

The Many Faces of Bullying: Elementary Students' Perceptions and Experiences with
the Phenomenon of Bullying

A Thesis

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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

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Dedication:

I would like to dedicate this to my family for all of their encouraging words, advice and support. They helped to instill in me the confidence that I can be successful no matter how daunting the task may appear. It has been a long upward battle and I know I couldn't have done it without you. I would also like to thank my two nephews, Devin and Jeremy, for being my inspiration. I also dedicate this to all the students in elementary, middle and high school who are silently suffering from the effects of bullying. Lastly, this research is also dedicated to those students who have taken their life due to the pain they experienced on a daily basis at the hands of a bully.

“Stand strong in the storms of life, the sun will always shine on you.”

Robert James Ritchie

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Abstract

This research thesis focuses on elementary students' perceptions, experiences and thoughts regarding the phenomenon of bullying. It describes a group of grade four students' feelings regarding this phenomenon through class discussions, student drawings and a series of in-depth interviews. From these various venues, several significant themes emerged such as the students receiving contradictory messages from administrators, teachers and parents on a daily basis in regards to how to respond to bullying. Other themes include the fact that a significant amount of bullying occurs on the school bus, that there is a strong call to action and a pessimistic outlook about the reduction of bullying. As a result of this research, we as a society are closer to understanding what it is like to be a grade four student who is bullied and hopefully we can begin to take initial steps in reversing this devastating phenomenon.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Rationale for Proposed Study

Hamed Nashtoh was an average grade nine student, growing up in Surrey, British Columbia. His parents described him as a quiet and caring boy. The following are some of the last words that Hamed ever shared with his family.

I know I left my room messy, you can clean it if you want. But please don't sell anything or throw anything away. Even though I will be dead I still want this room I have to be my room. Mom, I was teased at school by mates, my classmates even my own friends laughed at me. They always called me four eyes, big nose and geek. There was so much going on. I tried to cope with it. I love you mom and dad and especially you David. I have to mention this, please make people stop name calling and teasing other people because it really hurts. That's just my only wish and I hope people will listen to me. Please visit my grave often so that I am not lonely. (Hamed Nastoh, March 11, 2000 Surrey, B.C., retrieved January 11, 2005 from www.cbc.ca).

A conversation overheard in a school hallway by an elementary teacher that was spoken by a nine year old student: "I just want the bullying to stop. That is all I ever wanted. I used to love going to school. Now I hate it!"(retrieved January 11, 2005 from www.cbc.ca).

Numerous children have written notes similar to Hamed's, and they have taken their own lives because they saw no other way out of the pain which they felt every single day at school. Here are more accounts of students who have suffered the ultimate

price due to bullying: In January of 1999 in Manchester, England, an eight-year-old girl named Marie Bentham hanged herself in her bedroom with her jump rope because she felt she could no longer face the bullies at school. Marie is thought to be Britain's youngest victim of bullying. Fourteen-year-old Dawn Marie Wesley hanged herself with her dog's leash in her bedroom on November 10, 2000, in Mission, British Columbia. She left a suicide note naming three girls at her school who she said were "killing her" because of their bullying. Her note stated, "If I try to get help it will get worse. If I ratted they would get suspended and there would be no stopping them. I love you all so much." (Coloroso, 2002, p.12).

April 8, 2002, was a dark day in Halifax, Nova Scotia; that was the day fourteen-year-old Emmet Fralick decided to take his own life with a single shot in his bedroom. He left behind a suicide note saying he could no longer take the bullying from his peers. It was reported that Emmet faced extortion, threats and beatings from other teenagers (Coloroso, 2002, p.15). These suicide notes cry out for help and for action on our part as professional educators.

This study investigates three key questions: *How do students in their early school years perceive and experience bullying in the school? How do students who are victims of bullying describe their experiences? How do victims perceive the perpetrators?*

For the purpose of this study, I will use Dan Olweus' definition (1993, p.9) because he is one of the leading researchers in the area of bullying. He has defined bullying as:

being exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other students. Negative actions can be defined as when someone

intentionally inflicts, or attempts to inflict, injury or discomfort upon another.

These negative actions can be carried out by words (verbally), for instance, by threatening, taunting, teasing, and calling names. It is a negative action when somebody hits, pushes, kicks, pinches, or restrains another- by physical contact. It is also possible to carry out negative actions without use of words or physical contact, such as by making faces or dirty gestures, intentionally excluding someone from a group.

I am very interested in studying bullying in the early elementary grades because I feel that we (teachers, administrators, school board members) should address this issue as soon as children enter the school system. There is significant evidence that bullying begins at the primary and elementary school levels. We need to talk about bullying at the initial stages; we need to talk about what is appropriate behavior and what is not appropriate behavior on the school playground. Students in their early years need guidance in how to relate to one another with respect for everyone's feelings. There are many faces of bullying: relational, physical and verbal; and I also feel that there is a gap between what adults and students perceive as bullying. Society prefers to keep bullying in the background and pretend that it is not escalating into an epidemic. Students who are bullied feel that they need to keep quiet because to share their experiences would only bring more feelings of shame and embarrassment.

Stopping the vicious cycle of bullying is achieved only when power is returned to those who are bullied and to the many bystanders. The bystanders need to realize that their laughing or joining in with the bully only makes the bully stronger and the victim weaker. We want to empower victims by standing up for them. Students who are bullied

also need confidence, encouragement and reassurance that the problem lies with the bully and not with them. Another common view is that name-calling is just a part of growing up that everyone needs to experience and address. In my opinion, name-calling should not be tolerated in any learning environment. “Abuse is not tolerated on the street, then why do people accept it on the playground?” (Greenbaum, 1987, p. 23).

My earliest memory of being bullied in elementary school is of an experience I had in grade three. My experience was with a group of girls who decided that they would rather not be my friends; they therefore convinced each other to avoid me during recess play times. This was relational bullying, which I have come to know is very common among female students. Relational bullying can be just as harmful as any other type of bullying. I also experienced verbal bullying as a young student, in the form of name calling on the school bus, where my peers would laugh and support the perpetrator. I experienced verbal bullying on the school bus on a repeated basis when I was in grades six, seven and eight. I remember that the student who did the bullying would always have a captive audience and that they would laugh very loudly at my expense. Unfortunately, like so many other students before and after me, I kept the code of silence. I did not tell my parents, teachers, siblings or principal about what was happening to me nearly every day. I attempted to “deal” with it by myself and hoped beyond hope that the bullying would somehow disappear. As I got older, the bullying gradually decreased, and by the time I entered high school it had nearly stopped completely. Although the bullying had lessened, the repercussions that I felt and still feel because of the bullying have been far-reaching and complex. Many adults are struggling today with coming to terms with their experiences of being bullied in school. I chose to channel my energy and

concentration through this research project and as a result it has become a therapeutic, healing experience for me. If I can help even just one student deal with bullying, my efforts will have been worthwhile.

While some research has been conducted on bullying in the middle and the senior school years, I found a huge gap in the literature regarding bullying at the early elementary school level. Several factors may be contributing to this. Bullying seems to increase during the middle school years and as a result much of the research has focused on students in grades five to eight. The senior years have gained attention through the many violent incidents that have occurred around the world in which students can see no way out of their pain except suicide or even murder (McConville & Cornell, 2003). The number of teenage suicides has been growing steadily in Canada over the last number of years, due in part to the increasing occurrence and intensity of bullying. Canada holds the unhappy distinction of having the worst adolescent suicide rate among the world's leading industrial powers (retrieved February 12, 2007 from www.statcan.ca). In 1997, Statistics Canada reported 261 suicides of adolescents aged 15 to 19. In 2004, this number had climbed to nearly 300 deaths. The rate of suicide in youth between the ages of 10 and 14 has quadrupled over the last 30 years from 0.6 per 100,000 to 2.4 per 100,000. In Canada, more research is needed into the roots of the problem as well as looking at the familial, school and contextual predictors of bullying behavior and victimization (Harachi, Catalano & Hawkins, 2000). It is interesting to note that despite all the attention that bullying has recently received, there has been a gap in implementing preventive educational programs.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

The Prevalence of Bullying

A survey of 296 children in urban middle schools in Yorkshire, United Kingdom, found one fifth reported being bullied. Of these, 57.9% reported being hit and/or kicked (Boulton & Underwood, 1992). Nearly 62% of these students reported that the bully was in the same year group. An interesting finding from this study was that nearly 44% of the perpetrators, when asked what motivates them to bully their classmates, responded that they were provoked into bullying. Victims (36%) on the other hand responded that it occurred because victims are smaller and weaker than the bully and for this reason they did not fight back (Boulton & Underwood, 1992).

In a Toronto study in 1995, 211 students from grades four to eight were asked to complete a self-report questionnaire on the frequency of bullying at school. It was shown that 49% of the students reported being bullied at least once or twice during the term and three times as many boys as girls acknowledged bullying others more than once or twice per term (Charach, Pepler & Ziegler, 1995). Researchers found that 61% of the students reported feeling that bullying is very unpleasant. Among other interesting findings from this study, 43% of the children reported that they tried to help when a classmate was being bullied, 33% said they felt they should have helped but did not, and 24% reported that bullying was none of their business.

A study conducted by Mooney & Smith in Wisconsin in 1995 found that bullying can occur more frequently for a child who has some disability. A child who stammers may lose what confidence he or she has with peers and may withdraw from peer interactions. Children with special educational needs were more likely to be bullied than

other children and they tended not to have as many friends. A questionnaire was developed and sent to fourteen hundred people with reported stammering problems. The results showed that 82% reported being bullied at some time in their life and 59% reported being bullied at least once a week. Of those bullied, name-calling was the most common type experienced, followed by threats, physical bullying and rumor-spreading. In another study by Thompson, Whitney & Smith in 1994, 186 children from eight schools in the United States were interviewed. The children ranged in age from eight to sixteen years and half of them had special educational needs that included autism, Aspergers syndrome and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. The results showed that children with special educational needs were more likely to be bullied than were children without special needs. Nearly two thirds of the children with special needs reported being bullied, whereas only one quarter of the children without special needs did.

A study conducted in the United Kingdom involved 25 class teachers completing a “Strengths and Weaknesses” assessment for 523 students aged from seven to eleven. The children completed a questionnaire entitled “My life in school”. From this study it was shown that one third of the students reported they were victims of bullying behavior. It also showed that boys with poor social skills, emotional problems and difficulties interacting socially were at the greatest risk of being bullied. Another study by Craig & Pepler conducted in Toronto in 1997 focused on a sample of 41 aggressive and 41 socially competent children from grades one to six. They were videotaped on the playgrounds of two elementary schools in order to gain insight into bullying on the playground. In order to observe the students’ interactions, a video camera was set up in a classroom overlooking the playground and “target” students wore small microphones that

picked up their speech and the speech of those around them. From this study several important findings emerged, including the startling fact that bullying occurred every seven minutes and lasted an average of 38 seconds. The majority of bullying episodes occurred within 120 feet of the school building. Peers were involved in some way in almost 85% of the episodes. Another study focused on the prevalence and nature of bullying in the classroom (Atlas & Pepler, 1998). Participants were from a public school in Toronto where 27 children were identified as being either aggressive or nonaggressive. A video camera was set up and each target child was fitted with a microphone. From this study, 60 bullying episodes occurred over 28 hours of filming. Bullying occurred twice every hour in the classroom and was short in duration. The boys and girls bullied at the same rate and peers were involved in 85% of the episodes. It has been suggested from this study that bullying occurs in a peer context and is related to the particular classroom activity and individual characteristics of the students involved.

Bullies and their future

Two Canadian researchers (Craig & Pepler, 2004) assert that children who bully and who are victims themselves have the most troubling peer relationship problems. They can have more difficulty in making friends and even have an elevated risk for relationship problems in their later roles as spouses, parents and employees. A study conducted by Bond, Carlin, Thomas, Rubin & Patton in 2001 focused on 2680 students aged 10 to 14 in Victoria, Australia, over a period of two years. The students were surveyed twice in year eight and once in year nine. It was found that the incidence of self reported symptoms of anxiety or depression in year nine was strongly linked with victimization reported either once or twice in year eight. This finding was especially true

for young girls, perhaps because boys seldom reported symptoms of depression. Overall, this report showed that students with a history of victimization and poor social relationships predicted the onset of emotional problems in adolescence. Another study used 330 students aged between nine and eleven in six junior schools in the United Kingdom (Fox & Boulton, 2005). The researchers provided participants with 20 short statements that described different social skills and told them to rate themselves and also to think of a victim and a non-victim and rate them as well. Teachers were asked to rate a victim and a non-victim from their class as well. The results showed that for eighteen of the items, peer ratings showed more pronounced social skills problems for victims than for non-victims. Teacher ratings showed that victims were rated as having greater problems as well. Overall, this study showed that victims were perceived by three different sources to have poor social skills.

A study by Chan & Rauenbusch conducted in New York in 2004 recommended that intervention be aimed at the child who is bullying and the families of both the victim and the perpetrator. This intervention needs to be much more in-depth and focused than the current whole school anti-bullying program. Services should be available at the school, including counseling, behavioural management and other forms of treatment. They also recommended parent education at school, which may strengthen the relationship between the parents and the school. Most schools today suspend the student who is bullying; however, this does not help the student avoid criminal activity later on in life.

The Bystander's Role

Harachi, Catalano & Hawkins (2000) found that there is a great deal of peer reinforcement in the middle school years during bullying incidents despite survey results, which show that many children are disturbed by bullying behavior. A study at two Toronto area elementary schools involving 120 students aged five to twelve showed that nearly 54% of peers spent their time reinforcing bullies by passively watching (O'Connell, Pepler & Craig, 1999). These results were gathered through viewing 53 segments of videotape; each segment contained a peer group that viewed bullying on the school playground. Nearly 21% of their time was spent actively modeling bullies and 25% of their time intervening on behalf of the victims. This report also uncovered that older boys who were in grades four to six were more likely to join actively with the bully than were younger boys in grades one to three. Both younger and older girls were more likely to intervene on behalf of the victim than were older boys. These results further support the crucial role that peers play in the processes that unfold during playground bullying episodes and the importance of initiating peer anti-bullying programs that are reinforced by the whole school.

The Effectiveness of Anti-Bullying Programs

A study performed by Frey, Hirschstein, Snell, Edstrom, MacKenzie & Broderick (2005) showed positive results after the implementation of the *Steps to Respect* program at six schools in the Pacific Northwest, involving 544 students from grades three to six. There were groups who received skill-and literature-based lessons from the program over a twelve-to fourteen-week period and there were groups who received no lessons (the control group). Results were gathered by using observational techniques to watch student

interactions on the playground. Researchers found that the implementation of the *Steps to Respect* program resulted in positive changes in behaviour on the playground. More specifically, bullying and the attitudes believed to support it were reduced, relative to the control group.

Another study showed that peer support systems can prove to be a positive deterrent in the fight against bullying. This study focused on administering a large-scale questionnaire survey to 2313 students from 51 schools in the United Kingdom where peer support systems had been in place for at least one year (Naylor & Cowie, 1999). The peer support systems involved students who were trained in offering friendship and support on a daily basis, a consistent conflict resolution plan to follow, and training in addressing numerous relational problems that could arise at school, including name-calling, exclusion and physical abuse. The results of this study showed that 57% of the 65 pupils who were users of the school's peer support systems reported that they found the systems to be very helpful and 25% found them to be helpful. The three most commonly mentioned benefits of these systems were reported to be that somebody was there to listen, that it gave the student strength to overcome the problem and that it showed that somebody cared. The most commonly mentioned benefits to the school were that bullying was reduced and teachers were now free to do other things. Not all results were as positive; it was also reported that many students and teachers did not accept the system and some teachers had a negative attitude towards it. Also, very few users actually utilized the system. There are also the issues that boys in grades seven to nine were more reluctant to use the support systems and chose not to be active participants in support systems. Both boys and girls usually seek help from same sex

peer supporters and many boys do not report being victims to anyone. It would appear that seeking out care from a peer supporter would threaten these boys' perception of what it is to be masculine. It seems that better promotion and publicity of these peer support systems would benefit their effectiveness in changing the social climate of schools.

Another study was conducted in an urban elementary school in Salt Lake City, Utah, involving 462 students (Butcher, Newsome, & Nay, 2003). Thirteen university students were trained to deliver recess activities and games that emphasized the development of positive social skills and were then instructed to work with a group of students during recess as a social skill intervention. Researchers targeted 12 behaviors that included but were not limited to hitting, pushing/shoving, kicking/tripping, verbal abuse, throwing objects etc. A systematic observation checklist was developed and the playground was monitored during and after the intervention to determine if there was a significant difference in the number of problem behaviors. The results showed that there were fewer problem behaviors during the intervention phase. The intervention provided more structured play for the students and the reinforcement and feedback provided by the intervention was helpful in strengthening the students' social skills.

Teachers' hesitation to intervene in bullying incidents

It has also been found that a common theme among students is that teachers and students do not intervene in many cases to stop bullying behavior (Olweus, 1993). This information was collected through questionnaires and peer assessment surveys. A study performed by Price & Everett (1997) involved a random sample of 1000 elementary through high school public school teachers across the United States. These teachers completed a 42-item survey regarding their concerns, thoughts and perceptions on school

violence. Results showed that teachers perceived violence as more likely to occur at the secondary level, in urban schools, and in schools comprising predominantly minority students. Almost 77% of teachers reported feeling safe at school; however, 11% had been the victim of a violent act. It has been suggested that perhaps teacher hesitation in intervening could be connected to their fear of being hurt. A study published by Boulton in 1997 in Kansas City involved 138 pre-, infant, junior and secondary school teachers who ranged from 19 to 57 years old. They completed a standardized questionnaire and the results showed that more teachers agreed that threatening people verbally was a form of bullying, while fewer teachers agreed that leaving people out was a form of bullying. Teachers were more sympathetic towards the victims; however, sympathy diminished with increasing length of service. Nearly 87% of the teachers expressed lack of confidence in their ability to deal with bullying and wanted more training. This could very well be a contributing factor to teachers' hesitation in intervening in many bullying episodes; they are simply not trained.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

Introduction

For my research, I studied how students in their early school years perceive and experience bullying in the school. I also studied how students who are victims of bullying described their experiences as well as analyzed how the victims perceive the perpetrators.

Research Design

I chose a qualitative research design to uncover students' experiences with bullying in the elementary grades. I focused on their descriptions as students who were bullied and/or perpetrators and how they make sense of the phenomenon of bullying. In essence, I conducted an interpretive study with a phenomenological approach focusing on what it is like to be a victim, perpetrator and bystander of bullying. This approach requires capturing and describing carefully and thoroughly how people experience, perceive, describe, feel, judge and remember some phenomenon. As a researcher, I was particularly interested in how elementary students perceive bullying and also their interpretations of why it is happening to them. I wanted to discover how they experience bullying and how they feel about school and their peers.

I chose a grade four classroom in rural Nova Scotia to discuss bullying because I was employed at the school as a special needs teacher and knew that there had been many occurrences of bullying in this class. I arranged for six sessions that lasted 30 minutes each, in which we began to discuss the various types of bullying, read three books on bullying and had open conversations centered on this topic. My primary intent was not to teach students formally about bullying but rather to gain a deeper understanding of their

thoughts on bullying. The second component of the study involved the entire class drawing pictures that represented what bullying meant to them. The third component of the study involved five thirty-minute interviews that were conducted one-on-one with five participants. These interviews took place at school following school hours to ensure the confidentiality of the interview participants. The class sessions and interviews were audiotaped to ensure accurate transcribing of data for content analysis. All names of students interviewed were changed in the final report and the tapes will be destroyed at the end of the study.

Max Van Manen, a Canadian pioneer in phenomenological research, states that “Phenomenology asks for the very nature of a phenomenon, for that which makes a some’thing’ what it is—and without which it could not be what it is” (Van Manen, 1990, p.10). In this study I attempted to uncover the nature of bullying by gaining a deeper insight into how early it begins to present itself in our public schools. “Reflection on lived experience is always recollective; it is reflection on experience that is already passed or lived through” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 9-10). My goal was to capture children’s memories of bullying. One particular study of young children’s memories was very relevant. Liwag and Stein (1995) found that preschool children were accurate in remembering a past event that precipitated an emotion and displayed this competence by recalling their emotional reactions, goals, plans and actions. Working with memory is central to a phenomenological approach because, as Van Manen has noted, “A person cannot reflect on lived experience while living through the experience. For example, if one tries to reflect on one’s anger while being angry, one finds that the anger has already changed or dissipated” (Van Manen, 1990, p.9-10).

For the purpose of the study, I began visiting a grade four classroom on a regular basis to talk with them about bullying. This was an informal brain storming session during which I attempted to make all the students feel comfortable. I visited the class six times over a span of six weeks. Each visit lasted for approximately thirty minutes. The content of these class sessions was developed independently and solely created for the purpose of this study. All six sessions began with a “hook” to spark conversation and listening to the students’ views, concerns and perceptions that followed. My initial visit focused on getting to know the students and explaining my interest in this topic. I then facilitated a discussion of what bullying meant to them. The first session also involved having the students draw pictures of what bullying meant to them. To ensure all students were comfortable in their drawing, I heeded the advice of Alerby (2003) that it is not significant how skilful they are at drawing. These pictures were collected at the end of thirty minutes. During this time, I also invited students to explain their visual representations of bullying to the group.

My second visit involved opening the session with a children’s book entitled *The Two Bullies* (Morimoto, 1999). After reading this book aloud, I encouraged discussion around verbal bullying and listened to the students’ perceptions and experiences. The third session also began with a book entitled *Hooway for Wodney Wat* (Lester, 1999). Following the reading, I guided a class discussion on physical bullying and listened to what students had to say. Students who chose not to participate in the class sessions worked on relationship building exercises that were planned by the classroom teacher and were linked directly to the provincial curriculum outcomes for the Grade four level. The fifth session involved a book entitled *Chester’s Way* (Henkes, 1988). The intent of this

book was to spark a discussion about the experiences the students may have had with relational bullying. The final session was a closing celebration of the group participation in my research. The students were encouraged to discuss their ideas on how to stop or reduce bullying behaviors. We also talked about bystanders and whether or not they have any power to stop bullying. Following this session, I arranged interviews after school hours with specific students. I audiotaped the class discussions and transcribed all sessions. Following this, I began interpreting and analyzing the content for themes. The focus of these sessions was to talk with students about bullying and to hear what their concerns and feelings are on the issue.

Site and Population Selection

The research took place at a small rural elementary school in Nova Scotia. I chose to focus on grade four students because I believe they are old enough to articulate their thoughts but still young enough to want to discuss their everyday encounters with bullying. A letter was sent to the school board (See Appendix A) requesting that they confirm with the school administration their permission for me to conduct my research at the school. I then contacted the school principal and met with the teacher, who expressed an interest in having the class participate. The classroom teacher and I had lengthy conversations regarding data collection, strategy and methodology and the key role students would play as informants in this study.

The Researcher's Role

Having taught grade three for two years in northern Manitoba I know firsthand that students are feeling the effects of bullying at this tender age. I felt that my research and any other research done in this area would help to create more positive environments within our schools, environments where fairness and equal rights are top priorities. I have always been interested in fairness and equal rights for everyone. Hence my interest in exploring personal experiences with bullying because, in essence, bullying does not allow everyone the right to learn in a caring, positive and comfortable environment. From my own experience as a student and as a teacher, bullying creates a wide gap within the classroom and causes some students to suffer socially, emotionally and academically. I undertook this investigation in the belief that it would serve to shed new light on bullying in elementary school and be a springboard for constructive action.

Ethical Considerations

To protect the anonymity of the informants, I used pseudonyms rather than real names when discussing the results. The potential for tattling was addressed through a clear explanation at the beginning of each class session that no one was to use names of other students when telling a story. This helped to protect the identity of the students and also reduced the possibility of tattling. Before beginning the interviews, I reminded the participants that I wanted to hear about their own experiences only without reference to any other students' names. I offered the names of school staff that were willing to talk with students about bullying. The only individuals who would know about the interviews were myself, the teacher, the interview participants and their parents or guardians. The students not participating in the interviews were not aware of the identity of the interview

participants; thereby also helping to reduce the likelihood of tattling. I was prepared to provide assistance to those who had been bullied. Volunteers from the school staff were identified to provide extra support to students who wanted to talk further about their experiences on a personal level. Support staff were available in a private classroom during the scheduled interview times to offer one on one counselling. The guidelines set out by the Research Ethics Office at the University of Prince Edward Island were strictly followed. The participants were treated ethically, sensitively and with empathy. Consent forms (see Appendix D and E) were sent to the parents to describe clearly the key role their child could play in the investigation and their option of withdrawing at any time. In this way, parents knew the expectations for each child's participation. The students along with their parent/guardian agreed to participate in an interview and were chosen at random due to a high number of students showing an interest in being interviewed. No parent or staff member had access to the data. Because of the sensitive nature of the topic, I consulted with the resource teacher and guidance counselor in conducting debriefing sessions.

Data Collection Methods

During the interviews, open-ended questions (see Appendix J) were used to gain insight into specific events that students may have experienced or witnessed. I also asked all the students in the class to draw pictures regarding bullying. The six sessions that I conducted were also transcribed and used as valuable conversational data. The data was collected from the class sessions during regular school hours. The students and their parents were informed of the study in writing. Participation in the study was voluntary and parents signed the detailed consent forms. During the data collection, the students

had an opportunity to think and reflect upon their bullying experiences in school by participating in an in-depth interview. Students were reassured of the confidentiality of all they shared. Care was taken not to lead the participants or direct their dialogue during the interviews. The interview involved five students who had given consent to participate. They were done individually, in a private room in the school after school hours. These interviews were audiotaped.

Data Analysis

The interviews and class sessions were transcribed over the several weeks after their completion and subjected to line-by-line analysis. The data were organized and compiled into a form that was easily accessible to the researcher. The verbatim responses were supplemented with editorial notes that identified potentially relevant cues such as sighs, pauses, hesitation, tone of voice (sadness, anger) and any other pertinent cues. During data analysis, I read and reread the transcriptions and looked for recurring themes within transcripts and across all interviews. I also noted any variations that occurred within the data such as when one child said something that no one else shared but that is important to our deeper understanding of school bullying. The data was analyzed according to the six steps of data analysis as outlined by Marshall & Rossman (1999): “organizing the data, generating categories, themes, and patterns, coding the data, testing the emergent understandings, searching for alternative explanations, and writing the report” (p. 152). These processes called for strong interpretive skills as well as a willingness to challenge patterns that seem apparent. I was open-minded and flexible so that possible alternative meanings to those that might have been identified could also be considered.

Findings of a phenomenological approach are considered reliable “if a reader... can also see what the researcher saw, whether or not he agrees with it” (Hein & Austin, 2001). Dependability and confirmability were ensured as the findings and conclusions are rooted in the data and supported by feedback from colleagues. “The ultimate authority regarding accuracy of interpretation is the research participant” (Thomas, 2003, p. 167). Therefore, the individual participants interviewed were provided with a written summary of the study themes. They verified whether they were consistent with their bullying experiences. Within the thesis, I provide verbatim quotations that would assist readers in making their own judgments about the rigor of the analysis and the credibility of the interpretations.

A key requirement and challenge with a phenomenological approach is the ability to bracket oneself; meaning that the researcher makes every effort to suspend or set aside his or her biases, preconceived notions and any other knowledge of the phenomenon obtained from either personal or academic means (Field & Morse, 1985). In order to do this successfully, the researcher must go through a process of rigorous self-reflection. “The concept of reflection is challenging and may refer to a complex array of cognitively and philosophically distinct methods and attitudes” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 35). Practicing research in the human sciences is never simply a matter of procedure. I therefore made a conscious effort to suspend my preconceived notions of what children are capable of saying and doing and I entered situations with my participants with an open mind and a sharp ear.

A common misconception that many elementary teachers have is that young children have very short attention spans. There are many situations in which students at a

young age can be completely engrossed in an activity and lose all track of time, sometimes spending large blocks of time absorbed in one activity. It is notions like these that I attempted to keep in focus at all times during the data gathering and interpretive processes. Van Manen discusses six different ways of approaching bracketing or reduction: Ontological, Heuristic, Hermeneutic, Phenomenological, Eidetic and Methodological (Van Manen, 1990, p. 42). The researcher must consider the nature of the phenomenon that he or she is studying and then choose the most appropriate approach. In order to understand the unique meaning and significance of bullying, then, I need to reflect on it by practicing a thoughtful attentiveness. We as humans are already predisposed to perceive things in certain ways and therefore a reflexive practice must be utilized for phenomenological understanding to occur. I do not think it would be possible for me to remove myself from my own experiences with bullying and my preconceptions. This, however, is not necessarily a negative aspect because I can recognize and name my own experiences and my own biases as a method of being more sensitive and open to the ways that I make meaning from my data. We can learn through our biases and our prejudices and in all reality can never truly set them aside.

A key component of the analysis also included listening to the audiotapes of the six class sessions and interviews. These sessions and interviews were more conversational in tone. "Theorists and inquirers do not begin their research from scratch. People interested partake in a continually evolving conversation which has begun long before their arrival and which now continues with their participation" (Carson, 1986, p. 75). Conversation as a methodology is now widely recognized as a legitimate method of research. Mischler has written that "the research interview is no longer seen as a tool

only for ‘information gathering’. It is a site where partners meet and converse, and through their conversations they jointly construct meaning” (Mischler, 1986, p.29). Gudmundsdottir elaborates on this by stating that “the interview is a form of conversation. Someone asks a question and another person responds. Through their cooperation in the research process, researchers and informants jointly put the pieces together into a meaningful whole, something that makes sense to both with each participant having left his or her mark on the process and the product” (Gudmundsdottir, 1996, p. 294). It would seem that doing research in the conversational mode changes the relationship between persons who have been labeled as “researcher” and “practitioner”. While it is unlikely to eliminate totally the distinction between them, conversational research does offer the possibility of developing a community of cooperative investigation.

Interpretation lies at the heart of this study and was the biggest challenge that I faced during the research process. The meaning of “interpretation” in this study is that of Gadamer (1992) for whom interpretation is a process in which every human participates. We enter a particular point in that process and so are affected by what has happened before us. We have certain prejudices because we are part of this process. These prejudices form and make possible our understandings. Yet, as humans, we can still develop interpretive distance and so filter prejudices. We cannot remove ourselves from the situation to which we belong, but we can move around within that situation and so change our horizons. In this process we experience the fusion of horizons. As Gadamer illustrates in various pieces of work, we are not beings alienated and isolated from the past. Rather, we are a living part of an ongoing conversation. “We are active

participants in a dialogue with the past that will carry on into the future” (Gadamer, 1992, p. 67). Gadamer also claims that “All understanding is interpretation, and all interpretation takes place in the medium of a language that allows the object to come into words and yet is at the same time the interpreter’s own language” (1992, p.111).

Gadamer also states that language sometimes seems inadequate to the task of understanding. For the purpose of this study, interpretation of the data was based on my assumptions and my understanding through language.

Analysis of Children’s Drawings

I firmly agree with Van Manen when he refers to “epistemological silence”(Van Manen, p. 53, 1990) in describing how paintings can speak their own language. The products of art can, in a sense, be seen as lived experiences that are transformed into transcended configurations. Human beings engaged in drawing are involved in giving shape to their lived experiences. Their artistic pieces can be seen as texts. These texts do not consist of a verbal language but nevertheless are a language and have their own grammar and their own unique story. From this, I have come to the conclusion that it would be advantageous to use more forms of expression than only verbal or written language in this study. Picture drawing helped provide another outlet for students to express themselves who may have difficulty orally describing their feelings and perceptions regarding bullying. The intent of having students draw pictures was to gather an alternative form of data regarding their thoughts on bullying. It is important to note that students were asked to explain their drawings to me during one of the class sessions. This served as both an amplification and validation of their oral descriptions. The students were simply given the instructions “I would like you to draw a picture of what

you think of when I say the word ‘bullying’. This enabled a clearer representation of what bullying meant to the students.

Children can sometimes express themselves in a more descriptive and vivid way when given a pencil and paper and allowed the freedom to illustrate their experiences. Each drawing would be viewed as a device where qualitative similarities and differences will be noticed. Pictures are a tactful, sensitive way to link us to the concreteness of another person’s life (Coles, 1992). Children use artwork as a visible statement to others (as well as to the self) about what life is like from their perspective. Drawings done by children can make a moral and political statement regarding the rift between the oppressed and the oppressor (Coles, 1992). Coles points out that interpreting images has a certain degree of ambiguity involving how an individual image can and should be read; is it seen as an explicit, precise and matter-of-fact communication or as an ambiguous social and cultural artifact? Coles also indicates a second ambiguity in how images can and should be used in social inquiry: is it information-rich data that extends scientific investigations or is it challenging or stepping away from a science that is too narrowly conceived? (Coles, 1992). “All documentation... is put together by a particular mind whose capacities, interests, values, conjectures, suppositions and presuppositions, whose memories, and, not least, whose talents will come to bear directly or indirectly on what is, finally presented to the world in the form of words, pictures, or even music, or artifacts of one kind or another” (Coles, 1992, p. 87). Through these drawings I hoped to achieve an even deeper understanding of what bullying meant to this group of elementary students.

Pink states, “While images should not necessarily replace words as the dominant mode of research or representation, they should be regarded as an equally meaningful

element of work” (Pink, 2001, p.4). Patterns and structures from the drawings were combined in different themes. It is therefore the different themes that make the phenomenon what it is, and the phenomenon in this case is students’ bullying experiences in school. I anticipated that these data would be particularly valuable in my analysis. Aristotle admitted that “the soul never thinks without an image” (Gadamer, 1992).

Children’s art not only provides a window into children’s problems, it also gives them another language with which to share feelings and ideas. “There can be no doubt that student drawings can give us valuable insight into the world of the learner, providing us with information that cannot be gleaned from any other evaluation” (McLean, Henson & Hiles, p. 33, 2003). We cannot forget that children’s drawings are personal expressions of their inner world (Malchiodi, 1994). MacPhail and Kinchin reported that anything that is created by someone, be it a drawing, a painting or a piece of sculpture, is a non-verbal message from the creator about the inner self and that artist’s world. Dennis (1966) has also written a great deal on this topic. He suggests that analyzing children’s drawings is an appropriate method to use to determine values, stating that “it is our hypothesis that drawings do not merely mirror the environment. They reflect values or preferences, not the frequencies of experiences” (p.45). Drawings tend to reflect the child’s attitudes at the moment and those attitudes and drawings will change over time. This should be taken as a caution and not a true limitation because evaluators know that any measurement of attitude only captures the immediate state of the individual. Dennis says that a limitation that should be taken into account is the limited skill of the artist. He says many children will not try to draw a difficult scene but will substitute less difficult objects in the picture.

One of the most common mistakes made when analyzing images is projecting what we would like to see in an image. There are many graphic indicators in drawings which may not be related to the studied phenomenon. For example, smoke coming out of a chimney is a commonly reported indicator of turmoil in the house, yet there is no data for this conclusion (Malchiodi, 1994). This risk was always at the forefront of my mind when I was examining the images. Malchiodi advised that only under the guidance of an expert in art based assessments can interpretations of children's drawings really be used in research. Drawings include much more than just a simple look at the world. Attitudes, emotions, perceptions and psychological state can all be represented in an individual's drawings. Interpretation and explanation must be either omitted or done by an expert. There is a temptation for evaluators to make interpretations that they are neither prepared nor qualified to make.

Data Management

Data was collected in the school setting without compromising classroom learning time. Interpretation of the students' feedback from the class sessions as well as the student interviews began shortly after collecting the data. I intended to conduct the interviews during the last three visits outside of class time. To manage my data, colour coding was used and all data were securely locked in a cabinet in my office at home. The data were on my computer, hard drive and a CD. A hard copy was also made. Following the completion of the thesis, all data from this study will be destroyed.

Trustworthiness Issues

To address the issue of credibility, it is important to note that the participants are the only ones who can legitimately judge the credibility of the results. When I began to

analyze the data, I was faced with the challenge of organizing the transcripts from the class sessions and interviews into themes. The interviews and class sessions were analyzed individually during the initial stages, so as to attend to the varying experiences that each participant may have had with bullying. After this initial analysis, I wrote a summary for each interview and consulted with each participant to validate the findings. I revisited the school and arranged to meet with each of the five participants individually. I explained to them that I was there to summarize how I interpreted the interviews and was seeking their input on the accuracy of the account. Following this, the summary was read and the student had the opportunity to voice his or her opinion. All five participants agreed that the summaries accurately portrayed their thoughts and feelings. Following this level of validation, I faced the task of weaving five different interpretations into one story. All five participants agreed with my interpretation of their interviews and therefore the findings were validated.

The onus is on the reader to judge the transferability of the interpretative findings. I ensured that I described the research context (location, school's description, rural or urban setting etc.) as well as the assumptions made in undertaking the study. Dependability is another issue that needs to be accounted for in order to strengthen my research study results. I needed to account for the ever-changing context within which research occurs.

Confirmability refers to the degree to which the results could be confirmed or corroborated by others. I documented all the procedures for checking and rechecking data throughout the study and described how I recorded the interviews. I also had another researcher critique the results and document that procedure. A child's experience

was still viewed as important and was included into the final report even though it may not be linked to a recurring theme. I took time to analyze all data and view it with a sense of urgency and regarded it all as providing significant insight into the world of bullying.

Generalizing from this investigation was not my interest here. Hence the caution against concluding that the experiences and perceptions of the study's participants are representative of all early elementary students in that particular geographical area who attend school.

Validating Findings

Having my interpretations checked by the participants to determine if they were accurate was an important component in validating this study's findings. I met with all five participants again and asked them individually to check the accuracy of the account. This involved taking the findings back to participants and asking them in an interview about the accuracy of the report. I asked the participants several questions about several aspects of the study including whether the description was complete, if the themes were accurate to include, and if the interpretations were fair and representative. All five participants informed me that the findings were accurate and that the interpretations were appropriate and true to their meaning. Dawson added that he was no longer experiencing bullying as often as when he spoke with me earlier in the year. Sara was no longer interested in participating in a peer mediation program because she was now in the youngest grade in the building and was feeling rather overwhelmed. She said she would not feel comfortable trying to spearhead this program at this time. Peter expressed his despair over the fact that he was still experiencing bullying on the playground, more

specifically during recess and lunch. He explained that the older, stronger children would ask him to play dodge ball and then throw the ball as hard as they could at him. He made it clear that it would sting when the ball hit him and one time it hit him in the private area. With this new information, I met with the school principal and inquired about recess rules. He assured me that the older children would be separated from the younger children during recess and lunch times.

The Limitations of the Study

This study was limited to one school district in Nova Scotia and one grade four class. I would caution against concluding that the ideas, thoughts and perceptions expressed by these participants are representative of all early elementary students. On the same note, however, there are valuable insights into the lives of elementary students that can be drawn from this study regarding elementary students.

Another limitation that must be acknowledged is the possibility that more descriptive participants were missed due to the decision to randomly pick the participants' names. This was considered during this phase of the research; however, it was decided to follow the initial plan of selection.

Timeline

My timeline was as follows:

June 2005	Submitted revised proposal to Ethics at UPEI.
Summer 2005	Received Ethics approval to begin the study.
January 2006	Gained consent from school board and began working with classroom teacher by discussing my research plans.

Mid- June 2006	Six sessions completed, the interviews completed and the drawings collected. Transcribed interviews and class sessions.
Summer 2006	Analyzed the drawings for recurring themes. Read and reread transcriptions
September 2006	Met with interview participants and provided them with written thematic summaries to verify and validate the findings.
September-October 2006	The writing process: editing and revising.
November 2006	Submitted first draft of thesis to supervisor.
January 2007	Submitted second draft of thesis to supervisor
February 2007	Thesis to the external reader.
Spring 2007	Anticipated thesis defence.

Chapter 4 – Findings

Introduction

This chapter presents the data collected from the in class sessions and the following interviews in which students were free to speak openly on the topic of bullying. In the initial class session, students were given paper and a pencil and asked to draw what they think of when they hear the word ‘bullying’. One specific drawing was analyzed and included in Appendix K. The chapter concludes with a thematic analysis of one-on-one interviews conducted with five participants from the class. These interviews were able to shed light on what it is like to be a victim, a perpetrator and an observer of bullying. The insights of these five students proved to be invaluable in shedding new light into what it is like to experience bullying in elementary schools from many different perspectives.

Class Sessions

These class sessions were conducted to gain insight into students’ perceptions, thoughts and beliefs about bullying. There were no lessons taught during these times, simply listening and clarifying what the students were saying. The transcripts were studied and analyzed three times and there were significant themes that emerged from the data. The following is a discussion of the various themes that came out of these sessions.

Confusion on how to cope with bullying

Many students who spoke out during these sessions and in the interviews expressed their utter confusion on how to deal with a student who bullies them. Students frequently voiced their opinions on how frustrating it is to have the teachers tell them one thing (to report bullying) and some parents tell them another thing (to fight back

physically). One boy spoke out and said “I told my Dad (about bullying) and my Dad told me to fight back.” When asked if he thought he should fight back he responded, “No, but if it will make them stop and they will be scared of you. We have to figure it out ourselves. That’s a big load on us”. I found this quote to be enormously important to this research study and to schools everywhere. Our students should not have to figure out how to handle bullying by themselves; we as educational professionals need to have solid policies in place to deal with students who are bullying and those who are being bullied. Parents need to be on board with the school as well, so that the messages from home and school are consistent. It is no wonder that many of the students I spoke with were pessimistic about the reduction of bullying. This same boy later asked in the same session “Can you start calling them names?” He also voiced this opinion: “Or you can start bullying them so they know how it feels.” It is this very attitude that creates the victim-bully cycle whereby victims become students who bully and this is definitely a cycle that we as educators need to break. All five students wanted to make it clear that all the teachers tell them to report bullying incidents, but when they do report them it is not always helpful. As one student points out “one person always gets this other person going every recess. Every time that person is told on, it won’t stop him because he just keeps going and going. He is not afraid of the teacher at all.”

An interesting point was raised by one of the student informants and that was the absence of any consequences when students reported bullying. Again this theme surfaced in the second session as well. One boy stated, “Sometimes, the only way to get the bullying to stop is to bully back”.

Bullying Occurs Frequently on the School Bus

This issue came up during our first session and surfaced again later in the interview section. One student shared her experiences:

When I was in the last seat, there was high schoolers coming on the bus and one boy sat in front of me. He was calling me bad words and I said stop staring at me and he wouldn't leave me alone. And then I told my mom.

There is one drawing (# 3) (see Appendix K) that really stood out from all the rest. For this one young boy, the first thing that came to his mind was the school bus. The picture shows a lone bus that is packed with students. When he described his picture he simply said "I have picture #3 and there was a guy on the bus picking on me".

Difficulty Identifying Relational Bullying

From our initial discussion, the grade four students were quick to identify physical and verbal bullying; however they had trouble putting a name to relational bullying and with identifying when it happens. In a later session more students talked openly about their experiences with relational bullying. A major theme in the storybook entitled Chester's Way that I read involved relational bullying; however, when asked about what kind of bullying was portrayed they responded, "The mean kind." They listed physical and mental as the types of bullying. Mental, they explained, was when someone was "calling you names and stuff that hurts your feelings". Physical is "when someone pushes you or kicking". They agreed there was another type in the book: "They wouldn't hang out with Lily." When asked about the type of bullying portrayed, none of the 21 students could pinpoint that it was relational bullying signifying their confusion of the concept.

Students' Thoughts on Decreasing Bullying

A number of students felt compelled to voice their opinions regarding techniques and suggestions on how to decrease bullying on the playground. "You can put more paraprofessionals on the playground instead of just one or two." Others addressed the bullying that occurs on school buses: "You could have another guy, instead of the bus driver. You could have another person sitting in the seats watching the kids. Two people, one in the front and one in the back." Another suggestion was given: "The bus driver could assign a seat to the bullies." Several students spoke out and said, "I think that if everyone just walks away then it (bullying) looks funny." Another student, who was exceptionally insightful, stated, "It is kind of like a bully is like a building, if you take away its support it'll just fall down and look funny."

In-Class Bullying

Ten students reported that bullying occurs in classrooms even if there is a teacher present. "Some of the teachers don't care. They don't see it happening." "Yeah, sometimes she doesn't even see it. She sees it but she doesn't know what's happening." Dawson explained that often other students would whisper, under their breath, names directed at him that were loud enough for him to hear but quiet enough that the teacher could not. Dawson also had his winter cap thrown in the garbage can and his juice box purposely knocked over and spilled.

Relational Bullying

One student told of her experiences with relational bullying “My cousin, she has a funny way of doing things. If you don’t give it to her she says that she won’t be your friend anymore.” Another student shared his experience:

In another school there’s this guy and when I was a new kid he would always pick on me and throw me against the school and make me bleed. Then he asked me to do something and I said ‘no’ and he said do it or I won’t be your friend anymore. And I said I don’t care.

This was the only overly aggressive account that I heard throughout the data collection stage. This child was experiencing physical and relational bullying simultaneously, which no doubt was a heavy burden for him to carry. He explained that he coped with relational bullying by telling the student who was bullying him that he did not care, hoping that he/she would give up on him when he did not react. This has the potential for being a successful strategy; however, it is certainly not a foolproof remedy.

Early Experiences with Bullying

It was particularly disturbing to hear that many students had experienced some type of bullying at a very young age. Four students said they first saw or heard “bullying” in Grade Primary, while others said, “I don’t think I was even in a grade.” “More like preschool.”

Student Drawings

During the first session, I asked the students to draw a picture of what they think of when they hear the word ‘bullying’. There was no initial discussion of any kind; I simply introduced myself and handed out paper and pencils to everyone. After the drawings were completed, students were given an opportunity to explain their pictures. During the initial stages of this research study I had hoped to gain insight into children’s

thoughts through their drawings. However, this proved to be a daunting challenge that I elaborate on further in a later section. As a result, I chose to focus my attention on one drawing that clearly indicated that child's thoughts.

Interview Segment

Direct quotations provide an insider's point of view to the studied phenomenon. They in essence provide the "emic perspective", which is the insider's perspective (Hein & Austin, p. 6, 2001). It is because of this that I have decided to make the interviews the main focus of this thesis. I have included many quotations throughout this thesis to support themes that I have identified as well as to portray the students' experiences with bullying.

While reading and rereading the five interview transcripts, a number of common themes surfaced. It is these themes that I followed when I wrote each participant's story. I chose to present the data in a narrative style rather than question and answer to aid in the flow and readability of this work. The narratives address the common themes in this order:

1. General statement about the participant to establish context.
2. Initial thoughts on bullying (what it means to him or her).
3. Frequency and occurrence of bullying in his or her life and his or her peers'.
4. Location of most bullying episodes.
5. Opinions of why people bully.
6. Description of typical victim.
7. Most common type of bullying seen.
8. Differences between male and female bullying.
9. Current thoughts on punishments and deterrents.
10. Coping strategies.
11. Effects of bullying on his or her life.
12. Opinion on how to stop or decrease the number of bullying episodes.
13. Overall feelings about school.

14. Final thoughts.

Dawson's Story

Dawson is a nine-year-old boy in grade four. He has gone to the same school all of his life and either gets a drive to school or takes the bus.

When we began to discuss bullying and what it means to him, he quickly responded, "I can not stand that word." He said, "I hate it, I can't stand any kind." Dawson then went on to say that when he hears the word 'bullying' he feels immediate anger. Dawson strongly believes that bullying happens frequently at his school. When asked why he thought this, he responded, "Because mostly every single day... mostly every single day it happens to me!" He made it clear that he believes that bullying occurs most frequently in class and at the playground during recess times. He described the bullying he had experienced during class times: "I was flicked sometimes and sometimes poked and pinched." Another episode occurred during recess in his class:

Someone threw my hat in the garbage and filled it with strawberries and yogurt and juice. You know what? It was disgusting. I had to rinse it off. I couldn't calm down, I wasn't relaxed, I wasn't happy. You don't blame me, do you? The teacher tried all day to figure out what to do.

Dawson explained why he thinks some people choose to bully others: "Because they enjoy... they enjoy their pain, they enjoy their misery and maybe because they just like making other people feel sad."

When asked about the most common types of bullying, Dawson talked of verbal and physical bullying as being at the top of the list. He recounted two specific experiences. "They call me names and this one time in grade three a guy in my class same guy now called me and my friend a bad word." He said, "I've been hit, the second

time he pushed me down, I got cut here, here and here and I had rocks poking into my skin. I got them out but my skin was all bristles.” Dawson discussed the differences between girls bullying and boys bullying; while he agrees that they are both sneaky, he made it clear that boys are more apt to jump out and physically harm you, while girls will jump out and verbally abuse you. Dawson states, “Well, boys might get a few people to hide around the bushes and wait for him to show up and jump out and beat him and girls will hide too and jump out...but they would do name-calling.”

Dawson became very frustrated when asked what he thought could be done to lower the number of incidents that occur at school.

This bully has been punished and he has gotten into trouble, he got suspended for a day. It didn't work! My parents, teachers, principals have all tried really hard but nothing we do works. Even the substitutes have tried! We have tried everything we can think of, my parents have tried, even you are trying, even the new principal and vice-principal are trying. Ground them, getting them in trouble, not letting them go to recess, they've tried all that. The teachers and I have tried everything. It's pointless. And there is just one more thing you should know. We've tried everything!

When asked if he has ever done something to avoid bullying, Dawson went into a detailed description:

I've tried avoiding them, I've tried getting rid of them, I've even tried using force. I've tried hiding from them, I've tried running from them, I've even tried tripping them to give me more time to run around them in circles to make them dizzy and I've tried tripping them so they hit their heads and stuff and grabbing my things before they can get it and putting them in my backpack and zipping it up tight. If they were pulling on my backpack I would just stop and let them fall back. Pretty good plan, huh?

As the interview progressed, we began to explore the topic of how bullying has impacted his life and how it made him choose not to participate in Crazy Hair Day at school, which was intended to allow the students to have a little creative fun.

I've tried avoiding school, pretending I am sick. Once it worked and I didn't go to school because I didn't want to get my hair done and changed all crazy and stuff. I didn't want to get teased again. I just can't take it. I need help too, with all these headaches and stuff and this fever to go down that only I can feel. No one else can feel it - not even my nanny - and she is the most precious person in my life. She believes me that I have it.

Dawson believes that students who bully other students need help. "We've got to get that kid some professional help or send them to family therapy." However in the same breath, Dawson doubts even that would work. It was towards the end of the interview when Dawson really seemed to open up and express himself:

It feels like I don't belong in any place! Anywhere! That's the point. Mom said she is sending me to school to learn, not to be bullied. We've tried hard to make it stop, we've tried everything. Tried to be mean, tried hitting them even moved twice.

Dawson explained that he moved into a new home, but not very far from the school, and so did not have to change schools. He explained that school can feel unsafe to him at times, especially when he is being teased or called names. He does not feel comfortable at school. In his own words:

Lots of different reasons, name-calling, being tormented the life out of me. Keep bullying, give it up, what's the difference? I've tried everything and I don't mean to be rude. I've tried everything, I've tried everything, I've tried everything. I even feel like getting all my things, pack up and move 600 miles from here.

He expressed his feelings of profound frustration and hopelessness when he stated:

I feel like anytime soon I could just grab one of those chairs. Throw it out the window and run away and never come back. That's how mad, that's how much I can't take it anymore.

My parents have tried everything, nothing we tried works. Nothing.

Dawson expressed pessimism when asked how hopeful he is that schools will eventually eliminate bullying. He responded, “About... about 3% out of 100. My chances are very slim. And you don’t blame me either.” When given the chance to say anything at all about bullying he stated:

Well there is one thing. (sigh). I’ve never told anyone this not even the principal but I just cannot take it anymore. I feel so mad that I could just stand up, grab all my stuff, pack it up. Grab one of those chairs throw it out the window, jump out, walk away, not even come back if you said so. That’s how mad I feel, I can’t take this bullying anymore.

What I Learned from Dawson

Following my interview with Dawson, I was left with a feeling of deep concern for him. He was in a sense reaching out to me for help. I felt that he was nearing a breaking point and he stated at one point in the interview, “It feels good to talk about my feelings, I haven’t told many people.” In the following weeks, I reported my concerns to administration so that follow up steps could be taken to offer additional support for Dawson.

Peter’s Story

Peter is a nine-year-old student in grade four who has gone to the same school by bus every day since grade primary.

Peter’s initial thought on bullying was one word, “vengeance”. He went on to explain that he wanted vengeance on the people who bullied him. In essence, a thought of revenge and somehow getting back at someone. Peter also stated that bullying also means “picking on, definitely. Scared, and sad and nervous and you feel weird. Well that’s what I feel sometimes”. He also felt that bullying occurred quite often at his

school. He admitted that he is “a little bit” afraid of being bullied and told a story: “One day, I almost punched somebody back. They were picking on me. Well I didn’t punch them back, but I was showing my knuckles.” He also added that “one time in the line he was passing me and I just pushed him away and he punched me...right in the gut.” Peter also described a time when the students in his class would say, ‘I don’t want to play with you or play with someone else at recess. I’m going on the swing and I don’t want to play with you’, uhh, its hard.” When asked where bullying occurs most often, he replied, “ In classrooms and on... on the playground. You know, a lot of times it occurs.”

Peter spoke at great length as to why bullying occurs.

To get back what they want, their power ‘cause then they could bully someone else. They know you’re tiny and weak. They bully you so much, you can’t take it. It’s hard on them. When bullies pick on someone else they like it, they get happy and they just do it again. It’s just that if a bully makes another person sad or mad like angry then they think it’s funny and the other people doesn’t. Bullies feel like happy, but why? That’s the point! A lot of people just like to bully. They’re like angry they’re frustrated at something else and then they pick on little kids but that doesn’t mean you can take out your frustrations out on someone else. That’s why bullying has to stop.

Peter described the typical victim as being “Uh, well, shy a little bit”. He felt that he has seen all types of bullying with equally serious consequences. “I would say like a little bit of all of them.” Peter raised an important issue regarding current strategies and recommendations and the lack of empathy students who report bullying may experience.

Sometimes say that to me. If you feel hurt by somebody I want you to report it.... If it’s hurting your feelings it’s not right. But that’s a tattle tale. One day, I think the teacher said when I said something about somebody, “ahh, stop tattle telling” and I wasn’t tattle telling I think. That was hard. ‘Cause you know they don’t understand.

When asked about how he copes, Peter replied, “Ummmm, no ‘cause I’m too scared I don’t know what to do.” As the interview progressed, Peter described to me that the

bullying he experienced has made him feel “bad” towards school. He went on to say “I just don’t have the courage” to tell the bullies to stop and that “I’m such a wimp, just scared. That’s what a wimp means, that you’re scared”. Already signs of a lowered self-esteem and negative self-talk occurring. Peter had much to say when I asked him for suggestions on how to decrease the number of bullying episodes.

Would you get more paras (paraprofessionals) outside? And would you tell more teachers to look out for kids that are bullied and tell the bus drivers to look out too? You should get a lot of teachers to form a group to stop the kids from bullying. That would help.

He discussed his opinion that bullies are popular because people laugh with them. Peter described his feelings when he is at school: “It’s like no one likes me in my class. It’s like all the kids don’t because a lot of the time they are like mad at me. I don’t know why!” When asked if he feels comfortable at school, Peter replied that he does unless someone is bullying him and then he feels upset and angry. Towards the end of the interview Peter expressed a rather pessimistic viewpoint on the thought of bullying stopping completely. “1% that it will stop, 99% that it won’t. I wonder who invented bullying? Maybe they could tell us why.”

What I Learned from Peter

After this interview with Peter, I was both frustrated and annoyed at the thoughts of this young boy being victimized. From speaking with him, I became more deeply aware of his inner innocence in regards to the phenomenon of bullying. This became strikingly clearer when he asked, “I wonder who invented bullying?” He seemed at a loss in regards to coping with bullying and called out for techniques and strategies to help him in difficult situations. I was left wondering how many other students are struggling with

the dilemma of whether they are tattling or reporting a bullying incident. This was particularly disturbing for me, because we are in essence telling our students two contradictory statements. One is to tell when you are being bullied, but then when they do report it, they risk being reprimanded for tattling.

Sarah's Story

Sarah is a ten-year-old in grade four. She moved to this school eight months ago. She takes the bus to school. She explained that she was bullied extensively when she was in grade one, but now, thankfully, being in a new school she is no longer experiencing bullying. She speaks openly of her past experiences with bullying and shares her thoughts on the future.

As we began a discussion on bullying, she spoke of “people saying mean words, pushing and hitting and a whole bunch of bystanders”. She believes that bullying occurs every day and she sees a lot of it on the playground. “Once a day maybe. I see a lot of it out on the playground.” She described one particular incident:

He was playing around and he was singing and he was spinning around and he was having a good time and a couple of kids from my class walked over to him and started saying ‘aha, you’re so stupid’. Oh my God, your high voice could probably break windows... the victim would scream the person’s name and he would get very mad. And then the victim would go and scream in their ears, hit them sometimes.... He would end up getting into trouble when it was the bully was the one that really had to.

Sarah felt that bullying occurred most often at the back of the bus.

The bus driver can’t hear and it can happen without him knowing. It can also... happen on the playground too.

When I asked her why people bully, Sarah shared these profound insights: “It makes them feel good. Maybe they don’t get attention at home and they’re not very happy.

Sometimes you wonder if they got any feelings at all.” She described the typical victim with some detail:

Doesn't have very many friends. Probably different than a lot of people, wears kinda funny clothes, maybe has big glasses. The person in my class that gets picked on doesn't have big glasses but he's very different from the rest. Maybe they don't like doing things that most students like to or they don't know how to do something that other students like to do or maybe they're just different.

She thought carefully about what she considered to be the most common type of bullying and talked about mean name-calling that provokes screams and clenched fists in the victim.

As the interview progressed, Sarah talked about trying to ignore the bullying when she is a victim. She also described her response to knowing that her sister was being bullied by a classmate: “I told him to stop picking on her and then umm.... he kept on doing it so we told the teacher.” She then spoke graphically of the effect that bullying had on her life:

When I was being bullied, I used to stay up at night and I would cry myself to school because I'd do anything to make myself sick so I wouldn't have to go to school and umm I was really scared of what the bullies might do to me the next day.

Sarah had a number of specific suggestions on how to decrease bullying, such as peer mediation training. She was excited to share this with me and told me that she had spoken to the principal and he had been supportive. She explained that peer mediation involved having students trained to help settle arguments that can occur on the playground. Ideally, the students who are in conflict will seek out help from the peer mediators and then a conference will occur in which each party has the chance to tell its side of the story. Hopefully, the mediators will be able to listen to both individuals and

find a compromising solution. If this does not occur, then the disputants are referred to the teachers leading the peer mediation program or the school principal.

She offered these suggestions on how she could help victims: “I can play with the victims so that they are not so much right there and the bullies can’t just go up to them when he is just standing there and start picking on him. Then we’ll be there to stand up for him.” After a few moments of deep thought she offered several tips that included setting up security cameras in each classroom, in the playground, in the hallways, in the cafeteria and in the gym as well. She also said that cameras on the school bus might be beneficial, especially if they are set up in the back of the bus. Sarah explained that anti-bullying commercials on television and the radio might also help get the message across to students.

Sarah spoke confidently about how she handles bullying now and how she feels about school:

You always know that there will be a teacher there that... that stops the bullying and you know that they are not going to hurt you if you are with the teacher. I just know how to defend myself by saying look you’re bullying me, I don’t like it and if you don’t stop I’m telling. I usually tell anyway because once they start you don’t want them to keep doing it.

Near the end of the interview Sarah expressed the hope that bullying would eventually disappear. “I really hope it will happen soon ‘cause it really hurts me to go to school and watch these people get picked on but usually I don’t watch it because usually I’m in telling.” She ended by telling me that bullying would probably not disappear any time soon.

What I Learned from Sarah

After speaking with Sarah, I had a renewed hope regarding the struggle against bullying. She showed a real passion to help others who are being bullied and take action to stop it. When she spoke of peer mediation, I was impressed with her maturity and wisdom. She can serve as an example for others who are bullied, giving them hope that things can change and not to give up all hope. I could not help but think that it will be students like Sarah who will push for an end to bullying once and for all.

Tom's Story

Tom is a ten-year-old in grade four. He has traveled by bus to school since grade primary.

For Tom, bullying is "Picking on other people to make them feel sad or mad.

Anything to get them going really". Tom feels that bullying occurs often at his school:

Oh yeah, he does it every day to make him scream. I tried to stop him once but all he does is keep doing it so I just pretty much gave up. He won't stop anyway. The only way we could stop him was if we kept him in all his life at school and at that he'd probably pick on him in class and send him bad notes and stuff. He picks on other kids too like if they are playing soccer or ball he'll grab the ball and take off and biff it in the swamp.

After a few more minutes of thought Tom continued:

Oh there were thousands of times. This one time, he went to bend down and put his juice on the ground so he could get another thing out of his lunch can and the other guy came and kicked it over and sprayed it all over him. He started to cry, we all felt sorry for him and the other guy just sat there and laughed. I told Miss at the time.

Tom felt that bullying occurred most often on the playground, behind the dumpsters where no teacher could see it happening. When asked why he thought people bullied others, he responded:

To put them down so that they don't feel bad so someone else feels bad. They feel bad about themselves and they want to make someone else feel bad. It makes them feel good that the other person is sad for some reason. They feel sad because they are not grading and then they wanna put someone else down and then if they feel sad then they will start failing too. Then the bully will feel happy 'cause he is getting someone else down and he is not the only one failing.

As the interview progressed, Tom became more relaxed and spoke openly about typical victims and more specifically about one he knows:

He's nice, take a gun shot for you so you don't get hurt, he will. He's a very nice guy. If you had no food, he would like give you his food and everything and he would share food with you. Even if you bully him he will still be good to you because he knows that just because you bully him doesn't mean that I don't have to be nice to you and that's how he tries to stop it by being nice.

Tom felt that the most common types of bullying are name-calling, kicking and punching. He had an insightful explanation of the differences between how girls and boys bully:

The girls, girls probably bully like...like if a girl went down to school and she had on just plain clothes and they had big, rich clothes on they'd probably make fun of you "oh look, I have way better clothes than you, you loser". That's the kind of bullying they do. Boys really don't care what they wear as long as they are wearing somethin'.

Tom explained that boys usually punch, hit and kick as forms of bullying and girls choose to name call and alienate each other.

In discussing coping strategies, Tom informed me that:

If someone bullies, its like yeah, whatever, go away now I don't pay attention to it. I just tell the bully like to go somewhere. Sometimes,

sometimes, if the bully won't stop picking on me, I go and get the paras and if that doesn't work I just take it into my own hands but that's the last thing I would do. I would tell my Dad and he gets real angry if anyone picks on me because he used to get bullied and he knows how it feels. He tells me to punch and kick if I ever get bullied, but I say 'no' that's not the right thing to do.

Tom openly described his thoughts on how the school can help reduce bullying incidents:

Have triple the paras, triple the principals outside at all times, no dumpster in the grass areas so no one can hide behind it. All open slides so they can't bully nowhere, like that big round slide out there people like to plug that up so that all the little kids get hurt. The big kid goes at the bottom and there's a big kid at top and they let all the little kids go down and the big ones plow into the little ones, then they hurt them.

Tom stated that he thought students were popular "if they're rich, or if they drive a lamborghini, a hummer or a truck or cool clothes". In closing, Tom left the interview on a rather pessimistic note when he answered the question of how hopeful he is that schools will eventually have no bullying with this response: "Well, one in a million years!"

What I Learned from Tom

Tom brought up a number of important issues, but perhaps the one that stood out for me would be the struggle between whether he should respond physically to the bullies (as his father has suggested) or to report the incident (as the school tries to promote). Students are constantly being given two conflicting messages for dealing with bullying. It is no wonder many of them feel lost as a result.

Matthew's Story

Matthew is a ten-year-old whose father drives him to school every day.

Matthew felt that bullying is very common in schools, particularly in the form of exclusion. In his own words: “Whenever I come into the classroom there are a lot of complaints about name-calling and excluding people.” He elaborated by telling a story:

There was a student they were trying to play with one of the students- and he kept pushing him out of the group and saying that they couldn’t play because they were too small.

He said that bullying usually happens on the playground or behind the school. When asked why people bully, he replied:

Because they want to act cool and they think that it’s good ‘cause the kids who aren’t normally in fights will gather around and want to be their friend. Their parents are never home, they don’t have any friends and... Just because they want to act cool.

In Matthew’s opinion the typical victim is not as strong, nor as powerful. For him the most common form of bullying is verbal abuse. He went on to describe how girls and boys bully differently:

Girls normally exclude people and they name call. Boys they don’t do it everyday, they don’t fight everyday, they just decide if they are mad at somebody they just want to fight with them. The girls fight verbally.

Matthew had quite a bit to say about current punishments and deterrents:

There’s a lot of picking and fighting and even with non-bullying campaigns I don’t think it’s stopping. Even if teachers were more reliable when some students tell them. Because when some students tell the teacher they ... say that they will do something but they never do anything. They say next time I’ll do something about it and they don’t do a thing. I would say... I would tell them that detentions don’t work, that umm.... Just because you get a detention they don’t care they get a suspension. They don’t mind that they get to stay home from school or get to stay after school.

He discussed his coping strategies:

... I think two times one kid was mad at me and he said he wanted to fight me behind the school and I didn’t...didn’t go there and the next

day for about a week he forgot about it and then he said it again and I did the same thing. When I was younger I told the teacher and a parent and avoided recess.

Matthew remembered how bullying impacted his life. “When I was ... younger I didn’t want to play on the playground because I didn’t want to get bullied. I didn’t want to be in a fight.”

Matthew made it clear how teachers can help to decrease bullying: “They could be reliable so that students can tell and actually have some backup instead of just basically walking on thin ice.” He went on to explain:

Yeah, maybe have more teachers around on the playground to always see what’s going on ‘cause there’s not many teachers on the playground and where most of the bullying happens from the back of the school they really need more teachers there ‘cause there is only one there.

Towards the end of the interview Matthew expressed his thoughts regarding what makes a person popular “... They just hang around and sometimes they get into fights. That’s what makes them cool to most people.” The interview concluded with Matthew’s declaration that bullying would never be eradicated.

What I Learned from Matthew

Following this interview, I felt somewhat frustrated again because students are hearing contradictory statements again. Matthew made it clear that some teachers are not consistent with following up on punishments for the students who are bullying. This is one major theme that has come from all these interviews: schools need to be consistent in their punishments for bullying, and all staff need training in addressing this issue. I feel that this may deter students from perpetrating bullying behavior when students start to see that everyone works together to stop bullying. For a quiet and reserved youngster, Matthew brought deep and important insight into this study.

Chapter 5- Discussion of the Findings

After carefully rereading and analyzing the interviews and the class sessions, I have identified four major themes. They are the following:

1. Students receive contradictory messages about bullying from both parents and teachers.
2. Bullying occurs frequently on school buses.
3. Strong collaborative action is needed by teachers, administrators, parents and community members.
4. Overall, students have a pessimistic outlook on eradicating bullying.

Contradictory Messages

In Peter's and Tom's interviews, a strong message surfaced: students are receiving mixed messages from teachers, principals and parents. Peter and Tom could recount experiences where after reporting a bullying incident they were told not to tattle. At the same time, however, these same students were told to report bullying. One interviewee also discussed the confusion he felt when his parent told him to react physically to bullying in order to stop it. He voiced his confusion about knowing that he should not respond physically, but he said he would respond in that way if it worked.

In order for bullying to decrease, it is essential that children, teachers and administrators are taught the difference between reporting a bullying incident and tattling. There is still confusion about the definitions of these two, and as long as this confusion continues there will always be bullying. It is difficult enough for some students to find

the courage to report bullying; imagine their feelings of embarrassment, confusion and loneliness when a teacher tells them they are tattling.

Messages from teaching professionals and parents are often contradictory. Generally speaking, students are usually told by teachers to report bullying, not to participate as a bystanders and not to retaliate physically. Parents often encourage the opposite, as Tom explained in an interview that his father had told him to kick and punch back. Tom was confused by these mixed messages and seemed to favour the latter suggestion as being the more effective solution. He also wondered aloud if it would be all right to start calling names. It is understandable how easily victims can become perpetrators of bullying in such situations. In order to stop the cycle of bullying, there needs to be a consistent message sent to students. This brings to the surface the importance of having parental involvement in the school and a collaborative school/community approach to problem solving. Students should receive consistent messages from school and home regarding appropriate responses to bullying. In order for this to occur, schools need to have all staff knowledgeable about current bullying policies, be consistent in its implementation, and have open communication with parents. Parents should be invited at the beginning of the school year to learn about the school's stance on bullying and have a genuine opportunity for input. Newsletters to parents presenting appropriate tips and techniques for dealing with bullying would be helpful as a step in the right direction.

Bullying Occurs Frequently on the School Bus

Sarah's immediate response to where bullying occurs most often was the school bus. She made it clear that many students are bullied at the back of the bus where the

driver cannot hear what is occurring. Peter also voiced his concerns over bullying on the bus and wondered if video cameras would help. This same message surfaced in the class sessions as well, where one boy drew a picture of a school bus when asked to draw what he thought of when he heard the word 'bullying'. This drawing speaks volumes in that it represents the enormous amount of bullying that must occur on school buses every day. One boy during the class sessions suggested having two people on the bus, besides the bus driver. They would be there to see and hear the interactions between students and further implement the school's bullying policy. Students are in the care of the school board from the time they walk onto the bus in the morning to the time they step off the bus in the afternoon. Students should be able to ride the bus without any worries of being victimized. The adults who go on the bus must be trained and familiar with the schools policy on bullying, to ensure consistency. These adults may be program assistants whose hours would be extended or parents who are paid to work on the bus. It would be up to the school board to decide; however, having more eyes and ears on the school buses would only improve the lives of many students who are suffering in silence. The school bus driver's main focus should only be on driving the bus, not trying to discipline sixty students behind him or her and at the same time remain attentive to the children's safety.

Strong Call to Action

Another very important theme that emerged from the data is the students' silent prayer for adults and professionals to act on this issue. In one of the sessions, one boy spoke up and told me that basically students have to figure it out themselves and this is a big load on them. This simply should not be the case; students' full attention should be on their academics and developing positive peer relations. Our students are losing

academically, personally and psychologically because bullying has become an epidemic in our public schools. It has been well documented that children under stress cannot learn as effectively as children not under stress. If children are thinking about where they should go to avoid a student who is bullying them during recess, it is highly unlikely that they can focus on learning in the classroom.

Dawson made it crystal clear that he and his parents have tried everything they could think of to decrease the amount of bullying he experiences. There was a real sense of desperation in Dawson's interview. His despair was so real that he did not even have the optimism needed in order to give suggestions on how teachers and school staff could help. He continually repeated that everything has been tried. I fear that if Dawson continues to suffer from bullying then these feelings of hopelessness can intensify into thoughts of suicide. Matthew voiced his thoughts that current anti-bullying programs were not working and that teachers should be more reliable when they say they will do something when they receive a report of bullying. Teachers need to be much more consistent every single time they encounter or receive a report of bullying. He also told me that suspensions do not work because the student who receives it very often sees it as a positive aspect as he or she does not have to go to school for a few days. Peter expressed his bewilderment when he told me that he did not know what to do to stand up to the students who bully him. He suggested more paraprofessionals out on the playground, but really voiced his hope that someone would step up to the plate and take an assertive approach to this phenomenon of bullying. Sarah was extremely vocal in suggesting ways to help decrease bullying. They included everything from running public advertisements on television and radio stations to implementing peer mediation. I

think she really made clear her belief that education and work will go a long way towards helping to eradicate bullying. As discouraged as I sometimes feel, I also experience moments of hope that in the future bullying will be looked upon as uncool. I am hoping that this will follow the same route as the nonsmoking campaign that was aggressively put forward a number of years ago to help reduce the incidence of students smoking. It is my hope that bullying will one day become as socially unacceptable as smoking.

Regardless of the specific suggestions these five students had, one theme shone and that is the fact that school staff, school boards and parents need to take an aggressive stance against bullying and have strict consequences for those who do bully. Bullying cannot continue; too many students have suffered severely for too many years. It was brought to my attention just recently that many parents are choosing to home school their children because they do not want to subject their children to the cruelty of bullying. If this trend continues or increases, student enrollment numbers will decrease and this will cause further cutbacks to an education system that is already in trouble.

Student's Pessimistic Outlook on the Future

All five-interview participants held little hope when asked if they thought bullying would ever stop. Sarah explained that she hoped it would stop because it hurt her to go to school and see it, but ended her thought with probably not. Peter voiced his pessimism by stating that there is only a 1% chance that bullying would stop in the future, while Matthew thought it would be nice if bullying did stop but did not think it would ever stop completely. Tom voiced his opinion by stating that the chance of bullying stopping is around one in a million years, while Dawson stated that bullying has about a 3% chance of stopping.

I feel that the similarity in responses is startling. These students have only been in school for five years and have already formed their opinion that bullying is just something that they have to put up with at school and that will probably never stop. For children this young, this is terribly disturbing. It is as if bullying has taken away some of their childhood innocence and replaced it with worry and pessimism. Children's lives should be carefree and not filled with dread and worry. Dawson repeated himself a number of times, stating that he has tried everything and he feels at a loss with nowhere to turn to stop the bullying.

Signs of Hope

One cannot help but feel utter despair and sadness for the cruelty that many children have to endure day after day. There is light at the end of the tunnel, however, and a reason for hope. Many school boards across Canada as well as the United States have begun to direct their attention towards anti-bullying programs within schools. There are several programs being utilized such as the following: Don't Laugh At Me, Peer Mediation, Steps to Respect, Second Step and SMART Bullying, to name just a few. It is hoped that when social and emotional learning along with character education programs are implemented into the classroom, they will create a safe, nurturing environment for the students. It is important to stress that these programs should not be viewed as stealing time from academic work, but as a useful tool to bind classes together and create a spirit of humanity where all students can thrive personally, emotionally and academically.

The Don't Laugh At Me program is currently being used in many school boards across the Maritimes. This program includes a video, a song and a teacher's guide that is full of excellent ideas and activities to promote harmony. This program gives the

children an opportunity to share the feelings they experienced when they, or others, were targeted by disrespect. Students are then guided through numerous activities that work on sensitizing children to the harmful effects of ridicule, scorn and name-calling. Near the end of the program, children learn how to resolve disputes respectfully and nonviolently. As they acquire these new skills, they are also asked to complete a pledge honoring their newly found respect for others. The teacher's guide is organized into four thematic units. The first unit is entitled "Being You, Being Me, Being Us." In this unit students learn feelings-related vocabulary, to identify feelings in self and others, to acknowledge and respect others' feelings, to acknowledge the range of human emotions and empathize with others. The second unit is called "I Care, You Care, We Care." This unit involves helping others, taking responsibility for one's own actions and working together toward a shared goal. The third unit is entitled "Words that hurt, Words that Heal." The main objectives in this unit involve resolving conflicts without saying or doing hurtful things, understanding how conflict escalates, using "I" statements to share feelings and de-escalate conflict and being aware of different points of view in a conflict. The last unit is called "Together We Can" and focuses on identifying differences and similarities in a nonjudgmental way, accepting differences and becoming sensitive to acts of prejudice and bias.

I strongly recommend to any school that does not currently have an anti-bullying program to implement one as soon as possible. It is imperative that the whole school is involved in the planning for the safety and belonging of every student. An effective school-wide plan is collaborative, creates a shared understanding of the nature of violence and bullying, assists members of the school community to acquire skills and

language to respond to bullying and is proactive. Building a school plan will take time and should not be implemented too quickly without proper thought. The planning process is just as important as the content of the final plan.

The Department of Education in Manitoba has documented seven steps in implementing a school plan (retrieved March 3, 2007 from www.edu.gov.mb.ca). They are as follows: Step 1: Establish a planning team that includes students, classroom teachers, resource teachers, school counselors, administrators, support staff, parents, educational assistants and any other interested community members. Some activities that the planning team need to initiate include holding informal discussions with key staff, holding meetings with staff to discuss the level of concern they have regarding bullying, informing staff of the benefits of a whole school approach to safety and belonging. The team should also arrange for staff training, holding a parents' meeting, working with other schools involved in a whole school approach to safety and belonging and then developing a draft plan from members of the team. Following this, the draft plan needs to be presented to staff for discussion, feedback and revision. Step 2: Involve parents in this process. This is crucial to ensure consistency among school and home. Step 3: Involve students; this is extremely important because when students are involved as full partners then the planning team has a better chance to mobilize the student population in the creation of a positive student environment. Step 4: "Create a school pledge" is another crucial step that must not be overlooked. Many schools may already have a mission, code or charter that should be updated to convey a whole school approach to safety and belonging. Staff and students need to be a part of the creation and/or modification of the school pledge; it must be more than just words. Step 5: Build a

supervision plan that involves school staff. Thorough supervision is needed on the playgrounds especially in high-risk areas that should be identified by students via an anonymous survey. Educational assistants can also provide supervision for students during transitional times during the day where the opportunity for bullying may occur, such as getting dressed for home, walking in the hallways etc. Step 6: Develop a response plan that will involve First Responders and Second Responders. First responders may be teachers, administrators or support staff. They need to intervene quickly, attempt to calm and separate the parties, talk with the students for who have been targeted. Send the students responsible for bullying to a predetermined location for a “time out”. Complete an incident report and submit it to the Second Responder. Second Responders talk with each of the students by asking open-ended questions, they also begin a support system for the student who has been targeted. Step 7: “Implement and monitor the school plan”(p.44) is the last step but certainly just as significant as the previous steps.

The staff and parents as well as the students should be made aware of the specifics of the program. This can be done through staff meetings, information pamphlets and student assemblies. After implementing, it is also essential to keep the school plan alive by monitoring its progress and asking, “How is our plan working?” This venture is a great deal of work and should not be looked upon lightly; it is going to take several people a significant amount of time to plan, implement and monitor a school plan, but it will be worth it, if students begin to feel safe at school.

Along with programs, many schools are also working to weave social skills into the curriculum. Research has shown that children who do not have many friends due to

lack of social skills are at a higher risk of being bullied (Bond, Carlin, Thomas, Rubin & Patton, 2001). Educational professionals are now trying to address this issue by incorporating more group activities along with cooperative learning opportunities so that students can interact with students of differing ages.

Several theatre companies are also doing their part by performing plays that are directly linked to anti-bullying themes. By using music, actors, costumes and a stage, they are hoping to catch the attention of students. Along with being entertaining, these performances are also portraying an excellent message of how to deal with bullying, but also an up close view of how victims feel when they are bullied, and thus also helping to form a sense of empathy in the young viewers. Neptune Theatre is one touring company in Nova Scotia that is eager to book performances throughout the province.

There has also been a great deal of work and research done on developing drama surrounding the concept of bullying. One such production is Bullybusters, it is a psycho-educational drama that was developed by a school's counseling and drama department. This program illustrates the negative effects of the various forms of bullying, while informing students of various coping strategies. The authors believe this play allows students to learn vicariously through the actors and allow for modeling positive attitudes and behaviors. Follow up classroom discussion sessions are also incorporated in hopes of personalizing the concept of bullying and therefore promoting the creation of effective ways of handling bullying behaviors (Beale, 2001).

There are several websites that are currently available for students, teachers and parents. These websites provide an excellent outlet for students to anonymously voice their experiences and opinions either through artwork, poetry, journal entries or stories.

Students can go online and read others' stories and hopefully realize that they are not alone. There is an abundance of tips for students, parents and teachers on these websites on how to deal with bullying. Some websites that are available are as follows:

www.bullying.org, www.safecanada.ca, www.cyberbullying.ca and www.kidshelpphone.ca.

There are many books being published, both fiction and non-fiction, on the topic of bullying. Many wonderful children's books are available that can be made part of the language arts curriculum or used at home to help young children relate to the characters. There are also fictional books available for preteens and teens along with a number of books available for teachers to help decrease bullying in the classroom. One such publication is Cooling Conflict, which combines detailed theoretical background with practical strategies that teachers and students can implement together. This innovative approach empowers students to begin to change their lives and the culture of their schools.

In several municipalities, the city police have created a bullying hotline whereby any student can call and speak to a professional for help and advice. This is a volunteer hotline and the caller can remain anonymous.

I strongly believe that this study will deepen awareness that bullying is happening in early elementary grades and shatter the misconception that it is a high school problem. This investigation presents a strong case for a much more proactive stand than educational professionals are currently taking to combat bullying in early elementary grades. Their proactive interaction may come in various forms, including increased school time spent focused on identifying bullying behavior and also strategies for helping

both students who are victims and students who may be witnesses of bullying behaviour at school. Other options may include increased supervision on playgrounds by adults, who will intervene and report any bullying events that take place during recess or lunch. Other options also include clearly identified consequences for students who bully; organizing a school conference day to develop an overall long-term school action plan for addressing bullying; and providing a well-equipped and attractive outdoor environment to reduce the incidents of boredom that may set the stage for bullying. It is hoped that parents who read this study will more openly talk to their children about bullying and even set aside a designated time in the evening to talk with their child about his or her day. Parents may also become more involved with the school by joining PTA groups, communicating more openly with teachers about the issue and volunteering to help out more often during school functions, which may in the end help to reduce incidents of bullying. It is also an expressed wish of the author that teachers and administrators at school and district levels who read this study will be activists for implementing developmental anti-bullying programs starting in the entry grades and continuing across all grade levels. This will be a step in the right direction because the more awareness and communication on the issue the better. There are many groups who stand to benefit from this study, but perhaps the one that will benefit the most will be our young children who will be our future leaders.

Overall, there has been movement in the right direction, but we still have a long way to go to make bullying “uncool”. Looking back even to ten years ago, I do not feel that anti-bullying programs were given as much attention as they are today. This is what we as educators need to focus on; there is hope that bullying will decrease. All of the

efforts currently put forth by school boards, school administrators and teachers are not being done in vain or going unnoticed. It is important to end this thesis on a positive note so that we as a society can look to the future with a sense of hope and optimism.

Recommendations for Future Research

It was interesting to note that many of the participants that I worked with were also special needs students and received extra support at various times during their school day to help them strengthen their academic skills. A study that focused on students with special needs and their bullying experiences would be a significant addition to the research already done in the area of bullying. Are special needs students at a far higher risk of being bullied than other children?

Another interesting study that could be performed would be to follow elementary students who are victims of bullying through a longitudinal study to see how the bullying changes, decreases or increases depending on the individual student. This may lead to insight into why bullying tends to spike during late elementary and middle school and slightly decrease during senior high.

I feel that further research should be done in the area of introverted students. Teachers and school staff should be educated about personality differences to ensure that there is no discrimination. Even as an adult today, I feel the prejudices of people who do not understand that I am an introvert. They call me shy or quiet as if it is a character flaw. I do not like to be put on the spot because I need time to formulate my answer. I am slowly starting to understand that it is all right to be an introvert, that it is not bad or I am not missing something that other people have. More education is needed in all workplaces because introverted adults are not treated equally with adults who are more

extroverted; this may come in the form of not receiving eye contact from colleagues, not being listened to and being made to feel like outsiders every single day of their lives, and this needs to come to an end.

I would also suggest that universities ensure that teaching a course on interpreting children's drawings is a central part of research methodology courses. I found myself overwhelmed and feeling inadequate when faced with 21 drawings. I feel that many children are most comfortable expressing themselves visually and I feel that many significant thoughts and perceptions could be interpreted if one had the skills to do this. I realize that simply learning about the value of interpreting drawings would not make one an expert, but surely it would benefit the researcher. The course can perhaps provide the name of a reference person who is an expert in the area in case any graduate student is considering the use of drawings in his or her research. The course can be offered in the Masters of Education program as an elective.

Educational Implications

From this study, there is a number of initiatives that school boards can begin creating and implementing. The first and foremost is the intense need for students to be receiving the same message at school and at home on how to deal with bullying. This is going to involve community members and parents becoming active participants within the school to encourage them to express the same message at home.

Another equally important implication is the need for school boards to employ adult supervisors to ride on school buses to decrease the amount of bullying occurring during the bus ride home. These adult supervisors would need to be familiar with the school's policy on bullying and therefore consequences would be consistent with in

school repercussions. Two adults on each bus would be the most beneficial, one riding near the front and middle and the other riding in the back of the bus. These adult supervisors could be teacher assistants or newly hired employees; whichever is the case, I strongly feel that this will make the school bus ride a great deal safer as the bus driver can focus completely on driving, and victims of bullying will no longer have to suffer on the bus ride home.

This research has touched on several important issues that we are hearing more and more about in the media. I opened this paper with several excerpts from children who saw no other way out of their pain than to end their life. In closing I am hopeful that the findings from this study will not fall on deaf ears or sit collecting dust on a library shelf. I will be persistent in my lobbying of these findings to school boards in Nova Scotia along with government agencies because somebody needs to stand up for these children who are suffering in silence.

Appendix A

November 11, 2005

Virginia E. Morash
 [REDACTED]
 [REDACTED]
 [REDACTED]
 [REDACTED]

Dear (Name of School Board Contact). ,

I am currently working on my Masters of Education program at the University of Prince Edward Island. I have successfully completed all of the graduate level courses and am hoping to refocus my attention on the thesis requirement of the program. I have recently received approval from the Research Ethics Board at the university to begin data collection for my thesis, which will examine the issue of bullying in elementary schools. I believe that my research will provide valuable insights into this issue and will contribute to efforts to reduce bullying in our schools.

I am writing to you to request permission to contact the principal to seek permission to recruit participants for this research. The identity of the school board, the school and all participants will be held in the strictest of confidence. I plan on visiting a grade three or four classroom to hold six sessions on bullying. During these sessions, I will not be formally teaching, but rather I will be listening to students thoughts and beliefs on bullying. Each session will begin with a story being read or another conversation starter and the students will be allowed to voice their thoughts. It will be made clear to the class that this is not an opportunity for tattle-telling and no names should be used when stories are being shared. During one of these sessions, I will ask the students to draw a picture of what comes to mind when they hear the word bully. These drawings will become an integral part of my research because art can very often allow adults a small glimpse into the child's mind and perceptions. These sessions will be audio taped and later transcribed and analyzed for common themes. I also plan to conduct three confidential interviews with a sample of five to nine students. These interviews will take place at the school after school hours. Parents and guardians will have the option of attending these interviews with their child. These interviews will also be audio taped for later analysis.

I have also written parental consent forms to obtain the permission from parents of students who will take part in my qualitative study on bullying in elementary school. These forms are attached for your approval along with a copy of my research proposal and Ethics certificate.

If everything is in order, I request that you send a letter to the administrator of advising the relevant stakeholders that I have sought and received permission from the school board. Following this, I will contact the administrator, resource teachers, classroom teacher and guidance counselors to discuss my data collection strategy.

Thank you for your time and patience regarding this matter. Upon approval of my thesis I will forward a copy to you. I would also be pleased to conduct workshops in your school district to share my findings with teachers and administrators. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this research, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Virginia E. Morash, BSc., B.Ed.

Appendix B

January 30, 2006

Dear Parent/Guardian:

My name is Virginia E. Morash and I am currently working on the thesis requirement for my Master of Education program at the University of Prince Edward Island. I am very interested in studying bullying in elementary schools and I have chosen this topic to complete the thesis/research component of the program.

The topic of bullying is an important one in our schools today. In the coming weeks, I will be visiting your child's classroom three times to discuss with the entire class the issue of bullying. This topic relates directly to the provincial curriculum in regards to developing healthy relationships and building self-esteem. During my time in your child's class (approximately 60 minutes per session), I will encourage all the students to participate in the discussion by talking about their own views on bullying as well as bullying incidents that they may have witnessed. During one of these sessions, I will be asking the students to draw a picture of what comes to their mind when someone says the word "bullying". These drawings will become an important part of my research. All three sessions will be audio taped and later transcribed and analyzed for themes. Students will be reminded that these sessions are not opportunities for tattling; rather they are a chance for me to hear their concerns and issues regarding bullying. Students will be reminded not to use names when sharing stories. No names will be mentioned during the sessions to ensure confidentiality.

I am writing this letter to ask for your permission for your son or daughter to participate in these classroom sessions. As mentioned earlier, these sessions will be a discussion with the students around the topic of bullying. If you decide not to allow your son/daughter to participate in the sessions, they will be able to take part in an alternate meaningful exercise related to the Health curriculum during this class time. The sessions are scheduled for February 9, February 27 and March 7. Following the March Break, I will be focusing on the second segment of my research project which involves interviewing a number of students regarding their thoughts on bullying. An information package will be sent home that includes more details on the interview process along with the corresponding consent forms.

If you choose to allow them to participate, your son or daughter may withdraw from this research project at any time without prejudice. Neither the identity of the participants nor the identity of the school will be revealed in the final report. My thesis supervisor (Basil Favaro) and myself will be the only people to have access to the data. All data will be stored in a locked cabinet and destroyed upon completion of the study, which is anticipated to be one year.

You will find a consent form attached to this information letter. If you agree to allow your son/daughter to participate in this research project, please complete the consent form and return it to the classroom teacher as soon as possible.

I realize that this topic is a very sensitive one and as a result I will treat each participant with a great deal of respect and attentiveness. I firmly believe that the more research done in this area will help lower the incidence of bullying and encourage more elementary schools to take the initiative in curbing bullying as soon as it appears. Please sign and return the consent forms to school by February 6.

If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact me or my thesis supervisor:

Virginia E. Morash

Faculty of Education
UPEI
C1A 4P3

Appendix C

March 20, 2006

Dear Parents/Guardians,

I would first like to thank you for your child's participation in the classroom sessions on bullying that were held through out the months of February and March. They were extremely successful and many important issues came to light.

The second and final segment of my research involves inviting the students in this class to participate in three, twenty-minute interviews regarding bullying. I am hoping to interview at least five students individually. During these interviews, I will be asking them questions that will be directly linked to their perceptions and experiences with bullying. The type of questions asked during the interviews will include: Do you think bullying happens a lot at this school? Why do you think some students pick on other students? Do you think girls bully differently than boys? You as the parent/guardian are more than welcome to attend these interviews with your child. You have the choice of scheduling the interviews during school hours (to take place during Health period) or after school hours. The interviews will take place in a private room at the school where confidentiality will be of utmost importance. These interviews will be tape-recorded and no names will be mentioned on the tape or in any written documentation.

If I have more children than required willing to participate in the interview segment I will choose from those that would like to participate randomly (by drawing names) until we have the required number.

I look forward to working with your child and gaining more insight into the phenomenon of bullying.

Thank you,

Virginia Morash

Appendix D

Parent/Guardian Consent Form for Interviews

Please sign below and have your son/daughter return the form, in confidence, to the school.

I have read and understand the material in the information letter. I understand my child's participation is voluntary. I understand these interview sessions will be audio taped and my child's name will not be used at any time. My son/daughter has the freedom not to answer any question. I understand that the information will be confidential within the limits of the law and only the thesis supervisor and the researcher (Virginia Morash) will have access to the data. I understand there will be three twenty minute interview sessions to take place at a scheduled time during or after school hours in a private room located on school grounds. I understand I can keep a copy of this signed and dated consent form. My son/daughter has the freedom to withdraw at any time without prejudice. I understand that I have the option of attending the interviews.

I consent to allow _____ (student's name) to participate in the interviews on bullying at the elementary school.

I do not consent _____ (student's name) to participate in the interviews on bullying at the elementary school.

If your child will be participating in the interviews please check your preference below:

_____ **I would prefer to have the interview sessions during school hours (Health period).**

_____ **I would prefer to have the interview sessions after school hours.**

If you are interested in attending the interviews with your child please call the school and we can arrange a schedule.

Name of Parent/Guardian: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Parent/Guardian: _____

For further information, please call the school at any time at xxx-xxxx. The principal or myself would be more than happy to answer or address your concerns. You can also contact the UPEI Research Ethics Board at xxx-xxxx if you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of this study.

Appendix E
Parent/Guardian consent form for participation in the classroom sessions on bullying

Please sign below to give your consent and have your son/daughter return the form, to the school.

I have read and understand the material in the information letter. I understand my child's participation is voluntary. I understand that the information will be confidential within the limits of the law and only my thesis supervisor and I will have access to the data. I understand that the classroom sessions will be audio taped and no names will be used during these sessions. I understand my child will participate in creating drawings during one of these sessions around the theme of bullying. I understand I can keep a copy of this signed and dated consent form. My son/daughter has the freedom to withdraw at any time without prejudice.

I consent to allow _____ (student's name) to participate in the classroom sessions on bullying at the elementary school.

Name of Parent/Guardian: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Parent/Guardian: _____

For further information, please call the school at any time at _____. The principal, vice-principal or myself would be more than happy to answer or address your concerns. You can also contact the UPEI Research Ethics Board at xxx-xxxx if you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of this study.

Appendix F

Student Assent Form for Participation in a Research Project on Bullying in the Elementary School

Dear Student,

My name is Virginia E. Morash and I am studying bullying in elementary schools. I am very interested in learning more about your class's experiences and feelings about bullying.

During the next month, I will be entering your classroom to discuss bullying with your class. It is during these sessions that you will have a chance to voice your thoughts on bullying behavior. This bullying behavior can include: name-calling and teasing, pushing or kicking, or if someone refuses to talk to you or be your friend. It is very **IMPORTANT** however, that these class sessions are not viewed as opportunities for tattling. All students will be reminded not to use names if they are sharing a story. I will also be inviting students to draw pictures of what they think of when they hear the word "bullying". These pictures will be a valuable tool in my research as well.

Along with these sessions, I will like to interview students in your class. These interviews will last for approximately thirty minutes and will take place at the school after school hours. The type of questions asked during the interviews will include: Do you think bullying happens a lot at this school?, Why do you think some students pick on other students?, Do you think girls bully differently than boys?, etc.

I would like to make it clear that your name will be kept secret, no one will know you did the interview besides your parent/guardian, your teacher and myself. If you change your mind and decide you do not want to do any more interviews, you may withdraw from the study at any point. My supervisor and I will be the only two people who will have access to the data. You do not have to participate if you do not want to. By participating however, you are helping teachers and principals among others learn more about bullying in the early grades.

Please complete the following by writing your full name on the line:

I, _____, agree or assent to take part in the research of Virginia E. Morash. This research is on the topic of

bullying in the elementary school. I agree to do three interviews, which will be recorded, written out, and then analyzed. I understand that my real name will not appear in the final paper. I understand that all tape recordings will be destroyed upon completion of the study. I also understand that I am not required to take part in this research, but I agree to do so of my own free will. I may withdraw from this study at any time. I understand that I can keep a copy of the signed and dated consent form. I have the freedom not to answer a question.

Name of student: _____ Date: _____

Witness: _____

Date: _____

Appendix G

Letter to the School

Principal

Nova Scotia

Dear :

I am enrolled in the Masters of Education program at the University of Prince Edward Island. I have completed all of my coursework, and have submitted my thesis proposal to the Research Ethics Board at the university. My proposal has been approved and I received my Ethics Certificate over the summer months.

I am planning to conduct a qualitative inquiry into bullying in an elementary school setting. I hope to conduct my research at your school. I feel this research is extremely important and will benefit teachers, students, administrators, superintendents and society in general. I would like to enter a grade three or four classroom to participate in six class discussions (approximately 40 minutes per session) with the students regarding bullying. During these audio taped sessions, I will invite students to draw pictures of what bullying means to them and these will become an integral part of my research. These classroom sessions are essential to the design because they will provide a wealth of data regarding early elementary student's perceptions and thoughts on bullying. The drawings will become an integral part of my research as well because they will help educational professionals see how the students perceive bullying. I also plan to conduct interviews with five students (up to nine-depending on interest) in the elementary years. Of course, neither the identity of the school nor the identities of the participants will appear in the thesis.

Confidentiality is assured, and students will be aware that their participation will be voluntary, and if so desired, may cease at any time. All interviews will be scheduled after school hours. This topic is linked to the provincial curriculum relating to healthy relationships and promoting self-esteem.

I am enclosing a copy of my research proposal, the written communications I hope to use to recruit my participants, parental and participant consent forms, and a copy of my Ethics Certificate of Approval.

I appreciate your consideration of my request. You may contact the UPEI Research Ethics Board at xxx-xxxx if you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of this study.

Thank you,
Virginia E. Morash

Appendix H

Research on Bullying in the Elementary School

To: Grade 3 and Grade 4 Home Room Teachers

From: Virginia E. Morash, Graduate Student, UPEI

Bullying is a serious problem affecting all students from early elementary all the way through to secondary school. Students who are bullied are affected in many ways. We have heard of the violent incidents that have occurred at schools in North America that have been linked to the problem of bullying. Bullying can become so invasive on a student's life that their academic life suffers greatly along with their social, psychological and mental health.

I am inviting you to consider allowing me to visit your class approximately six times (approximately 40 minutes per session) over a four week period during the months of September and October to discuss bullying with your students. It will not be a lecture, but rather a discussion and brain storming session. These sessions will be audio taped and students will be reminded that this is not an opportunity for tattle telling and the importance of not using names when sharing stories. This issue of bullying could be linked to the health curriculum regarding healthy relationships and building self-esteem. I am also planning on interviewing students about bullying. Following obtaining permission from their parents I will interview between five and nine students about their experiences with students who bully and their thoughts on bullying. These interviews will take place at the school after school hours. I will also request that the class draw pictures of the first thing they think of when someone says "bullying". These pictures will become an important part of my research because it will allow educational professionals a small glimpse into the student's world and their perceptions of bullying.

**It is hoped that this research will help all of us understand more about bullying and in turn lower the number of bullying incidents.
This study will be confidential.**

I look forward to working with you.

Thank you for considering this request to participate.

**Sincerely,
Virginia E. Morash**

Appendix I

Consent form from classroom teacher

I _____, give Virginia E. Morash permission to enter my classroom on six different occasions to discuss bullying with the students. I understand that these sessions will be audio taped and kept confidential.

Appendix J

Interview Protocol

For my interviews I plan on structuring them in an open-ended fashion. I feel that this approach will be the most beneficial in that it will help focus my participants and provide rich, detailed data that will help us learn more about bullying. I plan on interviewing my participants three times; whereby the first meeting will have more basic demographic questions. I will be working towards establishing a good rapport with the student as well as getting to know them a little better. The following meeting will have more questions regarding their feelings and memories and the last meeting will involve more intense questions about their own experiences. All three interviews will have the various types of questions that can be asked during an interview: such as experience/behavior questions and opinion and value questions along with feeling, sensory and knowledge questions.

INTERVIEW 1

I will welcome the participant, verify the name, and ensure them that everything said within that room will be held in the strictest of confidence. I will inform the participant that my thesis supervisor may have access to the data as well. I will also remind them that he/she can refuse any answer to any question if they so choose. I will then proceed to explain the reason for the audio tape recorder, (so I don't miss anything he/she says during the interview). I will also explain that this is the first of three interviews. By the time I do this interview the participants will have had the chance to get to know me quite well and hopefully are comfortable with me.

- 1. How old are you?**
- 2. What grade are you in?**
- 3. Where were you born?**
- 4. How long have you been going to this school?**
- 5. (If they have recently moved there, ask them if they have made friends?)**
- 6. How do you get to school everyday?**
- 7. We are going to talk about bullying. What do you think of when I say "bullying"?**
- 8. Do you think bullying happens a lot at this school?**
- 9. Where does bullying occur most often?**
- 10. Does bullying ever occur in other areas other than school?**

- 11. Can you describe the “typical” student who bullies?**
- 12. Why do you think some students pick on other students?**
- 13. Can you describe the “typical” student who gets picked on?**
- 14. Why do you think these students get picked on?**
- 15. What kind of bullying have you seen the most at this school? Verbal (name calling), physical,(kicking or punching) or relational (refusing to talk to someone)?**
- 16. Do you think girls bully differently than boys?**

Is there anything that you would like to ask me before we start tape recording this interview? How do you feel about taking part in this study?

- 1. Last time, we began to discuss bullying at this school and your perceptions of students who bully. Have you ever seen someone being bullied? Can you tell me exactly what happened? Where it happened?**
- 2. When you see someone being bullied, what do you think you could do to help?**
- 3. Would you say that bullying is an important issue in this school?**
- 4. In your opinion, what do you think can be done to help lower the number of bullying incidents at school?**
- 5. How has your fear of bullying affected your feelings toward school?**
- 6. If you knew someone was going to be bullied after school, would you report it? If so, to whom? If not, why?**
- 7. Are the students who bully at this school powerful?**
- 8. Why do you think some students bully?**
- 9. Have you ever done something to avoid bullying?**
- 10. Do you ever worry about being bullied at school?**

11. Do you ever feel physically sick (sore stomach) when you think about the bullying that you may encounter?
12. In your opinion, how can teachers and principals help stop bullying?
13. What do you feel you can do to stop the bullying in your life?
14. When students see bullying happen and they laugh with the student who is bullying, who do you think is getting more powerful, the student bullying or the target?
15. Do you feel that you have ever treated another student unkindly at school?
16. If yes, can you tell me exactly what you did to the other student? How did you feel when you were doing it? How did you feel afterwards?
17. How do you think you made the other student feel? Would you like to have someone treat you like that?
18. How else could you have reacted in that situation so that the other student was not left with hurtful feelings?
19. Do you think that people always know when they are bullying?
20. If someone doesn't let another student join their game, are they bullying?
If someone calls another a hurtful name like stupid, is that bullying?
If someone refuses to talk to another student and tells them they are no longer their friend, is that bullying?
If someone kicks another student, is that bullying?
21. In your opinion, does everyone react to bullying in the same way? Why or why not?
22. Why do you think people bully?
23. Do you think that bullies ever feel sorry for the victims?
24. Have you ever been bullied? If yes, can you tell me exactly what happened?
Where it happened? How did you feel after the student who bullied you left?
Did you tell anyone about it? Why or why not?
25. Is this school a safe place for you? Why or why not?
26. What can make the school feel unsafe to you sometimes?

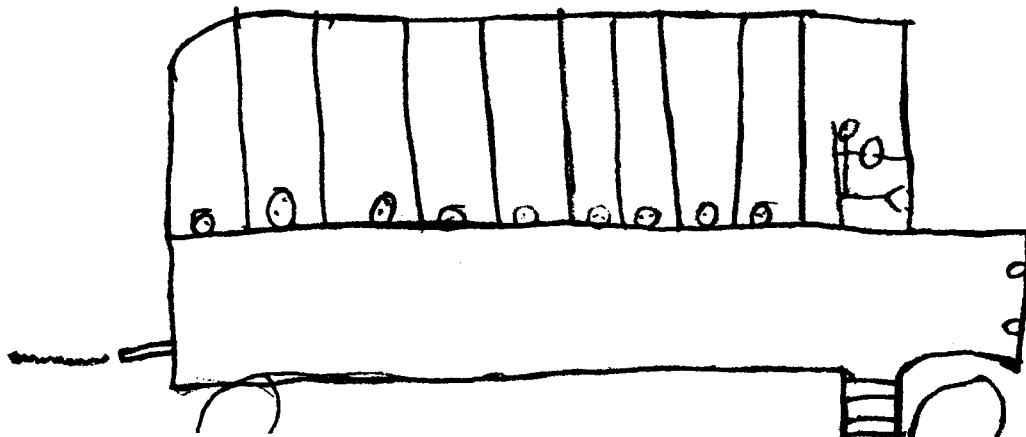
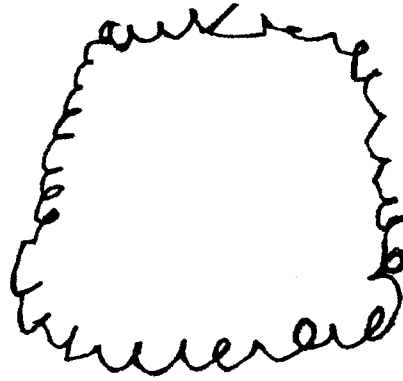
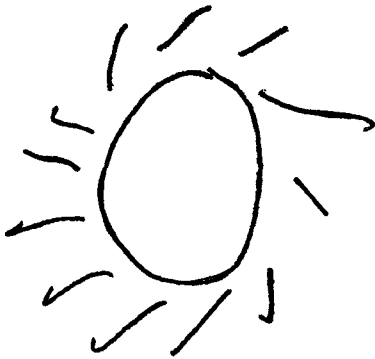
I have really appreciated your participation. By talking with me you are helping to stop bullying.

- 1. If you could say anything to the students who bully you, what would you say?**
- 2. Do you feel comfortable at school?**
- 3. When you disagree with another student, how do you work things out?**
- 4. What do you think will happen if you stand up to the students who bully you?**
- 5. How do you think people learn how to respect one another?**
- 6. How hopeful are you that schools will eventually have no bullying?**
- 7. Do you think students who bully feel bad about what they do? Why or why not?**
- 8. If you could give advice to a target of bullying, what would you say to her or him?**
- 9. If you had the chance to tell the principal to do something to reduce bullying. What would you say?**

*** Adapted from Paula McHugh-Gudrich.**

Appendix K

boy 3



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**University of Prince Edward Island
Research Ethics Board
Certificate Of Approval**

Title of Proposal : **The many faces of bullying: Elementary student's
Perceptions of experiences with the phenomenon of
bullying in school**

Protocol Number : **1000296**

Name of Investigator: **Ms. Virginia Morash**

Date Submitted : **15 April 2005**

Effective Date : **11 August 2005**

Signature :

A black rectangular box redacting the signature of the Interim Chair.

Date : 10 August 2005

Interim Chair, Research Ethics Board

cc:

Dr. Katherine Schultz, Vice President, Research &
Development, UPEI

Dr. Basil J Favaro, Education