Teachers' Perceptions of Their Professional Preparedness in Areas of Anti-Bullying

Farah Roxanne Stonebanks

The Department of Integrated Studies in Education

McGill University, Montreal

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Contents

Abstract

Since the influx of research in the 1970s, bullying has received unprecedented attention in academia. A significant concern amongst teachers, parents, and legislators alike, numerous anti-bullying programs have proliferated as schools attempt to reduce and control bullying. Unfortunately, while the power struggle between victims and their perpetrator(s) is a key factor in bullying, making it extraordinarily difficult for victims to handle cases on their own, teachers often note that they are unsure how to properly play their role in anti-bullying strategies. This thesis aims to better understand and evaluate ten elementary and high school teachers' levels of perceived professional preparedness received during their undergraduate degree while comparing that preparedness to "real world" experiences within their own classrooms and schools. Through individual interviews, analysed via reflexive thematic analysis, this thesis provides an insight into areas of teacher professional competency-building surrounding bullying that are currently lacking, and offers suggestions on how to better mobilize participant-requested knowledge.

Résumé

Depuis l'afflux de recherches dans les années 1970, l'intimidation a fait l'objet d'une attention sans précédent dans le monde universitaire. Une préoccupation majeure parmi les enseignants, les parents et les législateurs, de nombreux programmes anti-intimidation ont proliféré alors que les écoles tentent de réduire et de contrôler l'intimidation. Malheureusement, même si la lutte de pouvoir entre les victimes et leurs agresseurs est un facteur clé du harcèlement, rendant extrêmement difficile pour les victimes de gérer elles-mêmes les cas, les enseignants notent souvent qu'ils ne savent pas comment jouer correctement leur rôle dans la lutte contre le harcèlement. stratégies d'intimidation. Cette thèse vise à mieux comprendre et évaluer dix niveaux de préparation professionnelle perçus par des enseignants du primaire et du secondaire au cours de leurs études de premier cycle, tout en comparant cette préparation aux expériences du « monde réel » au sein de leurs propres classes et écoles. À travers des entretiens individuels, analysés via une analyse thématique réflexive, cette thèse donne un aperçu des domaines de développement des compétences professionnelles des enseignants autour du harcèlement qui font actuellement défaut, et propose des suggestions sur la manière de mieux mobiliser les connaissances des demandes des participants.

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Glossary

Term	Definition
Anti-Bullying Interventions	A formalized systemic compilation of specific strategies and techniques.
Anti-bullying Strategies	A potentially informal practice, rather than a set of prescribed procedures.
Bystander	An individual who is present at an event but does not take part.
Professional development / Professional training	Learning that emphasises education in one's professional career, building practical job applicable skills. Can involve learning after entering the workforce.
Pre-service teachers	Students enrolled in a teacher preparation program who are working at complete their degree requirement.
School board	The local board or authority responsible for the education in a particular city or area.
Stakeholders	A person or group of people that holds an interest, or stake, in the decision-making and outcomes of a project or initiative.
Interdisciplinary	Involving two or more branches of knowledge.
Interpersonal	The relationship or communication between two or more people.
Intersecting / Intersectional	The interconnection of different social categories such as race, class, and gender, that can cause overlapping discrimination for an individual.
Multiculturalism	The presence of multiple distinct cultural or ethnic groups in a society have equal rights and opportunities. Often described as a mosaic of equal cultures co-existing independently of one another.

Interculturalism	The integration of minority groups within the majority culture. Moves beyond passive acceptance of multiple cultures existing in a society, promoting dialogue and interaction between cultures.
Longitudinal studies	A study design involving repeated observations of the same variables over long periods of time.
Systematic reviews	A scholarly collection of the evidence on a specific topic using critical methods to identify, define and assess research on the topic.
Meta-analyses	A quantitative study design used to assess the results of multiple studies, to determine overall conclusion about that body of research.
Psychosocial	The combined influence that psychological factors and social environments have on individuals' wellness.
Psychosomatic	An interdisciplinary medical field exploring the relationships among social, psychological, behavioral factors on physical effects.
Zero Tolerance	A policy of imposing a punishment to every person who commits an infraction, regardless of its severity.
Thematic Analysis	A method for analyzing qualitative data, that emphasizes identifying, analysing and interpreting patterns of meaning.

Chapter 1

Introduction

For a long period of Canada's post-industrial age, bullying in formal public schooling was historically tolerated and dismissed by many as a simple rite of passage among youth (DeSisto & Smith, 2014). This attitude was held with an implication that victims of bullying must have been asking for it, deserved it, had to persevere against it as a sign of individual fortitude, or the act was simply justified by believing "kids will be kids" (DeSisto & Smith, 2014; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2016). Current popular media—from Mean Girls (2004) to Stranger Things (2016–2022)—openly acknowledge (and critique) that the youth culture experience in school is ripe with the prevalence of bullying as something that is real, commonly understood, and devastating (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2016), meaning that bullying is still very much part of our collective experience. Thankfully, we have begun to realize that bullying is not a normal part of childhood. Or at least, it should not be. Since the late 1970s, many books and articles have recognized bullying as an issue warranting concern and action (Monks & Coyne, 2011). But it was not until the late 1990s that a dramatic increase of public concern within the US and Canada grew, owing in large part to tragic school-related shootings, murders, and suicides (Raitanen et al., 2019; Hymel & Swearer, 2015; Langevin, 2002). Analysis showed that the lead actors (perpetrators or targets) in these acts were victims of bullying by peers at some point in their lives (Li, 2008). Since then, bullying has received unprecedented attention in the media and in academia, both nationally and internationally (e.g., Jimerson et al., 2010; Smith et al., 2004; Swearer et al., 2010), and it remains a significant concern among parents and educators (Hymel & Swearer, 2015).

Along with the above-mentioned attention, various anti-bullying interventions and strategies have been created and implemented in an attempt at prevention and intervention (Silva et al., 2017). In most school shootings and youth suicides, it was discovered that the resort to violence only occurred after the school repeatedly failed to intervene, as in the case of the 1999 Columbine High School massacre in Colorado and the 2007 Virginia Tech mass shooting. As a result of these trends, numerous anti-bullying programs and zero-tolerance policies have proliferated as schools attempt to reduce and control bullying (Chalamandaris & Piette, 2015; Roberts, 2011). The growth of anti-bullying interventions has also led to a dramatic rise in studies analyzing the success of such programs (Ttofi & Farrington, 2011; Huitsing, et al., 2020). This thesis does not attempt to write yet another study comparing the "effectiveness," both pro and con, of anti-bullying strategies. Instead, I will explore the less-researched topic of **teachers' perceptions of their professional preparedness** in areas of anti-bullying in their university programs (Bradshaw et al., 2013; Styron et al., 2016). This perspective is important to study, given that any power struggle between bullies and victims will be (by definition) representative of the uneven power dynamic of bullying (Volk et al., 2014), making it extraordinarily difficult for victims to "handle" on their own. Consequently, if one agrees with the current literature that bullying does not have to be accepted as a common part of youth experience in schools, teachers will play a predominant role in preventing, identifying, and dealing with bullying in their schools (Maunder & Tattersall, 2010). Given this expectation, teachers' perceptions of their professional preparedness in anti-bullying strategies (and comprehending bullying as a phenomenon in itself) must be a key element of the first intervention steps.

Unfortunately, teachers often note that when they enter the workspace, they are unsure how to properly play their role in anti-bullying strategies (Crothers et al., 2006). Providing

teachers with improved and continued professional development will not only raise their confidence and awareness on issues of bullying and anti-bullying strategies but also increase the likelihood that they will intervene when it occurs in their classroom (Jones & Augustine, 2015). Therefore, efficiently raising staff awareness and knowledge on this subject should be of high importance. However, this will not successfully occur if the primary leaders in schools, the teachers, are not consulted regarding the depth and effectiveness of their university programs in regard to anti-bullying components.

In summary, this thesis aims to better understand and evaluate elementary and high school teachers' levels of perceived professional preparedness received during their undergraduate degree while comparing that preparedness to "real world" experiences within their own classrooms and schools.

The idea is not simply to make a theory vs action argument but to better understand from teacher perceptions how to more effectively turn theory into practice. Through this research, I hope to move forward in raising awareness in areas of teacher professional competency-building surrounding bullying that may currently be highly effective or completely lacking. I wish to use my results to help enhance any areas in this field that may be causing teachers excess stress and feelings of hopelessness regarding their anti-bullying preparedness. The rest of this introductory chapter will introduce the study by first discussing the background context and definitions, followed by the research problem, the research aims, objectives and questions, the significance, and finally, the structural outline for the rest of my thesis.

Background to the Study

What is Bullying?

While general discourse on the topic of bullying tends to find collective agreement, such as its prevalence and significant harms within schools, many researchers within the anti-bullying field speak of a challenge regarding bullying's lack of a universally recognized definition (Goldsmid & Howie, 2014; Sercombe & Donnelly, 2013). It can be argued that at the intervention level, during practical, real-life cases of bullying, a precise definition of bullying might not be the most critical aspect of the intervention. When faced with a student in distress, we know that bullying exists, and we know it causes pain; thus, knowing how to solve the current issue becomes more important than coming up with a precise definition (Sercombe & Donnelly, 2013). Still, there is a growing body of literature that recognizes the importance of coming to a concrete definition of bullying; without a proper definitional consensus, bully-related research can run the risk of lacking in focus and direction—with different researchers sampling a range of bullying phenomenon and understanding bullying in different ways, leading to the possibility of being unable to compare their findings (Baly & Cornell, 2011; Griffin & Gross, 2004). A concrete definition of bullying is important if we ever want to consider its quantification—an essential tool for any claims being made at the structural level of anti-bullying work, such as resources, institutional reforms, or changes within legislation. Decisionmakers need to be aware of how widespread the problem of bullying is in the context they are working in, which will indicate whether it is a structural problem and their responsibility. Quantification is also essential to measure the effects of large-scale anti-bullying interventions or compare assessments of bullying phenomena in various environments (Sercombe & Donnelly, 2013).

In the search for the most commonly agreed upon definition of bullying, it would make the most sense to turn to the works of the late Dan Olweus (1931–2020). A prominent researcher within the global interdisciplinary research in the field of school bullying, Dr. Olweus created a succinct definition that remains the framework for the current definition and measurement of bullying (Margevičiūtė, 2016). In 1990, Dr. Olweus stated, "...a student is being bullied or victimized when he is exposed repeatedly and over time to negative actions on the part of one or more other students" (1993). Specifically, this definition stated that bullying involved three key components: 1) it is intentional negative behaviour that 2) typically occurs with some repetitiveness and is 3) directed against a person who has difficulty defending themselves (Olweus, 1993; Vivolo-Kantor et al., 2014). The pioneering empirical work of Olweus is frequently cited as a critical originating point for current research. The definition of bullying developed in his work continues to influence the broader field of bullying research (Canty et al., 2016). These three suggested components have been widely used as a means of distinguishing bullying from other forms of aggression and have deeply resonated with numerous researchers and practitioners (Margevičiūtė, 2016). More recently, there has been increasing support that these three criteria defining traditional bullying are largely applicable to the more modern cyberbullying (Olweus, 2013).

Key Features of Bullying

We need to be clear about what exactly we mean when we talk about bullying (Sercombe & Donnelly, 2013). A universally accepted definition allows international comparisons, helping in the creation of reliable intervention strategies (O'Moore & Minton, 2014). A common feature of bullying research is to treat our conventional definition of bullying as a given. Consistent application of this definition has created an aura of authority and temporal stability that obscures

its origins and development, its disciplinary paradigm and assumptions, and evidence that the term 'bullying' has multiple meanings and uses. Definitions, like theories, are made not born; they are partial and situated knowledges that have histories (Canty et al., 2016). Over the past two decades since the creation of Dr. Olweus' definition, the concept of bullying has evolved and expanded. For instance, there has been considerable discussion on the three components and debate over the addition of new components required for a behaviour to be defined as bullying (such as the perpetrator's intent to cause harm and the victim's report of experiencing harm) (Smith et al., 2013; Vivolo-Kantor et al., 2014). Consequently, the definition has been expanded or modified by numerous researchers, to emphasize different aspects of the bullying phenomenon that they hold as essential, such as the presence of a power inequity, or to highlight the different forms that bullying can take as more has become known about its nature (Salmivalli & Nieminen, 2002; Parada, 2006).

In my research into the definition of bullying, I have come across multiple definitions and aspects that researchers have decided are essential in our understanding of what bullying is (and what is it not). To offer a concrete understanding of what I, and many other researchers, believe constitutes bullying, I have collected and combined all of the common key features that appeared throughout anti-bullying research. Offering a run-through of these key features is essential.

Goal-Directed Intention to Harm.

Dr. Olweus' definition of bullying posits that bullying is intentional as opposed to accidental harm-doing (Greene, 2000). Emphasizing its goal-directed nature helps clarify the distinction between bullying and aggression by explicitly linking it to proactive rather than reactive violence and distinguishes it from accidental and unintended harm (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). Investigators typically describe bullying as having the characteristics of

proactive aggression as it is unprovoked, premeditated, and goal oriented (Olweus, 1993, 2013). This does not mean that bullies never use reactive aggression when provoked; only that to describe an action as bullying, the aggressive behaviour needs to have a proactive function. For example, an impulsive child with low effortful control who responds automatically and violently to peer teasing is engaging in reactive aggression rather than bullying, regardless of the existing power balance (Volk et al., 2014).

Reputation (Social Dominance).

Reputation is one of the most cited benefits of bullying, particularly as it relates to individuals or groups navigating dominance hierarchies (Berger, 2007; Salmivalli, 2010). Regarding the latter, engaging in bullying can be a way of promoting in-group solidarity to increase success in comparison with other groups. We see this dynamic in reports from individuals who join in on bullying because of a desire to not be left out or to prove their allegiance and loyalty against a specific individual who is an enemy of the victim (Bazelon, 2013). At the group level, bullying for social dominance can become an in- versus out-group exercise where the goal is to reinforce membership within a desired group and to harm the welfare of members of competing groups (Volk et al., 2014). This perspective may explain the behavior of some bullying bystanders or assistants who desire membership in a powerful group (Salmivalli, 2010). Regarding individuals achieving social dominance, bullies have been found to have higher levels of peer-reported dominance and perceived popularity, despite having lower ratings of likeability (Caravita et al., 2010; de Bruyn et al., 2010). Bullies may also focus on sabotaging the reputation of other closely matched "opponents" to boost their own status relative to the targeted victim, or when an individual targets a potentially threatening weaker individual who is nevertheless successfully climbing the social ladder (Volk et al., 2014).

Imbalance of Power.

Conceptually, almost all authors have defined bullying with respect to an imbalance of power. Bullying is a relationship problem, as it is a form of aggression that unfolds in the context of a relationship where one child asserts interpersonal power through aggression (Pepler et al., 2006). In contrast, in cases where the balance of power is relatively even, or the aggressor is less powerful, the act of harming another person may be considered aggression rather than bullying (Volk et al., 2014). This is an important distinction to make, as there is a different pattern (typically more serious) of negative outcomes for the victim when the measures of bullying explicitly refer to a power imbalance compared with when they do not (Ybarra et al., 2014). Despite a popular tendency to label bullies as cowards, bullies' preference for weaker targets represents an attempt at obtaining an efficient cost-benefit ratio, as weaker victims allow the bully to meet their goals (benefit) with only a modest chance of effective retaliation (cost). Indeed, bullies appear to deliberately target individuals who are incapable of effective retaliation or garnering peer support (Volk et al., 2014). Research in both adults and children, has reported that this power imbalance can be physical, psychological, economic or hierarchical (Olweus, 1993; Smith & Brain, 2000).

Repetition.

Most definitions refer to behaviour that must be repeated to be categorized as bullying (Olweus, 1993; Roland, 2002). This serves to distinguish bullying from single aggressive acts and to emphasize that bullying not only produces immediate distress and harm but also the threat of future attack (Lee, 2006). As previously touched upon, including repetition as part of the definition of bullying is to avoid confusing it with one-off incidents of aggression. This rationale is evident in Olweus' comment that bullying "exclud[es] occasional nonserious negative actions

that are directed against one student at one time and against another on a different occasion"
(Olweus, 1993, p. 9). While there is no consensus on the frequency of behaviour needed to
satisfy this criterion, researchers often advocate that victimization should be conceptualized as
on a continuum, and any frequency cut-off imposed is subjective (Marsh et al., 2004). Thus,
schools often adopt the practice of measuring bullying based on the frequency and variety of
behaviours experiences within a given time (Goldsmid & Howie, 2014).

Victim Distress.

There is a dominant understanding that experiencing victimization causes distress in both
children and adults, ranging from mild annoyance to severe psychological, social, and physical
trauma (Goldsmid & Howie, 2014). Distress is sometimes absent from definitions of bullying,
often due to the subjective nature of the judgement of distress and the practical difficulties of
applying this criterion in measurement instruments, as responses to comparable levels of
victimization may vary greatly due to individual vulnerabilities (Rigby, 1997). Despite this, the
consistent finding of associations between distress and victimization suggests the importance of
consideration of this criterion (Goldsmid & Howie, 2014).

Difficulty Defending.

Successful bullying establishes dominance (Horton, 2011). Bullying is not about just any
kind of injury, nor just any negative impact; it involves a particular kind of harm. It is aimed at
generating a helplessness, an inability to act, to do anything. It is an assault on a person's agency.
Bullying involves the attempt to deny another any settled place (Farrington, 1993). What makes
bullying so insidious is this systematic stripping away of any lines of avoidance, negotiation,
resolution, or escape. This element is why it so deeply threatens a person's security and why
thinking about suicide, as some do, is such a rational response (Giddens, 1979). This is also why

interventions by adults are so often unsuccessful, and so often make things worse. Unless executed skilfully, they can simply confirm to everyone that the person being bullied is helpless. The victim is aware that nothing has changed and that as soon as the opportunity arises, the bullying will continue—the victim is continuously denied the power to have their life belong to them (Sercombe & Donnelly, 2013).

Bullying As a Relation.

It is important to view bullying not just as a particular kind of act or event, but also as a particular kind of relationship—a relationship in which agency is progressively stripped from a victim. This involves two people at minimum: a perpetrator and a victim. However, a large number of people may be involved in an indirect manner as bystanders. They may be other students who witness the bullying event but remain uninvolved and are frequently afraid of becoming the next victim if they do interfere. Negatively affected along with the victim, the hostile environment created can distract them from school and friendships (Vanderbilt & Augustyn, 2010). Within this relationship, there is someone to bully and another to be bullied. There are sometimes other roles, such as the bystander, but bullying can happen without these parties. The cataloguing of behaviours can be useful, and may be an indicator that bullying is happening, but bullying can happen without physical infraction, without name-calling, without rumour spreading or without any of the typically identified bullying behaviours. Clever individuals who bully make sure that bullying activities remain subtle, ambiguous, deniable, or defensible in the face of exposure or accountability (Sercombe & Donnelly, 2013).

Types of Bullying

Bullying involves degrees of violence, comprising of various forms of harassment. Broadly speaking, bullying is often separated into two categories: Direct and indirect. Direct

bullying includes physical (hitting, punching, pushing, etc.) and verbal (name-calling, threatening, teasing, etc.) abuse (Bohn & Hickey, 2011). Indirect bullying, on the other hand, is more psychological in nature and is characterised by social exclusion (such as persuading peers to dislike a specific individual) and rumour spreading (Wolke & Lereya, 2015).

More broadly, bullying—whether it be direct or indirect, verbal or physical, on- or offline—often stems from the social inequities that adult society creates, fosters, and sustains (Glover et al., 1998; Janovicek, 2001). Recent studies have called for more attention on prejudice/ discriminative-related bullying (Juvonen & Graham, 2014). It has become more apparent that the risk of bullying and victimization is not equal across all student groups. Several studies have indicated that students with disabilities or who belong to ethnic or sexual minorities are at greater risk of being victimized than their peers (Menesini & Salmivalli, 2017). For example, Farmer et al. (2012) found that female students who received special education services were 3.9 times more likely to be victims than their peers without disabilities. When considering bullying related to children's race or ethnicity, sometimes referred to as racial or racist bullying, Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC) youth have reported more encounters of bullying than white youth (Peskin et al., 2006). Additionally, a survey run by LGBTQ+ associations involving more than 7000 students, aged 13 to 21 years, showed that nearly 9 out of 10 LGBTQ+ students experience harassment at school (Kosciw et al., 2012). Scholars have also observed that not only are such children marginalized by one form of discrimination, but they also often face a combination of discriminatory factors (for example, their race and gender combined) (Shramko et al, 2019).

Effects of Bullying

Contemporary efforts to counter bullying owe much of their impetus to the findings that being repeatedly bullied can hold serious consequences for the health and well-being of its victims (Rigby, 2003). Until recently, most studies on the effects of bullying just included brief follow-up periods, making it impossible to identify whether bullying was the cause or consequence of the reported health problems of students involved (Wolke & Lereya, 2015). Since then, numerous studies of the short- and long-term consequences of school bullying have been carried out in many parts of the world. Although they have mainly focused on the effects on bullying's victims, they have also given some attention to the possible social consequences for those who bully others and to the possible consequences of being involved in bully–victim relations (Rigby, 2003).

Several longitudinal studies from different countries, along with systematic reviews and meta-analyses, have demonstrated the relationship between school bullying or the experience of being victimized and later health outcomes. These associations hold even when controlling for other childhood risk factors (Arseneault et al., 2010). For example, Wolke and Lereya (2015), reviewing studies of genetically identical monozygotic twins who lived in the same households but were discordant for experiences of bullying, confirmed the dramatic consequences of being a victim of bullying over and above other personal and contextual factors. Bullying affects many children and lays the groundwork for long-term risk for psychological, physical, and psychosomatic outcomes (Vanderbilt & Augustyn, 2010). Bullying is clearly a serious problem that needs to be addressed by schools and, on a larger scale, all adult stakeholders (parents, community members, etc.). Such attention should focus not only on the extreme cases, where

bullying is left to fester until it leads to mass violence or victim deaths but also on day-to-day victimization.

Victims/Targets.

Significant effort has been put forth by researchers to analyze the effects of bullying and victimization (or targeting) on students' physical, psychological, relational, and general well-being. Overall, studies show that youth who are bullied miss more school, show signs of poor academic achievement, report higher loneliness, poorer health, and greater levels of anxiety than their non-bullied peers (Nakamoto & Schwartz, 2009; Juvonen & Graham, 2014). Meta-analyses of longitudinal studies (Ttofi et al., 2011) confirm that even after adjustments for a range of other factors, victims at school were at greater risk of later depression. Furthermore, being bullied in primary school has been found to both predict borderline personality symptoms and psychotic experiences, such as hallucinations or delusions, by adolescence (Wolke & Lereya, 2015). Studies have also linked victimization to suicidal ideation and higher rates of self-harm, even after taking account of prior emotional problems (Smith, 2016; Klomek et al., 2015), with suicide now reported to be the third leading cause of death among youth (Cooper et al., 2012). Additionally, youth who were victims of bullying have been consistently found to be at higher risk for common somatic problems such as colds or psychosomatic problems, such as headaches, stomach aches or sleeping problems, and are more likely have poor general health, including more bodily pain, headaches and slower recovery from illnesses (Wolke & Lereya, 2015).

Victimization is also related to numerous interpersonal difficulties, such as peer rejection, low peer acceptance, having few or no friends, and negative friendship quality (Cook et al., 2010). Victims may disengage from school due to anxiety over being further victimized. Depression can develop because children who are bullied are usually excluded and thus feel

alone. They tend to have a harder time making friends and feel like they are helpless because they cannot change their situation (Sanchez, 2019). Adolescents often grapple with the concept of where they fit in the world. If a teen feels alone and has a hard time making friends, they face a high chance of continuing their identity crisis because they will think they do not belong, with lowered self-esteem and self-perception as an outcast (Sanchez, 2019). Sigelman and Rider (2012) pointed out the importance of peer acceptance and that children who are victimized and excluded do not develop like their peers and lose out on opportunities. These kids cannot develop a sense of who their friends are and start to distrust people (Sanchez, 2019).

Furthermore, bullying is not only detrimental to a child's physical and psychological health at the time of occurrence (Cooper et al., 2012), the literature reports that those bullied in their youth over extended periods of time are likely to exhibit serious adverse effects later in life, such as psychosis, depression, poor self-esteem, abusive relationships, and anxiety (Wolke & Lereya, 2015; Cooper et al., 2012). Bullying has been described as a continuous cycle. Adams and Lawrence (2011) found that students who were bullied in middle school or high school continued to be excluded and abused by their peers as they move onto higher education. This continued trouble making or keeping friends leads to lowered rates of finding a partner and social support (Wolke & Lereya, 2015). Moreover, victimized children were found to have lower educational qualifications, be worse at financial management and to earn less than their peers (Wolke & Lereya, 2015).

Bullies/Perpetrators.

Bullies also suffer because of their actions. Bullying involvement leads to worse psychosocial adjustment, greater health problems, and poorer emotional and social adjustment (Vanderbilt & Augustyn, 2010). Outcomes associated with bullying behaviour include loneliness,

poor academic achievement, poor social adjustment and greater risk of drug and alcohol use (Nansel et al, 2001). Bullies who acknowledge their behaviour have higher rates of depression and psychological distress as compared to those who deny their bullying. All bullies have higher negative attitudes towards school and are at higher risk of dropping out of school. Bullies, as a consequence of their activities, are more likely to have social problems, aggression, and externalizing behaviours. Bullies tend to have psychiatric diagnoses of antisocial personality, substance abuse, and anxiety disorders. They engage in high-risk behaviors, such as using more tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs (Vanderbilt & Augustyn, 2010).

Active bullying has also a relevant impact on individual lives. In a meta-analysis of 28 longitudinal studies, Ttofi, Farrington, Lösel, and Loeber (2011) concluded that bullying perpetration is a strong and a specific risk factor for later criminal offending and psychotic symptoms. Klomek et al. (2015) confirmed this pattern and proposed a dose effect, in which more frequent bullying involvement in childhood is more strongly associated with adult adversities. Bullying perpetration is often followed by an increased risk of delinquency (Menesini & Salmivalli, 2017). Childhood bullies have a fourfold increase in criminal behaviour by early adulthood. They have more problems with being employed and having stable long-term romantic relationships. (Vanderbilt & Augustyn, 2010). Bullies may be more deviant and more likely to have less formal education and to be unemployed. They have also been reported to be more likely to display anti-social behaviour and be charged with serious crime, burglary or illegal drug use (Wolke & Lereya, 2015). Some bullies behave aggressively towards partners, use harsh physical discipline with their own children, and their children are more likely to become bullies themselves (Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005).

Bully-Victims.

Adding to the difficulty in identifying and addressing bullying, the roles of perpetrator and victim have been found to be interchangeable. A 1997 report by the National Crime Prevention Council stated that youth who are victimized can also perpetrate violence in the role of "bullies" (Wong-Lo & Bullock, 2011). Although extensive research has been conducted on victims and bullies, less has been done on the victims of bullying who also bully other children (Stein et al., 2007). This is unfortunate, as bully-victims are often found to be the most high-risk around involved in bullying (Kennedy, 2021). In fact, findings from certain studies have even indicated that youth involved in high levels of both victimization and perpetration are considerably more at risk of traumatic symptoms, the most dysfunctional, and the most at risk than of all youth involved in bullying (Kennedy, 2021; Stein et al., 2007). To begin with, they have been found to have more behavioural problems and more behavioural misconduct (Dukes et al., 2009), along with higher rates of psychological disturbances, including lower self-esteem, along with more depressive symptoms (Juvonen et al., 2003), attention deficit disorder (Schwartz, 2000), and anxiety (Kaltiala-Heino et al., 2000).

Additionally, such youth have been found to have more behaviour problems and misconduct (Dukes et al., 2009). Bully-victims are reported to be highly reactive and have been associated with the worst behavioural difficulties (Guy et al., 2019). This may be a key influence on youths' status among their peers, especially since they are most at risk for major aggressive behaviour against their peers, along with conduct disorder as well (Unnever, 2005). Their external behaviours predispose members of their social network to higher risk for injury (Veenstra et al., 2005).

The social networks of bully-victims tend to be small or non-existent. Among peers, bully-victims are often perceived as social outcasts and tend to provoke negative reactions (Juvonen et al., 2003). They are less likely to report having significant peer relationships (O'Brennan et al., 2009) and more likely to report having difficulty socializing with peers (Schwartz et al., 2001). Bully-victims tend to report more loneliness (Georgiou & Stavrinides, 2008), which is consistent with other research that finds them to be more socially isolated and with fewer friends than others involved in bullying (Unnever, 2005). While often "pure" bullies will hold continued high levels of popularity, bully-victims find themselves unable to do the same (Guy et al., 2019). In a 7-year longitudinal study, bully-victims were found to be more prone to relationship difficulties years after they had graduated school (Kumpulainen & Räsänen, 2000).

The Research Problem

The ever-growing range of research and awareness surrounding the topic of bullying and its effects on youth in recent years has led to a plethora anti-bullying interventions and strategies in an attempt to prevent and react appropriately to youth bullying. However, despite the increase in research dedicated to school bullying, many questions remain unanswered, *including teacher perspectives on how and to what extent such interventions and strategies are being included in pre-service teacher training programs*.

Many anti-bullying programs and strategies have been created and implemented in schools. However, no consensus on which anti-bullying interventions have had the best outcomes has been determined. Unfortunately, research reviewing the effectiveness of intervention methods has led to inconsistent findings (Ttofi & Farrington, 2010). Many bullying-intervention reviews have found low/contradicting outcomes. For example, one study found that

60% of bullying intervention outcomes were too weak to be considered meaningful. However, these low outcomes may be due to ineffective review design, such as not carrying out extensive meta-analysis, not focusing on programs that are specific to bullying, and not broadly searching for enough intervention-designs (Ttofi & Farrington, 2010). Such research has overlooked the importance of understanding teacher preparedness on the phenomenon and possible strategies and have, instead, consistently focussed on the "effectiveness" of anti-bullying interventions (Silva et al., 2017).

My goal is to move beyond simply stating whether an intervention works, and instead focus my efforts on the subject of teacher perceptions of professional preparedness in the university certification programs. The issue at hand is to explore such questions as whether teachers are confident when engaging in anti-bullying interventions. Educators are often unaware of bullying that is occurring around them at school (Beran, 2006). Others have stated that, even though they are aware of the problem, they have had no training on how to properly handle it (Crothers et al., 2006). Unfortunately, many educators are left unsure about which strategies they should use in their classrooms and schools and tend to pick and choose based on a "trial and error" basis, an acting "on the fly" approach, which can lead to further detriments for the victims (Jones & Augustine, 2015). Many teachers have spoken of a lack of confidence that they feel when faced with bullying in their schools and have asked for better training (Maunder & Tattersall, 2010), which would be more effective if given a priority in their undergraduate university education. Teaching is a job with high stress levels. For example, in Quebec, Canada, teachers in their first five years of practice have an estimated turnover rate of 20%. The main source of their stress comes from heavy workloads, a lack of resources, lack of support and time, along with what is described as "challenging" student behaviour (Leroux & Théorêt, 2014). In

fact, teachers have reported that one of the most stressful aspects of their jobs is dealing with pupil misbehaviour (Maunder & Tattersall, 2010).

This intervention confusion, along with a potential lack of teacher training on the subject, leaves educators feeling ill-equipped and stressed once bullying occurs in their schools and classrooms. Lack of knowledge and confidence on anti-bullying strategies and bullying in general, can cause students to learn that nothing will be done about the aggressions or that available interventions are inadequate. It has been argued that school districts should offer their teachers professional training to help address the challenge of bullying in their schools (Jones & Augustine, 2015). If teachers are unable to get the training that they are asking for, they may be left not intervening at all, which sends a negative message to their students as they watch their teachers' avoidance. (Jones & Augustine, 2015).

Research Aims

Given the lack of research regarding teachers' perceptions of professional preparedness in the university certification programs, this study will aim to get first-hand accounts from teachers concerning their own experiences during their undergraduate degree and working in their field. I will be interviewing several teachers who have recently graduated from anglophone Quebec universities within the past two years, and are currently teaching, or have extensive "in the field" experience, in an English Quebec elementary or high school. The three universities are Bishop's, Concordia, and McGill University, which all possess teacher certification granting privileges. I am choosing to focus only on English schools because there are differences between the French and English approaches to government curricula. An example of differences between the two linguistic school boards is that the English school board applies a model of multiculturalism, whereas the French school boards apply interculturalism (Waddington et al., 2012). My decision

is based on the fact that I want to keep my project specific to one type of curriculum approach before I branch out in research topics as I continue my education. I have chosen to situate my research solely in Quebec for the same reason. This is also assuming that my participants already possess, at minimum, valuable experience through their field-placements and the most recent memories of any anti-bullying content taught, modeled, or witnessed in their teacher education programs.

My goals from this thesis are to learn about (1) Teachers' professional understanding of bullying; (2) their professional training experiences both during their undergraduate degree and once they entered their field; and (3) their perceived professional preparedness when dealing with anti-bullying in their field; and (4) to use this collected data to suggest knowledge mobilization tactics that could help utilize this information in an effective and useful way.

My goal for this research is a better understanding of how anti-bullying interventions are perceived and understood by soon-to-be and newly graduated teachers. Gaining a better awareness surrounding what teachers already know and what they believe is lacking in anti-bullying interventions and professional training can help lead towards more frequent and efficient anti-bullying training. This can help create a more stable and healthy school environment for them and the students that they teach. Additionally, if they become aware of inadequate professional training or inadequate anti-bullying measures placed in high schools, they may feel inspired to engage in professional development to strengthen their strategies in this area. Alternatively, they may decide to constructively reach out to their university alumni to suggest improvements, including anti-bully curricula.

The Structural Outline

Chapter One introduced the context of the study. Bullying has always been a part of our collective experience within Canadian public schooling, tolerated and dismissed up until relatively recently. Due to unprecedented attention in the media and in academia, both nationally and internationally, we have become aware of its significant damage and importance. By providing an introduction into what bullying is, its key features, what forms it can take, its key players, and the effects it can cause, a general understanding of the key issue is given, demonstrating why anti-bullying is such an important, yet difficult, task. Guided by this presentation of the research problem, my research aim and goals are clarified: A better understanding of why learning about teachers' perceptions of their professional preparedness concerning anti-bullying during their university programs is an integral part of anti-bullying work.

In Chapter Two, I give an overview of global bullying research. School bullying is a widespread issue, equally affecting youth across the globe *(*Halliday et al., 2021). In this chapter, a brief timeline of bullying research within four countries is provided (Sweden, Canada, USA, and Japan), due to their significant contribution to the English language bullying research database. In comparing the countries based on their cultural difference between the Common Good (Sweden and Canada), Individualism (USA), and Collectivism (Japan), we are able to assert that while their approach to bullying may differ, it is clear that as soon as the general public is made aware of the extreme consequences of bullying, research and the legal system are forced into action with their responses.

In Chapter Three, I present an introductory dive into cyberbullying, along with an overview of the types of anti-bullying methods that are in use today. Over the past two decades,

youth have increasingly grown up immersed in easily accessible social media (Shariff & Stonebanks, 2021). Easily accessible technology has become a significant, integral part of their social lives (Prensky, 2001). Although cyberbullying is a new format of bullying, this chapter explains how we cannot separate the issue of cyberbullying from our offline experiences. What is often ignored in the general conversation and understanding of cyberbullying and bullying is how they are deeply rooted in intolerance towards others due to a perceived difference (Olweus, 2012). The critical role of adult stakeholders, such as teachers, is also presented. Furthering the argument of the necessity of effective anti-bullying professional training. I then present the various types of anti-bullying methods that commonly appear throughout anti-bullying research and the arguments that are made for and against their use. These are separated into three distinct themes: Anti-bullying focused on students' involvement, anti-bullying focused on adults' involvement, and anti-bullying focused on supervision.

In Chapter Four, I explore the methodology and theories this study will be centered on. Reflexive thematic analysis is used to aid me in my exploration through my participants' interviews. As recently graduated teachers grant me an insight into their experiences and observations, thematic analysis helps me to illustrate which themes are important in the description of the research topic at hand (Daly et al., 1997), highlighting only the most salient sets of meanings present within the data (Joffee, 2012). In addition, the reflexivity of my chosen thematic analysis aids in situating myself as an interpreter of meaning, as a subjective storyteller (Byrne, 2021). Alongside my methodology, I present my chosen theories of critical realism and contextualism, along with my reason as to why these best fit my approach to my research.

In Chapter Five, I organize and analyze my collected data. Themes from participant interviews developed through a reflexivity-based methodology are presented, representing a

clear majority of participant views on a topic. Participant quotes are included alongside my analysis, to aid in my representation and to provide a rich description. Intermingled with participant quotes is my reflexivity of considering each statement and point of view to the literature on anti-bullying that has guided my own views and subjectivity. Major themes include participants' understanding of bullying, participant experiences during their undergraduate degree, the consequences of not being properly trained, and help they would like to receive.

Finally, in Chapter Six, I summarize my research and the outcomes from the study, considering how my findings could be applied to help with continued improvement in professional development surrounding anti-bullying. Following my four major goals that I approached my thesis with, I review how the answers I received from my participants aided in my concluding findings. These findings included: (1) Learning about teachers' professional understanding of bullying, (2) Learning about their professional training experiences both during their undergraduate degree and once they entered the field, (3) Learning about their perceived professional preparedness when dealing with anti-bullying in their field, and (4) Using this collected data to suggest knowledge mobilization tactics to employ this information in an effective and useful way. Finally, in reviewing my thesis in its entirety and through my background in knowledge mobilization, I present my opinions on how one could use my findings in a productive and helpful way.

Chapter 2

A Brief History of Global Bullying Research

It can be claimed that for as long as schools have been in existence, there have been problems with bullying and peer victimization. According to social psychologists Alex Inkeles (1920–2010) and Daniel Levinson (1920–1994), all cultures face the same problems about how to deal with conflict, including how to express feelings and control aggression, how authority is structured and organised, and how the self is conceptualized in terms of the relationship between individuals and their society (Skrzypiec et al., 2019). School bullying is a widespread issue that equally affects youth worldwide (Halliday et al., 2021). That said, the current research and historical accounts of bullying available in each country does not equally reflect this global experience. As of now, bullying has mostly been studied in Western countries (Görzig et al., 2021). In 2015, Zych et al. reviewed the most cited articles on bullying and cyberbullying. They noted differences in the number of publications between geographical areas as well as cross-national collaborations across time. Prior to 2000, more than half of the articles came from Northern Europe, which was then overtaken by North American publications. Highly cited articles from other parts of the world were very low (e.g., Western Europe, Australia < 10%) or non-existent (e.g., Africa, Latin America, Asia). They also showed that 14.2% of articles involved cross-national collaborations. This rose from only two studies showing cross-national collaborations before 2000, to 28.1% of the studies within the period of 2011–2015. While research in other parts of the world have been catching up in recent years (Sittichai & Smith, 2015; Smith et al., 2016), studies from areas such as Africa, Latin America, and South-East Asia remain scarce in comparison, even though there is considerable need (Görzig et al., 2021).

My review of this literature has revealed that there are six main countries in the English language database that examine this phenomenon: Sweden, USA, UK, Canada, Japan, and South Korea. I have decided to separate the rest of this chapter geographically based on 1) the (so-called) "common good" approach under Sweden and Canada, 2) the individualism focuses of the USA and, 3) The historic collectivism approach of Japan. This can help situate this research in reference to where we are with school bullying today in Canada, in reference and collaboration with other lead players in anti-bullying research.

Common Good

Often referred to today as "public interest," the Common Good comprises the goods that serve all members of a community and its institutions—everyone, not just a particular group—and goods that serve members of future generations (Etzioni, 2014). With deep roots in the history of philosophy and religion, the Common Good occurs when the good of an individual is dependent on the good of their wider community, challenging the popular notions of the West where well-being is embedded in our individual freedom and happiness (Bradstock, 2013). It is rooted in the assumption that we are interdependent, and each have a responsibility to one another (Bradstock, 2013). We are asked to invest in the Common Good not because it will necessarily benefit us personally, or even those close to us, but simply because it is a Good that should be nurtured. Examples of such Common Goods can be apparent in countries that hold value in public health and environmental preservation (Etzioni, 2014).

Sweden

Time Period	Key Event in Bullying Research
18TH-Early 20th Century	Bullying was seen as a private matter between individuals (Swift, 1997). The term "bullying" was not often attributed to these acts (D'Cruze, 2000). Documented cases presented victims' external characteristics (such as being an immigrant and

	using a dialect) as reasons for being bullied (Horton, 2011).
WWII (1939– 1945)	A significant rise in interest in the topic of bullying during WWII moved the understanding of bullying away from only being considered as a natural part of human life. Our understanding of basic human rights and the dignity of life were altered significantly, including the notion that citizens have a right to be safe from the threat of violence as "everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person" (UN, 1948, article 3).
1948–1949	The United Nations declared the right of equality, the right to life, liberty, and security, which heightened people's awareness of their rights (UN, 1948). These changing perceptions of human rights and violence pushed forward the notion that bullying is to be considered as serious, violent behaviour.
1969	Dr Peter Heinemann (physician) introduced the Swedish word "mobbing" to describe interactions involving a group of children attacking an individual perceived to be different. He drew a parallel with apartheid and oppression in wider society, reframing bullying as a social problem (Larsson, 2012).
Mid-1970s	The first systemic research on bullying was carried out by Dr. Dan Olweus (psychologist) (Olweus, 1978). As opposed to the earlier perception of bullying, Olweus believed that bullying was not only physical but might also include psychological aspects (Tritt & Duncan, 1997). His definition (1994) stated that "a student is being bullied or victimised when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other students" (p. 1173). An imbalance of power between the bully(s) and victim(s) now needed to exist as well to be classified as bullying (Halquist, 2012). Due to Olweus' insight into bullying, others took notice of the significance in bringing safety back into the schools, leading to a widespread surge of bullying research from different disciplines, such as education, psychology, sociology, and criminology, expanding the study of bullying (Koo, 2007).
1982	A newspaper in Scandinavia reported that three teenagers from Norway had committed suicide due to being bullied by their peers (Olweus, 1993). The Norwegian Ministry of Education responded to the public outrage reaction by commissioning a large-scale research and intervention project, conducted by Olweus. The Norwegian response spread quickly to other Scandinavian countries, and to the UK, the USA, Canada, and Australia (Mellor, 1995).
1985	New school laws were created that stipulated that all those working in schools had to actively work against bullying (Jacobsson, 2009).
2006	The pre-election period within Sweden was marked by a high emphasis on the issue of discipline in schools (Hammarén et al., 2015).

2008 & 2010	The term "bullying" is no longer used as a legal term in the Swedish Discrimination Act (SFS 2008:567) or the Swedish Education Act (SFS 2010:800) due to a concern that too big of a focus on bullying overshadows any attacks that have only occurred once (Thornberg, 2019). Instead, terms are used such as "harassment" or "degrading treatment" as umbrella terms that also reflect bullying (Horton, 2014).
2009	All schools were required by law to have a plan for equal treatment to guide and encourage effective preventative and reactive actions against bullying and other violent behaviours, with schools now subjected to fines and lawsuits if they failed to fulfil these obligations (Jacobsson, 2009).
Present	The Swedish School Inspectorate holds a legal responsibility to ensure that schools are working against harassment or degrading treatment (Rosén et al., 2021), and if it is found that they are not doing so, the school authority is often made to pay damages to any student who was subjected to the harassment (Horton, 2014).

Canada

Time Period	Key Event in Bullying Research
Early-1990s	It was not until the 1900s that bullying became a subject of research among Canadian academics (Paré & Collins, 2016). Researchers in Canada were relative latecomers, despite evidence that bullying had been a problem in their schools (Bauman et al., 2016). One of the first steps they did in the early 1990s was collecting data to determine the prevalence of bullying in their schools, which concluded that students suffered from bullying at significant rates and frequencies (Fedoryshyn, 2019).
1995	One of the earliest studies in Canada, by Charach, Pepler, and Ziegler, examined differences in gender, age, and ablism, which could affect rates of victimization, as well as the popular motives behind perpetration (e.g., power and popularity). This aided greatly in our general understanding of bullying in Canada today (Bauman et al., 2016).
1999	Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold murdered twelve students and one teacher at Columbine High School, leaving many others wounded in the massacre, and eventually taking their own lives. It was reported that the source of their anger had generated from bullying they had received (Bauman et al., 2016). While occurring in the United States, the proximity of the events spurred Canada into action, as numerous publications began to appear in the late 1990s (Bauman et al., 2016).

1999	Eight days after the Columbine massacre, a copy-cat school shooting occurred in an Alberta high school, demonstrating to Canadians that this form of violence was not limited to the United States (Walton, 2004).
2000s	Suicides by Canadian students over the past two decades repeatedly captured the media's attention. For example: In 2000, Dawn-Marie Wesley, a fourteen-year-old student in British Columbia, committed suicide after three female classmates repeatedly threatened to beat her up. In 2011, Jamie Hubley, an Ontario high school student, committed suicide after years of being bullied by his classmates for being openly gay. In 2013, Rehtaeh Parsons, a seventeen-year-old high school student from Nova Scotia, committed suicide after pictures of her being allegedly sexually assaulted at a party were circulated at her school and other students proceeded to bully and harass her (Meredith-Flister, 2020).
2012– Onwards	Due to all these acts, administrators in Canada were increasingly pressed by parents' groups, teachers' associations, and education critics to take action against school violence. In response, anti-violence policies and programs began to develop, and "safe schools" continues to be a central mission statement in school boards across Canada (Walton, 2004). The following is a brief look into how the different provinces of Canada responded to the "safe schools" request. {{TABLE2}}

Inner table:

Alberta	**Bill 3 under The School Act** A commitment of the school community to ensure a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment, through the establishment of a code of conduct. Bullying is prohibited, and students have an obligation to report any bullying behaviours (PREVNet, 2017).
British Columbia	The Safe and Caring School Communities Policy Affirms all students' right to an education free from discrimination, bullying, harassment, intimidation, and other forms of violence (PREVNet, 2017). British Columbia's School Act School boards must establish codes of conduct that define

		what is bullying, and what the consequences of that behaviour will be (PREVNet, 2017).
	Manitoba	Formal legislation within the Public Schools Act Schools must establish a code of conduct that mentions bullying prevention and response. It must mandate respectful behaviour from the whole school population and include a duty to report bullying for all employes and any person who has care or charge of a student in a school-approved activity (PREVNet, 2017).
	New Brunswick	Policy 703: Positive Learning and Working Environment States the rights and responsibilities of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, school districts, and schools for creating a positive learning and working environment in the public education system. It concerns all incidents of bullying that affect the school's climate, whether on or off school property, and applies to all participants in the school system (PREVNet, 2017).
	Newfoundland and Labrador	The Safe and Caring Schools Policy Defines bullying and includes a staff response protocol on how staff members should intervene, investigate, inform parents/guardians of, apply consequences for and document bullying incidents (PREVNet, 2017).
	Northwest Territories	Bill 12: An Act to Amend the Education Act Establishes a definition of bullying and school codes of conduct, requiring Divisional Education Councils or District Education Authorities to ensure that schools develop safe school plans (PREVNet, 2017). This safe school plan must include, among other things, measures to address instances of bullying consistent with laid out regulations (e.g., reviewed annually, made available to the public, etc.) (PREVNet, 2017).
	Nova Scotia	Bill 30: The Promotion of Respectful and Responsible

		Relationships Act The legislation requires school principals to address all incidents of bullying, whether on or off school property if such behaviour significantly disrupts the learning climate of the school (PREVNet, 2017; Fedoryshyn, 2019).
	Ontario	Bill 13: Accepting Schools Act States the rights and responsibilities of teachers, schools, school boards, other school board employees, and ministries when preventing or dealing with bullying, whether on or off school property, if it affects the school's learning climate (PREVNet, 2017). New legal obligations are created for school boards and school to prevent bullying, tougher consequences are given, and students wanting to promote understanding and respect are more supported (Fedoryshyn, 2019).
	Quebec	Bill 56: An Act to Prevent and Stop Bullying and Violence in Schools This bill lays out the duties and responsibilities of the school boards, public and private schools, and the Ministry to provide a healthy and secure learning environment that allows every student to develop his or her full potential, free from any form of bullying or violence (PREVNet, 2017; Fedoryshyn, 2019).
	Saskatchewan	Mandated action plan by the Minister of Education Proposed that school divisions adopt the following definition of bullying: "Bullying is a relationship issue where one person or group repeatedly uses power and aggression to control or intentionally hurt, harm or intimidate another person or group. It is often based on another person's appearance, abilities, culture, race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation or gender identity. Bullying can take many forms: physical, emotional, verbal, psychological or social." (PREVNet, 2017). A Caring and Respectful Schools—Bullying Prevention a

		Model Policy
		Helps school divisions implement an anti-bullying strategy (PREVNet, 2017).
	Yukon Territory	Policy 101: The Safe and Caring Schools Policy Ensures a commitment of the whole school community to plan and create a respectful, safe and nurturing educational environment for everyone. It is accompanied by the Safe and Caring Schools Policy Support Plan, which outlines support programs available to schools to aid in implementing the policy (Prevnet, 2017).
	P.E.I. and Nunavut	While the remaining provinces do not currently hold any legislation specific to bullying, many behaviours of incidents characterized as bullying fit many definitions of criminal offenses under the Canadian Criminal Code. These include, for example: Criminal Harassment (CCC 264) - It is unlawful to make a person fear for their safety or the safety of another person by: repeatedly following them or watching their home or places they frequent; repeatedly communicating (directly or indirectly) with them; or directing threatening conduct toward them.

Individualism

In individualism, the self is prioritized over interdependency. Individualist cultures value personal success, self-esteem, and distinctive attitudes and opinions (Triandis, 1995); subsequently, adherents of individualism consider creating and maintaining a positive sense of self to be a basic human endeavour (Baumeister, 1998). In individualistic cultures, individuals need relationships to attain their goals, but relationships are seen as costly to maintain (Kagitçibasi, 1997). Social theorists assume that individualists leave relationships and groups when the costs of maintaining relationships outweigh personal benefits and when personal goals shift. Thus, individualists see their relationships as impermanent and non-intensive (Triandis,

1995). Those in individualistic cultures are less likely to live in intergenerational households (considering gaining independence from one's family to be a rite of passage towards maturity), have smaller support networks, and lower intentions to seek help from others for personal problems (Scott et al., 2004). In a worldwide study of 116,000 employees of IBM, Geert Hofstede (1980) found that the most fiercely independent people were from the US. Today still, American society expresses a high degree of individualism in its law and societal values, guaranteeing, for example, freedom of speech and the right to "bear arms" in its Constitution (Putnam, 2000).

United States

Time Period	Key Event in Bullying Research
1999	Two major events in 1999 aided in their turning point towards the recognition of bullying. The first was the shooting at Columbine High School, the most notorious of a series of school attacks that were widely viewed in the press as actions by vengeful victims of bullying (Dinkes et al., 2009). The incident ignited a wave of new legislative action within state legislatures that aimed to curtail bullying behaviour on school campuses or to mitigate its effects. The trend was later fueled by a number of highly visible suicides among school-age children and adolescents that were linked to chronic bullying, attracting national attention to the issue (Marr & Field, 2001). In the same year, the U.S. Supreme Court (DeMitchell, 1999) established that schools could be liable for failure to stop student-to-student sexual harassment. This far-reaching decision supported nationwide lawsuits concerning victims of bullying (Alley & Limber, 2009), as well as a directive from the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights that certain forms of bullying must be addressed as civil rights violations (Cornell and Limber, 2015).
1999–2010	More than 120 bills have been enacted by state legislatures nationally that have either introduced or amended education or criminal statutes to address bullying and related behaviors in schools (Stuart-Cassel et al., 2011).

2010	The US Department of Education established a recommended framework for antibullying laws for dissemination to schools across the country, with sixteen recommended components: (1) a clear statement of purpose and findings; (2) the scope of schools' jurisdiction; (3) a specific definition that includes (4) a prohibition against bullying on the basis of certain characteristics; (5) a requirement that local districts develop their own policies; (6) a regular compliance review process; (7) Laws should also require that schools develop definitions of bullying that conform to state law; (8) reporting procedures that are anonymous and protected against retaliation; (9) investigation protocols; (10) written record retention policies; (11) punishments for bullying and (12) mental health resources for bullying victims. Finally, they recommended that state laws include (13) procedures for communicating district policies; (14) provisions for training staff; (15) transparency and data reporting requirements; and (16) assurances that those who experience bullying are free to seek legal remedies against their harassers (Waldman, 2018).
2011	The Department of Education reviewed the extent to which state antibullying laws adhered to their recommendations and found substantial variations across state policies in their adoption of recommended practices, including definitions, policy development and reviews, and training and communication about policies (Hatzenbuehler et al., 2015). Out of fifty states, only nine enacted laws that followed all sixteen of the guidelines (Waldman, 2018).

Collectivism

Collectivism has four important cultural traits: 1) definition of the self as interdependent — in relation to other people rather than in the abstract traits of an individual (Reykowski, 1994); 2) an alignment of personal and communal goals — meaning that the individual makes decisions accounting for the wants of the collective and what they are bringing or taking away from the group; 3) a greater consideration of social norms than individual attitudes when making decisions; and 4) an emphasis on relationships, even if disadvantageous for individuals (Nickerson, 2023). The core of collectivism is the idea that groups bind together and mutually obligate individuals (Oyserman et al., 2002). As such, collectivists value security, good social relationships, harmony within ingroups, and personalized relationships (Triandis et al., 1990).

Collectivists tend to define themselves in relation to others, and group membership is a central aspect of collectivist identity (Hofstede, 1980). The well-being of the group defines the success and well-being of the individual, and as such, one protects oneself by considering the needs and feelings of others (Nickerson, 2023).

Japan

Time Period	Key Event in Bullying Research
1986	Japanese society was shaken by the news of the suicide of an eighth-grade boy who had been bullied not only by peers but also by his three teachers (Nagata, 2021). The case was brought to court, where the school was found guilty (Toda, 2016). Following this incident, a considerable number of Japanese students continued to suffer from bullying, transfer to other schools, and commit suicide (Nagata, 2021). In many of these cases, schools and teachers did not admit that bullying was occurring. They often made statements denying the causal relationship between bullying and suicide. In Japanese civil suits, the bereaved families of suicidal students were held responsible for proving the causal relationship, which often led to courts repeatedly denying the relationship (Nagata, 2021).
1994	After a long period of the media focusing primarily on school absenteeism, a second media frenzy on bullying began after a 14-year-old boy committed suicide due to constant attacks by his peers (Shakaibu, 1995).
1995	Japanese society began to pay attention to the victims of bullying. More people came to believe that victims should be protected, respected, supported, and cared for. In the criminal justice system, some legislation has been enacted and amended to protect and support crime victims (Nagata, 2021).
1996	The Japanese Minister of Education issued a directive to study school bullying primarily because of a number of suicides directly linked to bullying. The appeal highlighted that bullying was a significant violation of human rights and was not to be condoned (Murray-Harvey et al., 2009).
Early 2000s	The Japanese Parliament enacted the Act on Measures Incidental to Criminal Procedures for Protecting the Rights of Crime Victims in 2000, the Basic Act on Crime Victims in 2004, and the Act on Payment of Benefits for Relief of Crime Victims of Aum Shinrikyo in 2008 (Nagata, 2021). Since 2000, the Code of Criminal Procedure, the Act on the Committee for the Inquest of Prosecution, the Juvenile Act, and the Act on Payment of Crime Victims

	Benefits have been amended one after the other (Nagata, 2021).
2011	A bullying suicide case of an eighth-grade boy in Otsu city resulted in yet another media focus (Toda, 2016). People were outraged by this case, condemning the failure of the schools and boards of education (Nagata, 2021).
2013	In response, the Japanese government put forward an Act to require schools to be prepared for ijime incidents: the Act on the Promotion of Measures to Prevent Bullying (Nagata, 2021; Toda, 2016). This was the first Act in Japan specifically directed at bullying in the school environment. Consisting of six chapters and 35 Articles, the Act established basic principles concerning the prevention and early detection of bullying, provides measures to handle bullying cases, stipulates the responsibilities of the national and local governments and others, requires the establishment of basic policies concerning measures to prevent, detect early, and handle bullying, and covers basic measures for the prevention, early detection, and handling of bullying (Nagata, 2021).
2013	Later that same year, the Minister established the National Basic Policy. Because the Act does not provide for enforcement regulations or ordinances, the National Basic Policy is essential for not only providing details of the Act but also supplementing it. The Act also states that local governments should establish local basic policies that comprehensively and effectively prevent, detect, and handle school bullying (Nagata, 2021).

The Global Reach of Bullying

Bullying is a universal problem (Tsitsika et al., 2014). Approaches and responses to bullying differ due to cultural differences between Common Good, Individualistic, and Collectivist cultures.

In Canada, while each province and territory has its own independent approaches to anti-bullying, all educators are expected to be responsible for helping nurture and develop the social and emotional skills students need to engage in healthy relationships and teach students that bullying is unacceptable. Across Canada, bullying is seen as a relational problem that impacts the social climate of school communities (Fedoryshyn, 2019). To address this issue, Canadian

research often stresses the need for a whole school approach to bullying that includes the adoption of an anti-bullying policy and anti-bullying initiatives (Fedoryshyn, 2019)

In the United States, their culture inadvertently pushes the belief that individual success and wealth go hand in hand. The desire to survive is instinctual, associated directly with competition due to the multitude of species and limited natural resources. This survival instinct, along with a competitive atmosphere, has remained as the human race has evolved, moving over into our educational contexts. This competitive hierarchy, though prevalent in most societies, varies across cultures depending on their ethical systems, traditions, and the type of control exerted by the government. Within the U.S., this ideology has shaped a nation where bullying is unintentionally instilled as a survival tactic from a very young age (Donegan, 2012). From the time an American child enters grade school, they are taught to be the best they can be, which can morph as a child develops throughout his or her education, learning corrupt ways to get ahead in the highly competitive educational and social environments that school presents (Donegan, 2012).

In Japan, bullying is interwoven with the collectivistic nature of Japanese society (Naito & Gielen, 2005). For the Japanese, bullying incorporates the idea of a dominant position that is determined by an in group-interaction process. This does not infer either a physical power or an asymmetric power relationship. It suggests that the victim interacts with bullies, often in the same group or classroom, and is forced into an unequal power relation with the bullies (Taki, 2001). As well, bullying in Japan emphasizes mental/emotional anguish over and above physical force which arises out of group processes and interactions (Murray-Harvey et al., 2009). Comparative research to date has highlighted a Western interpretation of bullying as more direct in nature compared to the ijime reported by Japanese students (Slee et al., 2003).

While what I have offered is a comparatively limited scope of the history of bullying

research and legislation across the world (due in part to the limit of my thesis and the fact that

such a history would take up an entire book on its own), I find it interesting that even with the

few countries I chose, and the cultural differences between them, a common thread can be found

in their approach to anti-bullying research and legislation. For Sweden, an attention towards

bullying occurred in the aftermath of WWII, then again in the 80s following the suicide of three

adolescent boys who had been victims of school bullying (Koo, 2007). In Canada, there was a

string of terrible bullying-related deaths that spread from the 1999 Columbine school shooting

copycat in Alberta, to Rehtaeh Parsons suicide in 2013, that led to a country-wide anti-bullying

response across the provinces (Bauman et al., 2016; Meredith-Flister, 2020). The Columbine

School shooting, which occurred in the US, is regarded as a major turning point in the United

States' recognition of bullying as an important societal problem. In Japan, several cases of

bullying-caused suicides led to nation-wide impacts and responses—from the death of an eight-

grade boy in 1986, to the loss of a 14-year-old boy in 1994, and the suicide of another eight-

grade boy in 2011 (Nagata, 2021; Shakaibu, 1995; Toda, 2016).

This history shows a common pattern of public outcries, leading to research and legal

responses, commonly only occurring after a problem has been left to build to a critical point.

While responses to the issue may differ due to cultural differences, as soon as the general public

is made aware of the extreme consequences of bullying, research and the legal system is forced

to respond. Such responses range from the whole-school approaches in the Common Good

cultures focusing on the entire school community working towards a safer environment, to

collectivist cultures concentrating on building peer bystander approaches through encouraging

empathy, and individualistic cultures directing their efforts to disciplinary systems and

reprimands such as expulsions and zero tolerance programs.

Chapter 3

Cyberbullying and Current Approaches to Bullying

Cyber-Bullying

What has been missing so far from my historical review of approaches to bullying is the role of the internet and cyberbullying in more recent years. Advances in technology continue to throw a wrench into responses to bullying, as the internet has allowed the proliferation of cyberbullying and related intersecting forms of online violence. While not the purpose of my thesis, it is important to note that the internet is neither inherently good or bad. My goal in this chapter is not to add to any black-and-white style arguments surrounding youths' increased usage of online spaces (Morahan-Martin, 2000). While presenting new and complex problems, the internet has also allowed youth extensive communication, choice, identity development, and identity construction (Krivokapić, 2020). It is best to view online spaces as a double-edged sword, where youth should not be left alone to navigate during their developmental stage of heightened psychological vulnerability (Machimbarrena et al., 2018). While my thesis will have a focus on the aspects of the internet that have aided in cyberbullying, this is only due to wanting this current work to stay on focus.

Over the past two decades, youth have increasingly grown up immersed in easily accessible social media (Shariff & Stonebanks, 2021). Beginning in the 1980s, Gen X (1960–1979) were among the first to be able to utilize personal computers in their everyday lives as they became more easily available, entering the homes of those who could afford them (Myers, 2016). However, it was not until the early 1990s that computers became a common household item, and in 2004, when the Internet as we know it, was created, the way we were able to interact online changed—now as active content creators instead of simply passive information receivers

(Myers, 2016; Scanfeld et al., 2010). This 20-year timeframe between the introduction of the home computer to today's Internet produced what many researchers refer to as the "digital divide" between generations, highlighting the vast differences in technological knowledge and use (Bauman, 2010). Today, students from kindergarten through university represent the first generations to grow up with constant access to technology. At a global level, researchers have been able to track an increased Internet usage of 342.22% since 2000 (Valcke et al., 2011). This has become a significant, integral part of the younger generation's social lives (Prensky, 2001; boyd & Jenkins, 2006; Ofcom, 2017).

Definition of Cyberbullying

Looking at its inception, it is unclear whether the term "cyberbullying" was first introduced by Canadian teacher and researcher Bill Belsey (2005) or American lawyer Nancy Willard (2004). Belsey described cyberbullying as the use of information and communication technologies, such as cell phones and emails, to support deliberate, repeated, and hostile behaviour by one or more individuals that is intended to harm others (Belsey, 2005). Nancy Willard, director for the Center for Safe and Responsible Internet Use, described it as speech that is "defamatory, constitutes bullying, harassment, or discrimination, discloses personal information, or contains offensive, vulgar or derogatory comments" (Willard, 2004). Specifically, it involves the use of electronic communication technologies to commit violence and aggression towards others, occurring when one or more people use the internet to threaten, harass, or humiliate someone else. These acts are done intentionally, and repeatedly, over a long period of time, towards a victim who is unable to defend themselves (Machimbarrena et al., 2018). The acts may include posting hateful comments on victims' posts, creating a derogatory website dedicated to the student, sending out negative private messages on a constant basis,

sharing images without consent, or direct threats (Campbell et al., 2008). Ultimately, the goal

often is for others to evaluate the victims negatively, dismiss them socially, or join forces against

them. It is violence that thrives on inciting group hatred, harassment, invasion of privacy,

disseminating compromising content and comments, or harming a person who cannot be

protected (Krivokapić, 2020).

An Old Problem, A New Format

Cyberbullying has distinct characteristics compared to offline bullying. These include

asynchronous communication, an absence of time and space constraints, easier access to

anonymity, a potentially infinite audience of bystanders, an inability to observe the victims'

immediate reaction, and an altered balance of power (Bauman, 2010; Davis et al., 2015). These

distinct attributes are what help perpetrators reduce their social inhibitions (Bauman, 2010; Davis

et al., 2015), and increase victims' fear and insecurity (Nocentini et al., 2010). They also present

unique challenges for schools attempting to prevent cyberbullying that may be taking place

between students (Harmon, 2004).

Patchin and Hinduja (2006) found that 37% of teens had said things electronically that

they would never normally say in person. Through the lowering of social inhibitions online,

perpetrators can rationalize within themselves that their actions are simply just having fun and

nothing serious, as they are unable to witness the reaction of their victim(s) play out in real time

(Bauman, 2010). While playful teasing can help youth develop social skills and positive

relational encounters (Eisenberg, 1986), in cyberspace the ability to develop and assess a healthy

level of teasing is hampered (Willard, 2007), as they are increasingly unable to judge the

acceptability of their own and others' statements and actions (Heyman et al., 2009). Distance in

time and space impact a person's ability to evaluate their own and others' actions, as the

boundaries of what is acceptable speech online that may not be acceptable face-to-face, continue to shift (Willard, 2007).

It is also important to note that while many adults view on- and off-line behaviour and relationships as separate from one another, most adolescents do not perceive a clear divide (Subrahmanyam & Smahel, 2011). Most youth view their digital identities as inseparable from their offline identities, as their peer relationships spillover from offline to online and vice versa (Lankshear et al., 2008). A prime example of this blurred line can be found in the case of Jessica Logan (1990–2008), who died by suicide after suffering harassment from her school peers, caused by her ex-boyfriend posting a nude photo of her online (Logan v. Sycamore Community School, 2011). The photo was shared by others across the school campus, which roused many students to chastise Jessica with nicknames and offensive remarks, throw things at her while at school and at her own graduation, and harass her by phone and online (Logan v. Sycamore Community School, 2011).

Systemic, Intersectional Discrimination

What is often ignored in the general conversation and understanding of cyberbullying, and bullying, is how they are deeply rooted in intolerance towards others due to a perceived difference (Olweus, 2012; Cassidy et al., 2013; Sugarman & Willoughby, 2013). For example, studies have shown that youth with sexual minority status (referring broadly to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender adolescents) are bullied and victimized in schools at disproportionate rates when compared to their heterosexual and cisgender peers (Abreu & Kenny, 2017; Mennicke et al., 2020; Harmon, 2004).

While the internet facilitates many facets of communication, it also brings into sharp focus the dark elements of society (Shariff and Stonebanks, 2021). It is crucial to understand that

adults have provided the technology instruments and have supported and modelled many of the harmful behaviours that emerge in unsupervised cyberspace (Servance, 2003). The physical and online adult world that created social media and populates it sets the standard for normalizing high levels of scapegoating, violence, discrimination, online hate, violent pornography, and offensive online content that young people are exposed to constantly (Gotfried & Shearer, 2017; Ott, 2017). As these attitudes are modelled online, they are internalized and mirrored by youth, particularly as they attempt to construct online identities, deciding who will make them powerful and who could drag them down. Youth from marginalized groups tend to bear the larger burden of intersectional online victimization among young people, as they are often targeted for intersecting characteristics based on race, gender, sexual orientation, abilities and disabilities, religion, appearance, and accent (Shariff & Stonebanks, 2021).

Adult Stakeholders; Youth Empowerment

To this end, adults have an important role to play in supporting safe internet use and the well-being of youth, as well as involving young people in developing strategies to protect themselves and supporting their competence and confidence (Amichai-Hamburger, 2013). This is not to say that youth are unaware of the risks of the internet, with many developing their own strategies for dealing with digital harassment (Lwin et al., 2012). However, youth still often look to supportive adults to help them cope with harassment in appropriate and effective ways (Fenaughty & Harre, 2013).

While bullying is an age-old problem (Campbell, 2005), the fast-paced evolution of technology has left teachers feeling ill-equipped to effectively navigate or gauge the extent of cyberbullying occurring to students in their classrooms (Lane, 2010). Unfortunately, in terms of support, schools often lack clearly developed policies of what to do in the case of cyberbullying

(Lane, 2010). Budget restrictions and staff shortages can increase difficulty for teachers who are attempting to follow through on antibullying policies effectively. Mandatory reporting to the Quebec government, for example, under Bill-56 can feel like nothing more than an increased workload (Mackay & Flood, 2001). Teachers and school administrators are under increasing pressure, under state and provincial legislation, to provide safe school environments (e.g., Bill 56, An Act to Prevent and Stop Bullying and Violence in Schools, 2012; Bill 13, Accepting Schools Act, 2013; Cyber-safety Act, 2013). Educators, in their valuable role of fostering inclusive and positive school environments, would benefit from teacher preparation programs and professional development focusing on helping them better prepare for these scenarios. The study of cyberbullying, and bullying in general, should be approached from an interdisciplinary perspective, drawing upon academic expertise in the fields of education, psychology, criminology, sociology, and law (Shariff & Hoff, 2007). If teachers themselves do not feel proficient in digital media or their legal obligations, they will consequently not be able to help their students think through the impact of negative online postings.

Anti-Bullying Approaches

While it is clear from the literature review in Chapter 2 that bullying is not a new phenomenon, the topic has been experiencing a renaissance of scholarly attention in the past few decades (Jones & Augustine, 2015). Increased attention on implementing anti-bullying strategies and programs in schools, especially within secondary school environments, has developed within the context of horrifying and highly publicised events, such as the Columbine school shootings (Jones & Augustine, 2015), the suicide of Amanda Todd after years of online bullying and sexual harassment (Lester et al., 2013), and the murder of Devan Selvey by his bullies just outside of their school (Taekema, 2019). In response, several intervention and prevention strategies have

been developed and implemented within both elementary and high schools in recent decades. Anti-bullying strategies must be both well-crafted and implemented as intended. However, research on the content and implementation of anti-bullying policies in schools continues to remain vastly confusing for stakeholders who need to execute them, leaving policymakers and educators with little evidence to guide policy formation and implementation (Hall & Dawes, 2019).

Following the vast growth of anti-bullying methods was an equally high rate of research dedicated to assessing the effectiveness of each method (Gaffney et al., 2019; Hall, 2017). Although some research has demonstrated significant and positive outcomes for school-based anti-bullying intervention and prevention efforts (e.g., Cross et al., 2004; Frey et al., 2009), not all efforts have met with consistent success (Cunningham et al., 2016; Cliplef, 2021). Many intervention components have been tried, and several programmes rigorously tested. But while we have learnt quite a lot about what does or does not work and in what conditions, there are still controversial areas and many challenges that remain if we are to make interventions which are feasible, effective, and sustainable (Smith, 2016). Researchers have found a wide inconsistency in the reliability of implementation of policy interventions for bullying. For example, in the United States, 51% to 98% of educators reported that their school systems had adopted a local anti-bullying policy in compliance with their state's policy (Bradshaw et al., 2011; MacLeod, 2007; Hall & Dawes, 2019), 39% to 94% of educators reported receiving training on the policy (Bradshaw et al., 2011; Hall & Dawes, 2019), and 56% to 84% of educators reported that students were notified about the policy (Smith-Canty, 2010; Jordan, 2014). Regarding school procedures, 60% to 94% of educators indicated that their school maintained procedures for reporting bullying (Hall & Dawes, 2019; Cosgrove & Nickerson, 2017), 78% to 92% of

educators indicated that their school had procedures for investigating reports or complaints about bullying (Hall & Dawes, 2019; LaRocco et al., 2007), and 52% to 80% of educators indicated that their school provided mental health assistance to students involved in bullying (Hall & Dawes, 2019). As well, since the early 2000s enough interventions had been evaluated to make it possible to conduct meta-analyses of their success. One of the more thorough analyses was reported by Ttofi and Farrington (2011), who analysed 44 high-quality school-based intervention programmes and found that, on average, these reduced bullying by around 20–23% and victimisation by around 17–20%. Similarly, Evans, Fraser and Cotter (2014) reviewed intervention evaluations published between 2009 and 2013 and found a 46% success rate in their meta-analyses of various anti-bullying reports.

The salience of these findings cannot go overlooked. As stated earlier in the thesis, it has been reported that educators can feel unsure about which strategies they should use in their classroom and can be left to pick and choose what to do based on an "on the fly" approach (Jones & Augustine, 2015). This could unfortunately lead teachers to apply interventions that may be ineffective, or even detrimental if it causes the perpetrators to up their attacks in response (Jones & Augustine, 2015). With a limited knowledge of programs' successes, or ineffectiveness, the public and policymakers can be lulled into a false belief that the issue of bullying and school violence is being addressed, when (in reality) resources could be better used to develop more successful programs (Ferguson et al., 2007).

Types of Anti-Bullying Methods

As we are coming to recognize the varying contexts in which bullying occurs and the complex nature of social interactions, it has become important to establish whether there is any consensus about what strategies might be considered effective to address bullying (Murray-

Harvey et al., 2012). It could be argued, however, that due to the complexity surrounding bullying, there can be no definitive set of strategies found to apply for all students and all bullying incidents. What works for physical bullying, for example, will not necessarily work for cases of verbal bullying. But with a limited understanding of the anti-bullying method, it is possible that it could be used in an incorrect context (Murray-Harvey et al., 2012). It is important to consider the statement from Hunter et al.'s (2004) report that 'coping cannot be considered effective or ineffective independently of the context in which it is used' (p. 4).

Ultimately, however, the purpose of this thesis is not to add to the ever-growing research on which anti-bullying methods are effective. But it will touch on anti-bullying methods in general, as it explores how prepared teachers feel they are at choosing and implementing them. And due to the wide variety of anti-bullying methods, it could help to present an overview of the various types of anti-bullying methods that popularly appear throughout anti-bullying research, and the common arguments that are made for and against their use. What follows presents commonly mentioned anti-bullying methods separated into three distinct themes: Student-focused learning, using methods that aim to increase students' understanding of bullying and peer support; Adult-focused learning, which uses methods that aim to increase adults' understanding of bullying and victim support; and Supervision, which refers to methods that focus less on knowledge acquisition and more on managing student behaviour. These interventions could be all used regardless of the form of bullying, on- or offline, physical, verbal, social, etc.

Anti-Bullying Focused on Students' Involvement

Peer Support Systems.

To involve students in tackling bullying, peer-support methods of anti-bullying can include:

a) Cooperative group work in the classroom to address relationship issues;

b) Creating a support team of peers to work with vulnerable peers;

c) Befriending, in which peers are assigned to hang out with a peer;

d) Programs in which pupils elect a committee of peers who propose and implement antibullying activities;

e) Conflict resolution or mediation, where a neutral third party helps participants resolve their dispute;

f) Active-listening, where peer helpers support peers in distress (Smith et al., 2003; Ttofi & Farrington, 2009).

For vulnerable students, having the opportunity to create positive relationships with peers can be a critical component of them feeling better about themselves, as they are given the opportunity to express their feelings while being helped by peers (Cowie & Hutson, 2005). Peer supporters have also reported feeling benefits from their role in the helping process, allowing them to feel more confident about themselves and learning to value and empathize with others (Cowie & Hutson, 2005). Teachers frequently report that school environments become safer and more caring, and that peer relations improve following the introduction of peer support strategies (Cowie & Sharp, 1996; Cowie & Hutson, 2005). However, it is important to note that these methods are not designed to prevent bullying from occurring but are only used to support victims of bullying after the act has taken place (Ttofi & Farrington, 2012). As well, various studies have

acknowledged the significant challenges in implementing these strategies, including hostile

reactions towards peer supporters by other students and poor communication and lack of

commitment between staff and peer supporters (Cowie et al., 2004; Ttofi & Farrington, 2012).

Developing Students' Social Skills.

A socially knowledgeable person has an easier time making and maintaining friendships,

has good emotional control, and can solve interpersonal problems without creating more conflict

(Silva et al., 2017). Being able to improve the social and emotional skills of students is important

in reducing their vulnerability to bullying by facilitating friendships, conflict resolution,

emotional self-control, and adaptive coping strategies (Silva et al., 2017). These skills can

include addressing problem-solving capacity, positive thinking, relaxation, body language,

ability to making friends, and dealing with bullies, among others (Silva et al., 2017). On the

other hand, focusing on these strategies tends to place responsibility strongly on the vulnerable

students, helping to teach them skills to prevent them from experiencing aggression, sending a

strong message of victim-blaming (Moriarty, 2008). This creation of "legitimate victims,"

describing victims as deficient in some way (e.g., deficient in social skills), gives offenders a

way to justify their behaviour (Moriarty, 2008).

Classroom Rules.

Creating classroom-specific rules against bullying that students are expected to follow

can be effective. Often, the rules are created from co-operative group work between the students

and teacher, usually after the teacher has taught students about bullying and anti-bullying

messages. In many researched cases, the rules are written and displayed in a distinctive place in

the classroom (Farrington & Ttofi, 2009). Teachers are often placed in leading roles against

bullying, expected to implement anti-bullying policies and interventions in their classroom. And

it has been found that their action, or inaction, towards bullying in their classroom can lead to significant effects on their students (Guimond et al., 2015). For example, Saarento and colleagues (2013) found that peer victimization was more frequent in classrooms where teachers were perceived as less disapproving of victimization. Youth with proactive teachers who openly disapproved of bullying have reported feeling safer in their classroom, less anxious concerning victimization, and more secure knowing their teacher will intervene when needed and help them during difficult social situations (Guimond et al., 2015). However, for this to work, teachers obviously need to feel competent in handling bullying situations to effectively know which rules to enforce and how to effectively deal with bullying in their classroom. School staff are more likely to intervene and to improve the situation if they feel efficacious and competent in handling bullying situations (Bradshaw et al., 2007). Therefore, this form of anti-bullying strategy is highly dependent on teachers' beliefs in their knowledge and skills.

Educational Anti-Bullying Presentations.

Student-focused, but adult-led, this form of intervention is normally done through school assemblies to target the entire student population to provide knowledge, raise awareness and concern, and change attitudes and behaviours related to bullying (Sherer & Nickerson, 2010). A key component in these forms of bullying prevention programs is increasing awareness of bullying and recognizing bullying behaviours (Rawlings & Stoddard, 2019) under the assumption that students must develop an awareness of bullying, or more specifically, an awareness of which behaviors the school classifies as bullying, to effectively help enforce school and classroom rules (Milsom & Gallo, 2006). It is also hoped that through hearing examples of and stories about bullying, students may recognize they are not alone, learn new coping mechanisms, or realize how harmful their behaviors are to others (Milsom & Gallo, 2006).

However, Cunningham et al. (2016) explored 97 students' perspectives on anti-bullying methods and found a large demographic of their participants felt that adult-led education methods often fell short. Sixty-seven percent of the study's focus groups were unencouraged by these forms of educational activities, mentioning that many kids did not pay attention, as it was mostly PowerPoint presentations and adults talking (Cunningham et al., 2016). Additionally, students reasoned that receiving top-down messages through speakers lacking credibility limited the effectiveness of antibullying communications and felt that repeated exposure wore down any influence the anti-bullying messages may have had (Cunningham et al., 2016; Boulton & Boulton, 2012).

Mediating Between Bullying Perpetrator and Victim.

This strategy involves school staff meeting with all the students involved in the bullying incidents, to communicate that bullying is not acceptable and to provide victims with psychological support (Sherer & Nickerson, 2010). This activity can involve encouraging the perpetrators to acknowledge the suffering of the victim and take steps to help the situation (Smith et al., 2003). It can also involve teaching assertiveness techniques to help victims cope in nonpassive, but nonaggressive, ways (Smith et al., 2003). Within these interventions, assertiveness, awareness and regulation of emotions, interpersonal problem-solving and co-operation, self-esteem building, and friendship-making skills are the most frequently recommended skills for students involved in bullying to develop (Sherer & Nickerson, 2010). As well, forgiveness is a common quality found to be taught during the interventions, as it is seen as an important coping strategy for dealing with the effects of being bullied (Rensburg & Raubenheimer, 2015). Adolescent victims of bullying who have higher levels of forgiveness have been found to be more likely to use conflict resolution and support-seeking strategies and less

likely to endorse revenge-seeking strategies (Flanagan et al., 2012). However, similarly to strategies focusing on building students' social skills, one has to be careful not to push the idea that victims of bullying were somehow "deficient" before this intervention, justifying the perpetrators' behaviours (Moriarty, 2008). Additionally, focusing too heavily on victim forgiveness can overshadow the responsibilities of the perpetrators (Rigby, 2002).

Technology-Assisted Anti-bullying Programs.

Programs have been created using technology, such as anti-bullying videos or computer games, to raise students' awareness about bullying and how to deal with it. For example, FearNot!, an interactive virtual learning environment presents cartoon-like episodes of bullying. These episodes are connected by interactive episodes where the student can talk to the victim character through an instant messenger interface and can recommend coping strategies for the victim to attempt in the next episode (Vannini et al., 2010). Technology-led interventions have been found to be positive for the following reasons:

a) They allow users to practice skills in simulated real world experiences;

b) They are easily updated;

c) They are appealing to youth;

d) They allow multimodal learning;

e) They allow the intervention to be tailored on the personal characteristics of the user;

f) They offer safe environments for children to explore emotionally uneasy situations, ensuring distance from real situations;

g) They allow a cognitive and emotional learning process facilitated by activities separated from social pressure, as opposed to face-to-face experiences; and

h) They allow students to practice skills as often as they wish (Nocentini et al., 2015).

Currently, more research still needs to be completed on the effects of technology-led interventions (Calvo-Morata et al., 2020). For example, few studies have reported differences in how players of different genders interact with the resources, despite the fact that there are gender differences in the field of video games (Lucas et al., 2004) and in bullying (Waasdorp & Bradshaw, 2015). As well, while many anti-bullying games are being developed, few are currently available for teachers to use. Of the few that are available, many require a license purchase, restricting teachers' ability to offer the services in their classroom (Boyle et al., 2016; Lau et al., 2017).

__Anti-Bullying Focused on Adult Stakeholders' Involvement__

Whole-School Intervention.

Aiming to alter the entire school environment, this approach provides a framework to guide the whole school's actions in addressing bullying (Sherer & Nickerson, 2010). It rests on the assumption that bullying is a systemic problem, therefore interventions must be directed at the entire school context, not just the students involved in an act of bullying (Smith et al., 2004). The idea is that since bullying is often considered a multi-faceted phenomenon, influenced by individual, family, school, and community factors, anti-bullying methods should also have a multi-faceted perspective involving multiple contextual levels and actors (Swearer & Espelage, 2004; Valle et al., 2020). And because bullying happens more often in school locations that are less structured (ex. playgrounds, cafeterias), a whole-school strategy better ensures that all school locations are targeted (Sherer & Nickerson, 2010). Whole-school strategies can combine classroom rules, lectures addressing bullying, activities with bullies/victims/bystanders, information provided to parents, increased supervision, training of teachers, technological resources, etc. (Silva et al., 2017). Unfortunately, there is currently a lack of reviewed studies on

whole-school interventions (Valle et al., 2020), as more often than not reviews tend to focus on interventions concentrating on one specific group, such as just teachers or just parents (e.g., Cantone, et al., 2015; Silva et al., 2017).

School Staff Involvement.

Intervention strategies focusing on teachers primarily involve two approaches: providing staff training and increasing adult supervision (Sherer & Nickerson, 2010) and rests on the theory by Nel Noddings that teachers can promote positive social behaviours by modeling caring relationships, communicating with students to ensure clear behavioral expectations, and generating opportunities for students to demonstrate their concern for others (Yoon & Bauman, 2014). Its importance is also highly stressed due to the prominent position teachers hold in daily school life to intervene when bullying occurs (Yoon & Bauman, 2014). It has been found that teachers' responses to bullying affect their students' future actions concerning bullying, influencing the degree to which student bystanders are willing to intervene and levels of their students' aggressive behaviour (Hektner & Swenson, 2012; Kochenderfer-Ladd & Troop-Gordon, 2010). Unfortunately, specific guidelines, aside from referring incidents to principals and school counselors, for how to respond to bullying are rarely provided to teachers (Fekkes et al., 2005; Yoon & Bauman, 2014). It is also common for students to not speak to teachers about incidents of bullying, especially when they move from elementary school to high school (Fekkes et al., 2005), reportedly due to a common fear that their report may be dismissed, that teachers might reveal their report to their peers, or that teachers may make the situation worse (Fekkes et al., 2005).

Parent Involvement.

Parent involvement can include raising awareness through anti-bullying conferences or information nights, guides on how to help their children deal with bullying, distributing newsletters regarding school policies and activities, consulting with them when bullying policies and programs are being created, and meeting with parents of victims and bullies (Sherer & Nickerson, 2010; Ttofi & Farrington, 2009). Outside of the school context, parents are recognized as having a significant role in the development of their children's socialization, leading anti-bullying researchers to propose higher parent involvement in bullying prevention efforts (Holt et al., 2009). Children generally have an easier time telling their parents if they are being bullied than they do with their teachers (Niejenhuis et al., 2020), with research among elementary school students showing that while 53% reported bullying to their teachers, 67% reported it to their parents (Fekkes et al., 2005). And a meta-analytic study by Ttofi and Farrington (2011) found parent training conferences were an important contribution to reductions in bullying perpetration and victimization rates (Huang et al., 2019). Nonetheless, some studies have still found that children hide their bullying experiences from their parents (Huang et al., 2019), as they often think the bullying is not serious enough to talk about, that their parents cannot solve the problem, or that this may ultimately cause worse retaliation from their bullies (Newman & Murray, 2005).

Co-Operative Group Work.

The co-operative group work intervention was created out of the belief that to bring about change, schools must partner with other adult stakeholders such as parents and community members. This intervention was created out of the social-ecological model of bullying, focusing on understanding how individual characteristics of children interact with environmental contexts

or systems to promote or prevent victimization and perpetration (Hong & Espelage, 2012). This can be conducted through including parents on school safety committees, sending email blasts or newsletters to parents and community members, partnering with community agencies to make sure youth and their families know where they can seek help, and holding events about bullying at recreational centers (Espelage, 2014). However, developing, coordinating, and sustaining partnerships can be challenging. The same types of issues that impact school-based intervention—building motivation, knowledge and capacity; maintaining fidelity; and planning for long-term sustainability—also apply to community involvement in bullying prevention efforts (Holt et al., 2013).

Anti-Bullying Focused on Supervision

Zero Tolerance.

One of the more popular approaches in Canada and the United States, this strategy focuses on the sanctions and punishments imposed upon the perpetrators of bullying, regardless of the degree of severity (Rigby, 2012). There is a widespread belief that this is the best resort for schools if there is an absence of proper alternative anti-bullying resources, as bully behaviour can only be stopped by a zero- tolerance policy that imposes tough consequences on bullies (Rigby, 2012). The appeal of this approach is that bullying is seemingly directly addressed once school staff is made aware of the issue, causing students to refrain from bullying since they are aware that they would automatically face severe sanctions if caught (Roland et al., 2010). It has also been argued that authoritative leadership makes school staff more effective in anti-bullying intervention, as this approach provides them with a clear procedure where adults can demonstrate that there is a zero tolerance for bullying (Roland et al., 2010). Then again, research into zero tolerance policies have uncovered serious problems, specifically that it reportedly appears to

target minority groups, and that administrators tend to misuse these policies to address a wide range of student behaviours in the form of severe sanctions (Roberge, 2012). Other studies regarding the efficacy of zero tolerance suspensions and expulsions concluded that the policy had little to no impact (Borgwald & Theixos, 2013).

Improved Supervision.

Some anti-bullying strategies aim to focus on identifying "hot-spots" of bullying, to provide improved supervision of students (Ttofi & Farrington, 2009). For example, since a great deal of bullying has been reported to occur in the playgrounds and schoolyards, especially in elementary schools, improvised supervision in that specific location has been greatly advocated (Smith et al., 2003). For many children, school recesses provide opportunities for the kinds of physical activity interactions that may not be available to them outside the school context, where they are given the opportunity to engage in physical activities that can contribute to the development of their gross and fine motor skills (Mulryan-Kyne, 2014) and social activities that contribute to key life skills, such as learning how to negotiate and manage conflict as well as to enjoy activities in the company of others and form friendships (Mulryan-Kyne, 2014). Therefore, creating a safer space for students to engage positively and openly in this school and all school contexts aids greatly in their social and physical development. An argument could be made, however, against increased supervision that restricts children's freedom and prevents them from having free choice. Bishop and Curtis (2001) argued that adults need to be extremely cautious about intervening in children's spaces where they can hold a level of independence about their choices. Providing a space where children can be relatively free from direct adult attention may be conducive to their development of social skills and competencies, including resilience and the ability to deal with conflict (Mulryan-Kyne, 2014).

Chapter 4

Theory and Methodology

I have a confession to make. For 30 years, I've yawned my way through
numerous supposedly exemplary qualitative studies. (Richardson, 1994, p. 516)

Keeping with the spirit of confessions, I admit that I came across this soul crushing and

honest quote from a required reading authored by my father, C. Darius Stonebanks (2008), in a

course dealing with experiential learning. The quote proceeded a section about "artistically

setting the stage" for qualitative research regarding participant narratives coping with culture

shock. Three details became immediately disturbing about having to read a parent's piece of

writing in an undergraduate class: first, it challenges a future writer to make qualitative research

engaging; second, it makes you wonder if other students find your parent's work engaging; and

third, though you do not feel particularly artistic, you acknowledge that a lot of qualitative

studies are yawn-inducing. In writing this section on Theory and Methodology, I have tried to

keep the Richardson challenge in mind and will return to how the data will be presented at this

chapter's conclusion.

A thesis requires context, and the previous chapters review a brief global history of

bullying research, the definition and characteristics of bullying, popular forms of anti-bullying

approaches, and finally an overview of cyberbullying. With this overview, the specific focus of

this thesis, teachers' perspectives of their professional preparedness via undergraduate studies,

becomes clearer. For example, with a deeper understanding of how the capitalist and

individualist nature in countries like the US (and in great part, Canada) framed historic

compulsory education, we understand why schools are an ideal environment for bullying to

occur. It is difficult to conclude the depth to which practitioners (teachers, administrators, etc.)

accept that schools as a microcosm of larger society's reward of capitalistic individualism foster bullying, but we can acknowledge that there is an increased awareness of the seriousness of the bullying phenomenon. With this awareness came attempts to counter the reality through the development of anti-bullying solutions. An influx of solutions can lead to stakeholder confusion, and the lack of converging evidence on effectiveness further clouds any positive trends to curbing bullying in schools. The advent of the internet and social media as a new platform for bullying has brought an entirely new dimension to anti-bullying work, and we are still unsure of where teachers are being prepared to counter bullying, what they are being told, and if the countermeasure and/or preventative tools are effective. The literature is predominantly silent on these preparedness questions from the very people expected to deal with bullying, the teachers.

To address this lack of literature, this thesis primarily aims to better understand and assess elementary and high school teachers' level of perceived professional preparedness received during their undergraduate degree, while comparing that preparedness to "real world" experiences within their own classrooms and school. In my effort to reach this aim, my goals include learning about: (1) teachers' professional understanding of bullying, (2) their professional training experiences both during their undergraduate teacher training and after entering their field, (3) their perceived professional preparedness when dealing with anti-bullying in their field, and finally (4) using this collected data to suggest knowledge mobilization tactics that could help utilize this information in an effective and useful way.

In my psychology background, where quantitative data and statistics still rule most research designs, the idea of exploring multiple theories connected to a variety of methodologies (or vice versa) was never introduced. Rather, if you were of the school of Piaget thinking of child cognitive development, your methodology would more than likely be a quantitative model, with

the desire to make the outcome reproducible and testable. If you were interested in Kohlberg's views on moral development, your methodology would also probably be quantitative. To my recollection, having sat through all the presentations of my Honour's Psychology cohort, I cannot recall a single study involving qualitative methods. Deciding to explore my research questions using qualitative methods was a far cry from my previous courses on Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS). However, I concluded that qualitative interviews were the best choice to best understand teacher's perspectives. Through grad courses and independent reading, I came upon Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke's book, *Thematic Analysis: A practical guide* (2021) and quickly began seeing my research outcomes organized through their methodological lens. As their book became a touchstone, the use of reflexivity theory opened the door to critical realism and epistemological views on how one's subjectivity (through a variety of experiences) influences research. These ideas became important for me, because I want to respect the participant's views, not test them. I decided respecting their perceptions can be best done by acknowledging that, for example, the literature I have brought to the analysis has already influenced how the participants' views will be portrayed, because I found the literature I previously presented persuasive. The following chapter will highlight how my research aimed to reach the goal of understanding teachers' perspectives on anti-bullying preparedness, through both the methodology and its underlying theory.

Research Design

As explored in earlier chapters, teachers were the main participants in this study as I explored their perceived professional preparedness surrounding anti-bullying. I specifically chose teachers who had just graduated (within the last two years), as they would be in the best position to reflect on current teacher certification programs. All participants were required to

have attended English schools in Quebec, to have received their degree from an English university in Quebec, and either be practicing teachers or have prior field experience in an English Quebec elementary or high school. I chose to focus exclusively on English schools since there are differences between the French and English curricula in Quebec (e.g., English school boards apply a model of multiculturalism, whereas the French school boards apply inter-culturalism (Taylor, 2012)). My primary decision was because I want to keep my project specific to one type (or view) of curriculum before I branch out into other research topics as I continue my education. I chose to situate my research solely in Quebec for the same reason. Participants had to be over the age of 18 and be certified teachers, according to Quebec's professional teacher accreditation. There was no exclusion based on other factors such as gender, religion, etc.

Participants were found through snowball sampling (Parker et al., 2019) by creating and posting an online informative flier on Facebook with a short explanation of my research project and the kind of participants I was searching for. I also included a "call to action," asking others to share the flier online if possible, allowing for a wider reach of participants. Through this method, I was able to collect ten participants who were graduates from McGill, Concordia, or Bishop's University (all three English-language institutions that offer undergraduate teacher training programs).

On November 15, 2021, I received ethics approval from my university. I chose to conduct my research with a relatively small sample of participants, as I wanted to be able to conduct one-on-one interviews and allow myself the appropriate amount of time to go through each of the interviews extensively. My aim for this study was to gain a deep understanding of the experiences of the teachers I interviewed as opposed to focusing on interviewing a large number of participants; therefore, I chose quality over quantity. Each participant was interviewed once,

over Zoom, for approximately 40 minutes to an hour. The interview followed a set of questions (see Appendix A); however, I left the interview open-ended to allow for a natural flow of conversation. All participants were asked the same set of questions, but I allowed myself to follow other paths of conversation if relevant. All interviews were audio recorded through Zoom and then transcribed by me into the datasets. Once all transcriptions were completed, I went over the datasets using reflexive thematic analysis, primarily using the method set out by Braun and Clarke (2021).

Reflexive Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis (TA) is the study of patterns of meaning (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). It helps illustrate which themes are important in the description of the research topic at hand (Daly et al., 1997), highlighting only the most salient sets of meanings present within the data (Joffee, 2012). Beginning in the early twentieth century, procedures for using thematic analysis began being published, with thematic analysis used in reference to data analysis techniques in social sciences (Terry et al., 2017). Gerald Holton, a philosopher of science, is often credited as the founder of thematic analysis, through his work on 'themata' in scientific thought (Holton, 1975), but the term has also been found to pre-date Holton's use of it (Terry et al., 2017). These earlier uses of thematic analysis are similar to contemporary use, in that they offer a method for identifying themes in qualitative data (e.g., Dapkus, 1985). However, before the 2006 publication of Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke's landmark paper, thematic analysis was described as "a poorly demarcated and rarely acknowledged, yet widely used qualitative analytic method" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 77). Since their publication, thematic analysis has risen in popularity and taken its place in the qualitative cannon as a reputable method of analysis (Terry et al., 2017).

The format in which I collected data (through hour-long interviews-turned-transcriptions) left me with an abundance of raw data. To ensure that my analysis would not be bogged down due to a lack of focus combined with pages upon pages of potential codes (relevant or not), I believed TA would be valuable. This way, codes (and subsequently, themes) could be created while simultaneously guaranteeing a strict focus on what I had set out to accomplish in this thesis.

According to Braun and Clarke (2012), TA offers an accessible and robust method for those new to qualitative analysis, which appeals to me as a master's student still relatively new to the world of qualitative research. As a method, TA offers a set of "tools" (e.g., concepts, techniques, practices, and guidelines) that researchers can use to organise, interrogate, and interpret their dataset(s) (Braun & Clarke, 2012). However, there are dozens of varieties of TA, and my decisions as to which distinct choices I have made regarding how I will be using it will be explored throughout this chapter.

First, it is important to note that I specifically chose not just TA but *reflexive* TA (Byrne, 2021). When we speak of reflexivity in this sense, it is in reference to the practice of critical reflection on my role as a researcher and my research practice and process. Reflexivity involves the practice of critically questioning what we do, how and why we do it, and the impacts of this on our research. It captures approaches that are fully embedded within the values of a qualitative paradigm, which then inform my research (Campbell et al., 2021). By qualitative paradigm, I mean a special focus on meaning, from understanding situated meaning to examining meaning-making practices. Thematic analysis situates itself under a Big Q qualitative orientation, instead of a small q qualitative orientation (Campbell et al., 2021). To clarify, small q and Big Q approaches to qualitative research are created by very different conceptualizations of knowledge,

research, and the researcher. In small q qualitative research, the research can be described as acting like an archeologist, searching for and discovering themes that already exist within the data, or finding evidence for pre-existing themes (Terry et al., 2017). Alternatively, in Big Q qualitative research, analysis becomes a constructivist process as opposed to a technical one. There is an interaction between their engagement with their data, the application of their analytic skills and experiences, as well as their personal standpoints (Terry et al., 2017).

My role as researcher within these qualitative paradigms is as a situated interpreter of meaning, as a subjective storyteller (Byrne, 2021). Under this value system, I approached my research with the belief that we live in an only partially knowable world where meaning and interpretations are situated practices (Braun & Clarke, 2013). This complemented my desire and decision to only focus on the perspectives of recently graduated teachers from English-language Quebec universities. This way, I can reflect their experiences and perceptions within their wider context. I wanted to ensure that I did not present my results as though they occurred within a socio-cultural vacuum, which would have effectively diminished any deeper understanding of experience. My goal is not to claim my findings as the one universal truth, but to gain a rich, in-depth understanding of the perspectives of my smaller sample size and to contribute to knowledge as part of a rich tapestry of understanding. Respecting the participants' experiences, and therefore, their subjectivity as professionals in the field, along with my stated subjectivity as the person reflecting on their responses allows for a more objective understanding of the research itself amongst the tapestry.

Because of this, the "concern" of researcher subjectivity is not a concern at all but in fact an asset. Subjectivity is at the heart of reflexive TA practice, viewing subjectivity as something valuable rather than problematic. My subjectivity is essential to the process of reflexive TA; it is

the openly acknowledged fuel that drives the qualitative engine (Eisner, 1992). Reflexive research treats knowledge as situated and as inescapably shaped by the processes and practices of knowledge production—the processes and practices that I have chosen and conducted. The idea of "researcher bias" is incompatible with reflexive thematic analysis, as it implies that there is a possibility of generating objective knowledge (Gough & Madill, 2012). Within a qualitative paradigm, researcher subjectivity, who we are and what we bring to the research, ranging from our personal identities and values through to our disciplinary perspectives, is an integral part of the analysis (Morgan, 2022). As I came to appreciate through Dr. Lynn Butler-Kisber's (Professor, Department of Integrated Studies in Education, McGill University) course on qualitative research, through the overt admission of subjectivity, I become the instrument for analysis for the reader to better evaluate the data, in this case, the participants' perceptions. Therefore, throughout my analysis, I called back to my own "biases" to make clear what I am bringing to the final findings of this thesis. As someone with a psychology undergraduate degree, currently in an education master's program, who has never worked in a school or classroom but grew up in a home where both parents taught at education levels ranging from daycare to the education programs at universities, it would be incorrect to assume that I could approach my analysis without any reflection on my own experiences and subjectivity. This was certainly not a stance we were taught in psychology, where the researcher was deemed the neutral and objective designer, observer, recipient and then producer of data.

Using reflexivity requires the researcher to turn the lens back onto themselves, recognizing and taking responsibility for how they stand within their research, and the effects this may have on the setting, the people being studied, the questions being asked, the data being collected, and its interpretations (Berger, 2013). It challenges the view of knowledge production

as independent of the researcher producing it and of knowledge as objective, asking researchers instead to routinely reflect on their assumptions, expectations, choices, and actions throughout their process (Finlay & Gough, 2003). This means I must locate myself, which includes having an awareness of the philosophical and theoretical assumptions that inform my research and working to ensure theory and research practice align.

With my rationale of the use reflexivity clarified, the following is a summary of how my research was conducted; my "action plan" of sorts. Once that groundwork has been laid, I will then dip into my philosophical and theoretical assumptions that governed every step of my design. The following is grounded on Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke's *Thematic Analysis: A practical guide* (2021). Although authors such as Boyatzis (1998) previously developed recommendations for applying thematic analysis, Braun and Clarke have been two of the most significant contributors to our understanding of this technique, especially in its *reflexive* form (Campbell et al., 2021).

The Six Phases of Reflexive TA

Familiarisation (Phase one).

In this first phase, it was vital to become deeply familiar with the content of my data through a process of immersion, familiarizing myself with the depth and scope of the content (Braun & Clake, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017). This meant reading (and re-reading) the transcriptions and making brief notes about analytic ideas or insights related to the data item and/or the dataset as a whole. This involved three practices. The first was about developing deep knowledge of my datasets. The second was starting to critically engage with the information as data and not just information. Finally, the third was note-making of thoughts related to the data, which is done throughout the first two practices. To reach immersion, I had to work towards deep

engagement to identify the rich diversity of meaning, particularly interesting or intriguing elements, as well as possible patterning across the data (Lincold & Guba, 1985). At the same time, I needed to ensure I was being critical and analytical with the data, while also being honest about my own perspectives, preexisting beliefs, and developing theories (Starks & Trinidad, 2007). This phase involved more than just taking in the information but instead asking deep questions about it. In reflexive TA, the goal is to make meaning of the world that has been presented in the data and to develop potential patterns of meaning. This process is not suggesting that meaning is simply there, waiting to be discovered in the data. Instead, analysis is a process of meaning-making, through blending the researcher, the dataset, and the analytic and historical contexts. Once I had a sense of possible patterns, I was able to move on to phase two.

Coding (Phase Two).

As TA is about identifying patterns of meaning, my task in this phase was to begin noticing shared or similar meaning. Codes are my smallest unit of my analysis, forming the building blocks of analysis that I can use to move forward and develop my themes. These codes capture specific meanings within my datasets that are relevant to my research questions. This allows me to move away from unstructured data, to focus on specific characteristics and develop ideas about what is going on (Morse & Richards, 2012). Qualitative coding is a process of reflection, interacting and thinking about the data as one reads each item closely, tagging all segments of text where I noticed any meaning potentially relevant to my research questions (Savage, 2000). This systematic coding process is important for two reasons: insight and rigour. With insight, my analysis can become deeper and more interesting through a repeated process of close engagement. With rigour, coding ensures a systematic engagement with meaning and patterning across the entire dataset. Codes should capture the qualitative richness of the data,

while also having explicit boundaries to ensure they are not interchangeable or redundant (Boyatzis, 1998).

An important dimension to address at this stage is understanding where and how meaning is noticed. In reflexive TA, the two main options are inductive (data-driven) and deductive (researcher- or theory-driven) orientations. This range of orientations captures whether the analysis meaning exploration in one's reflexive thematic analysis is either driven by the data content or by the ideas that the researcher is interested in exploring (Braun et al., 2023). In my research, I moved forward in my coding using an inductive orientation, as I am interested in the experiences, perspectives, and meanings of the participants. An inductive orientation places the data as the starting point for engaging with meaning. However, while working with reflexive TA, I also have to be aware that I cannot listen to and interpret participants' voices in a straightforward way. We bring with us all sorts of perspectives, theoretical and otherwise, to our meaning-making, so our engagement with data is never purely inductive. We cannot simply give voice, because who we are always shapes what we notice about our data and the stories we tell about it (Braun & Clarke, 2021). In Reflexive TA, my analytic process can emphasize the data meaning and aim to be grounded in and depart from these meanings as my starting point; the conversations I have with the participants about their anti-bullying experiences formed the starting point for my coding and theme development. Once I generated codes that were specific and brief (offering a quick "in" to what each code is about), effectively reducing the initial "mess" of my original data, I could move on to my next phase of analysis.

Generating Initial Themes (Phase Three).

In this phase, I compiled clusters of codes that seemed to share a core idea or concept that might provide a meaningful 'answer' to my research question. The process is not to view

meaning as simply lying there in the data waiting to be uncovered and discovered. Rather, theme development is an active process constructed by the researcher based on the data, the research questions, and the researcher's knowledge and insights (Braun & Clarke, 2021). DeSantis and Ugarriza (2000) offered the following definition, "A theme is an abstract entity that brings meaning and identity to a recurrent experience and its variant manifestations. As such, a theme captures and unifies the nature or basis of the experience into a meaningful whole" (p. 362). Where codes typically capture a specific meaning, themes describe broader, shared meanings, bringing together fragments of ideas that often seem meaningless when viewed on their own (Aronson, 1994). Once I identified potential themes, I gathered all the coded data relevant to each potential theme.

This phase is titled *Generating Initial Themes* to emphasize the generative part of the theme development process. My analytic task was to explore the expression of shared or similar ideas or meanings across different contexts; to build alliances and networks between codes and to explore shared-meaning patterns, clustering together the potentially connected codes (into candidate themes); and to explore these initial meaning patterns (DeSantis & Ugarriza, 2000). My aim here was to generate a number of temporary themes and consider the story they allow me to tell about my data to address my research question. Good themes need to be both distinctive and work together as a whole. To ensure this, Braun and Clarke (2021) suggested that we ask ourselves if these themes capture something meaningful, if they follow a central idea that bring all the code/data together, and if they have clear boundaries.

Developing and Reviewing Themes (Phase Four).

In this phase, my task was to assess the initial fit of my potential themes to the data and the viability of my overall analysis through checking that themes make sense in relation to both

the coded extracts and then the interviews in their entirety (Nowell et al., 2017). Considering the

relationship between the themes, existing knowledge and practice in my research field, and the

wider context of my research, the purpose here was to review the viability of the initial clustering

and explore whether there is any opportunity for better patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2006). My goal

was to develop an engaging analysis using themes that are built around a singular idea, are not

too fragmented, are distinctive from one another, are not topic summaries, and work together to

tell an overall story that addresses the research question (King, 2004). Once I felt I had a set of

themes that work in relation to the coded data extracts, that tell a good story and with each theme

offering something distinctive, I then expanded the focus by going back to the entire dataset.

Refining, Defining, and Naming Themes (Phase Five).

During phase five, I finetuned my analysis, ensuring that each theme was clearly

independent and built around a strong core concept. This phase included writing a brief abstract

and deciding on a brief and informative name for each theme. Writing a definition for each

theme worked as a test of quality, to think about the organization and flow of the overall story

my analysis builds towards. It is also commonly suggested (King, 2004) that themes are not final

until all of the data and codes have been read through and scrutinized twice, evaluating what

story each theme told, and how those stories fit within the overarching narrative about the data. I

considered what the theme is about, what the boundary of the theme is, what is unique and

specific to each theme, and what each theme contributes to the overall analysis (Braun & Clarke,

2006; Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Writing the Analysis (Phase Six).

This final phase of doing reflexive TA was about deep refining analytic work to shape the

detail and flow of the analysis. It is also the work that has to be done to tell my whole analytic

story and bring it all together. With TA, I produced my analysis as I wrote it, not simply describing the analysis I finished before I began writing. This stage is presented in the data analysis chapter.

Theory

As opposed to other approaches to qualitative data analysis, such as grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) or interpretative phenomenological analysis (Smith & Osborn, 2003), reflexive thematic analysis is described as independent of specific epistemologies and theories (Campbell et al., 2021). This means that the researcher is responsible for selecting the theory and epistemology that fit within their reflective thematic analysis approach (Campbell et al., 2021). This independence allows for broad application of its analytical approach (Braun & Clarke, 2019). However, this independence does not mean that theory and epistemology are optional (Clarke & Braun, 2018). Reflexive TA cannot be conducted in a theoretical vacuum; we always make theoretical assumptions, whether we are aware of this or not (Braun & Clarke, 2012). TA considers assumptions about the nature of reality and what research gives you access to, assumptions about what constitutes meaningful knowledge, and about language and how it operates. The critical starting points for reflexive TA and theory are that theory is always there, whether in the background or foreground, and to do TA well, I will need to bring theory into my analytic process at some point and know enough about it to be able to write about it. This is not describing theory as an analytic tool, but rather as providing the conceptual basis for my whole project.

To begin, I will be taking an experiential orientation (Byrne, 2021) to my research. For reflexive thematic analysis, researchers are asked to choose between "experiential" and "critical" orientations to qualitative research (Reicher, 2000). Critical orientations understand language as

creating reality, as opposed to reflecting it (Terry et al., 2017). An experiential orientation to

qualitative research and TA centres on the meaning and experiences articulated by participants.

Experiential qualitative approaches are focused on meaning and experience what people think,

do, and feel and how they make sense of their realities (Terry et al., 2017). Experiential research

views language as a tool for communicating meaning, offering a type of transparent window into

the worlds inside participants' heads or their social worlds out there. While this research can still

be richly theorized and complex, at its core is a focus on participants' worldviews and frames of

reference (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Through this understanding, my research will take an

interpretive orientation that seeks to stay close to participants' meanings and capture these in

ways that might still be recognizable to them. My analysis is grounded in seeking to understand

and make sense of the reality captured in the data. For experiential researchers, language is a tool

for communicating experience in a relatively straightforward way. While participants may forget

details, reinterpret past experiences through the lens of the present, or struggle to find words to

express themselves, none of those issues shift the fundamental assumption of experiential

orientation that language reflects people's thoughts, feelings, and beliefs (Braun & Clarke, 2021;

Terry et al., 2017). Language is conceptualized as a transparent window onto the psychological

and social landscape of meanings within the participants or 'out there' in the world. In

experiential research, 'out there' meanings can encompass the social norms and expectations that

shape and constrain individual experiences and are reflected in the way people talk about their

lives (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

      However, this orientation does not mean that experiential research simply summarizes

participant data in a non-interpretive, untheorized way. My use of TA will also be located with

regards to ontology (the nature of reality or being; theories of what exists or is real) and epistemology (knowledge; what is possible to know and meaningful ways of generating it).

Theories of Reality: Ontology

From a very simple point of view, there are three general answers to the question, "Is there a reality that exists separately from our research practice?"

1) Yes, of course, as captured by an ontological position known as realism.

2) No, there's not, as captured by an ontological position known as relativism.

3) Yes, but also no, as captured by an ontological position known as critical realism (Braun & Clarke, 2012, 167).

Critical Realism.

Scholars who subscribe to pure realism have been positioned as guilty of what is termed an 'ontic fallacy': confusing their representations of reality with reality (Pilgrim, 2014). In contrast, critics argue that reality and representations of reality are not one and the same (Braun & Clarke, 2012). This is where critical realism comes in. The Mind vs Matter debate of Descartes and Locke opened the possibility that it is our mind and our ideas, as opposed to the external world, that we can be most sure of (Shipway, 2011) By treating research as an exploration of realities with boundless depths, critical realism is noted to help keep explorations open for further development (Collier, 1994). Critical realism asserts the belief of a mind-independent reality, where our awareness of such a reality is indirect, and mediated by our perception (Shipway, 2011).

Critical realism offers a contextualization of classic realism. With that in mind, it is no wonder why it seems to mesh so well with reflexive TA. Critical realism can be understood as combining ontological realism (the truth is out there) with epistemological relativism (it's

impossible to access truth directly) to provide a position that retains a concept of truth and reality but recognizes that human practices always shape how we experience and know this (Riley et al., 2007). In other words, human practices can be said to give rise to our perspectives and contextual truths (Pilgrim, 2014). Critical realism *does* broadly propose that there is a reality that exists independent of my own ideas and descriptions of it. However, our experiences and understandings of reality are mediated by language and culture. Our experiences are not pure internal truths but rather socially located (Pilgrim, 2014). Therefore, it is not that there are multiple realities out there in the world. Instead, critical realism conceptualizes different perspectives on, interpretations, and representations of this singular reality, or truth (Scott, 2013). Critical realism is critical, because it views any attempt to describing the world as fallible, as they are always open to critique (Scott, 2013).

What does taking a critical realist position mean for reflexive TA? It means I cannot assume my data will provide me with a clear and direct reflection of reality. Instead, what I will be accessing is the participants' perception of their reality, shaped by and embedded within their own cultural context, language, and so on. The teachers that I interviewed brought me a localized, interpreted reality, which I can interpret using reflexive TA. My goal will be to provide a coherent and compelling interpretation of the data I collected based on their contextualized reality and experience. I cannot claim or assume to know all teachers' truths and experiences based on my ten participants. Still, the parameters under which I chose the participants were under the assumption that I would not conduct my thesis with the goal of understanding one universal truth about teachers' experiences and perspectives of their anti-bullying knowledge and training.

Theories of Knowledge: Epistemologies

Epistemological positions reflect assumptions about what constitutes meaningful and valid knowledge and how such knowledge can (and should) be generated. Epistemology is really about what we think is possible to know and, therefore, how we should go about trying to know it (Braun & Clarke, 2022). In the case of my thesis, I went with contextualism, as it made the best fit with reflexive TA.

Contextualism.

Contextualism views knowledge as, unsurprisingly, contextually situated, partial, and perspectival (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Defended by a range of philosophers (e.g., Foucault, 1972; Bloor, 1991; Longino, 2002) in its broadest understanding, contextualism is the view that epistemic matters depend on the context (McKenna, 2015). Offering an epistemology compatible with qualitative research emphasizes the ambiguous, context-contingent nature of language and meaning, the dependence on theory and interpretation for 'data' to have meaning and 'make sense,' and the political-ideological nature of research (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009). It is the view that our understandings and our beliefs are dependent on features of the context in which they are said (McKenna, 2015). Humans cannot be separated from or meaningfully studied in isolation from the context they live in. Contextualists say that necessary conditions for a claim to be true vary with the context in which the claim is made (Pynn, 2014). Truth-conditions of knowledge attributions are context sensitive (Pynn, 2014). This means that multiple accounts of reality are possible, as one account is not invalidated by a conflicting account (Madill et al., 2000).

In a contextualist epistemology, knowledge cannot be separated from the knower, and the researcher's values and practices inevitably shape the knowledge they produce. The researcher

and participant are 'in relationship,' co-producing meaning, rather than two independent entities (Braun & Clarke, 2012). What contextualism does not require is for the researcher to 'weed out' sources of bias in an attempt to control them. Instead, it followed the reflexive approach of asking the researcher to consider their role in shaping meaning, shedding light on the effects of the reader on the context of the research that shapes the knowledge produced (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Knowledge produced through my research will be viewed as local, situated, and provisional, and the results will be seen as dependent on the context of my research and my interpretive engagement with it (Madill et al., 2000). But while data analysis is acknowledged to be partial and subjective, it is also accepted to reveal something of the underlying logic of social practices (Madill et al., 2000).

Methodological Limitations

While I have purposefully chosen to use only ten participants, as I am going for more of an in-depth quality-over-quantity analysis into the experiences and perceptions of the participants, it is true that this could be viewed as a limitation on how my results can be used. The methodological and theoretical choices that I have made strictly focus on the concept that knowledge is contextually based. Because of this choice, I cannot claim that my results are applicable to spaces outside of the English-language Quebec university context. However, I do not view this as an issue, as my goal was never to figure out any type of one-size-fits-all solution. I believe issues concerning schooling and anti-bullying are incredibly context-based, so it would never make sense to attempt to interview participants from a wide variety of contexts to find one big answer. Being an anglophone Quebecer, I would prefer to concentrate on my own local environment to strengthen the anti-bullying movement here.

Additionally, it could be argued that there is a weakness in only having one researcher review-and analyze the datasets. With multiple coders, there is the opportunity to collaborate and compare every researcher's findings to come to one collective decision, which could be viewed as a stronger argument for the "truth." However, with the interpretive process of reflexive TA coding, where researcher subjectivity works as the fuel, the subjectivity that I bring to my research is viewed as a strength instead of a weakness or bias (Nadar, 2014). This subjectivity and situated nature of analysis means that different coders will notice and make sense of the data in different ways. Having only one person code is a normal practice and indeed a good practice for reflexive TA. I'm not looking for a single, absolute truth (Braun & Clarke, 2021). In fact, if multiple coders were included in a reflexive TA analysis, the purpose would be to collaborate to gain more nuanced insights, not to reach agreement about every code.

Artistically Speaking

The way data is presented, to avoid the yawn reaction stated earlier by Richardson, needs to be mindful of art. For the presentation format, I have decided to reproduce the model used by C. Darius Stonebanks' book, *James Bay Cree and Higher Education: Issues of Identity and Culture Shock* (2008). In full disclosure, C. Darius Stonebanks is my father, and his book not only included the voice of thirty participants but also was interwoven with our family's experiences, primarily those experiences living within the Cree communities. As the book included me, it would be disingenuous to say the way the information was presented did not influence my own emerging academic writing approach. As previously mentioned, the book received the accolades of journalist, activist, Order of Canada recipient and anthropologist, Boyce Richardson (1928–2020), who stated in his review,

> A wise and courageous book on native students and higher education, written by a
> Bishop's University professor . . . I have seldom read a better account of why native

students don't do well in non-native education. The alienation imposed on them by our institutions, just by their very existence, has seldom been better explained. (Richardson, 2008)

Stonebanks' approach was to weave between participant experiences and his own subjectivity derived from the literature that influenced his research direction. In doing so, he created a dialogue between participant data and literature that he openly stated influenced his subjective stance. This admission allowed the reader to approach the participant voice with the disclosure of the researcher's subjectivity, thereby allowing one to find their own space and conclusions. Stonebanks' model was relatively simple: 1) Present the data, 2) Weave the data back to the literature, and 3) Let the reader conclude. This is the model I will be using in the next chapter as well.

Chapter 5

Data Analysis

In the following chapter, data is presented in a manner that is meant to draw out a reliable and coherent comprehension of the participants' views on bullying in schools. At the very least, that is the hope. The other hope is that data is presented in a way that not only remains true to participant voice but also acknowledges the researcher's subjectivity and maintains the reader's interest and promotes their own internal dialogue. I used reflexive thematic analysis throughout my data collection and analyzing process, which was explained in a prior chapter. This approach helped me collect, and subsequently present, themes that stayed within the initial focus of my thesis. The *reflexive* component of my analysis involves the practice of critically questioning what I as a researcher am bringing to my research. It falls under the belief that I will always play the role of a *subjective* storyteller with my data, and the participants are providing me with their knowledge through their own subjective, situated practices (Braun & Clarke, 2022). While these findings cannot be claimed as an objective, universal truth, they offer an equally valuable and rich insight into the experiences of recently graduated teachers from English-language Quebec universities, to help contribute to the global collection of anti-bullying research.

Reviewing the methodology and themes that guided my approach to the participants' interviews, it was a combination of reflexive thematic analysis, experiential orientation, critical realism, and contextualism that led me to the themes I will be presenting. Using thematic analysis aided me in highlighting only the most salient sets of meaning within my data (Joffee, 2012). Helping me cut down on the vast amount of information that ten interviews can provide, to illustrate key themes that are important for my specific research interest (Daly et al., 1997). This process of ruling out themes that could not make the cut was critical throughout my

analysis, as even near the end I found myself needing to cut out themes that, while interesting, did not offer the same level of connection with my thesis goals as the themes I have chosen to keep.

In keeping with the requirements of a Master's thesis regarding the age-old student question, "how long is it supposed to be? ," it quickly became clear that I am unable to present all the themes of my research. Questions relating to COVID-19 and cyberbullying reinforced participants' overwhelming sentiment that they were unprepared for a profound shift in "classroom management" and student interactions that arose in online platforms during COVID-19. In retrospect, no one was prepared for COVID-19, and the field of education was no exception. Ferdig et al. (2020) published an open access ebook during the height of the pandemic, called *Teaching, Technology, and Teacher Education during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Stories from the Field*. The book contains 133 chapters with over 850 pages, presenting short articles of "best practices" in the new classroom virtual space, in a noble attempt at knowledge sharing to mitigate damages. Despite these timely publications, teachers in general (Ferdig et al, 2020) and the participants perceived a lack of organization in their administrations and the government, and while the upper echelons of education improvised directives on a (seemingly) daily basis, cyber-bullying became an increased concern to teachers. Participants described a change, from the "take it off school grounds" approach to bullying, to an increased expectation from parents that the sole use of the internet by students for their education and the prevalence of access required teachers to be vigilant 24/7 in their students' lives. Although the data provided by the participants was very interesting and supported their perceptions on preparedness (or lack there of) on the subject, the themes themselves represent a stand-alone thesis.

The reflexivity of my thematic analysis also insured that I took the time to turn back towards myself through the process, to recognize how I stand within my research and the effects this can have on my interpretation of the data (Berger, 2013). Who I am and what I bring to this research, from my personal identities, experiences, and values, is an important part of this analysis (Morgan, 2022). The themes that I found within the data were not found disconnected from my experiences as an undergraduate psychology major, as a daughter of two parents who worked in various educational fields ranging from daycares to education programs in universities, as someone who has never worked in a school but has had conversations with educators and education students throughout my life. This knowledge production is not independent from myself. My goal as a researcher is not to claim that the themes I present are the one and only universal truth. If another research read over the raw data, their interpretation may result in different themes coming through to them. This does not mean that my themes, or differing themes, are more or less accurate than each others. My goal is not to claim my findings as the one universal truth, but to gain a rich, in-depth understanding of the perspectives of my smaller sample size and to contribute to knowledge as part of a rich tapestry of understanding. To present my findings in an objective way within the tapestry of anti-bullying and teacher's-as-stakeholders research.

The experiential orientation that I took to my qualitative research allowed me to center on the meaning and experiences that the participants articulated. I was able to focus on how they made sense of their realities (Terry et al., 2017). While throughout my analysis I offer an insight into how the participants' experiences relate to a wider scale context of anti-bullying research, at its core my analysis stays close to participants' meanings and capture these in ways that might still be recognizable to them. For experiential research, the participants' language is seen as a

straightforward way for them to communicate their experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Terry et al., 2017). I do not approach it to catch them on anything they may have said "wrong" or forgot about. Throughout my analysis, I present snippets of direct quotes from their interviews, to highlight the importance of their words that allowed me as a researcher understand their experiences and understandings.

Lastly, contextualism and critical realism both guided my analysis with an understanding that my own and the participants' understanding of reality are mediated by our perspectives, culture, and experiences (Scott, 2013). I cannot present my findings as claiming to be the one and only truth to everyone. What I am assessing and presenting is the participants' perception of their reality, shaped by and embedded within their own context. What I am presenting is the participants' experiences and beliefs, which are shaped by the specific context that I have focused my research on. As I have stated before, I cannot claim or assume to know all teachers' truths and experiences based on my ten participants. However, this was never my goal. The analysis I have provided is to provide an understanding of the experiences of recently graduated teachers within the English sector of Quebec. When I speak on their opinions, experiences, and requests, this is done with the understanding that it is a context-specific truth.

What follows are the themes from participant interviews developed through a reflexivity-based methodology. Every theme included represented a clear majority of participant views on a topic, and, of importance, there were no opposing views presented. Participant quotes presented represent what I believed to be both representative of the overall view of the participants as a whole and the richest description. Intermingled with participant quotes is my reflexivity of considering each statement and point of view to the literature on anti-bullying that has guided my own views and subjectivity.

Participants' Understanding of What Bullying Is

How Participants Define Bullying

In one of my more direct collections of data, participants were asked how they would define bullying. In response, all participants were able to provide a description. Throughout their interviews, none of the teachers expressed significant confusion, if any at all, concerning knowing what bullying is. Instead, most of their confusion was centered around knowing how to appropriately approach and prevent it. In their descriptions, eight of the participants described bullying beyond just physical abuse, but also as attacking victims verbally, emotionally, mentally, and socially. As well, six participants mentioned the necessary aspects of harassment needing to be repetitive and intention to be specifically defined as acts of bullying.

> **Par 3**: The way I usually explain it, especially to my students, is that bullying is an action or something that you do to harm someone either physically, emotionally...And it's repetitive. So, it's not just, "He pushed me once. I'm being bullied." It's really something deliberate that's being thought through by one person or a group of people. And it's meant to hurt someone. And usually if there are bystanders too, and no one does anything to help stop, I do also classify that as a form of bullying. . . . They're not stopping something that they know is wrong. So that makes them part of the problem as well.

The components of bullying that were largely touched on all closely reflected the definition of bullying created by Dan Olweus (1990). His characterization of bullying is still one of the more popularly used descriptions by bullying researchers today, containing three main aspects: 1) it is intentional negative behaviour that 2) typically occurs with some repetitiveness and is 3) directed against a person who has difficulty defending themselves (Olweus, 1993; Vivolo-Kantor et al., 2014). In their responses, the participants demonstrated that they were aware of the first two traits: the distinction between accidental harassment or a one-time aggressive act, as opposed to intentional, repetitive bullying. However, there was less focus placed on the vulnerability of students chosen to be victims. Out of the ten participants, only four mentioned that specific students hold a heightened vulnerability to bullying due to various traits.

> **Par 8**: I would say that bullying in schools is when one or more students are targeting a student or a person. . . . It's targeting them to a point where it's not joking. It's just poking at them. Usually poking at an insecurity. . . . I guess it's just anything that makes someone feel unwelcome in that particular environment. So that could be anything. . . . It could be anything from the clothes they wear, to a pimple, freckle, eye color, anything. Race, gender, anything that makes them feel unwelcome in that environment.

Research in bullying victimization has found that youth from marginalized groups unequally bear the larger burden of abuse, targeted for intersecting characteristics based on race, gender, sexual orientation, disabilities, religion, and appearance (Shariff & Stonebanks, 2021). It is possible that this is an aspect of bullying that those outside of anti-bullying academia are less aware of. As we will see further in the analysis, all the participants make it clear that any discussion surrounding bullying in their education program was brief at best. Just describing bullying as a repetitive, intentional act of harm can be done a lot more quickly and easily than describing how intersectional discrimination plays a key role. It does not seem as though there was much of an educational environment where discussions on how intersectional discrimination's relationship with school bullying occurred, which may be why it is missing from many of the participants' definitions.

Four participants expressed concern over other teachers misunderstanding the specifics of bullying, leading it to become a term that is overused or misused. There was no similar level of concern over teachers' misunderstanding leading to *underuse*. They felt as though we have moved away from the "boys will be boys" era where bullying acts were seen as normal rites of childhood and never called out. Instead, there is worry that we have moved too far on the opposite side of the spectrum and are now calling out too many actions as "bullying."

> **Par 4**: But now I feel that anything that happens . . . let's say I'm a student, and I make a joke about someone—"Oh, that's bullying!" Well, no, not really. I might have made a joke that's a little bit inappropriate, and I need to be corrected for that. But that might not be bullying, because it's a one-time thing, you know? Like I said, I think bullying is a

continuous act. And I think now we kind of have this broad brush about bullying that sometimes goes a bit too far. . . . So now kids are like, "Whatever." You know? They don't understand. Anything that they do, it's called bullying. And it's like, "Oh, well, I didn't really do anything." So, they don't really care.

The concern is if the term is overused, if too many actions are labeled as bullying, it will

lose its power. Students will not have a specific understanding of what bullying is, will not

understand if they are committing or witnessing it, and will become desensitized to the word.

There has been a building concern over the possibility of public misuse of the word, due to the

rapid expansion of bullying discourse (Englander, 2017). This is a natural response to an issue

that has been previously pushed aside, and only recently been realized as a significantly harmful

act (DeSisto & Smith, 2014; Monks & Coyne, 2011). To avoid making the same mistake, we

want to ensure we are hyper-aware of any actions that could be bullying. However, this reaction

also includes significant potential for its over-use and ultimately misuse. If the term "bullying" is

used to refer to any unpleasant interaction, the word may lose its significance and meaning

(Shariff, 2009). With that, we lose the ability to explore the deeply rooted areas of discrimination

that trigger so many acts of bullying.

Bullying Is Not Just a Youth Issue.

In their descriptions of bullying, six participants brought up the fact that it is not an event

that only occurs between youth.

> **Par 2**: A lot of people often consider the word bullying as something like, you know, that's very childlike. . . . but it's still something that is prominent even outside of, you know, elementary school and high school. There's different words for it, like discrimination and harassment. It still kind of connects to bullying, just on a much larger scale. So, you know, it's not something that's tied exclusively to kids . . . but it's only kind of tossed around kind of at early ages.

Some of my themes went beyond only touching on whether or not participants felt

prepared to handle bullying in their schools. Other themes, as in the quote above, helped show

which areas of anti-bullying research they were aware of. My aim was never to quiz them or

make them feel insecure about knowledge they may be missing. Instead, if any areas came up that demonstrated missing information, the focus was on how this information could have been given to them previously, and how they could be supported to learn about this in the future. Alternatively, when themes such as this one show areas of bullying research that teachers *are* aware of, we can get an idea of what knowledge they area already aware of, and where they were able to learn it.

As a result, it is important to point out that many participants are aware that bullying occurs in contexts outside of elementary and high schools. In anti-bullying research, it has been found that bullying among youth is deeply rooted in intolerance towards others and is influenced by societal hate and discrimination such as sexism, xenophobia, and ablism (Sugarman & Willoughby, 2013; Bailey & Steeves, 2013). This recognition that bullying is not created and contained within the walls of a school was understood in different degrees by six of the participants: Either as an objective fact, such as Participant 2, or due to personal experiences, as we will see in Participant 3's anecdote.

Four participants specifically mentioned bullying occurring within their alma mater, either by professors to students, professors to professors, or in their schools between staff members. It was also noted how nothing was done in any of these scenarios to prevent, address, or stop these actions.

> **Par 3**: And I have a couple of friends who quit being really close to the finish line because they were being bullied by their own associate teachers, or they were being targeted. And there was no support surrounding that either. There was no protection. . . . So, one of my friends three weeks out, he quit, you know? He had three weeks left. . . . he's like, "My well-being, I couldn't do it anymore. My A.T. (associate teacher) was horrible to me. I couldn't do it." So, there's that too, like that's not talked about.

While institutions of higher education are meant to take on a principal role of performing and presenting key knowledge and practices, they are unfortunately not immune to bullying and

academic mobbing (Kakumba et al., 2014; Friedenberg, 2008). As well, while teachers are

expected to take on key stakeholder roles in anti-bullying, several authorities have asserted that

bullying by teachers, either towards other staff or their students, is a serious problem (Datta et

al., 2017). Understandably, the participants questioned that if universities and schools cannot be

locations where bullying among adults is effectively addressed or even acknowledged, then how

can we expect them to be spaces where future teachers are taught how to address bullying? And

how can we expect them to be spaces where youth, the future of our society, are effectively

taught against discrimination and hate?

Bullying Is a Universal Act.

Within their descriptions of bullying, five participants described bullying as being a

universal experience. One that everyone has experienced at least once during their lives.

> **Par 3**: Everyone has either been bullied or have participated in bullying. It happens
> everywhere. So, we can all recognize it.

Seen as a common act that everyone has experience with, all ten participants mentioned

bullying as being an issue within the schools where they had previously worked and were

currently working. While awareness surrounding the severity of the effects of bullying has had to

develop through recent research, we have been aware that bullying has existed in formal public

schools since Canada's post-industrial age (Desisto & Smith, 2014). Newly graduated teachers

know it exists; the concern is how they should approach it. The issue is less whether the

participants know what it is or not but more the lack of effective prevention against everyone

having to experience it at least once during their lives.

Society-wide bullying was also found, with bullying seen as a symptom of a much larger

issue.

> **Par 8**: But trying to cure it is like trying to cure cancer, where it seems like nothing can
> 100% be done. And is it realistic to think we can completely stop bullying from ever

happening? Because the world is a violence place. And maybe it's human nature to inflict harm on each other. We can't stop bullying until we figure out the root of our societal problems. Because bullying is just a symptom of those societal problems.

These five participants understood that a focus on how society at large influences these issues is needed to stop bullying. There is an understanding that this is a deeply rooted issue within much larger scope. The concern is what to do with this information. How do they approach bullying in their classroom and school in a way that is helpful, when there are much larger issues at play? Unfortunately, teachers often note that when they enter the workspace, they are not sure how to properly play their role in anti-bullying strategies (Crothers et al., 2006). Without resources, advice, and support, teachers are going to see this as an impossible task. Providing teachers with improved and continued professional development will not only raise their confidence and awareness on issues of bullying and anti-bullying strategies but also increase the likelihood that they will intervene when it occurs in their classroom (Jones & Augustine, 2015). Therefore, efficiently raising staff awareness and knowledge on this subject should be of high importance.

Participants' Past Personal Experiences with Bullying

Speaking of bullying being a universal experience, all ten of the participants gave personal experiences of their own connected with bullying when they were in elementary and high school either firsthand as victims (four), or witnessing others experience it (six). Building on the research of social psychologists such as Alex Inkeles (1920–2010) and Daniel Levinson (1920–1994), it can be claimed that for as long as schools have been in existence, there have been problems with bullying and peer victimization (Skrzypiec et al., 2019). While indeed a problem that has been growing in the public eye, the participants' experiences add to the

substantial evidence that school bullying has been an issue that has existed in school consistently and affects youth worldwide (Halliday et al., 2021).

> **Par 6**: I was bullied while I was in grade 11. . . . But unfortunately, someone found out, . . . told the leadership teachers what had happened and showed them screenshots of what people were saying about me. So, these people got in trouble. They had to come in and apologize to our class, and they had to apologize to me. And of course, everyone thought I was the one that had told teachers about it since I was the one that was involved online. And I'm like, "Well, no, I was okay to like, move on from this. I don't want your insincere apology or anything like that." It got really, really bad after that. Everyone thought it was me. . . . I got called a snake and things like that. And I was really, really struggling with it. . . . And it was starting to get a little bit violent at the time. I was getting shoved in the hallways and stuff.

In response to their stories, I asked each participant how effectively their school responded. Eight of the participants described the responses as less than satisfactory. This is important to note, as their experiences with an unsatisfactory anti-bullying approach can act as influencers for their future work as teachers. They are aware of what not to do, based on what they experienced. I found that whenever the participants would talk about anti-bullying strategies, there was a stronger focus on what they did not like, as opposed to what strategies they did like. This is understandable, given the tendency to problematize an issue to develop a solution. It is important to state clearly that the participant responses were an effort to point out a problem to lead to a solution and not a reflection of a negative or fatalistic attitude.

From my perspective, the participants were dedicated to solution building. With that in mind, the examples the participants gave of how they learned which anti-bullying strategies to use were presented through their own negative personal experience. There was a clear imbalance in personal stories being shared on anti-bullying strategies they experienced or witnessed that were between those that were ineffective vs. effective. This response could mean that negative experiences of ineffective anti-bullying strategies either hold a stronger impact, or ineffective

anti-bullying strategies greatly outnumber effective strategies being used while the participants were in school.

Any time any of the participants expressed displeasure with an anti-bullying strategy, it was only due to their own experience personally or by watching its ineffectiveness play out. No examples were given of teachers learning during their undergraduate degree about what anti-bullying strategies work or do not work. This is an incredibly difficult task to leave up to teachers to figure out on their own outside of their education, due to the high number of different interventions that are available. Many different intervention components have been tried, and several programmes rigorously tested. However, there are still many controversial areas and challenges that remain (Smith, 2016), with researchers reporting wide inconsistencies in the reliability of implementation of policy interventions for bullying (Ttofi & Farrington, 2011; Evans et al., 2014). Therefore, the task of evaluating and choosing strategies is difficult enough for teachers, even if they had been provided with a general education on the different types available.

Learning through real-world experiences is not necessarily bad, however these real-world experiences involve the health and safety of youth. Being able to teach pre-service teachers which anti-bullying methods are ineffective before they are used in schools would obviously be the best option in this case, as opposed to learning through experience.

Participants' Experiences Conducting Anti-Bullying Outside of Education

Four participants talked about jobs they had outside of their undergrad and teaching experiences that helped give them the opportunity to learn how to handle bullying. The comments are positive, with participants saying that they were fortunate to have received these experiences.

Par 2: I've worked with a playground program for a few years . . . And we had like a brief crash course on bullying with kids, and how we would deal with it in an outdoor environment. . . . So there was that, which, again, that kind of connects to what I said, what I would have hoped we had in university.

What was noteworthy were their statements on how lucky they were to receive these experiences to learn anti-bullying skills. They said this is what they would have wanted to receive during their undergraduate degree, and how fortunate they were compared to other teachers who did not have the same experiences as them. Those who were able to get these experiences were aware of what that they are missing within their undergraduate degree. They are aware of the skills that are not being taught to pre-service teachers within their education program. This awareness has been found in other research as well, with many teachers speaking out on their lack of confidence when faced with bullying in their schools and asking for better training (Maunder & Tattersall, 2010). They have also reported that one of the most stressful aspects of their jobs is dealing with cases of bullying (Maunder & Tattersall, 2010), with other main sources of stress coming from a lack of resources, and a lack of support and time (Leroux & Théorêt, 2014). For the participants in this study, it seems to be that to receive proper anti-bullying advice, one of the best bets is to look outside of their undergraduate education degree.

Participants' Experiences During Their Undergraduate Degree

Participants Wished They Had Received More Practical Advice

When discussing their experiences during their undergraduate degree, eight participants expressed that they wished they had received more practical advice on how to handle cases of bullying. They believed bullying discussions in their courses did not provide them with practical solution or advice. Ultimately, they wished they had been given more opportunities to learn about, or even practice, anti-bullying strategies.

Par 7: I definitely feel like there should have been more. There's a lot I feel like I should have learned in school that you don't learn until you actually hit the ground. Bullying is

definitely a big one. . . . I really feel like, even especially when I went to work in the field, I really do feel like a lot of the times, a lot of the things I did in class did not help me. I feel unprepared. . . . So, it's little things where I feel like had these things been addressed, just even role playing, you know, like, I feel like, would have put us in a better position as we enter the workforce.

These participants felt that their education did not set them up for success. They have a desire for practical knowledge, which they believe would have better prepared them to work in education. For example, concrete examples of strategies and advice were wanted, as these would have offered them tools to work from when confronted with bullying situations. Unfortunately, similarly to previous research findings (Crothers et al., 2006), the participants noted that when they entered their workspaces, they were unsure of how to properly play their role in anti-bullying strategies. Instead, participants described that they learned more practical information about dealing with bullying after they graduated. They learned hands-on while working in their schools. Sadly, this form of learning is done at the expense of the youth. If teachers are unable to get the training that they are asking for, they may be left not intervening at all, which sends a negative message to their students as they watch their teachers' avoidance. A lack of knowledge and confidence on anti-bullying strategies and bullying in general, while not done maliciously by the teacher, can cause students to learn that nothing will be done about the aggressions, or that interventions that can be done are inadequate (Jones & Agustine, 2015).

> **Par 7**: And you see when you get in class and you have students that you're like, how do I help them? You know, how do I help them, whether it be for the behavioral issues or just for bullying as well. Like, what happens when a situation degenerates online? And a kid brings it to you, and it's not the two kids that are in the problem? How do you address it? How do you call them in to be honest, and to be open about it? Do you immediately ditch and send them to the technician? Do you try to do something? What if you try and you mess up, and you feel like you made it worse, but you do know, you know? So it's little things where I feel like had these things been addressed, just even role playing, you know, like, I feel like, would have put us in a better position as we enter the workforce.

Other participants wanted concrete examples to build on; they want techniques; they want "in-the-field" examples, and they want advice. They expressed that there are so many different

options of what you can do and so many different options of what bullying can entail that it is

hard to know what to do. They want to be aware and help and be effective, but they are left

feeling confused with no tools to work with. Unfortunately, despite this need, five participants

expressed that during their undergraduate degree they were never told anything specifically

about how to prevent or handle bullying. This left them feeling confused once they entered the

field and were presented with bullying among their students.

> **Par 1**: But in university specifically, I can't recall a time where it was like, "When
> something happens that is considered bullying, you do this." You know? . . . I feel like I
> was never given specific strategies, you know what I mean? It's always, like I said, kind
> of textbook answers kind of surface like "Yeah, a kid hits a kid? Well, you tell him not
> to." Okay, but like, how do I get this kid not to hit another kid again? You know? I think
> it's more the act of like long term. Because on the spot - I feel like dealing with bullying
> might be easier on the spot in the sense that I know how to handle the situation. But how
> do I stop it long term from happening again? Or from it getting worse? That's where I
> think I might be lacking the resources.

The answers they were provided in their university courses were vague, as they were

often told to just to stop bullying when it happened. Participants knew this was not going to stop

anything long-term, and that bullying is a systemic issue that does not easily go away. Providing

teachers with improved and continued professional development not only raises their confidence

and awareness on issues of bullying and anti-bullying strategies but also increases the likelihood

that they will intervene when it occurs in their classroom (Jones & Augustine, 2015).

Unfortunately, they were not provided any significant professional development. As well, if

teachers follow the advice of stopping bullying when it occurs, but ignoring the long-term,

systemic concerns, this creates a false belief that the issue of bullying and school violence is

being addressed, when resources could be better used to develop more successful programs

(Ferguson et al., 2007).

Other participants mentioned that their courses purposefully avoided providing them with

any concrete answers or strategies, under the justification that since every situation will be

different, it made no sense to provide any specific advice. It can be argued that due to the complexity surrounding bullying, there can be no definitive set of strategies found to apply for all students and all bullying incidents. What works for physical bullying, for example, will not necessarily work for cases of verbal bullying (Murray-Harvey et al., 2012). While it is true every situation will be different, and teachers cannot expect to use the same strategy every time and get the same outcome, pre-service teachers were still looking for some general guidelines or examples to build on and adapt to each new situation. If anything, this reality suggests that more course time should be provided to pre-service teachers to tackle the complexities, not less. Offering pre-service teachers no anti-bullying overview does them no good and increases the risk that they will use a strategy in an incorrect context (Murray-Harvey et al., 2012).

Participants' Undergraduate Degree Felt Disconnected from The Realities of Teaching.

In a similar vein, three participants strongly expressed how their courses were disconnected from the actual realities of classroom experiences, making it hard to care about what they were being taught, as it seemed unapplicable. Courses, they explained, were heavily theory-based and hard to bring into their classroom spaces now in a practical way.

> **Par 5**: There's like such a massive disconnect . . . there were times in certain classes where we felt like, okay, it's hard to listen to this or care about what we're learning. Because things just feel so disconnected from what our reality is going to be like. Like, I'm not going to end my day every single day and just say, that theory from that one academic, I definitely use that one today. . . . I wish I was a bit more prepared.

These participants focused in on the fact that their education courses were far too often theory-heavy and experience-light. Some participants did acknowledge that it is important to learn and develop an in-depth understanding of what bullying is, and how it is created, influenced, and exists in our society. For example, some participants mentioned taking courses where the relationship between social justice and racism were touched on in connection to

bullying. We know through bullying research that a strong connection exists between acts of

bullying and acts of discrimination (through racism, homophobia, sexism, etc.). Bullying,

whether it be verbal, physical, on- or offline, often stems from the social inequities that adult

society creates, fosters, and sustains (Glover et al., 1998; Janovicek, 2001). If taught effectively,

teachers' awareness of this connection could greatly help their understanding of why bullying

acts may be happening, how to help victims of bullying whose backgrounds may make them

more at risk, and how to work with their students to teach anti-bullying theories.

However, from talking with several of the participants, the importance of these

connections was not made clear to them in their courses. They were touched upon, but they were

not given any understanding of what to do with this information, or why it was important to

know. They are unsure how to bring theory into their classroom spaces now in practical ways.

This disconnect between theory and practice was often expressed by participants when they

stated that although they had been taught about ableism, homophobia and racism, these realities

were rarely connected to concrete anti-bullying action; the link between them was never

coherently established.

> **Par 8**: . . . from my experience at my old university, first of all, I don't feel like they
> actually prepared us. Most teachers didn't prepare us to actually be teachers. . . . I've
> noticed that a lot of my professors at university just seems so disconnected from the
> reality of elementary or high school classroom, because many of them haven't set foot in
> either of those institutions for like, over two, three decades. . . . it's like, well, "How are
> you telling me how to be a teacher when you haven't been in the classroom since you
> were a student?" Right? Because a lot of them obviously are PhD holders and only spend
> about 15 to 20% of their time teaching university students. Which I mean, that's pretty
> easy to deal with, you know? A kid pisses you off, you just tell them to leave your class.
> So I think that might be part of the whole reason, that maybe it's not talked about or
> something is just it's that disconnection from the reality of education.

Another reason behind their feeling of disconnect between their courses and their

experiences post-graduation, is that some had professors with no experience working in school

spaces beyond higher education. This lack of experience was apparent to participants, feeling as

though their professors could either give suggestions on what to do, based on no real experience

using them in a classroom setting, or simply avoided the topic of anti-bullying all together.

How Participants' Undergraduate Courses Talked About Bullying & Anti-Bullying

None of the participants had a course during their undergraduate degree that was

specifically or significantly focused on bullying. When participants did mention a course that

included bullying, they described it as being very briefly touched upon and never going into

much detail, if at all. If it was mentioned, nine participants explained that courses never really

talked about what to do when faced with bullying within their class. They expressed

disappointment in this as they believe there should have been courses dedicated to this topic or at

least it should have been touched on in different courses in more detail.

> **Par 2**: I guess another instance of it, I mean, I wouldn't really call it professional training, but I had a sociology of education class one year, and it kind of addressed some concerns of, you know, social inequality and how that's affected in schools. But it wasn't, you know, directly referring to how to kind of solve these issues, it was just more just explaining, like, you know, why kids get bullied or how, you know, how it could fall into place.

A common theme was that when bullying was mentioned, however briefly, it was usually

done in connection to social inequality and discrimination. This is a critical connection to make

if any real work against bullying is to be done. However, several participants, such as participant

2 and 7, felt as though the discussions within their courses on this aspect fell short, as they did

not go deep enough into its specific connection with bullying. There was a "we almost got there"

feeling where they began to touch on the social aspects of bullying, but they never got deep

enough into exploring how this information could be used to help effectively work against

bullying in elementary and high school.

> **Par 5**: There were none. We had—I think the closest thing we had to, I guess, anti-bullying was this class called social justice and anti-discrimination. But it didn't focus on anti-bullying or the topic of bullying in schools. It kind of just focused on different forms of discrimination in general, which I thought was a little bit bizarre. It was very much

like, what is classism? What is racism? What is sexism? And how is it presented in our media? How is it presented in the in, like, the laws and stuff of our society? And we watched a lot of documentaries. But I feel like we never really focused on—I think we watched one movie or one documentary about students in the school, but it had nothing to do with bullying.

They were taught *why* some students are more vulnerable to bullying than others, as they

were taught that discrimination exist, but then no further thought was given. Yes, racism and

ablism and sexism exists, but then what? Yes, bullying exists, but then what? No answer is given

after that on what should be done about it. Teachers do need to be aware of this, but then there

needs to be resources given to do *something* active in working against it. It is not enough to just

know it happens and it is still not enough to just know why it happens. If you know a student in

your class is going to be more vulnerable to bullying, what good is that if you are unaware of

what you can do to stop that from occurring?

No Real Discussions Were Had in Participants' Courses.

Moreover, eight participants said that whenever bullying was mentioned in their classes

by their professors, it would be done so in a brief and vague way. They felt as though they were

only reminded that bullying existed, and that it was bad, but that the topic was never explored

deeper than that.

> **Par 6**: I feel like bullying and anti-bullying were all sort of like buzzwords during my education, but they were never really actually addressed beyond: "Bullying is bad." and "We want to make inclusive classrooms where bullying doesn't exist." But other than the idea of like, being approachable as a teacher yourself and kindness and setting ground rules in a classroom, beyond the sort of basics of that, we didn't ever really get into any specifics on bullying.

The subject seemed to be brought up as something to check off a list in different courses,

to be able to demonstrate that due diligence was taking place. However, the overwhelming

perception by participants was that bullying was effectively glossed over. There was program

cohesion in the message to university students that bullying is a common issue in schools, but nothing was done further than that.

We cannot claim that bullying is not being effectively treated because of a lack of awareness. As Participant 6 put it, "bullying" itself has turned into a sort of buzzword in the field of education. We have reached a point in society where we are aware of its dangers. With infamous acts such as the 1999 Columbine school shooting (Bauman et al., 2016), the soon followed copy-cat school shooting in Alberta (Walton, 2004), and the numerous suicides by Canadian students over the past two decades, the fears of bullying have repeatedly captured the media's attention (Meredith-Flister, 2020).

There is an awareness of bullying within Canada, with anti-violence policies and programs being developed, and "safe schools" continuing to be a central mission statement in school boards across Canada (Walton, 2004). Within Quebec as well, with Bill 56 specifically being approved in Quebec to amend the Education Act and the Act Respecting Private Education in relation to bullying and violence (Prevnet, 2017; Fedoryshyn, 2019). Nonetheless, the proper effort to battle bullying or to fully understand it is not being put in place. As Participant 6 put it, it is not as though pre-service teachers are unaware of the need to create inclusive classrooms where bullying does not exist. The issue is how to create and maintain those classrooms. These are areas that the participants wanted to have in their courses, and they knew they were missing.

> **Par 5**: I hate the fact that I can't just be like, "Oh yeah, we had this really deep discussion on like, ways we can help students that are struggling with bullying and ways we can fully support them." Because that would be nice. How do you emotionally support a child who's going through something really traumatic as bullying. Nope. None of that.

The participants know that it is important, and they know what they are missing. They also know the consequences of leaving these acts unattended. In response to this and their desire

to learn more, several participants mentioned taking it into their own hands while in their

undergrad.

Student-Initiated and Led Discussions About Bullying.

Three participants mentioned that the only time bullying would be brought up in their

courses, was when students would initiate the conversation themselves.

> **Par 10**: So, we always brought it up. That's how it kind of went is if we found a spot to bring it up, we annoyed every professor until they gave us some sort of answer, or where we could go to find some sort of answer if we came across bullying. So yes, we always did something in every class because we bothered them until they did.

> As Participant 10 put it, bullying was brought up in all their courses, but only in informal

ways due to students bringing it up themselves and asking their professors about it, even

describing it as "annoy[ing]" their professors with it until they were given answers. Pre-service

teachers have the desire and need to learn about anti-bullying methods. They are aware of the

importance of this issue, and of the need they have to learn about these skills.

The Consequences of Not Being Properly Trained

Participants' Ability to Notice Bullying

While they are aware that bullying exists and is detrimental to its victims, a concern for

five of the participants was whether they would be able to notice bullying when it was occurring.

In their opinions, it can be difficult to notice if bullying is occurring between students. They have

found that teachers who have been working for longer, tend to be the ones who have an easier

time picking up on it. This implies that work experience tends to be a bigger indicator of their

ability to notice bullying, as opposed to being given the opportunity to receive resources or

knowledge on the topic.

> **Par 5**: I feel like there aren't enough discussions and like, there aren't any updates on these discussions on what does bullying look like now and how can we catch it before it gets worse. . . . I feel like pointing it out would be a difficult thing. I feel like that will always be a challenge. And either confronting the bully or speaking to the victim, and

saying, "What's going on?" and getting that full story. . . . So I feel like that would be a challenge to actually say this is a case of bullying and what can we do about it.

Participant 5 noted that there are not enough discussions concerning the changes that bullying goes through, in order to update adult stakeholders on what to look out for. This links closely with the ever-evolving cyberbullying that is making bullying between youth increasingly more difficult to catch. Other participants brought up that it can be difficult to know what actions between youth are bullying and which are just harmless teasing, due to the changes in how youth interact with each other. All the participants made references to personal experiences with bullying while they were younger, which has obviously given them an insight into what bullying is. Because of this, they are aware that the way youth are interacting with one another now and the way bullying is being perpetrated are different from when they were in school. Students in elementary and high schools today are still among the first generations to have grown up with constant access to technology. Eighty percent of adolescents now own their own technology, primarily computers and cellphones, with even more teens being able to access technology at school, libraries, or after-school programs (Bauman, 2010). Not only are pre-service teachers lacking anti-bullying education in their undergraduate programs, but if this education is provided, it may not be up to date on the issues that students are experiencing in schools today. This reality makes it harder for them to know what they need to look for and what they need to act on. Consequently, they worry that they may not notice acts of bullying until they have gone too far.

> **Par 8**: Yeah, most of the time, from my experience, when we've actually caught it is because something's actually—the online aspect of it has breached into real life. Like by action. I'm not like, obviously it breaches real life when someone's affected. But I mean, it went off script. And, I don't know, someone went up to another person and confronted them, or said something really harsh because of a rumor they heard in this group chat. And, you know, it's just insane. And that's usually when we catch it. And that's the case for most horrible things that start online nowadays is like, you know, if you see like these spree killers and stuff, it's like, well, we only knew the day that he bought that gun and

killed his grandma or something, right? We didn't know for the past few months that the person was suffering, and was either bullied or bullying someone else, you know?

There is an understanding among many of the participants that the earlier an intervention can be used, the better. They feel as though without the ability to catch bullying earlier, they are allowing bullying to continue until it grows to dramatic levels. Participant 8 touched on an important type of bullying today—cyberbullying. A more recent area of bullying; it has risen in media awareness because it is harder to detect in schools due to its distinct characteristics such as asynchronous communication, an absence of time and space constraints, easier access to anonymity, and a potentially infinite audience of bystanders (Bauman, 2010; Davis et al., 2015). This presents unique challenges for schools attempting to prevent any cyberbullying that may be taking place between their students (Harmon, 2004).

Some participants also mentioned the important role students can play in informing teachers when bullying is occurring. For example, while it can be hard to detect bullying as a teacher, this can be alleviated if students witnessing or experiencing these attacks approach their teacher to inform them. However, participants also expressed how difficult it can be to get your students to talk to you openly about these issues.

> **Par 5**: I feel like pointing it out would be a difficult thing. I feel like that will always be a challenge. And either confronting the bully or speaking to the victim, and saying, "What's going on?" and getting that full story. Because some kids will lie. I feel like it would be a thing too for the kid who is being bullied to say nothing's happening. So, I feel like that would be a challenge to actually say this is a case of like bullying and what can we do about it.

This is another hurdle they wish they knew how to overcome, because they are aware of the potential positives that could come out of having their students work with them to prevent and address bullying. We know, from research into the importance of collaboration between adult stakeholders and youth empowerment, that helping youth develop the agency and awareness surrounding anti-bullying is crucial to more effective and positive changes not only for their

generation, but for future generations as they age and influence generations after them (Shariff & Eltis, 2017). It is obvious that teachers and pre-service teachers are aware of what is missing, and have clear ideas on what could be better, but they are missing the resources and knowledge to know what to do to fix this. They want to be taught how to create those bonds with their students, to get them involved in anti-bullying, and to create a routine where they feel safe to approach them if anything has happened.

Cyberbullying Is Especially Hard to Catch.

As already briefly touched upon, creating even more difficulties for teachers to notice bullying now is the emergence of cyberbullying. The fact that it occurs both within and outside the classroom, as well as within and outside of school grounds, adds to the confusion. It is much harder to police or even to be aware of what your students are doing when so much of it is occurring outside of your vision. Nine of the participants expressed their concern over how cyberbullying is more difficult to catch than offline bullying.

> **Par 4**: I think it's very hard now, because now most of the bullying is happening online, right? It's cyber bullying. So, it's very hard to police. And then whatever happens in school is just like a carryover of what happened online. . . . So, you could, you know, if you're in the classroom for example, and you hear someone say something, you can be like, "Hey, stop that, that's not–" whatever. And they could stop. But it's still going on, you know, like outside the school. It's still happening.

They are left feeling helpless in stopping bullying when it is happening online. They can try to stop actions that are happening in their class but then have no idea what is happening outside of that context. Or even, as some participants expressed, what is happening inside your classroom as you teach, as students could still be using social media and technology to bully each other discreetly. As we know, while many adults view on- and offline behaviour and relationships as separate from one another, most adolescents do not view them through a clear divide (Subrahmanyam & Smahel, 2011). Most youth view their digital identities as inseparable

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from their offline identities, as their peer relationships spillover from offline to online and vice versa (Lankshear et al., 2008).

Intervention would be easier if students reached out to teachers and informed them of potential problems. But youth are not naturally going to do that, especially regarding cyberspace. There is a strong draw to stay online for youth, as it tempts them with the possibilities to control their self-presentation and build their social belonging without the presence of parental interference (Yau & Reich, 2018). It is this strong potential that causes even online victims to continuously return to this cyberspace and refuse to tell adults if they are suffering from online attacks to avoid the possible reaction of their technology being taken away from them (Nilan et al., 2015; Shariff & Stonebanks, 2021).

> **Par 7**: Like, I'm not going to monitor what my students are posting. . . . It's crazy. Like, I don't want to have to do that. I want to be able to trust my kids. . . . Like, I'm not trying to monitor everything they're doing. I want them to have their freedom to express themselves, just appropriately. . . . I do think it's important that we address it, but it's not my job to monitor. . . . You know, I'm not looking for them so I can see what's happening. I want to be able to trust them. I want to give them the opportunity to mess up so we could then talk about it. Because like, it's hard for someone to learn if they don't mess up first. But no, I don't think it's our job to be on them, monitoring them. No. We address it, maybe address it two, three times if the situation arises. I believe that's the best we can do.

Clearly, participants such as Participant 7 do not want their job to be monitoring their students' every move, inside and outside of the school context. They believe youth need the freedom to explore and potentially make mistakes. They do not think their job should be to hover over their students, waiting to spot trouble. Arguments have been made against increased supervision that restricts children's freedom and prevents them from having free choice. Bishop and Curtis (2001) argued that adults need to be extremely cautious about intervening in children's spaces where they can hold a level of independence about their choices. Providing a space where children can be relatively free from direct adult attention is conducive to their

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development of social skills and competencies, including resilience and the ability to deal with conflict (Mulryan-Kyne, 2014).

Instead, participants indicated they want to be able to have conversations with students about online safety, about positive interactions with others, and about the deep-rooted issues that create bullying. Participants mentioned how bullying is not the core issue within online hate; instead, negativity online is a much deeper societal issue, and one we need to find ways to address. Participants wanted to learn how to help youth navigate their online space safely and positively.

The Consequences of Universities Graduating Untrained Professionals

Seven of the participants expressed concern while self-reflecting that they had graduated from their education program while being untrained to handle cases of bullying. They felt as though universities did not properly do their job training future teachers on how to approach bullying, being unproperly trained themselves. Without being provided with proper education and resources to tackle bullying, are universities simply graduating professionals into a field that they are unprepared to fully handle?

> **Par 1:** I think generally speaking, talking with other teachers, there's a lack of training and a lack of talking about bullying amongst students and how to handle it. So, I wish there was more. . . . I mean, we all have a tendency to kind of blame our own schools. Like I know I'll complain about [University 1] all the time. But I also realized that it's the same thing in another school. I'll talk to my friends that went to [University 2] or [University 3]. And they're like, "Yeah, us too." And I'm like, "Cool. Okay, so it's not just me."

For these participants, it is not just their graduating year that failed to get this information, and it was not just their specific alma maters that failed in this area of education. This is a common issue that graduating teachers feel. This is a frequent concern that teachers feel as they enter their classroom. My own research shows that participants from McGill University, Concordia University, and Bishops University are concerned about a lack of learning about

bullying in their education programs, which I believe speaks to how common this issue is, at least within the Anglophone Education sector in Quebec. It can be easy to blame your university program as being the outlier in not providing appropriate professional education, but as they asked peers from other education programs and other provinces, they realized that many other pre-service teachers felt the same way.

Several participants explained that they knew a lot of teachers who felt this way. They prioritize their students' health and safety and genuinely want to understand how to provide that care. However, they are often left feeling ill-equipped. They express that this common lack of knowledge for graduating teachers is "scary to think about," because they know how serious the issue of bullying is, and how badly it can affect their students. If teachers are unable to get the training that they are asking for, they may be left not intervening at all, which sends a negative message to their students as they watch their teachers' avoidance (Jones & Augustine, 2015).

> **Par 5**: I wish it was different. But I feel like the fact that I'm a teacher, and I'll be going into schools, and I'll be teaching, and I don't know anything other than from what my experience is...I feel like that just... it's like, it lets me do the same thing over and over again. And I'm just repeating things unless I do something about it. And I feel like that is the case for a lot of other teachers too. Like, for example, as I mentioned before, my graduating class, I feel like that is this kind of the same case.

Quite a few participants, such as Participant 5, worried that because they are inexperienced, all they can do is fall back onto their own personal experiences to try to address bullying. However, they theorize such an approach will only continue a cycle of potentially harmful, ineffective anti-bullying. They feel as though this is the case for a lot of graduating teachers if they continue to not receive proper education and resources. They know they could do better, and they know this is potentially harmful or incorrect, but they aren't given the opportunities to learn what other options are out there that they can use.

Having to Make Decisions on The Fly.

Seven of the participants expressed the feeling that they had no preparation to handle cases of bullying. They wish they had been given more resources to feel more equipped during those instances. To them, responding to bullying feels like a crash course that they were shoved into with no instruction, worrying that they are not going to be able to handle it properly, aware of the further damage they could cause.

> **Par 2**: Having to encounter . . ., you know, kids bullying each other and just being mean. And kind of exercising judgement kind of on the fly and figuring out if that was the right things to do. Which again, like I've talked with profs before to kind of, you know, if we can go into more detail about it, but we never got the change to explore it. So again, it was just more of, it's more of like a crash course kind of thing. You go in, hopefully it works, if not you have to think of something else.

Many of the participants associated conducting anti-bullying interventions with a trial-and-error method. Seven of the participants understandably expressed worry over that fact that because they felt untrained and unprepared. They knew this could lead them to make a mistake when confronting bullying within their school, causing even further harm to their students. Unfortunately, many educators are left unsure about which strategies they should use or avoid in their classrooms and schools, tending to pick and choose ones while acting in an "on the fly" approach, which can lead to further detriments for the victims (Jones & Augustine, 2015).

> **Par 6**: I think it's so important where even now sometimes if a kid comes up to me and says, "So and so was bullying me," and my immediate knee jerk response is, "Okay, you need to tell an adult." And then I have to catch myself going, "Oh no, wait, I'm the adult now." So that idea of like, where do you start? . . . You don't want to make the situation worse for the child. So, making sure that you manage those types of situations can be challenging. . . . And how do you hold the bully accountable for their actions without making them angry, escalating the situation and then retaliating against the victim? I think it's that fear of retaliation that is really- Or not even retaliation, but potentially even escalation, right?

I find Participant 6's view interesting, in that their initial reaction to hearing about bullying is needing to find someone who will be able to handle it, subsequently realizing that *they* are now the adult who is expected to be in charge. The participants know this is a

complicated situation, which is shown in the concern they all shared throughout their interviews over their lack of professional training and their feelings of unpreparedness.

Participants Learning Outside of Their Education

Many of the participants talked about how they receive help and advice for their anti-bullying knowledge outside of their education program. They know that they needed further information and reacted by actively taking the initiative to search for it.

> **Par 10**: But every time that we asked about it, we were always told, "You need firsthand experience. You need to get out in the field, and you need to see it, and you need to talk to your co workers, and you need to figure it out that way."

I found Participant 10's experience notable, where they were told by their professors that to gain knowledge on anti-bullying they needed to first go into the field and learn by themselves. I do not doubt the helpfulness of hands-on learning. As with all professions, learning continues after university. However, one still has the expectation that a professional program will effectively prepare their students prior to their graduation. For seven of the participants, partial solutions to this crisis came from the role mentors played in their professional development. Mentors that they received during their field placements during their undergraduate degree.

> **Par 10**: Professional training in my field placements? No, but I had really great mentors. I had harassment, I had threats, I had fistfights in my placement. And I was really lucky to have experienced mentors. We'll put it that way. So, they were able to navigate me through those. . . . All I did is I went and found someone who's close to retirement, and I went, "You have a lot of experience." So, I go to them with a lot of questions. But it's almost daily that you encounter something that you're like, "This is kind of questionable." And I seek guidance, often.

The reality of how often help is needed in this area is expressed by Participant 10, who said that it is an almost daily occurrence where they see a negative student interaction. It is a natural reaction to turn to someone who has had more experience in this field, who has had more "real world" experience to draw from and learn from them. It is unfortunate though that whenever learning from others is discussed in these interviews, they never describe the

individuals they are learning from as having received more professional development than they have. Instead, knowledge is always evaluated by the length of time teachers have spent working in their field. I am not claiming that this is an unvaluable resource to learn from. However, one would hope that it would not have to be the *only* resource for teachers.

Participant 6 noted that even their mentors have expressed that handling bullying contains a lot of gray area for them. The mentors themselves are not able to offer the concrete solutions that so many of the participants wish they had. So, while mentors are extremely valuable, this is not a guaranteed solution if the mentors themselves have also not been given the opportunities to learn about anti-bullying. Recall the concern participants had earlier in the data of a repetitive circle if no new solutions or resources are provided. Mentors may give solutions that they are aware of and have been using, but these are not guaranteed effective solutions. This could lead to a continuation of ineffective, or even harmful, anti-bullying methods as new teachers learn and take on these strategies.

Six participants described turning to their peers for help, whom they assumed had more experience or at least had some more experiencing in a particular situation than they did.

> **Par 5**: You hear something through the grapevine on how to approach something? Okay, that's your new approach. You talk to a teacher who's doing really well about a certain issue or whatever? That's your new approach. But we don't have... My toolbox? Empty. . . . I'm borrowing tools. I'm like, chatting around just collecting. . . . It's like, what is it? Like the blind leading the blind? . . . Right? Yeah. Sometimes teaching definitely feels like that. Not teaching, but just navigating the school.

What I found interesting was Participant 5's perspective of the "blind leading the blind," as there were similar feelings expressed by other participants. They speak of figuring out what to do based on what others have done or what seemed to be the most popular strategy among their colleagues. They are left to feel as though they have to learn from each other, whether that be

from each others' victories or mistakes, with an awareness that they are all coming into this job with a similarly low baseline of anti-bullying knowledge.

I absolutely advocate for teachers working with each other through a whole-school collaborative system. This type of approach rests on the assumption that bullying is a systemic problem; therefore, interventions must be directed at the entire school context, instead of just the students involved in an act of bullying (Smith et al., 2004). The aim is to alter the entire school environment, instead of just one classroom, as the idea is that since bullying is a multi-faceted phenomenon, anti-bullying methods should also have a multi-faceted perspective involving multiple contextual levels and actors (Valle et al., 2020). However, part of this collaboration needs to involve educational resources. As without them, we risk falling back into a continued cycle of inaccurate anti-bullying strategies. If teachers are only learning from each other, I worry that their solutions may not as effective as ones that are available, but unknown to them.

Lastly, four of the participants mentioned having to do research on their own after they graduated, as it was the only way for them to learn, with no one else providing them with resources or help.

> **Par 5**: And so now, it's just, you start off with these, like, websites that were designed for children to help them understand what bullying is. And then you're kind of like, okay, well, there has to be some academic people that probably talked about this, or studied this or something, and then you go off from there.

They should not be expected to conduct research in this area on their own, especially with the limited time they already have due to their work schedules and the sheer amount of information (good and bad) that they would have to sift through.

Help Participants Would Like to Receive

Whole-School Collaboration

A common theme that came up throughout my interviews, concerning what could help

participants feel more prepared once they entered their schools, was building a better whole-

school approach to anti-bullying: being able to work together, as opposed to feeling as though

they were left on their own to handle bullying.

> **Par 2**: . . . And even like workshops too would have been great. I know high schools and elementary schools have staff meetings and workshops during that point. But even in like, university, it'd be important to kind of have them get involved in that as soon as possible. So, you can start building like a framework of as to how they can provide more advice to other teachers, because everyone has different perspectives on how to solve problems.

This approach includes more than teachers working with one-another within their

schools. For Participant 2, this was described as a collaboration between teachers and pre-service

teachers who were still completing their undergraduate degree. There are significant positive

impacts of whole-school collaborations against bullying (Pearce et al., 2022; Acosta et al., 2019).

Considering the desire they had throughout their program to have these practical conversations

about bullying, offering these types of collaborations could help them learn about how bullying

is being acted out within schools and how teachers are handling it, as they share their

experiences. This type of collaboration could go both ways as well, as opposed to just teachers

offering their expertise to pre-service teachers. As we have seen from the participants, their past

experiences as elementary and high school students themselves, while working in jobs outside of

education, and their experiences online, have provided them with insights into anti-bullying that

teachers may benefit from.

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Other participants described the difficulties that can come out of ineffectively attempting whole-school collaborations. Some of these examples, as seen below, focus on collaborations with other teachers.

> **Par 10**: I'm going to go back to what I said and that you need a staff that's all on the same page. It would be very easy at my school because we're a staff of less than 20. But at somewhere where you've got 1000 students, and you've got a staff of 50, that's a much bigger conversation to have. Yeah, so I think that having everyone on the same page is more important at this stage in the game.

> It is important to note the difficulties involved with creating a collaboration of any kind.

While collaboration is a strategy that can lead to positive outcomes, it is not as simple as just deciding that all teachers in a school will now work together, with equal effort, using strategies that everyone agrees upon. Developing, coordinating, and sustaining partnerships can be challenging. The same types of issues that impact school-based intervention (e.g., building motivation, knowledge, and capacity; maintaining fidelity; and planning for long-term sustainability) also apply to collaborative involvement in bullying prevention efforts (Holt et al., 2013). Building these types of partnerships is complicated, especially if the goal is to have them run long-term. It asks teachers (and all school staff members) who all have their own concept and understanding of what bullying is and how it should be handled, to create a combined effort that they all agree upon.

Participants are Overworked.

Nine of the participants spoke on how overworked they found their profession to be.

> **Par 5**: Yeah, that's like another thing too. It's like when you're addressing bullying at schools, that's an extra load. That's like another thing on your plate on top of like, an already very challenging job. And I don't know, this is just part of my like, I have a hard time understanding how federal and provincial governments can pay their teachers so little for the amount of work that they do. Not just teachers, but like, just people who work in schools in general, when we're asked to do so much, and when we give so much, even when we're not being asked to. I feel like caring for the students as a collective, I feel like that should be our priority. And ensuring their safety and health and well-being should really be one of the things we talk about and prioritize. And bullying is definitely

one of them that we need to discuss, because that's really affecting the kids now. And especially during a time when a student's mental health is down a drain. We don't need any more stress on them. So, we need to be prepared.

Their worry is if they are not being given help, anti-bullying work will become a more difficult task than it needs to be and viewed as another job on top of all that teachers are already asked to do. Some participants stated that school policies should be more accessible to them so that they can feel more prepared to know how to handle bullying once they enter the school. Six participants spoke about how the policies at schools they had worked at were never properly shared with the teachers. Bill 56 made it mandatory for schools to create anti-bullying policies, but according to participants the new law did not naturally lead to schools sharing these policies or to working alongside their teachers in developing these policies. They saw the law as though it was created to check a box and then left aside. When I asked each of the participants if they could recall anti-bullying policies being followed in any of the schools they had worked in, most of them could not recall anything specific that teachers had to follow.

> **Par 6**: But I think if policies are there, they're definitely not explained or even necessarily followed. Because I have seen different people act in different ways, right? In the way that they respond to bullying. . . . Like, any changes would be more just to make them more accessible and more like raising the awareness of what they are, I guess. Because then even if there was a problem with them, then we need to know what they are in order to identify the problems within them.

Participants Want More Resources.

As the final theme in my data analysis, I thought it appropriate to explore the resources that participants wish they were able to receive now that they have graduated and have begun working in schools.

> **Par 5**: I feel like us teachers need to just generally be better educated about it. We need better protocols. We need to be told and taught what bullying can look like, what are the many forms of it, and how might we see it. Better response from Admin. More resources for help. I just want tools. Like I just want to have like, a set of tools where I can say, "This is for the student who's struggling, and this is how I can be there for them." I want to be taught how can I be there for the child.

They are very clear about what they want: they want professional development; they want collaborations with other teachers and other schools; they want workshops and seminars; they want written out protocols and policies that they can follow. They *want* to succeed in their role as an anti-bully stakeholder but know they cannot do this on their own. My hope is to use my research to work towards a better understanding of how anti-bullying is understood by soon-to-be and newly graduated teachers. Gaining a better awareness of what teachers already know and what they believe they are missing can help lead towards more frequent and efficient anti-bullying training and help create a more stable and healthy school environment for them and the students that they teach.

Reflecting on the invaluable contributions of my participants, I hold a great sense of gratitude for the thoughtful and personal insights they shared regarding their experiences and concerns. Their willingness to open up and offer a glimpse into their worlds has been an enlightening journey, and I am sincerely thankful for the trust they placed in me. Having completed this thesis at the master's level, the focus of this project centered on the mastery of knowledge rather than the creation that will define my future work during my future PhD program. Despite my current limitations, I have taken the initiative to share my completed thesis with each participant. I hope that this document accurately captures and illuminates their voices, offering a platform for their narratives to resonate with a wider audience. It is my sincerest wish that this project, rooted in the understanding gleaned from their stories, can contribute to raising awareness about the unmet needs and challenges they face.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

Before submitting initial drafts of my thesis topic and questions, I received consistent advice from multiple academics and those who had successfully completed their graduate studies, along with those who continued to study, and still others that had dropped out of their respective programs. The advice was simple on the surface: pick a topic that interests you and a question to which you truly do not already have the answer. Otherwise, I was cautioned, the process will be one of drudgery and hoop jumping, and the inspiration to complete the work will escape you over time. The topic of bullying in public schooling was inspired by my own experiences and observations as a student within the system, but the answer to the question of novice teachers' perspectives on the university education they received in their training to the profession was unknown. In truth, I wondered about multiple possibilities, including pre-service teachers being instructed on antiquated models of bullying prevention, maybe an underlying culture in education that bullying was much ado about nothing, perhaps a pervasive philosophy that bullying was a natural part of childhood, or even the notion that the phenomena itself was actively being dealt with due to schooling being an effective and neutral space of equality. I was not prepared to hear from all ten participants that not only was the viewpoint in university departments of education that schools suffered from multiple forms of discrimination that led to bullying, but that they all firmly believed that they received no tangible instruction or discussions on the phenomenon itself or the research and strategies on anti-bullying. In effect, they all stated that their respective professors spoke a lot about racism, sexism, homophobia, ableism, and other forms of discrimination, but they did little to inform pre-service teachers on how to address bullying, either from sources of research or experience. What is worse, some described the

universities themselves as spaces where bullying was accepted, which speaks volumes about "modeling" best practices.

We have reached an unprecedented time where the concept of bullying is acknowledged in research, popular culture, and news media at a heightened level. We are aware of its existence, we are aware of its effects, and, as demonstrated by the influx of school-located anti-bullying interventions, we are aware of the vital role teachers can play in preventing, identifying, and dealing with bullying in their schools. My goals in research were fourfold: (1) To learn about teachers' professional understanding of bullying, (2) To learn about their professional training experiences both during their undergraduate degree and once they entered the field, (3) To learn about their perceived professional preparedness when dealing with anti-bullying in their field, and (4) To use this collected data to suggest effective knowledge mobilization tactics. Through this, my hope is to add to the still-developing research field of anti-bullying an analysis on how anti-bullying interventions are perceived and understood by soon-to-be and newly graduated teachers and how prepared they feel as vital anti-bullying stakeholders.

It is important to note that the initial draft of my thesis reached over 220 pages. Going through all the participants' interviews, the themes that were created easily grew to an amount that surpassed what I could fit within a master's thesis. Along with the four major groupings of themes I have chosen to include, I originally had included a section on participants' opinions and experiences with anti-bullying strategies and their experiences with anti-bullying work during Covid-19. These were not removed due to any weakness in their quality. Through the participants opinions and experiences with anti-bullying initiatives, I was able to learn which aspects they believed were important to incorporate within anti-bullying strategies (e.g., student involvement), that the most popular anti-bullying strategy within their schools (zero tolerance)

was also the strategy they spoke the most negatively about, and their desire for schools to

provide them with anti-bullying protocols. Through participants discussing their experiences

working during Covid-19, I was given the opportunity to hear about how they struggled with the

increase of cyberbullying during a time when so many youth were forced to go online, how the

combination of at-home schooling and an increase in online use affected their students

emotionally and socially, how these effects were being conducted within their classroom, and

how they were now being asked to take on a new role as an online monitor for their students.

Unfortunately, to ensure that I stayed on track to answer my questions and to keep my thesis at a

reasonable size, I had to remove these themes.

Following are the answers I was given by the participants along with my suggestions on

how one could use these findings in an effective and useful way to improve teachers' perceived

professional preparedness concerning bullying.

(1) Teachers' Professional Understanding of Bullying

In learning about how participants professionally understood bullying, there was no sense

of confusion surrounding how to define the term. All the participants were able to give a

description of what bullying was, noting its physical, verbal, emotional, mental, and social

characteristics, and they were able to touch on its most agreed upon features: that it was

intentional, repetitive, and directed at an individual who had difficulty defending themselves.

However, while it was clear that they all understood bullying in a way that fit the most common

description by Dan Olweus, pioneer of bullying research, the aspect of a vulnerable victim and

what made the victims vulnerable was notably mentioned less. While an area of bullying that is

developing in bullying research (e.g., Ash-Houchen & Lo, 2018; Xu et al., 2020), connections

between bullying victims and the marginalized groups they are often a part of was missing from

the conversations, potentially signifying that the connection between discrimination and bullying was absent within their undergraduate degree, while other traits such as its deliberate, repetitive, and harmful nature were more touched upon.

Other descriptors that participants assigned to bullying was its universal reach, beyond both school and youth contexts, affecting almost everyone during at least one point in their lives. They held an understanding that bullying among youth was not created within the schools or among youth themselves but exists spread across all areas of our societies, filled with broad societal hate and discrimination. They understood that there was a connection between discrimination and bullying, but they were missing information to know how to link that connection in a practical and helpful way.

Concerning their understanding of bullying through anti-bullying strategies, the majority described their experiences with ineffective initiatives. As mentioned in my data analysis, it is understandable that, in the hope of problem-solving and solution building, the participants would focus on areas of anti-bullying that they felt needed to be fixed. The clear imbalance in personal stories being shared on effective vs ineffective anti-bullying strategies could either mean the experiences of ineffective anti-bullying strategies hold a stronger impact, or ineffective anti-bullying strategies greatly outnumber effective strategies used while the participants were in school. Either way, they held strong beliefs on which forms of interventions they would never use themselves, and they were more uncertain on which interventions they believed they should use instead.

(2) Teachers' Professional Training During and After Their Undergraduate Degree

Before mentioning their undergraduate program, the participants who experienced working with youth outside of the field of education (e.g., camp counsellors, coaches) spoke on

how fortunate they were to receive opportunities to learn about and use anti-bullying techniques from these jobs. In comparing themselves with their peers who had only received bullying information from their education program, they acknowledged how lucky they were to receive this information that many of their peers are missing, and they were aware of the skills that are *not* being taught to pre-service teachers within their education program.

When discussing their experiences during their undergraduate degree, participants felt that they were never given any practical advice on how to effectively perform their role in anti-bullying interventions. None of them had any courses specifically focused on bullying, nor did any course spend significant time on the topic. Bullying was only ever touched on briefly, seemingly to remind them that it existed, but they were never given advice on how to approach the phenomena in their classrooms. Participants spoke on how the only advice they were given was to simply stop bullying when it happened, or they were told that concrete strategies could not be given as each case of bullying was unique.

Courses were also described as highly theory-based and disconnected from the realities of practical classroom work. While participants mentioned that courses touched upon social justice and discrimination, they did not receive any advice on how to use this information in a helpful way with their students. When told that certain students would be more vulnerable than others, no answer was given on what they as teachers should do about this reality.

Instead, participants felt that they learned more practical information after they had already graduated, when they were working in their schools. What they are learning in their schools tends to be informal, through watching their peers, from mentors, or researching and learning on their own, which left them feeling unconfident in their skills. They fully embraced that their profession requires lifelong learning after graduating; however, there is a desire for this

to not be the only source of knowledge they are receiving. They want to be able to enter their field with a basic level of preparedness. As well, they are left unsure whether what they are learning to do is as effective as it could be, as without the background knowledge, they have a difficult time critically reviewing whether any advice that they are receiving is practical and helpful. Although professional research is highly respected, greater, and more transparent support and resources need to be offered at the outset, so that vulnerable students are not (in effect) experiments where an educator is developing a competency from a starting point of zero experience.

(3) Learning How to Swim: Teachers' Perceived Professional Preparedness with Anti-Bullying

From what we have already reviewed, it is now understandable that the participants were all concerned over their lack of anti-bullying training. Participants expressed the feeling that they had no preparation to handle cases of bullying and were forced to have to figure things out on their own as soon as something happened. It was like being thrown into the deep end of a swimming pool so that you learn how to swim. However, in this scenario, the adult who does not know how to swim is being asked to save children who also do not know how to swim. To the participants, responding to bullying felt like a crash course that they were thrown into with no support or significant pre-knowledge, which led to worry that they were not going to be able to handle a bullying situation properly, aware of the further damage they could cause.

One of their major concerns was their ability to recognize bullying, especially since, in their opinion, there has not been enough discussion concerning the changes that bullying is going through due to cyberbullying to update adult stakeholders on what to look out for. They felt as though their teacher-education on bullying was not up to date on issues that their students are

experiencing today, making it harder for them to know what they need to observe and what they need to act on. Cyberbullying was a key area of bullying that participants mentioned when talking about areas they felt insecure about. Many expressed their concern over how more difficult cyberbullying is to catch than offline bullying, as they are left feeling unable to do anything to stop bullying when it happens in real-time. Due to their perceived inability to effectively notice cases of bullying, they expressed great concern over how this can leave bullying to grow to dangerous levels.

They also felt unprepared in knowing how to create a bond with their students, which they knew could offer them significant help in becoming aware of bullying concerns. They did not want to take on a role of monitoring everything their students were doing, and instead wished they knew how to have conversations with students about online safety, about positive interactions with others, and about the deep-rooted issues that create bullying. They knew that discussions and collaborations with their students could enact better change but were unsure how to go about effectively having those conversations.

Self-reflecting on their experiences within their education program, the participants believed their universities did not do their job properly at training and preparing future teachers on how to approach bullying, and they were open about their feelings of unpreparedness. Through speaking with their peers, the participants in my study mentioned that this was a common issue that graduating teachers felt (within their university and outside), as many want to prioritize student health and safety, but often feel ill-equipped to do so.

(4) Knowledge Mobilization

When I speak of Knowledge Mobilization (KMb), I am referring to the process of moving evidence into action. At its core, KMb involves taking what some people know (usually

in the form of research findings) and making it applicable/useful to stakeholder groups. Knowledge users (in this case, teachers, education professors, school admin, etc.) are the groups who can make use of and apply research knowledge—incorporating it into policy, practice, programs, and individual behaviour. KMb goes far beyond the dissemination of knowledge. It is not just knowledge transfer but embedding knowledge generation and use within the core structures of the communities that need it (Bennet & Bennet, 2007). It runs under the belief that just because knowledge is available, it may not be used. For example, just because anti-bullying research has been conducted, it will not necessarily be used within schools. Most people encounter more information daily than they can deal with (Hilbert & López, 2011). This trend also holds true for academic knowledge. As of 2010, there were an estimated 50,000,000 scholarly journal articles in existence (Jinha, 2010). Even a subject specific research topic such as bullying in schools has an overwhelming number of generated publications. No one person can ever acquire more than a tiny fraction of the knowledge available. We face a paradox of abundance: quantity undermines the quality of our engagement. We need a way to help sift through the massive amounts of information, which is where KMb comes into play.

KMb is designed to identify where knowledge and evidence are not being used and to rectify the situation. The field of knowledge mobilization exists because it is not sufficient to put knowledge "out there into the world" and expect people to pay attention. It takes time and effort to move new evidence and social innovations into broad practice. Generally, there are four main reasons why knowledge has not yet been put to use (Bennett & Jessani, 2011). Either the intended users of this knowledge: 1. Do not know the information exists, or what action to take to learn it; 2. Do not understand the information, what it means, or why it is important; 3. Do not care about the information, seeing it as irrelevant or not beneficial to their agenda; or 4. Don't

agree with the implications of the information, believing the knowledge to be misguided or false. Successful KMb involves overcoming these barriers (Bennett & Jessani, 2011).

Moreover, each type of barrier must be addressed on its own terms. For the one that is more applicable to our current case, "Do not know," KMb suggests that if your audience only lacks knowledge and is waiting for the evidence you must share, then enabling action may be as straightforward as creating and disseminating knowledge products (Bennett & Jessani, 2011). Therefore, one would need to figure out what knowledge teachers need and how to properly share this knowledge with them in a way that ensures they receive the help they need and are not overwhelmed.

From what we have seen in the data analysis, the participants do not lack understanding, caring, or agreeing that learning effective anti-bullying is vital for their roles as stakeholders. Participants expressed great concern throughout their interviews over their self-evaluated inability to properly enact anti-bullying strategies that can help their students. They noted the consequences of ineffective interventions and stated their dismay in the numerous anti-bullying strategies that led to them feeling confused and overwhelmed. There is simply too much knowledge for them to be able to sift through it all themselves, without being provided with the proper tools or background information. They want to be aware and help and be effective, but they are left feeling confused with no tools to work with. What they need help with is not discovering that all this information exists and that it is important that they learn it. What they need is to be supported throughout their undergraduate degree and throughout their profession as knowledge on anti-bullying evolves. However, the participants made it clear that through their experiences, both in university and as new teachers in the field, no such expertise is provided to them.

KMb has three desired outcomes: inform, engage, and act. Thus, KMb serves three basic functions: informational, relational, and systemic. This often works as a step-by-step process, with each function building on the other. Foremost, enabling dissemination and access to information is the most basic function of KMb. This would simply involve teaching pre-service and graduated teachers about bullying and effective anti-bullying initiatives. The other function of KMb involves helping others to make sense of information, improving knowledge-use in decision-making, and fostering co-production. This process could involve including pre-service and graduated teachers in conversations when creating anti-bullying interventions and policies, to learn from their expertise and experiences. The most complex function of KMb is aimed at broad innovation and systems change and builds on both the informational and relational functions. This function could mean involving whole schools in developing anti-bullying policies or interventions; connecting community members, parents, and schools together to work at developing anti-bullying and anti-discrimination measures that span across contexts; and providing teachers with education and resources so that they can best support their students as they develop positive online practices.

These informative and whole-school actions are ones that participants mentioned they wanted. One popular theme that came up a lot in my interviews, concerning what could help participants feel more prepared once they entered their schools, was building a better whole-school approach to anti-bullying. Participants wanted to work together, as opposed to feeling as though they were left on their own to handle the issues. This desire included more than just teachers working with one another within their schools. They described it as a collaboration between practicing teachers and pre-service teachers. Considering the desire expressed by participants to have these practical conversations about bullying, I believe offering these types of

collaborations could help them learn about how bullying is occuring within schools, how teachers are handling it, and sharing experiences.

One of the biggest challenges KMb can face when trying to connect and engage both the work of knowledge creators (e.g., anti-bullying researchers) and knowledge users (e.g., teachers) is attempting to span their two perspectives or worlds. According to Lomas (2000), part of the problem is that knowledge creators and knowledge users view each other's work as a product, as opposed to a process. That is, knowledge creators see knowledge users as choosing (or not choosing) to use the knowledge in policy and practice. Knowledge users see knowledge creators as providing them with some sort of completed knowledge. Key recommendations to facilitate relations between knowledge creators and knowledge users include using use intermediaries such as knowledge brokers (Dobbins et al., 2009), which in this case could mean supporting education professors in creating a course, or course components, dedicated to bullying and anti-bullying knowledge building. Research also suggests building research capacity (e.g., scientific literacy) in knowledge users (Lomas, 2000; Oliver et al., 2014). In other words, teaching pre-service teachers skills to effectively continue their self-education on anti-bullying methods outside of their university education.

Finally, another way to facilitate the effective use of knowledge creators' findings is to work with knowledge users themselves. General advice from users (to creators) on building successful partnerships includes, among others: (1) Discover the end-user community's needs and interests, (2) Make sure the information is relevant and beneficial for end- users, (3) Cultivate a positive relationship and respect the knowledge of your end-user, (4) Try to understand the end-user's context—find out how decisions are made, how research influences

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decisions, and (5) Involve all key stakeholders in the collaboration and consultation process (Shantz, 2012).

I hoped through this thesis to initiate the beginnings of a proper KMb to help inform and empower teachers in their anti-bullying abilities by asking them specifically what they believed was missing and what they would like. The participants spoke about how overworked their profession was. They understand the importance of helping their students with their social and mental well-being, but they also need to focus on their role in educating their students. They feel overworked, under-supported, and know that their ability to effectively help their students in need is being hurt because of it.

Gaining a better awareness of what teachers already know and what they believe is lacking in anti-bullying interventions and professional training can help lead towards more frequent and efficient anti-bullying training. What is it that they need help with? Participants wished they had received more anti-bullying training during their degree; that they had been taught how to create close, open bonds with their students, to help get them involved in anti-bullying, and to allow them to feel safe in approaching them if anything has happened; that they had been given more resources to feel more equipped during bullying instances where they may not have a step-by-step guide to follow; that they knew how to help youth navigate the blurred lines between respectful, legally defensible, and inclusive online dialogues, and divisive, demeaning online interactions; and that they knew how to address the closely connected aspects of discrimination and hate that are deeply involved in many examples of bullying. Furthermore, they expressed that this common lack of anti-bullying knowledge that so many pre-service and graduated teachers experience is alarming, if not frightening, because they know how serious the issue of bullying is, and how badly it can affect their students.

The participants were clear that they just want help to be as prepared as they can be when facing bullying. They wanted professional development, collaborations, and written out protocols and policies that they can follow. Ultimately, they just want support and resources and to be educated in the field of bullying both during their undergraduate degree and continuing throughout their profession after their graduation. These are not knowledge users who need to be convinced of the importance of this knowledge or need to be convinced that this knowledge is correct. They are actively asking for this information, so that they can succeed as best as they can in their role as an anti-bully stakeholder. They do not want to do this on their own, nor should they have to.

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Interview Questions

Background

1. How many years have you worked as a teacher?
2. What grade level(s) have you taught?

Definition

3. How would you define bullying in schools amongst students?

Training / professional experience

4. Did you receive any resources or professional training on the topic of bullying during your undergrad degree?
    a. If yes, could you describe what you were taught? How adequate do you think the training was? Do you believe you were effectively prepared and supported?
    b. If not, would you have liked to receive any? What would you have liked to have learned?
5. Have you had any professional training on bullying after you received your degree or while you were in field placement?
    a. If yes, could you describe what you were taught? How adequate do you think the training was? Was it a specific program? Do you believe that what you were taught is effective?
    b. If no, would you have liked to receive any? What would you have liked to have learned?
6. How would you describe the importance placed on bullying in your teaching certification program?
    a. Were there specific classes that the Education program tailored to understanding bullying and examining anti-bullying strategies?
    b. Was the subject of anti-bullying and/or bullying brought up in any other courses? If so, which ones?
    c. Were there any professors or instructors that had a (verifiable) expertise in the phenomenon of bullying and anti-bullying strategies?
    d. Were you aware of any specific discussions had by faculty on the phenomenon of bullying and anti-bullying strategies?
    e. Were there any specific names of academics or researchers you can recall professors or instructors referring to? If you can't (understandably) remember, you can send me the name later.
    f. Do you have anything else to add about how your alma mater approached the phenomenon of bullying?

Personal experience

7. Did you experience (first or second-hand) anti-bullying interventions while you were a student in elementary and/or high school?
    a. If yes, can you describe them? Were any of them effective? Were any of them not effective? How so?
8. What changes have you seen from anti-bullying methods used when you were in school to anti-bullying methods used now?

Schools

9. How well do you think schools are doing, generally speaking, in their response to bullying?
10. In considering Bill 56: An Act to Prevent and Stop Bullying and Violence in Schools, which states that school boards must see to it that each of their schools provides a healthy and secure learning environment that allows every student to develop his or her full potential, free from any form of bullying or violence, do you think that schools are adequately addressing these requirements?

Programs and policies

11. What anti-bullying policies are you aware of are in place in your school/school board/province?
    a. What is your opinion about current policies and/or legislations that aim to combat bullying in schools?
    b. If you were to make some revisions to these current policies and/or legislations, what would you change and why?
12. Have any schools that you have worked at implemented an anti-bullying program?
    a. If yes, can you describe any that were effective? Can you describe any that were ineffective?
    b. If not, do you believe they should have? Why or why not?
13. In your opinion, are there any anti-bullying measures that you have witnessed or experienced that you believe should be done away with?

Current and emerging challenges

14. Have you noticed COVID-19 causing any changes within bullying behaviours?
    a. To what extent do you think technology and social media has changed the way in which students engage in bullying behaviour?
    b. Do you believe that it a teacher's responsibility to address Internet etiquette and behaviours that may take place outside of the classroom? Please explain why or why not.
    c. Have you personally enacted any anti-cyberbullying interventions? Have you witnessed any? If so, can you describe any that were ineffective? Can you describe any that were effective?
15. What challenges have you encountered in anti-bullying work?
    a. How do you respond to these challenges?
    b. How might the education system further support you to meet these challenges?

Closing

16. Do you have any lingering thoughts? Is there anything else you'd like to discuss on the topic of bullying?
17. Do you have any questions for me?