

McGill University

**The Bullying Spectrum in Grade Schools:
Parents, Teachers, Child Bullies and their Victims**

A Thesis Submitted to

**The School of Social Work
Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research**

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For

The Master's Degree in Social Work

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions and practices of children, their parents, and their teachers with regards to bullying at the grade school level. Eight children were interviewed; three that were identified by their teachers as *victims*, two identified as *bullies* and three identified as regular *peers*. Three parents, each taken from the *victim*, *bully*, *peer* groups were also interviewed, as was four teachers taken from the fifth and sixth grade, within the English and French language stream program. The subjects were interviewed using a semi-structured qualitative interview format.

Victim children were generally perceived negatively by the bullies, their peers and by some teachers. The school used in this study did not adopt a formal bullying program and teachers received no bullying training. Parents of victims and bullies were seen to have had similar childhood experiences. Victims felt they did not receive enough support by their teachers.

RÉSUMÉ

Le but de l'étude a été d'examiner les perceptions et les agissements des enfants, de leurs parents et de leurs professeurs en ce qui a trait au phénomène de l'intimidation qui sévit à l'ordre de l'enseignement primaire. Huit enfants ont été interrogés, dont trois ont été reconnus par leurs professeurs comme étant des victimes, deux des personnes intimidatrices « bullies » et trois des camarades de classe réguliers. Trois parents ont également été interrogés; chacun a été sélectionné parmi le groupe des victimes, des personnes intimidatrices et des pairs. En outre, quatre professeurs, choisis des classes de la cinquième et de la sixième année du programme des langues anglaises et françaises, ont eu une entrevue. Afin d'interroger les sujets, on a eu recours à des entrevues de type qualificatif et semi-structuré.

Les victimes étaient en général perçus de façon négative par les personnes intimidatrices « bullies », par leurs pairs et par quelques professeurs. L'école citée dans cette étude n'a pas adopté de programme officiel sur la prévention de l'intimidation. De même, les professeurs n'ont reçu aucune formation en la matière. Les parents des victimes autant que ceux des personnes intimidatrices « bullies » semblent avoir eu des expériences de vie similaires durant l'enfance. Quant aux victimes, elles ont dit n'avoir pas reçu assez de soutien de la part de leurs professeurs.

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The Bullying Spectrum in Grade Schools: Parents, Teachers, Child Bullies and their Victims

CHAPTER 1

1. INTRODUCTION

For most adults who reflect on their elementary school years, thoughts of forming new friendships and of a pleasant school atmosphere come to mind. However, for a significant proportion of people, elementary school memories evoke a sense of discomfort as they recall being the brunt of everyone's jokes, of being purposely left out of playing circles and/or being physically injured by a certain child or group of children in their school. For them, elementary school was a time of distress and loneliness that is best left locked away somewhere in the subconscious. Today, elementary school life still represents terror and anguish for some children.

Bullying among grade-school aged children is prevalent in Canadian schools. Students are victimized by other children on the school playground, in hallways and even in the classroom. In a Toronto study, 49% of students in elementary school reported that they have been a victim of bullying at least once or twice in the school term (Charach & Pepler, 1995), while in a study by Ziegler and Pepler, 15% maintained that they bullied others somewhat regularly (as cited in Craig & Pepler, 1999). Bullying generally takes place in a covert manner, hidden from school staff and other adults (Besag, 1989). Parents largely underestimate the occurrence of bullying, especially parents of children who bully others (Olweus, 1990). Teachers, although found to be relatively unaware of individual children's involvement in bullying, were also deemed by children to intervene infrequently in bullying episodes that were either brought to their attention or that occurred in their close proximity (Charach, Pepler & Ziegler, 1995). In a study conducted

by Craig and Pepler (1997), school staff is found to be unaware of bullying in approximately 80% of episodes.

Having worked within elementary schools for two years, both as a social worker and as an integration aid, I am dismayed at the lack of concrete strategies available to schools when dealing with bullies and their victims. Bullies are generally scolded for their inappropriate actions while victims are comforted following victimization. Such responses do nothing to curb the aggressive acts of bullies nor do they teach victims to advocate on their own behalf. Before any measures to prevent bullying can be applied in the schools, school staff must be made aware of the intricacies associated with this phenomenon.

Through the utilization of ineffective or inappropriate measures to stop bullying in the school setting, bullying has been permitted to continue. The safety of children who are victims at school is compromised as long as nothing is done to ensure that bullying is eliminated. Children who are bullies are also at risk, as their bullying in the school setting is often symptomatic of problems they may be living in their home environment. In addition, bullies are at a greater risk for difficulties later in life. Farrington and Olweus found that boys who bully are prone to criminal behavior in adulthood, engaging in marital violence, child abuse and sexual harassment (as cited in Craig & Pepler, 1999). Farrington also found that adults who were bullies as children tend to have offspring that bully, and adults who were victimized tend to perpetuate the trend through their children (as cited in Craig & Pepler 1999). Olweus cited that 60% of boys who were identified as bullies in grades 6-9 had at least one criminal conviction by the age of 24. In a related study by Olweus, it was found that 35-40% of school-aged bullies had at least three

criminal convictions by 24 years of age, in comparison to only 10% of children in the control group (as cited in Atlas & Pepler, 1998).

Much of what we know about bullying stems from self-reports by students, school staff and parents. Researchers such as Pepler, Craig and Atlas have observed bullying in the natural setting by using video and audio devices. However, in these instances, the researchers do not interact with the subjects under study.

This present study proposes to interview children, school personnel and parents in a semi-structured qualitative format in an effort to obtain intimate detail on the phenomenon of bullying and victimization of grade school-aged children. A close-up look at the perspectives of both the victim and the bully are brought forth through one-on-one interviews with the children experiencing both these spectrums of bullying. Interviews with peer children allows a third perspective into bullying as peers are often present during such episodes. School staff will provide their thoughts and experiences with bullying at the school setting as well as identify the prospective bullies and victims for the study. Parents will be interviewed in order to gain information concerning the home life of the children in the sample, as well as possible historical antecedents that may have contributed to the bullying or victimization observed in their children.

The goal of this research is to examine the stories of those involved in bullying, in an attempt to extrapolate the themes inherent in its manifestation. Once examined, the data may contribute to better intervention strategies, as it may then better suit the needs of all involved.

The next chapter examines the literature surrounding bullying in grade schools to date. Chapter three outlines the design methodology of the study, followed by subsequent

chapters on data analysis and the study implications. The final chapter will deal with the implications for future research and practice and the conclusions drawn by the researcher.

CHAPTER II

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature that examines bullying and victimization within the grade school level is extensive, providing a review of the definitions, prevalence rates and long-term outcomes of this problem. Programs aimed at intervening as well as preventing bullying are also represented in the literature. Major points of contention surround the age group that encompasses the highest incidence of bullying behavior, as well as the age group within which the risk of being a victim is most likely. Therefore questions remain regarding whether bullying takes place between same aged peers or between older bullies and younger victims. In addition, disagreement exists around the possibility of a child encompassing both bully and victim tendencies.

There is general consensus in the literature regarding the definition of bullying. The act of bullying does not refer to an occasional dispute between students on the playground. Bullying occurs when a person is exposed to regular negative actions by one or several people over time, whereas negative actions imply intentional aggression, whether it be physical or verbal, inflicted upon another (Olweus, 1990). Bullying generally involves a power imbalance that can be asserted by verbal, physical or psychological means (Besag, 1989).

2.1 Bullies

Olweus (1991) described the typical bully and victim in his extensive work in this area. Bullies are characterized as having an aggressive personality pattern and are often aggressive towards teachers, parents and siblings. They are impulsive, dominating, and hold a positive attitude towards the use of violent means. Bullies have little empathy towards their victims and there is no indication that they are anxious and insecure under a

tough surface (Olweus, 1991). Bullying can also be seen as a component of a larger anti-social and behavior problematic disorder. Olweus also showed that boys who bully are most often physically stronger than their victims (as cited in Besag, 1989). A passive-type bully may also be present in bullying episodes, whereby the child participates in bullying but is not the initiator. Instead, they may be referred to as followers or henchmen of the more dominant bully (Olweus, 1991).

Evidence indicates that more boys than girls bully (Charach, Pepler & Ziegler, 1995) and a higher percentage of boys than girls are victimized (Olweus, 1991). Female bullies tend to target other girls as their victims, although girls are more often victimized at the hands of boys. Research by Olweus revealed that different forms of bullying are utilized by the sexes (as cited in Besag, 1989). Girls tend to employ indirect bullying such as social exclusion, gossiping and ostracizing their victims, while boys use a more direct form of bullying such as physical aggression and threats.

2.2 Victims

Olweus (1991) identified two pools of victims, the passive victim and the provocative victim. The provocative victim encompasses a much smaller group, and is characterized by a combination of anxious as well as aggressive behavior patterns. Passive victims are highly represented in the literature, as they comprise a much larger group of children. Passive victims are characterized by an anxious personality pattern and are typically more insecure than average students. They are sensitive and quiet but react to attack by withdrawing and crying. Children who are victims have a negative view of themselves, perceiving themselves as stupid, unattractive, and a failure. They are lonely and abandoned at school and have no close friends in their class. They are not aggressive or teasing in their behavior therefore the bullying they suffer does not come as a response

to any provocation on their part. Their insecure disposition acts as a signal to other children that they will not retaliate if attacked or insulted. Boys who are victims are generally physically weaker than other children (Olweus, 1991).

2.3 Examining the Causes of Bullying

Several theories examine the roots of bullying. Personality attributes in the temperament of the child as well as socialization and home environmental factors are two possible frameworks espoused in the literature, while social cognitive deficits in studies with aggressive boys have also been undertaken, yielding interesting results. Arguments for a systemic view on factors that lead to bullying are also discussed.

Individual differences in children, namely the characteristics in a child's temperament as well as their gender, have been used by Olweus to explain bullying (as cited by Craig & Pepler, 1997). A child who's temperament includes high energy and hot-headedness, may be more at risk for developing bullying behavior than a child that has a quiet temperament (Olweus, 1990). Boys who are victims were reported to be cautious and sensitive at a young age (Olweus, 1991). A child's temperament is often seen as closely linked to their home environment.

It's been argued that the power and aggression that characterizes bullying is rooted in the family context. (Craig & Pepler, 1999). Olweus found that bullies generally live in homes that are typified by harsh punishment and a lack of warmth (as cited in Pepler, Graig & O'Connell, 2000). Bullies are thought to develop anti-social tendencies through the family context, transferring their aggressive behavior patterns from the home to the school setting (Patterson, DeBaryshe, & Ramsey, 1989; Patterson, Reid, & Dishion, 1992; Reid & Patterson, 1989 as cited in Craig & Pepler, 1997). Olweus (1990) described three elements of the primary caretaker's relationship with a child in the home that are

conducive to the development of a bullying disposition: a) a negative emotional attitude of the caretaker that portrays a lack of warmth and involvement with the child; b) permissiveness and a lack of clear limits towards a child's aggressive behavior; c) use of physical punishment and violent emotional outbursts as child rearing methods. Within each scenario, the child's temperament responds with an increase in aggression and hostility towards others. In other words, when a caretaker rears a child with too little love and warmth as well as too much freedom without clear limits, a child's chances of developing an aggressive personality pattern are increased.

It has also been argued that the upbringing of victim children may contribute to their development of victim-type behavior. Victims are often overprotected by their parents, and boys who are victims may share an exceptionally close relationship with their mothers (Olweus, 1991).

In contrast, Dodge and Frame (1982) suggested that a developmental lag in aggressive boys might play a role in their violent outbursts towards other children. Dodge found that aggressive boys overattributed hostility to children in a situation where they are the recipients of the outcome (as cited in Dodge & Frame, 1982). It was demonstrated that aggressive boys fail to inhibit highly available responses (Dodge & Frame, 1982). If the argument is made that an aggressive boy's most available response is hostility, when faced with a situation where there is an ambiguous provocation, aggressive boys will be more likely to show a hostile attributional bias and react violently.

A systemic view of bullying has been put forth in an effort to examine the roots and causes of bullying. Three variables are espoused to play a contributing role; a) personality or temperament of the child, b) the family environment of the child and c) the

school environment of the child (Charach, Pepler & Ziegler, 1995). All three variables interact with one another producing a bullying response from the child.

There is no evidence indicating that victimization is caused by "external deviations" of the victim, such as overt identifiable differences in a given child. In other words, obesity, eyeglasses, ethnicity or other specific attributes of the victim are not the reasons behind a child's victimization. The child's reaction to the taunting is what reinforces a bully to continue his attacks (Besag, 1989). This being said, only physical strength was seen as playing a role in bullying among aggressive boys.

2.4 Peer Involvement

The role of peers in bullying is an important aspect to consider when studying its phenomenon. Craig and Pepler (1997) found that peers are often involved in bullying episodes. In their study, 80% of peers took part in the interaction, with 12% of peers intervening, 23% acting as simple bystanders and 30% participating in the episode as an aggressor. The involvement of peers highlights the idea that even those children not specifically identified by school staff as being a bully may in fact show bullying tendencies when a bullying episode occurs. In addition, the influence of peers may be important when attempting to curb children who exhibit aggressive behavior towards others (Olweus, 1990).

2.5 Some Opposing Views

Under dispute is whether the bullies are older than their victims are, or whether bullying takes place among same-aged peers. Pepler, Craig and Connolly (1999) report that bullying decreases with age, indicating that only 5-6% of students between the ages of 13 and 16 report they bully others (as cited in Craig & Pepler, 1999). Craig and Pepler (1997) found that children between the ages of 6-8 as well as children 9-11 years of age

were equally likely to be involved in bullying, with bullying taking place between students within the same school grade. However, Charach, Pepler and Ziegler (1995), noted that younger children reported being victimized more than older children and youth between the ages of 11 and 12 reported the highest incidence of bullying behavior. Olweus, in his description of bullies, indicates that such children are generally one to two years older than their victims (as cited in Besag, 1989).

There are also opposing views on whether a child may be both a bully and a victim simultaneously. Besag (1989) maintains it is possible that a child who is bullied by older children in turn becomes a bully towards children younger than they are. Olweus however, states that the home life of bullies and victims is so diverse that it would be difficult to have both the bully and the victim represented in one child (as cited in Besag, 1989). More research is needed in this area in order to determine whether the dual role of bully and victim in a given child is possible and in what capacity.

2.6 Intervention and Prevention Strategies

Intervention that favors a positive outcome must target all facets of the bullying epistemology, utilizing an ecological method whereby the personality, home life and school setting of the child are taken into account (Charach, Pepler & Ziegler, 1995). Victims must be encouraged to tell a teacher, allowing an adult to intervene as soon as possible. Intervention with bullies should focus on empathy training, social skills, problem solving and self-regulation training. Parents should be educated regarding the short and long-term effects of bullying and helped to recognize the signs of bullying or victimization in their children. A home environment that includes warmth, positive interest by parents combined with firm limits to unacceptable behavior must be encouraged (Olweus, 1991). The use of non-hostile sanctions for children who are

reprimanded as well as consistent consequences is an important part of child rearing practices.

An ecological mode of intervention that focuses on the behavior of bullies, victims and other peers under the wider spectrum of the school setting and the home is encouraged (Charach, Pepler & Ziegler, 1995). Intervention in the school setting should include principals, teachers, peers, and students in its paradigm (Graig & Pepler, 1999) while taking into account the aspect(s) within the school context that may contribute to bullying.

Educating school staff about the act of bullying, as well as its prevalence, is a necessary start to any intervention and prevention initiatives. Bullying should be uniformly defined within the school setting to avoid mislabeling. Bullying episodes are not always clear and obvious to the observer, some may not distinguish between rough play and bullying while mild forms of bullying may not be detected.

Once bullying is identified, an increase in supervision within areas prone to its manifestation, such as playgrounds, hallways and classrooms are needed (Craig & Pepler, 1997). The school layout in such areas should also be examined and reworked if necessary. As bullying episodes are generally brief, lasting only 38 seconds, removing any obstacles that may prevent adult supervision must be undertaken (Craig & Pepler, 1997).

Peers are now considered an integral part of the bullying phenomenon. Peers therefore must be added to the intervention equation as mentors in conflict management as well as encouraged to take part in peer intervention (Craig & Pepler, 1997). However, as empathy for victims has been detected to decrease with age, anti-bullying programs must begin early in a child's school life to be most effective (Atlas & Pepler, 1998).

Studies that include adult education, peer awareness and the creation of a school climate that views bullying as inappropriate achieve the most favorable results (Pepler, Craig, Ziegler & Charach, 1993). In a study by Pepler, Craig, Ziegler and Charach (1993) within four schools in the Toronto area, the researchers used a quantitative self report questionnaire approach to determine the frequency and type of bullying in 9 to 14 year olds, as well as the children's perceived level of adult and peer intervention. The questionnaires were administered prior to, and following, the institution of an anti-bullying intervention program within the schools. One goal of the intervention was to heighten the awareness of teachers, parents and peers while increasing their intervention in bullying episodes. The success of the program was later discussed in qualitative interviews with team leaders in each school.

The outcome of the study showed limited results with parents. Interest was limited to a small group of parents already committed and supportive to school activities. In the school setting, staff increased supervision on the playground and in hallways, while restructuring play areas to allow better supervision and constructive play, and discourage bullying opportunities. However, despite establishing codes for positive behavior in schools, school staff did not themselves display clear evidence of behavior changes when dealing with bullying. While some staff remained unclear as to how to handle a bullying episode, others were uncertain as to how to define such an interaction (Pepler, Craig, Ziegler, Charach, 1993). Some of the schools in the study recognized the difficulty in dealing effectively with victims, finding it easier to deal with bullies.

The researchers suggest preventive measures, such as encouraging group work initiatives between students of mixed age, gender and ethnic groups foster positive social

interactions among peers. In addition, teachers could provide early individual support to perceived victims and bullies in the hopes of addressing any problems.

Craig and Pepler (1996) overviewed the effectiveness of the Toronto Anti-Bullying program in seven elementary schools, including four pilot schools and three intervention schools. The results indicate some successes along with areas still in dire need of improvement.

The authors report that school staff who are motivated and support the program, show more initiative in dealing with bullying than they did prior to administering the anti-bullying program. This was manifested by an increase in supervision, and a willingness to speak to children about the problem.

Despite some curriculum changes that reflect bullying issues, such as the creation of a mentoring program aimed at increasing peer involvement, there were no significant changes in the number of peers involved in bullying. Peers who joined bullying episodes, that tried to stop bullying or felt unpleasant watching such episodes did not change over time, following the intervention (Craig & Pepler, 1996). However, efforts to involve peers within a bullying intervention program is still important, as peers are present more often during episodes than are adults.

It was suggested that encouraging victims to report bullying incidents as well as training them to increase their self-confidence, resist bullies and develop better social skills could lead to an improved school life. Parents of victims must be encouraged to support their children, recognize signs of victimization and work with the school in preventing future episodes (Pepler, Craig, Ziegler, Charach, 1993).

In addition to developing empathy, social skills and self-regulation in bullies, teachers could help re-direct bullying behavior by providing other ways to experience

leadership in the classroom. Parents must also be included in improving the behavior and attitudes of bullies.

All parents must be made aware of the problems associated with bullying and be involved in curtailing its manifestation. Parents of children involved in bullying must be informed and provided with an active role in changing the destructive patterns within the home and school environments.

CHAPTER III

3. DESIGN METHODOLOGY

The present study utilizes an exploratory qualitative design to examine the stories of elementary school-aged children, parents and school staff in an effort to identify the themes generated around bullying. The findings of this research are expected to aid in the development and application of intervention or prevention strategies dealing with bullying in grade schools.

The sample size of this study will include children between 9-12 years of age and their parents. Teachers will be given a short questionnaire containing the definitions of a bully, victim and well-adjusted student, otherwise known as peers (included as a control) that will serve to identify the sample of children from the classroom. In this manner, teachers will provide the list of children that fall into the desired category. Teachers will not be made explicitly aware of which label identifies these three categories of students.

Children characterized as bully, victim and peers will be interviewed employing a qualitative semi-structured interview format. Parents from each child category as well as the four teachers that head the 5th and 6th grade English and French stream classes will also be interviewed utilizing the same format. In this school, teachers either conduct their courses predominantly in English or in French. Thus the views of the teachers in either language stream are essential to this study. Themes will be extrapolated from these interviews and subsequently analyzed in an effort to obtain insightful information on bullying at the grade school level.

3.1 Data Collection

After obtaining consent from the school, the 5th and 6th grade teachers will be approached with the questionnaire encompassing the definitions of the target group. The goal of the study, to probe further into the problem of bullying, will be explained. The parents of the students identified in the classroom will then be sent a consent form, outlining the goal of the research, my desire to meet with their child, as well as my intention to include their perspectives in the study. Interviews will be audio-taped following permission from participants. The recording will facilitate analysis and interpretation during the data interpretation phase. Participants will be informed of their right to terminate the interview at any time.

3.2 Possible Problems with Research Design

Parents may not be willing to participate in the study, or may provide limited information when discussing personal history or the upbringing of their children. However, any information gleaned from interviews with parents would be important as home environment plays a considerable role in a child's subsequent school behavior. Children, especially those who have been victimized, may also be reluctant to disclose all details related to their victimization.

3.3 Issues of Confidentiality

The school will not be privy to the intimate details of the students and adults I will have spoken with. Their names will be kept confidential. General findings may be shared with the principal and support staff as a means to create future intervention and prevention programs.

3.4 Relevance

Past studies have used field observation and questionnaire/quantitative approaches to the study of bullying. There is little research that directly interviews those involved in bullying, such as the parents, teachers and children themselves. This study hopes to shed some light on the thoughts, feelings and experiences of each group, thus leading to better suggestions that would deal with bullying in the school setting. Future research using an interview approach or a combination of qualitative and quantitative and/or observational approach could yield interesting results.

3.5 Conclusion

Bullying may be seen as part of a greater problem involving conduct disorder in children. Social Workers who deal with such children and their families must be made aware of, as well as informed upon, the best mode in which to deal with aggressive behavior in the school.

Bullying at the grade school level adversely affects the bully and victim throughout their lives. When examined under a wider context, the children involved carry their experiences with them until adulthood, with bullies at a greater risk for criminal activity and victims more likely to pass on the victimization they experienced to their offspring. Bullying must not be ignored any further. While children may be more easily controlled at a young age, adolescents and adults who exhibit similar aggressive tendencies could place themselves, as well as those around them, in serious danger.

CHAPTER IV

4. Data Analysis

The final sample size consists of eight 5th and 6th grade children taken from within both the English and French language streams. Classroom teachers identified three children as victims, two as bullies and three as regular peers. All four 5th and 6th grade teachers took part in the interview portion of the study. Of the parents asked to take part in the interview portion, three agreed: one from each of the victim, bully and peer groups.

The children were interviewed in the school, in a "quiet" office or room on the premises. Teachers were interviewed in their classrooms. Two parents were interviewed in their respective homes and one parent was interviewed from a quiet coffee house near their home. The following sections describe the themes extracted from the interviews with children and adults. The first three sections pertain to the victim children, bullies and peers respectively, followed by the sections regarding parents and teachers. Each section will begin with a general description of the selected sample group followed by a depiction of main themes.

4.1 Victims

Two boys and one girl, identified as victims by their teachers, were interviewed. For the purposes of identification without compromising anonymity the girl will be labeled B, and the boys, F and K respectively.

4.1.1 General Description

F is in sixth grade. He is twelve years old and lives in a nuclear family setting, with both his birth parents. He has one older half sibling who does not live in the family home. F is very articulate and insightful, relating his experiences in an open fashion. He has a parent who works in the mental health field and seems to have a greater

understanding about the manifestation of bullying than other children his age. He is presently taking martial arts classes.

K is in sixth grade. He is eleven and lives with a foster family that includes B and three other children. K related well to the subject at hand, and conversed easily about his school and home life. K admits he doesn't play with same aged kids and instead spends his time with younger children when on the playground. He says he is viewed positively by others his age but does not describe same aged friends.

B is twelve years old and also in sixth grade. She is a foster child, living in the same home as K. She lives with three other children, including an older brother who is a blood relative and two children who are the foster parent's own offspring. B is very open and relates to adults easily. She was candid about her experiences at school and at home. From her home life description, it is possible that she is bullied by her older brother. B tends to spend most of her recess and lunch hours with teachers or alone in the computer room.

4.1.2 Who are the Bullies and their Targets?

All three children identified differences between themselves and their peers as the reason why they were bullied. While the boys tended to point out physical factors to explain their victimization, the girl also spoke about personality traits to describe why she was a target for bullies.

F felt others teased him because he was the new kid in school. He also emphasized that bullies are bigger than he is, and he is being picked on because of his small stature. He stated that without the help of other kids he calls friends, he is not safe at school.

K stated that he was singled out because he is an adopted child and a medical condition that could at times engender momentary lapses (not named here due to

confidentiality) may also be why bullies target him. K related that bullies tend to capitalize on such differences when targeting victims. He stated that bullies seek out children who appear weak and thus would be a good candidate for victimization.

Like K, B also felt she was first targeted because she was adopted, and said she does not feel safe at school. She described herself as the tallest student in class and therefore stands out from others. However, she admitted that she often talks back to children who tease her and hypothesized that this may encourage children to pick on her because she is a "problem" at school. In addition, B felt that she was partly to blame for her school situation because she "bugs kids" and "teases them back".

When describing why bullies behave the way they do, all three victims felt such children act purposely, with the intention to hurt and terrify their victims. Though F said bullies most often act without provocation, he was the only child to state that there could be a link between a bully's actions and his home environment. F felt a bully's behavior at school is the result of an abusive home setting.

K stated that a bully uses his behavior as a means to draw attention to themselves. He stated that children who bully like to impress others while hurting their victims in the process. He specified that in most cases, the victim is not to blame for their victimization.

B also felt bullies act intentionally and as they enjoy tormenting other children. She said bullies are not afraid of reprisals and are aware that their actions hurt others.

4.1.3 Telling on Bullies; but who listens?

Though all three children related that in theory they should tell an adult when they are being bullied at school, all alluded that this was not necessarily an efficacious manner to deal with the problem. Each child expressed doubts that this actually leads to a cessation in bullying, or even to a temporary halt of its occurrence.

F related that when he tells a teacher about a bullying episode, there is no guarantee that something will be done. He stated that when a teacher does act, they normally enforce the current school policy of giving bullies a detention. F pointed out that this form of punishment doesn't stop the bully from resuming his actions once this punishment is over.

When it comes to telling his parents, F said he would tell them only if he had experienced "abuse" rather than if he were simply "teased" at school, as the latter happened too often to mention. If he chose to tell his parents, they would normally inform his teachers and the bully would then receive the prescribed detention. F recognized that the system currently in place does not curb bullying. He believed bullies are aware of the flaws in the system and thus simply resume bullying once the detention is over.

K admitted he doesn't always tell an adult about a bullying episode because this does nothing to actually curb bullying in the school. He felt the school's policy of handing out detentions to bullies does not deal with the problem, as the bully may thus become more enraged with the victim. K felt that there are not enough teachers on the playground or in the halls to catch bullying while it is happening, and felt the school should enforce stricter rules against bullying.

K will at times tell his parents if he is bullied but conceded this does nothing to reduce the occurrence of bullying in the long term. After his parents speak with the school principal, the bully invariably receives a detention but resumes his behavior once the detention is over.

B explained that teachers rarely see a bullying episode because children wait until a teacher isn't looking before engaging in such episodes. She admitted that she is a

frequent target but then explained that teachers become "annoyed" with her because she will tell them about bullying episodes on a daily basis.

B felt she is not always supported at home. When she tells her mother about her victimization, she is told to "stop bugging the kids" and to "ignore them".

4.1.4 What Role do Peers Play?

Peers may play a significant role in directing the outcome of a bullying episode. While their presence can bolster the bully and encourage victimization, their negative reaction to a particular bullying episode may discourage its future occurrence. In addition, peers may affect the bullying action indirectly, by virtue of their role as audience. Each child was asked to describe what action or reaction peers have during a bullying episode.

F has a unique school situation because he described a group of peers whose presence keeps him "safe" at school. He recounted a bullying episode where his friends crowded the bully and diffused the situation. He said without his friends, he doesn't feel secure at school because he wouldn't benefit from their reinforcements.

K described the peer's involvement in the aftermath of a teasing episode. He stated that following such episodes, he will see and hear his peers whispering about what had taken place. However, if they were present during its occurrence, they will most likely do nothing to stop the bullying from continuing.

B explained that peers have in the past either come to her aid or have acted as contributors to the bullying. She recounted how most often peers would stand around watching and listening and then walk away laughing after having witnessed an episode. She explained that peers get enjoyment out of seeing another child teased. However, on other occasions, some peers have attempted to diffuse a bullying episode by directly

telling the bully to stop teasing. According to B, the latter instances are rare because the peers are afraid they may then become victims themselves.

4.2 Bullies

Two bully children were used for this sample group. The difficulty in obtaining parental consent for the children identified as bullies for the purpose of this study did not permit three children to be interviewed. However, the two children that were interviewed, identified here as M and C, nonetheless provide an idea of what bully children think and feel about their actions.

4.2.1 General Description

M is twelve years old and is in sixth grade. He lives with his mother, eighteen-year-old brother and his maternal grandfather. M's father is deceased. He has serious learning disabilities and requires the regular use of a tutor. Though M seemed to relate well to the questions, his answers were very short and he did not develop his thoughts. Overall, M feels that he is regarded positively by his peers.

C is also twelve years of age and in sixth grade. He lives with his parents and is the eldest of his four siblings; two sisters, ten and three respectively, and two brothers aged eight and six. Although at the beginning of the interview C was a little hesitant to develop his answers, by the end he was speaking candidly about his thoughts. He spoke well and had a well-developed vocabulary.

4.2.2 What's in a Victim?

While victims tend to see the bullies as acting purposefully and without provocation, the bullies do not share this view. Bullies tend to regard the attitude of victims negatively, to the extent that in some cases, the victims act to provoke the bully to attack. In addition, the perception of the situation itself may also be significant. In the

previous section on victims, it was shown that victims view the bullies as initiators of an attack without provocation, whether verbal or physical. In this section it will be shown that bullies view the victims, and not themselves, as instigators.

In characterizing the children that are picked on at school, M described victims as children that are "mean" and that "make fun of people". He explained that it is the children who poke fun at their peers that will be picked on by others.

When asked whether the child he does pick on deserves what happens to them, he responded "no not all the time, sometimes he does". Although the signs of remorse are encouraging, M later stated that he "doesn't care" if he gets in trouble by the school, and that school policy on punishment does not act as a deterrent. The latter once again reinforces the idea that current school policy is not effective in reducing bullying.

C stated that he reacts towards children who provoke him. He stated that he becomes "really mad" as a result of other children making fun of him, his family or his friends, which in turn provokes a physical reaction from him. C described victims as children who are "weak and shy" and rarely tell the teacher that they were victimized. He stated that victims are often smaller children that are not treated positively by their peers. In addition to physical bullying, C admitted that he has also verbally made fun of other students.

4.2.3 Self-perception and the Perception of Others

The perception bullies have of themselves and the view they believe their peers have of them may play a role in the behavior a bully exhibits at school. If a child feels others support and agree with their actions, efforts by the school to limit the behavior through detention may not be sufficient if social denigration by their peers isn't included in the mix.

When asked to describe himself, C stated that he was "a nice person, a generous person" who wouldn't hurt people unless they made him mad. When it comes to the perceptions his peers have of him, C felt others look up to him. He described himself as liked by others, stating his peers think he's "cool", though he admitted some children are afraid of him. C is aware that he is bigger and stronger than others are, and even described himself as more aggressive than some of his peers.

M said his peers see him as a "good friend", and is generally favorably regarded by others. He described spending weekends and evenings playing with friends. However, when it comes to the perception adults have of him, M stated that he is often blamed for instigating altercations with others, something he finds frustrating.

4.2.4 School Policy and the Home

It is interesting to note the bully's thoughts concerning the school's policy on bullying. These bully children have sampled the system and its repercussions yet keep up the same behavior. In addition, unless the school calls the parents directly, it is the child who will either impart or withhold information regarding bullying episodes that may have occurred on a given day.

The sample school has a policy of "reflection" and "detention". The child may be asked to stand at a wall during recess if he or she is found to have engaged in negative behavior with another student. The bully may then be asked to go to an empty classroom or library to "reflect" and explain their behavior. However, if deemed necessary, a teacher may also keep a student in detention.

Although M explained that he tries to avoid "getting in trouble" as much as possible, he did not seem phased by the school's use of repercussions for bullying. He said that he "doesn't care" if he gets caught, although he explained that having to go to

reflection or detention does interfere with the enjoyment of school activities. When it comes to informing his mother about what occurred during his day, M explained that he tells her he "did good in school today". He will not tell her if he was involved in a fight at school as she may impose repercussions and call the principal.

C explained that teachers aren't as observant as they should be. He explained matter-of-factly what was involved in the school policy regarding reflection and detention. At home, C will be grounded and privileges will be revoked if his parents find out he was fighting at school. C said he does not tell his parents about such situations, and will instead wait and see if the school calls home.

4.3 Peers

Three girls were interviewed for this group. They were selected in the same process used for the selection of bullies and victims-- teachers were asked to suggest students that fit the profile for "well-adjusted" students. The students are labeled L, B and N.

4.3.1 General Description

N lives with both birth parents as well as her nine year-old sister and three year-old brother. She is a quiet girl who admits she has few friends and often plays with her sister during lunch and recess. N is a good student and seems happy at school. She is eleven years old and is in sixth grade.

B is twelve years of age and also in sixth grade. She lives with both birth parents and her eight year-old sister. B is articulate and friendly, and seems to enjoy the company of several same aged peers.

L is eleven years old and is in fifth grade. Her parents are divorced and she lives with her mother and older brother who is, by her account, victimized at his high school.

4.3.2 Peers have their own Problems

Two of the three girls identified and discussed some of the issues they are themselves dealing with at school or at home. However difficult some of these problems were, neither described incidents in which they were either regularly victimized or where they bullied others. The girls' teachers could also attest that these three seem to be well-adjusted, regular kids.

L lives in a broken home and though she did not relate details regarding her home life, any divorce will impose some stress on the child, which in turn could affect her school life and/or relationships. L described several incidents where it appeared her older brother had been victimized at school. She recounted incidents in which he may have been bullied in both grade school as well as his current high school. At one point in the interview she explained how she is concerned for his safety, and how she sometimes fears that her brother's aggressor may one day come after her. However, despite such strains, she performs well in school, seems to have many same aged friends and is neither a bully nor victim in her school environment.

N lives in an intact home. She explained that she enjoys learning new things at school. N spends a lot of time playing with her younger sister during school breaks and does not describe many same aged friends. She tends to keep to herself, and even described some painful moments in which she is often neglected when students are asked to pick a partner for school projects or to take part in teams during gym class. Such instances leave her feeling "sad". In addition, she patiently explained that she believes others perceive her as a "nice girl" but perhaps they do not try to approach her because she is dark skinned. However, despite such situations, N is not regularly victimized or

bullied by other students. She feels safe at school and does not describe any teasing nor does she bully other kids.

B described many same-aged friends and what seems like a normal school life. She described playing with her friends as the "best part of school" and taking tests as the worst. She depicted a good home life. Unlike the other girls, no specific strain was evident from her interview.

4.3.3 Bullies and Victims: as seen by their Peers

The peers were included in this research as they can provide a "third side" to the situation. From their descriptions of bullies and victims, an interesting picture regarding the dynamics between these children emerges. In addition, their role in bullying episodes, as well as their possible future role in reducing such episodes from occurring, can be gauged from the perceptions they hold.

B described the onset of bullying episodes as occurring in either one of two ways. She explained that at times the victim may say or do something that angers the bully and prompts a physical or verbal reaction, or the bully may act without being prompted. However, although she described some episodes where the bully acts without provocation, B characterized targets as children who make fun of others. She went on to explain that victims are normally the kids other students dislike. Most disturbing is her comment that such kids are chosen by bullies because "nobody will care" what happens to them. B said she generally sees bullying taking place between students in the same class or grade.

N depicted victims as children who incite bullying episodes due to their inherent personalities or "how they are" when at school. She did not believe that children are picked on based on exterior differences they have from others, like wearing glasses for example. She explained that the victim children often "starts to do something" to provoke

a bullying episode, such as making fun of the bully. Though she said she "feels sorry" for victim children, she explained that such children normally become targets due to their propensity for making fun of others. N said she could easily identify all the bullies in her grade, as such children are normally known for their behavior throughout the school. She felt victimization still exists in schools because parents of victims "don't care" about their kids and that they don't speak about bullying with their children. N said she avoids becoming a victim at school by avoiding situations where she could get into a fight with bullies. She explained that kids who get picked on are those that "don't mind their own business". N related that she will normally see the same students in the same grade engage in bullying.

L stated that children bully others because they themselves have no friends and have "nothing better to do". She described bullies as children who are simply "not nice" to a particular person and are not concerned about getting into trouble with the school. It is her opinion that both boys and girls can be bullies though boys make up the majority, as they are physically bigger. She described how an older boy may pick on students younger than he is, because he knows that "they can't hurt him". She has witnessed students within the same grade as well as students from different grades engage in bullying-- though she said the bully is normally a student bigger than his victim. However, L believed victims could also provoke the bully to act. She explained how victims will sometimes do or say "something mean" and incite the bully's reaction. She described how she used to feel bad for targeted children, but due to the frequency of such occurrences, she is no longer concerned by bullying incidents.

4.3.4 The Teachers and the School

The manner in which a teacher will deal with bullying in the school serves as a model for their students. Interviews with both victims and bullies have shown that students come to learn which teachers will take bullying seriously and reprimand those involved, and which will not. If the goal of a particular program entails converting peers into proactive agents against the manifestation of bullying in the school setting, teachers must serve as positive role models in this regard.

L explained that she has only told those teachers "who care" about the bullying she witnesses. Conversely, she described how a certain teacher who no longer works at the school would "always listen", and therefore prompted more kids to go to her. L stated that she doesn't always tell teachers because telling may have ill effects on the victim child. L recounted how once informed about a bullying episode, certain teachers who are "mean" may then punish the child who is "getting hit on". Currently the school will deal with bullying by imposing reflection time (having the children think about what they did), having students write "apology letters" or assigning detention. She explained that as far as she knows, teachers have rarely called home if the students were involved in verbal bullying. L felt that if she were able to change current rules at the school, she would have teachers mediate between the bully and victim children in an effort to reduce bullying. L related that teachers have at times imposed sanctions on children who verbally bully others, whether through reflection or even detention.

N explained that teachers are good people to deal with bullying episodes if they see it happen themselves, as they will then most likely become involved and impose reflection time or detention. Otherwise, she explained that teachers have resorted to asking others who may have witnessed what occurred. When asked if she would change

any current rules used in the school, N responded that she would suspend students that engaged in physical fighting. It should be noted that N related she has witnessed numerous physical bullying episodes in the school setting.

Just as her peers described above, B felt that not all teachers are good people to tell about bullying episodes. She reiterated that there are some teachers you tell, and others you don't. B said that if she could change anything regarding school life, she would ensure that no one would be allowed to make fun of others.

4.3.5 What do Peers do?

How do peers perceive the bullying taking place around them? Are they compelled to do something about it or just stand around watching their fellow students get abused as though they were watching a movie? In many ways, it is the peers that hold the key to how bullying is perceived in schools. They can either encourage or discourage it from taking place, simply by their actions.

When it comes to what peers do when there is a verbal or physical episode taking place-- N said that most students "just watch". She related that "one sixth of the school" may be compelled to tell an adult while the rest will "just look". N said she has never felt pressured to bully victims because others were doing it.

L explained that some peers will attempt to break up a fight, although this may sometimes result in them taking part in the episode themselves. She related that some peers will tell a teacher, and has witnessed others tell a bully to stop verbally abusing their victim. L said she does feel pressure to engage in bullying if others, especially her friends, are doing it. She explained that some of that pressure comes from the fear of becoming the next victim if she does not follow suit. She related that she has witnessed

both physical and verbal bullying in the school, though the verbal teasing is what she sees on a regular basis.

Though B related that she doesn't habitually make fun of others, she conceded that she can be enticed to engage in verbal bullying if her friends are doing it. She said she will most often tell an adult if she witnesses bullying. B explained that some bullies will turn on witnesses and call them "tattle-tales" for telling teachers about bullying incidents.

4.4 Parents

A parent taken from each of the victim, bully and peer groups were interviewed. In this section a parallel is made between the parents' childhood and the current experiences of their children. In addition, the parents were prompted to reflect on the relationship they share with their children and what they would like to see incorporated into the school system to deal with bullying on school grounds.

4.4.1 General Description

All three of the parents interviewed were mothers. The mother of the victim child, F, is forty-five years of age and will be referred to as Mrs. C. She is her husband's second wife, both are the biological parents of F. A half sibling, from her husband's first marriage, lives outside the home. Mrs. C was an adopted child who lived with her adoptive parents, both are still married and alive today. Mrs. C works in the mental health field.

Mrs. E is the mother of the bully child, M. She is fifty years of age and lives with M as well as an older son and her own father. Mrs. E is Caucasian and her late husband (who died recently at the age of 64) was African-American.

Mrs. S is the mother of the peer child L. She is 43 years old and separated from L's father. She lives with L and her older brother. Mrs. S runs a house cleaning business.

4.4.2 Pregnancy and Early Upbringing

A correlation between both the pregnancy and early development of the child with their later behavior are explored in this section. It is interesting to note that these factors are markedly different between the three mothers, especially the mothers of the bully and victim children.

Mrs. C described her pregnancy with F as without incident. She did not mention any difficulties at birth, and described F as a happy but quiet baby. She said F was an easy child to raise, though she encountered a few challenges in raising both F and partly raising his half sibling. She explained that very early on, she would try to expose F to other children, as she wanted to ensure he, unlike herself, would develop a social network.

Mrs. E described a very difficult pregnancy with M. She was a severe diabetic and needed insulin throughout her pregnancy. M was born at 34 weeks with under-developed lungs and maintained a "very fragile health" during his first few years of life. Though her pregnancy was difficult, Mrs. E described M as a very happy baby. She said he ate and slept well and was a normal child. She described M as very active growing up.

Mrs. S said her pregnancy with L was problem-free, as was the childbirth itself. However, Mrs. S described her own emotional state as "sad", as she was experiencing problems with L's father at that time--a relationship she described as emotionally abusive. Mrs. S described L as a very happy and active baby.

4.4.3 Who is my Child?

In this section, the mothers were asked to describe their children as well as their relationships with them. How close are they to their children? What pressures do their

children experience both at home or at school that account for who they are? How well do they relate and communicate with their children?

Mrs. C felt that she and her son have a close relationship. She said she knows F very well and that he would confide in her if he needed to. Every day Mrs. C prompts F on how his school day went and discussions tend to flow easily between mother and son. However, she explained that even if F doesn't directly tell her something is bothering him, she would be able to sense if he was bullied at school based on his body language and agitation. Mrs. C said that F "hates school" and conceded that she has had to transfer him from many different schools due to bullying situations there. During his last transfer, F was placed in third grade instead of forth grade because he was unable to keep up with his studies at his previous school. Although F has had some friends, Mrs. C stated that "troubled kids" tend to gravitate most towards him. The manner in which Mrs. C deals with her son's victimization is by one on one "interventions" and by having F learn karate. The latter was included so that he can both bolster his self-esteem as well as defend himself physically if the situation presents itself.

Mrs. E described her son M as a very reserved boy who has difficulty verbalizing his needs. She recounted how she must ask M a multitude of questions about his day at school, though she receives little information in return. Mrs. E explained that M confides in his older brother, but that even this is limited. On a scale from one to ten on how well she knows her son, Mrs. E answered "six". Mrs. E felt that her son had shared a close relationship to his late father. She will learn about M's bullying through the school, rather than directly through her son. M has significant learning difficulties, which became apparent when M was three years of age. His abilities to read and write are at a grade one level and he has no concept of time. M is diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity

Disorder as well as severe dyslexia. He is "coded" in the school system and receives the aid of a tutor to work through his learning disabilities. Mrs. E felt M's learning disabilities have a direct impact on his behavior. She described how M easily becomes frustrated at home and that his behavior engenders a compensatory reaction within the household as she and her husband were always more "tolerant" with M than with his older brother. Mrs. E believed that M will bully others as a result of his academic frustrations. In order to discourage bullying, Mrs. E is kept informed by the school regarding bullying episodes so that sanctions may be imposed on M at both the home and school levels.

Mrs. S described a very good communication between she and her daughter, L. She said L will confide in her for most things, and she's confident L would inform her if she were being victimized at school. She explained that if L comes to her with a problem at school, they work it out together. She has had her children sign a contract detailing house rules so that these are understood and endorsed by the household. Although L isn't experiencing any victimization at school, Mrs. S related that L hasn't made many close friends. Mrs. S felt that the difficulties L's older brother is experiencing has greatly impacted her daughter. The older sibling has been diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorders and as a result, Mrs. S spends a lot of time with him. In addition, Mrs. S explained that the older sibling is routinely physically bullied at school, which may also have an affect on L. Mrs. S also described a strained relationship between L and her father. She stated that he is verbally abusive with the children, which in turn causes additional stress on L.

4.4.4 Parent's Childhood and School Life

A parent's own childhood may at times be a mirror image of their children's current experiences. Did the parents live through their own bullying or victimization? Are

their children emulating, or to a further extent, "re-living" their parents' school experience? This section explores the parent's recollections of their childhood and elementary school years.

Mrs. C recounted a rather unhappy childhood. She was an adopted child and described a youth that was marred by a physically abusive mother and a friendless grade-school experience. Though she said she had a troubled childhood, she described fond elementary school memories. Mrs. C attended an all-girls school she described as "safe", a setting where she found refuge with other adults. She described herself as a bright student who received a lot of encouragement by her teachers. She explained that she felt more comfortable with adults than with other children.

Mrs. C stated that she was not victimized at school. When prompted to recall children who were bullied at school, Mrs. C remembered a disadvantaged young girl the students would avoid because of poor hygiene. When asked how she thought this girl had turned out today she responded "somehow I think she's O.K." Mrs. C had some recollections of a school bully, a student she would avoid whenever possible. She felt that today, this bully is most likely "not very happy" with her life.

Mrs. E recounted a "wonderful" childhood, at home and at school. She had fond memories of her elementary school life, with some of her friendships still strong today. Mrs. E described herself as a "non-conformist" who would often get into trouble at school, "talk back" to teachers, or was sent out of class for not raising her hand. She was even suspended from school on a couple of occasions. Mrs. E was part of a popular group of friends and said she was never victimized. Though she did not consider herself a bully, Mrs. E recounted one incident where she took part in teasing a student whom she described as "unattractive" with "thick glasses". She explained that one of her motivations

for bullying this girl was to be part of a certain circle of students. Mrs. E related that many of the children she attended elementary school with have remained part of her community. While the victim children of her youth are functioning well, she admitted that the children she knew as bullies have grown into very successful people.

Mrs. E was an adopted child but enjoyed a good relationship with her parents, describing them as people who "really wanted children". At home, Mrs. E would be grounded, and privileges taken away if she got into trouble at school. On one occasion when she was caught smoking cigarettes, Mrs. E recounted how she was given extra chores and was unable to engage in after-school activities. She described her relationship with her parents as very respectful, with a home environment that fostered conversation and the expression of views. Her mother has since passed away but she maintains a very close relationship with her father.

Mrs. S did not describe fond memories from elementary school. Though she had made a couple of school friends, she was very shy and admitted to being made fun of at school. One of her most hurtful memories was having her whole classroom invited to a birthday party, except for she and one other student. Mrs. S recalled incidents where other kids were targeted by bullies and related how she would avoid these students for fear of receiving the same treatment. Mrs. S hypothesized that the children who were victimized in her youth are most likely still carrying the emotional scars today. She believed the bullies have evolved into "grown up jerks", most likely displaying the same behaviors they did as children. Mrs. S said that if she could change anything about her elementary school experience, she would like to go back to that period with more self-confidence in herself.

Mrs. S described her childhood as difficult. She lived in a very strict home environment and was expected to pitch in with cleaning and cooking at a very young age. Her father passed away when she was twenty-three and she described a conflictual relationship with her mother.

4.4.5 Thoughts on Bullying and the Role of the School

Mrs. C defined bullying as physical, emotional and intellectual abuse. She said children should tell teachers if they are experiencing bullying, and should not stop telling until someone listens. Mrs. C felt that both the bully and the victim child should be held responsible for their actions, and a good school-based program should reflect this premise. She felt that the victim children should be empowered to solve their problems. Though she would like to see more teachers become active in limiting bullying episodes on school grounds, she admitted teachers may not have received the proper training to deal with bullying.

Mrs. E described bullies as children with a low sense of security. She said there is always at least one bully in the classroom, and their behavior stems from problems at home, or manifestations of a broken home. Mrs. E felt the best way to deal with bullying is to maintain good communication between parents and the school. However, she felt that teachers should become more involved at the school if bullying is to be curtailed. In her view, one way to limit bullying episodes is to have more teachers surveying the schoolyard in order to catch such episodes as they are happening. Mrs. S defined bullying as a power issue. She viewed bullying as the means used to pressure another person to do something against their will, which in turn weakens the victim's self-esteem. She felt victims should confide in adults they trust, whether the adult is a parent or teacher. Mrs. S didn't feel the current school system is effective in dealing with bullies.

4.5 Teachers

This particular school includes both a French and English stream department. Students receive the majority of their lectures in a given dominant language depending on the stream they belong to. In order to represent a balanced sample, two teachers were taken from the fifth and sixth grade English stream, and two from the fifth and sixth grade French stream. In total, three women and one man were interviewed: L teaches sixth grade in the French stream, and J, the only male, teaches sixth grade in the English stream. P and A teach fifth grade in the French and English streams respectively. For labeling purposes, I will refer to these teachers as Fr6-L; Eng6-J; Fr5-P; Eng5-A.

4.5.1 Who are the Bullies?

Which children were perceived as bullies by their teachers? How do these children behave at school? In this section, teachers were prompted to reflect upon the behavior of these bully children and discuss the possible antecedents for this behavior. Teachers were further asked to describe the overall personalities of these bully children. This section allows us a glimpse into the way teachers view and interact with bullies.

4.5.2 Physical Bullies

Teachers were asked to discuss the antecedents and reasons behind why they think children bully. Teachers were then given the chance to describe some of the episodes they have witnessed. Generally, boys were identified as most likely to engage in physical bullying than girls.

When describing physical bullying, Eng6-J included any of the following behaviors: a kick, a tap, a push, touching someone's property, hitting a student's desk or pushing a student's chair or any other physically based behavior that will serve as provoking another child. He believed children who physically bully others lack self-

esteem and may be the product of aggressive parents. Eng6-J described physical bullies as popular male students who may at times be disrespectful towards adults and may be aggressive towards women. He has often noticed that these children come from an aggressive home environment, whereby they may be encouraged to respond to others physically.

Fr6-L described the antecedents to physical bullying behavior as stemming from frustration; whether academic, or from difficult home situations. These children were described as having a general lack of respect for others, are spontaneous and tend to be egocentric-- though they also tend to have many friends. Fr6-L explained that these kids may be rude to their teachers and towards their peers, even outside bullying episodes. She felt that the children who use physical aggression on others are acting out of a combination between their personality, their family, and peer pressure at school.

Fr5-P believed physical bullies act aggressively because its what they have been taught. According to this teacher, the children are exposed to aggressive behavior in the home, and will then utilize this same behavior in the school. Fr5-P found that children who use physical bullying tend not to be included in the classroom as other students attempt to keep a safe distance. She felt that these physical bullies have very little friends.

Eng5-A described "constantly touching or kicking" other children as some of the behaviors bully children will engage in. Eng5-A felt the reason why some children react aggressively to others is because they have poor language skills. She explained that because they are unable to communicate, and often have poor impulse control, they will simply hit someone. According to Eng5-A, these bully children have learned to act aggressively due to their home environment, though she feels genetics also plays a role.

Eng5-A explained that these children seem more stressed and frustrated than other children do, though they are popular and are generally the "gang leaders".

4.5.3 Verbal Bullies

Teachers were asked to describe what they felt constituted verbal bullying episodes and why they felt children engaged in verbal bullying. Children described as using verbal or non-physical bullying were most likely to be girls.

Eng6-J described verbal or "psychological" bullying as making another student feel bad, laughing at a student for the way they are dressed, the way they look, for something they say, talking behind another's back or ostracizing them from a group. Eng6-J felt these children bully others because they lack self-esteem, have a poor self image of themselves and may also have poor academic skills. According to Eng6-J these students often come from troubled homes and may be reacting to peer pressure. Outside of bullying episodes, Eng6-J described these students as very pleasant, polite, eager to please and they tend to have a lot of friends within the school setting.

Fr6-L believed that the reason behind why girls make up the majority of verbal bullies is attributed to the way they interact with others. She explained how girls can become insulted very easily and will remember events over several years. She recounted one example of a group of girls who have ostracized another student over an event that occurred five years earlier.

Fr5-P viewed verbal bullies as "more sneaky" than physical bullies. She admitted she rarely bears witness to such bullying as it is done covertly. According to her, verbal bullies will victimize their targets by regularly excluding them and talking behind their backs. She felt that these verbal bullies tend to have many friends, as girls prefer to befriend the bully rather than be left on the outside. She felt these children will engage in

verbal bullying in an attempt to "feel superior" to their targets. She believed the behavior stems largely from the individual's personality, and is compounded by peer pressure. In general, outside of bullying episodes, Fr5-P felt these children normally act friendly with those around them. She explained that girls tend to lay a lot of importance onto certain events, and will use these past events as the basis for current bullying.

Eng5-A hypothesized that children may verbally bully others because it is the way they have learned to treat others. She explained that they may be verbally bullied in the home and in turn, will bring that behavior to the school. She felt that these children lack confidence, and may lash out at others due to their own insecurity. She described these children as loners who may experience academic difficulty. Eng5-A explained that often these children become verbally abusive in an effort to feel better about themselves.

4.5.4 Who are the Victims?

In this section, the teachers were asked to describe the targets for both regular physical and verbal bullying. What are the general personalities and behaviors of these children? Why are they regularly victimized? What role if any do these children play in the bullying they receive? This section allows for a teacher's perspective on the victims of bullying.

4.5.5 Physical Targets

Teachers were asked to describe how they perceive the physical victims of bullying. How do these children respond to the bullying? This section attempts to extract the teacher's view of physically bullied victims.

Eng6-J described victims of physical bullying as those children who tend to antagonize others during a schoolyard game, only to be pushed or hit purposely during that game. He didn't feel that physical bullying is derived from one child simply hitting

another without any previous antecedent leading up to that act. Eng6-J felt that some students often set the stage for the bullying to occur by putting themselves in a situation where they will be picked on, or retaliated against. He explained that some students often behave like a "sore loser" or are perceived as a "complainer" or a "whiner" by other students. In one example, Eng6-J explained how a boy would always "put himself in the wrong place" by regularly sitting down next to the class bully during assembly or in the computer room. According to Eng6-J, although the child would be victimized, instead of learning from the experience, the student would continue to sit by the bully during future activities.

Eng6-J viewed the general personality of physically targeted children as "passive", eager to please and often "a mamma's boy". One boy in particular was described as a child who gets along very well with adults but who seems to falter when it comes to interacting with children his own age-- often "bringing out the worst" in other kids.

Fr6-L believed the most common reason for why these children are victimized is because they are perceived as easy targets. She felt these children often suffer from self-doubt, a lack of self-confidence and poor self-esteem-- attributes the bully senses and capitalizes on. She felt that these children draw attention to themselves, as they tend to be easily distracted and may not always be academically strong. Fr6-L stated that in addition to rarely having any friends at school, the victims may open themselves up for bullying when they behave in a way that differs from that of other children.

Fr5-P felt physical targets are those children who are perceived as "different" from the others, with differences based on either physical or personality attributes. According to her, these students may be new to the school and may act in a way that does not enable them to fit in with the others. In general, she viewed these children as "quiet" and "within

themselves" with little friends within the school setting. Fr5-P felt these children play a role in the bullying they receive, as she can find no other explanation for why they are constantly targeted. She explained that these children seem to be without the skills to deal with, and stand up to, the bullying.

Eng5-A felt physical targets are the children who will not react and will simply take the abuse that is dealt them. She felt that the children who are targeted for physical bullying are those that are perceived as, "eccentric", "odd" or "different" by their peers, and will simply not fit in with the others. She explained how many children who are targeted may ask "strange" questions in class, or make rude comments about others. According to her, these students may also behave "strangely" in that they hang back from the others and will play alone at recess.

4.5.6 Verbal Targets

Are verbal targets different from physical targets? This section examines the victims of verbal bullying from the teacher's perspective and the role if any, these children play in the bullying they receive. Teachers were asked to provide some examples of verbal bullying.

Eng6-J viewed verbal targets as children who tend to draw attention to themselves by frequently and very clearly pointing out the faults of others, thereby initiating their own bullying episodes. According to him, victims of verbal bullying are generally girls. Some of the behaviors he has witnessed victim children engage in were: insulting other students, telling on them, and saying things about them behind their back. Eng6-J described these victim children as lonely and friendless, who will use their victimization as a means to gain any attention they can. He described these children as constantly "putting themselves in the wrong place at the wrong time". In one particular case, Eng6-J

characterized one target for verbal bullying as "annoying" as she often tells on others, thereby inciting them to bully her. According to him, these children tend to have no friends and poor personal skills. This teacher felt that bullying is not a one-sided affair whereby the bully initiates and carries out a bullying episode. He explained how often there is an underlying situation that initiates an episode. He felt that oftentimes, victimized children do not take steps to prevent the bullying, as they choose to sit or stand next to bullies rather than actively stay away. He hypothesized that perhaps the social interaction that is created when a child is being picked on may be better than the alternative of being ignored completely.

Fr6-L explained that those children who tend to become the regular targets for verbal bullying lack the social skills that other children possess. She recounted how certain children will hang back from the others and will not try to find a partner when the teacher asks the students to work in teams. She explained that such children draw attention to themselves when they are regularly left out, or display academic skills that are slower than other students. Fr6-L didn't believe that these children have many friends.

Fr5-P described the general personality of targeted children as shy, introverted, who do not retaliate to the bullying and have little or no friends. She explained that when she asked other students their opinion on why these children are targeted, the information she received was that victims often speak ill about others, which in turn provokes bullies into victimizing them. While Fr5-P felt girls are most often involved in this form of bullying, boys may also be targets of verbal bullying.

Eng5-A explained that children targeted for verbal bullying are those that "rub" others the wrong way. According to Eng5-A, the victim child is attempting to obtain any kind of attention they can, whether positive or negative.

4.5.7 How do Teachers Feel about Bullies and Victims?

The personal feelings the teachers have towards both the victims and the bullies have received little attention in the literature. Such emotions yield much information regarding the child's perceived role in the bullying dyad: is the bully fully responsible for his or her actions? Does the victim child play an active role, is he or she perceived as the instigator? In addition, personal feelings towards a child may affect the intervention they receive from their teachers.

Eng6-J explained that he does not respect those who use physical aggression on others. He is "frustrated" and "irritated" that children would resort to intimidation and aggression to respond to problems. He admitted that it angers him to have to deal with such situations as he finds it difficult to understand why the children use physical means to achieve their ends. When it came to verbal targets, Eng6-J explained how he is "annoyed" by one little girl in particular. He felt she encourages bullying by constantly being in the wrong place at the wrong time and therefore becomes very frustrated whenever he deals with her. One manner this teacher deals with the bullying situation for two of his students (one is a verbal victim, the other a physical victim) who are especially targeted is to have them by his side at all times, throughout recess, lunch and free periods. Eng6-J admitted these children have become a burden on him, as he must make special provisions in order to ensure that they not become the victim of physical or verbal bullying. This teacher admitted that he felt targeted children play a role in bullying, and has developed a "cold" and socially distant relationship with these children as a result. In the case of verbal bullies, he explained that he was disappointed each time they are disciplined by the school because he felt he has done his best to show them a better way

to deal with problems. He admitted the behavior of these children has diminished his respect for them.

Fr6-L said she feels "frustration, anger, and dismay" towards children who use physical bullying on others. She makes a point of telling these students she is disappointed in them. For targets of physical bullying, she didn't have any feelings of reproach towards the victim-- she simply feels upset that the bully has struck again. She will look upon verbal bullies less favorably than other students, as she feels their behavior is "malicious" and "sneaky". In the case of victims of verbal bullying, Fr6-L felt "distressed" that they are constantly being targeted.

Fr5-P explained that she feels frustrated with physical bullies. She said she is afraid of what could happen in the future-- she has had students who physically bully engage in serious offenses later in life. She explained that she tries very hard to make physical targets of bullying feel comfortable and secure when at school. She explained that she feels "sorry" for these children, and empathizes with them. In the case of verbal bullies, she is "disappointed, and annoyed" with these children, and will make it a point to let them know how she feels. With victims of verbal bullying, Fr5-P said she tries very hard to mediate and find the cause of the bullying. She stated that she feels "sorry" for them and will attempt to see what she can do to help.

Eng5-A explained that she tries to give physical bullies "mothering" in that she empathizes with their difficult home environment but won't tolerate them hitting other children. In the case of physical victims, Eng5-A feels sad for them, as she perceives these children as always "unpopular", always "miserable". She will sympathize with them and attempt to make them feel as safe as she can. With verbal bullies, Eng5-A is not especially angry with these children as she feels they simply weren't taught how to

behave. In the case of verbal victims, Eng5-A explained she sometimes feels discouraged as she wishes she could do more to help them.

4.5.8 Parents

At what point do teachers inform parents about a child's behavior in the school? Do more calls go out to parents of children involved in physical bullying than verbal bullying? Are the parents aware that their children are perceived as bullies or victims at school? What role do teachers feel parents should play at home? In this section the perceptions and relationships teachers have of the parents are examined.

Eng6-J explained that parents of children who use physical bullying are aware that their children are engaging in this type of behavior in the school. He said that parents know their children can be aggressive and for some children, parents may even be the ones encouraging the behavior. If a bullying episode results in some sort of action taken by the school, i.e. detention or suspension, Eng6-J will call the parent. This teacher related that the parent is neither surprised such an episode has occurred, nor do they deny that their child may be involved. However Eng6-J displayed some frustration when it comes to such repeat offenders. In one case, he stated that "you can only call so many times", indicating that he won't always take the step to inform parents when such episodes occur too frequently. For children who engage in physical bullying, Eng6-J felt the parent's role in the home should be to understand why their children react and behave the way they do. In his opinion, the parent should then actively deal with the situation, by increasing their self-esteem, tutoring them to help with academics or finding an activity that could address this issue. According to him, parents should also try to make their child aware of how the other person feels when they physically hurt them.

With parents of children who are physically victimized, Eng6-J said that they too are aware that their children are being picked on at school, as the parents are often involved in decisions that may affect a child's school activities, such as removing their child from gym or from class trips. Often, Eng6-J does not call the parent's as he will try and settle a bullying episode that involves a physical victim within the school setting. He explained that once again, there are only so many calls that can be made. He felt the parent's role is to speak to their children in an attempt to glean the child's point of view for why they are targeted.

Parents of children who verbally bully others don't accept that their child is engaging in such behaviors, according to Eng6-J. In his experience, the parents tend to defend their kids and refuse to accept responsibility for the situation. Although the parents may have been informed by their children that a situation has occurred, Eng6-J explained that it is often a slanted or incorrect view of the situation. He doesn't believe these parents are in tune with their children's personalities and behaviors outside of the home. Eng6-J said he contacts parents if a verbal bullying episode occurs, though not all the time. He believed that the parent's role in the home should be to take a closer look at why their children behave the way they do. He felt there is an element in their upbringing that led to this type of behavior.

With parents of verbal victims, Eng6-J explained that they are aware of the difficulties their children are having. He said they may have noticed problems outside the school and therefore recognize that their child may be experiencing social difficulties. When he does call these parents, they tend to accept what he tells them, though Eng6-J explained that he doesn't often call parents of verbal victims because he would be "on the

phone 24 hours a day" in some cases. He felt the parent's role in the home should be to seek counseling or find a way to help these children integrate with others.

Fr6-L explained that parents aren't aware that their children are engaging in physical bullying. However, though the parents may be surprised to find out their child is a physical bully, Fr6-L said they take her at her word when she tells them. She will most often contact the parent following such episodes. She believed one of the roles for parents of physical bullies should be to limit the exposure of violent and aggressive television at home. Also, she felt many children who become physical bullies live in aggressive households, and she believed family intervention is necessary to address this issue.

Fr6-L said the parents of children who are physically targeted are aware of their child's situation at school. She will maintain constant contact with these parents and will let them know when an episode takes place. According to her, the parental role for children who are physically targeted should be to ensure the child feels he or she is believed and that action will be taken as a result of telling their parents. She felt the parents should also teach the child to take charge of bullying situations. She explained that parents should try harder to become in tune with what their kids may experience at school. In one example, Fr6-L explained how one little boy was sent to school in what appeared to be his older sister's purple boots. According to her, this situation engendered a lot of teasing that could have been avoided had the parents thought their actions through.

Fr6-L described parents of children who verbally bully others as unaware that their children behave this way at school. Fr6-L explained that when she informs these parents, they are generally very upset. However, she often does not contact parents following verbal bullying episodes, and will instead deal with the situation at the school

level. She felt the parent's role in the home should be to provide a positive role model for their children.

Fr6-L said parents of children who are verbally bullied are generally aware of the situation. She felt it would be very difficult for parents not to notice their child has had a bad day at school if they were the recipient of such bullying. She will generally call the parent to inform them if bullying has occurred. According to her, the parent's role in the home should be to ensure the child has friends outside the school. She felt the parents should also provide as much support and encouragement as possible in addition to coming up with strategies that would help their child get along with others.

Fr5-P explained that parents of children who physically bully don't accept that their child is engaging in this type of behavior. In her experience, they will likely defend their child and argue with the teacher while pinning the blame on other children or on the school itself. She felt the parent's role in the home should be as role models for their children and she would like to see more consequences in the home for such behavior at school.

According to Fr5-P, parents of children who are physically victimized tend to be aware of the problems their kids are having. Fr5-P will often contact the parents if a bullying episode has occurred and once informed, parents react by wanting to find ways to help their child. She felt the parent's role should be to provide their children with strategies they could use in school.

According to Fr5-P, parents of children who verbally bully aren't aware that their children are behaving this way at school. She explained that she is not generally in contact with these parents because such episodes are "harder to prove". She felt the

parent's role in the home should be to show their children a better way to deal with people.

According to Fr5-P parents of children who are verbally victimized are aware that their child is experiencing such bullying and they have the desire to help their children. Fr5-P explained that the parents themselves will often contact the teacher to discuss what is happening at school. She felt the parent's role in the home is to lend support to their child.

According to Eng5-A, parents of children who physically bully are aware that their children engage in this behavior at school. Eng5-A explained that the parents are generally distressed when informed about a bullying episode and while some parents seek help, others don't always agree that there is a problem. Although she generally calls the parents following a bullying episode, she admitted that when such episodes occur too frequently, speaking with the parents no longer yields any results. Eng5-A felt that the parent's role in this case should be to lend support to their child in the home and corroborate with any consequences the school hands out.

In the case of physical victims of bullying, Eng5-A explained that parents are aware of what is happening to their child and will often feel overwhelmed. According to her, the parents never contest what the teacher tells them, although she doesn't always inform the parents when such episodes occur. Eng5-A said the parent's role should be to teach their children to be more confident, to avoid trouble, and for some cases, self defense courses may be needed. She felt that parents need to be more available for their children.

For parents of children who verbally bully, Eng5-A said she will only contact them if she deems a situation is serious. She felt the role of these parents should be to spend more time teaching their children that words can hurt.

In the case of parents of children who are victims of verbal bullying, Eng5-A explained that they are generally willing to find help for their children. They are aware that the situation is ongoing, but are baffled as to why it is happening to their child. According to Eng5-A, the role of the parent should be to help their child learn socializing skills and build up their confidence level.

4.5.9 Peers

When looking at a program that would deal with bullying in the school, it's hoped that peers will be included as they could be a powerful influence over bullies and victims. In this section, teachers were asked to assess the reaction and behaviors of peer children with regards to bullying episodes, as well as what they feel are the peer's perceptions of bullies and victims.

Eng6-J explained that when it comes to physical bullying, peers will either do nothing, or encourage the bullying. He recounted how during one physical bullying episode, peers created a circle around the bully and victim and yelled, "fight! fight!" while encouraging others to come watch. He hypothesized that peers do little to intervene in these cases because the bully child is deemed popular and the victim is not liked. According to Eng6-J, the peers are generally not afraid they will face retaliation by bullies if they attempt to stop the fight, but rather they want to see the victim get hurt.

Fr6-L explained that peers are more likely to stand around and watch physical bullying episodes than they are to report such incidents. She felt that though most children may feel physical bullying is wrong, they do not act because they fear they may

be the next target. According to Fr6-L, peers who witness verbal bullying also tend to watch and listen rather than tell an adult as they fear they may be ostracized or picked on themselves as a result.

According to Fr5-P, peers who witness physical bullying will tell an adult and are less likely to simply watch and do nothing. Though she felt peers are reluctant to directly intervene for fear of being targeted in turn, she explained that this does happen on occasion. In the case of verbal bullying, Fr5-P explained that peers are less likely to intervene for fear they will be the next victim.

Eng5-A explained that some peers will sit back and watch bullying episodes, others will seek out a teacher, and still others may try to directly intervene. She felt that most children are afraid they will be bullied next, and are therefore reluctant to get involved. With verbal bullying, Eng5-A explained that peers will most often tell a teacher if they witness such episodes.

4.5.10 Dealing with Bullying

Does the school dictate a specific and uniform protocol when it comes to dealing with bullying? Do the teachers use their own discretion when applying consequences or is there strict adherence to the rules? In this section, teachers were asked to describe how they deal with physical and verbal bullying episodes.

The first thing Eng6-J will do when he comes across a physical bullying episode, is pull the children apart. Once separated, he will then likely provide the students with a cooling off period before he listens to both sides of the story. Eng6-J explained that school policy dictates that if a child hits another, he or she receives a one-day suspension - however the teacher admitted this rule is rarely enforced as it isn't always clear what occurred during the episode. In the case of verbal bullying, Eng6-J will attempt to find

out what provoked such an episode and will then approach the bully in an effort to explain to him or her what their actions could mean to the victim. Eng6-J explained that there are generally no detentions handed out to children involved in verbal bullying-- though in more severe cases the parents are called. He felt that the actions he is currently taking to deal with bullying has no direct impact on preventing bullying from occurring in the future.

Eng6-J admitted that the school does not have a specific protocol when it comes to dealing with bullying-- he explained that teachers generally deal with the problem as it arises and if they are faced with an exceptionally difficult situation, they will then speak with the school's principal. He has never attended a workshop or a training session that dealt specifically with bullying.

Fr6-L explained that when she comes across a physical bullying episode, she separates the children in order to ensure their safety. She then provides the students with a cooling off period before asking each child to explain what happened. Most often, Fr6-L will call the parents of both children. With verbal bullying, Fr6-L will ask for explanations from both parties and will then decide if the words used warrant any consequences or a call to the parents.

Fr6-L explained that the school does not use a uniform way of dealing with bullying. The teachers will apply their own discretion and will look at each bullying situation individually. She has never assisted in a seminar, workshop or conference that discussed how teachers could deal with bullying at the school.

Fr5-P explained that her first concern when dealing with a physical bullying episode is to separate the children and find out what happened. If she felt that she was unable to deal with the situation, she will send the students to the principal's office. The

most serious consequences handed out are suspensions or in extreme occasions, the child can be expelled. In the case of verbal bullying, Fr5-P will speak to the children involved about how such acts can hurt those targeted. She didn't recall a situation where a detention or suspension was used as a consequence for verbal bullying.

Fr5-P explained that she hopes the methods she uses also helps preventing bullying episodes from occurring. She explained that though the school doesn't have a specific or uniform way to deal with bullying, certain classes have in the past been targeted for special programs. Fr5-P has never taken part in a seminar or training program on dealing with bullying.

Eng5-A explained that when faced with a physical bullying episode, she separates the children and inquires about what happened. She said that she will sometimes use a cooling off method that involves the child standing in front of a wall so that they may reflect on what occurred. If she felt the situation is serious enough, she will call the parents. In the case of verbal bullying, Eng5-A will speak to the children involved about how using certain words or acting a certain way can be painful. She explained that unless she deems the situation is serious enough to warrant a call, she rarely calls the parents to inform them of instances of verbal bullying.

Eng5-A felt her actions when dealing with bullying has some impact on preventing further episodes, but she was reluctant to say there was a definite improvement. Though she explained that all teachers likely attempt to gain information about a particular bullying episode before they apply any consequences, she didn't feel there is a specific prototypical way for staff to deal with bullying. Eng5-A described an in-class program where someone other than a staff member provided an anger-

management program to her classroom for a 5-week period. She has never assisted in any training programs specific to bullying.

CHAPTER V

5. IMPORTANT STUDY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Victims

Gender differences may exist between victims when it comes to their perceptions for why they are being targeted by bullies. The girl who was victimized described inherent personality or attitudinal traits to account for why she was targeted, while the boys pointed to physical or extraneous factors beyond their immediate control. Further study into these differences may engender a more personalized program or methodology when dealing with victim children at the school level. Further, a program that takes into account the personal reasons for why children feel they are victimized, over and above gender differences, may perhaps lead to a more successful outcome.

Children are clearly taught to inform an adult when they experience bullying. Though all three children felt the current school system failed them when it came to removing the threat of bullying from the school setting, each mechanically told me they should tell a teacher when they are victimized. Schools desperately need a more suitable system that would not only rehabilitate the bully but also provide a safer environment for children that are routinely victimized. Children need to know they can count on teachers and principles to protect them. While parents may or may not step in on their child's behalf, they are powerless to change the school atmosphere for their children if the current school policy remains unchanged. A system that works on improving the behavior or self-image of both the victims and bullies is the key to better socialization for each group of children. As was seen for at least one victim child, B, the system has truly failed her. By having her spend her recess and lunchtime with a teacher, or in isolation inside the school, does nothing to improve her self-image or socializing skills. In addition, it

only adds to the image that she is "different" from others and unable to be with other children.

Peers can be regarded as the group most amenable to instigate change within the bully/victim dyad at the school level. As well-adjusted children, they may very well play an important role in reducing bullying. School programs must include this group of children in programs, using their behaviors and actions as models for other children.

5.2 Bullies

The schema bullies have of victims provides some interesting insights. Bullies view the victims as children who are not liked by their peers and are thus easy targets, as others will not attempt to circumvent the negative treatment aimed at them. The bullies perceive victims as instigators, who behave negatively towards them. Though victim children certainly do not deserve physical and verbal abuse at the hands of bullies, the personification children have of them and their personalities may attest to adjustment difficulties victim children may be experiencing in the school setting. Social and personal aspects could be addressed through programs targeted towards their needs. A focus on stopping the behavior of bullies, albeit an immediate solution, does nothing in the long term to help victim children grow up to be well-adjusted adults. It is simply not enough to develop bullying programs without addressing the needs of victims.

The self-perception bullies have of themselves as well as the perception their peers have of them, are positive reinforcements for negative behaviors. The bullies interviewed rarely regarded their actions as stemming from them. Instead, they are reacting to the victim's negative attitude. The bullies then go on to perceive themselves as favored and well liked by their peers. In C's case he admits some peers may be afraid of

him, as they have witnessed him hurt other children. Only in M's case did he feel persecuted and blamed for his actions, albeit by adults, not same-aged children.

The section on school policy only reinforces what the children have been saying throughout the interviews. The punishments imposed on bullies do not necessarily protect victims and seemingly do nothing to curb bullying, as recidivism is high. Teachers already have their hands full and do not always see bullying episodes take place with their own eyes--relying on the children to inform them of such incidents. Even a bully child stated that teachers aren't observant enough and do not catch what is happening in the schoolyard. In addition, keeping parents informed falls directly on the shoulders of the school. Bullies will certainly not inform their parents that they were engaged in fighting, not unless the school forces their hand. If the school is to have cooperation of parents, they must at the very least inform them regarding their child's negative behavior, especially when it concerns bullies with a proven track record.

5.3 Peers

Two of the three girls describe important strains that affect them in either their home or school lives. Living through a divorce is always a stressful event in any child's life, whether the parents separate amicably or not. Such situations may place a child at risk for developing negative school behavior. In addition, a child who feels she does not fit in with others may place her at risk for victimization by her peers. However, the girls in these circumstances excel in school and are not targets by bullies, nor are they bullying other children. What makes these children well-adjusted students instead of easy prey for bullies? Why do others not exploit their weaknesses? Could there be inherent personal traits or attitudes regularly exhibited by victim children that draws bullies to them? Further study would be needed to examine these issues. The undertaking of such a study

would not constitute a blaming of the victim, on the contrary, identifying inherent characteristics of a potential target may actually help thwart future victimization in the school setting.

Of interest is the manner in which peers perceive victims in the school. The three girls interviewed view victims as responsible for bullying episodes at least half the time, by inciting the bully's negative reaction through provocation. As long as peers see the victim as an instigator, it will be very difficult to employ peers as a tool for intervention during such episodes. Where do these negative connotations come from? Why has compassion been replaced by contempt? It may be the sheer frequency of bullying episodes taking place in the school that increases the students' tolerance to them, or perhaps, it may be the manner in which teachers themselves view bullying within the school. Though the actions of bullies were perceived negatively by their peers, and it was felt that bullies should be punished for their actions, there was little indication that bullies were ostracized for their behavior.

When in the school setting, it falls squarely on the shoulders of teachers to model the proper conduct when it comes to dealing with an aggressor or bully. It seems teachers have only partly fulfilled this role, as explained and described by each group of children, whether victims, bullies or peers. The peers themselves recognize which teachers are ineffective at dealing with bullies and will forego telling them about an episode if it means that nothing will be done. In fact, one peer described how some teachers will turn on the victim child and punish them along with the bully-- prompting the peer to think twice about telling in the future. Teachers and parents teach kids to tell them if they see someone is getting hurt, but if the adult doesn't act when informed of such episodes, it will simply result in less "telling" and more complacency. At least one peer has already

said she used to feel bad for the victims, but has by now become so accustomed to bullying that she is no longer concerned. Although parents are normally informed if their child was engaged in a physical altercation, this is not always the case with verbal bullying. However, it is sometimes the verbal teasing and ostracizing that can cause difficulties for victims when it comes to self perception and self-esteem, as these can also become the basis for personality problems later in life. Though it would seem that verbal bullying is getting more recognition (at least one peer stated that detention can be handed out for such offenses), perhaps this policy should stretch towards informing parents as well. Verbal abuse should not be overlooked.

The interviews with peers have demonstrated that this group can potentially be swayed to react against bullying with the right coaching. While two of the three girls said they can be enticed to verbally bully others if their friends are doing it, they also responded that some students will tell an adult or attempt to stop an episode themselves. Only one girl expressed the concern that telling may result in the bully targeting her in return. While N explained that many students simply watch as an episode takes place, this reality is preferable to peers actively engaging against victims. Based on the girls' descriptions of what peers do in bullying episodes, there is still hope that peers may be amenable to work against verbal or physical bullying in schools.

5.4 Parents

Pregnancy and childbirth may have some bearing on future pre-dispositions and attitudes in school-aged children and perhaps even beyond, into adulthood. Though taken alone we are unable to predict later bullies or victims based on these factors, they are worth considering within a full spectrum analysis of such children. When a child struggles through their first few weeks or months of life, or if a mother's emotional state

is fragile, these may play a contributing role. It is interesting to note the health struggle the bully child, M, experienced as opposed to the victim or peer children. More research in these areas is needed before a correlation can be established.

The relationship between child and parent allows a glimpse into the home environment for each of these children. The flow of communication and the degree to which the parent knows their child is interesting to note, especially between the victim/parent and bully/parent dyad.

The mother of the victim child describes a close relationship with her son, a relationship that has been defined in the literature as more typical of victimized boys. In this case, Mrs. C knows her son so well she can read his non-verbal body language. Mother and child also experience a steady flow of communication, with the child feeling he can confide in his mother. Although taken alone, a close relationship between mother and son is in no way predictive of a child who will be victimized in the future, perhaps this and other factors may point to a possible trend. F has been transferred from many schools, also a trend that has been observed in many victimized children cases. The fact that "troubled" children seem to gravitate towards F is an interesting concept to keep in mind for future research. In addition to his Karate lessons, F would benefit from socialization training in order to help him create and maintain friendships that could provide him with a behavior model.

In stark contrast to F's relationship with his mother, communication between Mrs. E and her son is very limited. Only the mother of the bully felt she did not know her child. Certainly his learning disabilities play a role, both in the parent/child relationship as well as the child's relationships at the school level. Bully children who suffer learning disabilities are not uncommon, as described in the literature. His difficulty in expressing

himself compounded by his academic frustrations at school make him more likely to lash out on other children around him. How to deal with these variables? Working through M's learning disabilities would improve his self-esteem in school but he would also benefit from socialization and communication training.

For a "peer" child who is described as well adjusted by her school teachers, L has a lot on her plate. Despite difficulties at home (parent's separation; possible verbal abuse) and at school (lack of close friends), L seems to be developing well socially and academically. Perhaps this is due at least in part to the rearing tactics adopted by Mrs. S, as she uses regular communication and clear guidelines in the home. Again the conundrum re-surfaces: how is it that peer children living through their own problems manage to surmount their difficulties without exhibiting either victim or bully tendencies? Considering L's complications in her life, this is no easy feat.

Certain parallels between the parents' youth and the current experiences of their children concur with the idea that bullies tend to raise bullies and victims raise victims. With respect to the mothers of the victim and bully children, each experienced markedly different youthful experiences, both in the context of school and in the home.

Though Mrs. C says she was not victimized at school, she was a loner who preferred the company of adults. She did not have any school-aged friends but she received encouragement by her teachers and thus favored this environment to the abusive one she led at home. Such behaviors and attitudes with regards to socialization are well within the boundaries used to describe victim children. A lack of social behavior with same aged peers seems to have been passed on to her son, as F too has not established solid school friendships and tends to spend much time at home, with his parents. Can an argument be made that parents teach their children to become victims if they harbor

"victim-like" traits of their own? The literature seems to support the idea that such characteristics do pass on to the next generation.

Mrs. E shares a very similar youth with her son M. Both have had turbulent school experiences that have resulted in sanctions and suspensions, with consequences handed out at home. Both seem to have had many friends and belonged to a popular group, and both have bullied others on at least one occasion. Such trends are interesting to note and certainly more research is recommended in order to study the parallels between the parents of bullies and victims with their children.

The parent/child relationship in the peer group seems to be the one that least resembles one another. Mrs. S was victimized at school and had little self esteem, while L is described as a confident girl who is well adjusted in her school environment. Though L may not have close friends, she is not victimized and is active at the school setting. Mrs. S seems to share a more similar youth with her eldest son, who is currently victimized at his school.

When it comes to the position of the school in reducing the incidence of bullying, all three mothers would like to see a more proactive role on the part of school administrators and teachers. Perhaps a larger school staff and better training would address the needs of both the victim and bully children.

5.5 Teachers

As the school is the setting in which bullying occurs, thus it is within this setting that bullying must be dealt with. The home environment of course has its many influences but it is within the confines of the school that children spend the bulk of their time. The teachers then, become the role models and the ones ultimately responsible for preventing bullying.

All four teachers felt the antecedents for children who physically bully stem from the home environment. They cite aggressive parents and an aggressive upbringing as the reasons why these children bully others. Other precursors to physical bullying were poor academic skills, low self-esteem and poor language skills. While family therapy may be needed to deal with an aggressive home environment, at the school level, teachers could use intervention techniques that would improve both the academics and self esteem issues these children may have. If frustration derived from academics is a factor, what better setting than the school to ameliorate this problem?

Children who verbally bully tend to be regarded by teachers as using a more underhanded way to victimize their targets. Though the teachers cited poor self-esteem issues and poor academic skills as possible reasons for such behavior, home environment was also cited as playing a role. Gender issues surrounding the use of verbal bullying was suggested as two teachers felt that girls tend to use past events as the basis for current verbal bullying. This suggests that differences between the way boys and girls interact with one another, and hence bully one another, is apparent in grade school. Perhaps taking gender differences into account when preparing intervention strategies would yield better results.

In general, the teachers viewed physically bullied victims as passive, introverted individuals who make easy targets. All four teachers felt these children play a role in the bullying they receive, whether it be by drawing attention to themselves through their behavior, or by placing themselves in the direct line of fire. One teacher felt these victim children actively provoke other children into bullying them. Often, teachers used words like "different", "odd" or "eccentric" to describe the personalities of these children. What does this mean for intervention purposes? Certainly the way a teacher perceives victims

and their role in bullying will greatly affect the way they treat these children. It is evident by the teachers' comments that these children could use some coaching in self-esteem and interpersonal skills. A bully can sense an easy target and will capitalize on this unless the victim child is coached on how to deal with it.

Three of the four teachers discussed how children who are the victims of verbal bullying will draw negative attention towards themselves due to their behavior, personality or certain actions. It was noted that for these children, negative attention is better than the alternative of being ignored. How can teachers provide positive attention to these children while coaching them on interpersonal skills? Perhaps inciting them to work with younger students may improve their self-esteem and social skills. Certainly any positive reinforcement from their teachers would be an important ingredient to any intervention.

The way teachers personally feel about the victims and bullies in their classroom could greatly influence the way they intervene with these children. An interesting finding was that the teachers seem to have some negative feelings towards the victims of both physical and verbal bullying. While the teachers may feel "sorry" for the animosity these children regularly experience, the perception that they are at least partially responsible for their fate leads the teachers to feel frustrated with the victims as well as the bullies. One teacher in particular was especially vocal in his feelings about victims, as he spends all of his own free time with two children who cannot be alone for fear of bullying. Certainly personal involvement with victim children can make intervention sensitive. This situation brings forth the question of who should be implementing anti-bullying programs. Perhaps a professional who is not personally involved, and hence who is not prejudiced, may be better suitable to deal with bully and victim children than their own teachers.

The issue of whether parents are aware of their child's actions in the home, and the level of communication that exists between teachers and parents was explored. Teachers differed on whether they believed parents of bully children are cognizant of their children's behaviors. Two teachers felt that the parents were generally aware of their child's school behavior while the other two teachers explained that parents may act surprised or even deny their child's involvement. However when it comes to communicating with parents following a bullying episode, teachers don't always make that call as the situation is often dealt with internally. In some more extreme cases, teachers felt that calling parents became excessive, as episodes would occur too frequently. Should parents play an active role in a school-based intervention program? Should parents receive a call each time their child engages in physical bullying? Surely parents should be made aware of what their child is doing at school. An intervention strategy that includes parental role models would yield better results.

All four teachers agreed that parents of physical victims are well aware of their child's school situation. However, while two teachers will maintain regular contact with parents, the remaining two opt to settle issues at the school level. According to teachers, roles for parents of victims of physical bullying should include teaching their children how to stand up to bullies, how to interact with others and teaching them self-confidence. One teacher pointed out that parents could even contribute to the problems their children experience, as was highlighted by an example of a parent who sent their son to school wearing his older sister's hand-me-down purple boots. Perhaps a workshop for parents on strategies they can use, and situations they should avoid, will improve any intervention program at the school level.

According to the teachers, parents of children who verbally bully others are not aware of their child's actions at school. One teacher found that parents react negatively when informed about their child's behavior and may even defend their child's actions. Generally teachers do not contact the parents following verbal bullying episodes, as one teacher explained that these are "harder to prove" than physical bullying episodes. All four teachers agree that parents should act as role models for their children and teach them how to better deal with others. It seems verbal bullying is regarded more as an in-school problem that is less likely dealt with through the parents. Perhaps a bigger involvement with parents may contribute to decreasing its occurrence at school.

All four teachers agreed the parents of children who are verbally victimized are aware of their child's situation. The teachers would like to see the parents take on the role of encouraging, supporting, and teaching their children the socialization and confidence skills they need. While confidence-building and social skill strategies could be implemented at home, such training would be needed at the school level as well, where it could be practiced. After all, it is at the school level surrounded by the child's daily reality, that improvement is most likely.

The involvement of peers in any school-based bullying prevention program will likely increase the chances of a positive outcome. The perceptions and reactions of peers regarding bullying must therefore be taken into account. All but one teacher said that peers are more likely to watch a physical bullying episode rather than tell a teacher or directly intervene. One teacher even felt peers may go as far as encouraging a physical bullying episode to continue as the victim is often not liked. Three out of four teachers said that the reason peers don't become more involved is they fear negative reprisals by the bully. These results suggest that the perceptions peers have of bullying episodes must

be dealt with before we can include peers in any intervention program. If peers are more likely to watch and encourage bullying episodes than they are to tell a teacher, than such actions must be examined and dealt with first if a program is to use peers as positive role-models.

All four teachers say they deal with physical bullying episodes by first separating the children involved, providing them with a cooling off period, and then asking what happened. The teachers use their own discretion when applying consequences or calling the parents. Verbal bullying episodes are also dealt with by speaking to the children involved, but consequences and a call to the parents aren't often made. All four teachers explained that the school does not have a specific, uniform way of dealing with bullying at the school. To note, none of these veteran teachers with many years of teaching experience to their credit, have ever taken part in a workshop, seminar or training program that dealt with bullying. How can teachers deal with bullying more effectively? Certainly supplying teachers with a background and an understanding regarding its manifestation would at the very least prepare teachers to deal with bullying. In addition, how can the school effectively discourage bullying if there is no rhyme or reason to how teachers deal with its occurrence? The school does have some guidelines: if an episode is deemed serious enough, detention or expelling the student is possible. However, there should be little room for subjectivity in a concrete, results-oriented anti-bullying program. Where do the victims fit into the equation? The teachers all mentioned dealing with the bullies, but the victim's needs are unfortunately not being met. Though the victim's physical safety must remain at the top of the priority list, this alone will not contribute to diminishing or altering the victim's possible role in the bullying dyad.

CHAPTER VI

6. CONCLUSION

This study reaffirms the idea that perceptions can greatly influence subsequent behavior. The notions that people hold on bullying in general, and of those involved in particular, will have a great impact on how bullying is subsequently dealt with. This premise, already extensively studied and analyzed in past research, is the basic building block for any prevention or bullying treatment program. In this study it was shown that victims were generally perceived negatively by bullies, peers and even some teachers. They were viewed by these groups as inciting, or even actively provoking, their own victimization.

The school under study did not have a formal method to deal with bullying. Teachers did not receive any training in bullying prevention or intervention. The staff had certain tools at their disposal, such as the ability to hand out detentions or recommend a student for temporary expulsion, but teachers used their own discretion when deciding on the consequences. In severe cases of victimization, the school isolated the victim children and used temporary measures, such as detentions, to deal with the bullies. Understandably, the current method used by the school does nothing for preventing bullying, and does little to deal effectively with its occurrence. Surely a properly trained school staff is needed if bullying is to be dealt with in a serious manner. However, teachers must first deal with the preconceptions and personal feelings they have with regards to the children involved in bullying-- the victims in particular.

Victim children felt the school did not always support them, and that teachers did not always take action when told about a bullying episode. The victims themselves also had impressions regarding their own victimization. While girls tended to view their own

personality attributes as the reason they were targeted, boys tended to view their physical attributes, or factors outside their control, as the basis for their victimization. Full support of victims, together with socializing and confidence-building programs must be the building blocks of any victim-sensitive intervention and prevention program. Though the exact nature of the victim's role may not be clear, the victim's needs must still be assessed and dealt with.

Bullies will often feel their actions are justified, as they view the victims negatively and are supported in this view by many of their peers. Bullies themselves said they were able to identify the gaping holes in the methods used by the school to deal with bullying. For them, receiving a detention did little to discourage them from bullying in the future. Certainly if the children can identify the school's methods as a "Band-Aid" approach, the adults must also realize the same. Perhaps working on the perceptions children have regarding their own actions, as well as the view each has of the other in the bullying dyad, should precede any formal program initiated by the school.

Surprisingly, the peers used in this study were bogged down by their own personal difficulties. Divorce, a lack of friends and other stressful events were present in their lives, though they did not themselves become victims, nor did they become bullies as a result of such strains. This poses an intriguing question regarding the influence of the home and the role of personality in bullying. What makes a victim susceptible to becoming a target? Why were these peers able to avoid being singled out? These issues reinforce the idea that victims play an important role in their own victimization. Peers can generally be regarded as the "third" eye witness in bullying, with the victim and the bully as the first two. In this study, even the peers recognized that teachers do very little to thwart or prevent bullying from occurring. Though they viewed the actions of bullies

negatively, they also understood that standing up to a bully, unsupported and alone, would make them the next target. It is the peers that emerged from this research as the group most amenable to immediate change, as they are neither directly involved nor completely removed by the bullying that occurs around them. It is this key group that, if included in bullying prevention and intervention programs, could encourage a decrease in bullying activity.

The parents in this study had similar childhood experiences with their own children. While the mother of the victim had little friends and was most comfortable around adults, the same was true for her son. The bully's mother rebelled and tested the limits of her own parents, as did her son. This indicates a certain cycle in the lives of victims and bullies-- a cycle that needs to be broken. A parental-based program that would educate parents on this cycle, as well as effective methods to deal with their children at home, could perhaps be a precursor to a home-school integrated program. How can a school-based intervention program include parents? The first step would be to ensure parents are informed of every bullying episode, whether verbal or physical. Teachers in this study not only used their discretion when applying consequences, they also used their discretion when calling parents. Both teachers and parents also point to academic failings as a precursor to bullying-- especially in the case of bullies. Parents should not only be informed about such problems but communication between parents and the school should take place on how best to address it. It seems each side regards the other as ineffective: the parents are pointing the finger at the school, asking for a greater teacher involvement while the teachers are pointing to the home, calling for a greater presence and responsibility in their child's upbringing.

It is within the confines of the school that change is most amenable. It is there that children spend the bulk of their day, it is there that bullying takes place and therefore it is at the school level that something must be done to curb it. Teachers need resources and training in order to deal with bullying. Large classrooms, a lack of individual training, a lack of formal rules and programs in the school will together make it difficult for staff to deal efficiently with bullying. Personal feelings about the bullies and victims involved, frustration with the parents and with the system in their own schools are also contributing factors that lead to temporary answers to verbal and physical aggression in the school. These issues must be addressed if any reduction in bullying is to be achieved.

This study attempted to extract what each person involved in bullying felt and thought about their own roles. It was hoped that this would serve as a tool for those who create bullying intervention and prevention programs so that they may be better suited to each group. Bullying involves a spectrum that encompasses the bully, the victim, and the peers that surround them, as well as the two worlds these children live in; the home and the school. Each member of the spectrum must be made aware of their contributions to bullying and what they can do to prevent it from happening. It is at the grade school level that change is most essential, for as the bullies and their victims grow up, so does the aggression level of the bullying that occurs.

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APPENDIX A: PARENTAL CONSENT FORM

Dear Parent(s),

I am conducting a study that explores bullying between children at the grade-school level. This study is part of my Thesis requirement as a Master's student for the School of Social Work at McGill University.

The objective of this study is to speak with children, their parents, and their teachers in an effort to gain the perspectives of all those touched, directly and indirectly, by this phenomenon.

Your child's school has granted me the permission to interview students within the 5th and 6th grade levels concerning their school and home life, and I will be interviewing teachers that may be familiar with your child. The children who will participate in the study have been randomly chosen from a class list.

A. I am therefore requesting:

1. Your consent to have your child interviewed by myself, Christine Zaklama, (approximately 30-45 minutes) during either class time or lunch time, as agreed upon between yourself and the teacher as well as;
2. Your consent to have the interview audio taped and later transcribed by an assistant.

Your child will be verbally informed that he/she could terminate and withdraw from the study at any time.

I hereby provide my consent for all of the above: (Signature) _____ Date: _____

B. In addition, I am seeking your:

1. Consent to an interview (approximately 45-60 minutes) conducted by myself, Christine Zaklama, at the location of your choice at your convenience, with the person regarded to be the PRIMARY CARETAKER of the child. Up to two adults may be interviewed;
2. Consent to have your home and/or business phone number be given to me by the school so that I may contact you and;
3. Consent to have the interview audio taped and later transcribed by an assistant.

Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may refuse to participate, or change your mind and withdraw at any time. A decision not to participate in this study will in no way result in any negative consequences for your child at the school.

The results of both interviews (yours and your child's) will be incorporated into the thesis and kept completely confidential. Any data released for publication will not identify your name or the name of your child. Any recorded data will be destroyed at the completion of the thesis.

I hereby provide my consent for the above: (Signature) _____ Date: _____

You may wish to take part in the study under both options (you **and** your child), only one option (either yourself **or** your child), or no options (request denied). Please send the completed consent form to the school with your child as soon as possible.

I thank you for your time and cooperation. If you should have any questions or concerns, you may contact me (pager) 514-614-3175 or my thesis adviser Dr. Robin Wright 514-398-7056 at any time.

APPENDIX B: TEACHER'S CONSENT FORM

Dear Teacher,

I am conducting a study that explores bullying between children at the grade-school level. This study is part of my Thesis requirement as a Master's student for the School of Social Work at McGill University.

The objective of this study is to speak with children, their parents, and their teachers in an effort to gain the perspectives of all those involved in this phenomenon.

Your school has granted me the permission to conduct this study within the 5th and 6th grade levels.

I am therefore requesting:

4. Your consent to an interview (approximately 60 minutes) conducted by myself, Christine Zaklama, to be held at the school at your convenience;
5. Your consent to have the interview audio taped and later transcribed by an assistant and;
6. Your participation in assigning particular students in your class to preset categories that would ask you to assess their interactions with other children.

Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may refuse to participate, or change your mind and withdraw at any time.

The results of the interview will be incorporated into the thesis and kept completely confidential. Any data released for publication will not identify your name. Any recorded data will be destroyed at the completion of the thesis.

I hereby provide my consent for the above: (Signature) _____

Date: _____

I thank you for your time and cooperation. If you should have any questions or concerns, you may contact me (pager) 514-614-3175 or my thesis adviser Dr. Robin Wright 514-398-7056 at any time.