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Understanding Classroom Bullying Through Student and Teacher Voice: A Whole-School Intervention Approach

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for degree Doctor of Education

in

Educational Leadership

by

Gary Robert DeBora

Committee in charge:

California State University San Marcos

    Erika Daniels, Chair
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University of California, San Diego

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2013

The dissertation of Gary Robert DeBora is approved, and is acceptable in quality and

form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

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                                                                                                     Chair

University of California, San Diego

California State University San Marcos

2013

DEDICATIONS

I dedicate this project first and foremost to my wife, Jennifer LeAnne DeBora, and our two sons, Jake and Jeffrey. Your unconditional love and support through this process (and throughout my career) have allowed me to pursue and accomplish my goals. All three of you will never fully understand how much I love each of you. I look forward to each day of my life because you three *are* my life.

I also dedicate this to all my grandparents for their impact on my life. To Grandma and Grandpa DeBora, who taught me how to treat people (even strangers) like family. To Grandma and Grandpa Dolan, who showed me unconditional love and how to compete (even playing horseshoes at the beach). To Grandma and Grandpa Evans, who instilled the life-long value of an education. I miss you all. I thank you all. I love you all.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

EDUCATION

Doctor of Education, Educational Leadership and Social Justice
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Masters of Arts, Curriculum and Instruction
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May 2005

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ADMINISTRATIVE EXPERIENCE

Assistant Principal
San Elijo Middle School
San Marcos Unified School District
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- Conduct yearly teacher and classified staff evaluations
- Bully Awareness Committee (BAC) Coordinator
- AVID Coordinator
- Classroom Management- The First Days of School
- Discipline (A-L)
- Attendance/SARB Coordinator
- Safe Schools Coordinator
- Disaster Plan Team/Fire Drills/Intruder Coordinator
- Web Site Coordinator
- PTO Liaison

Director, Individualized Learning Program
Escondido Charter High School
2005-2006
- Supervised and evaluated twenty-four teachers
- Hired and trained new teachers
- Administered discipline for student body of over 1,000 students
- Selected and incorporated new courses of study

Athletic Director
Escondido Charter High School
1999-2006
- Developed beginning teams for eleven C.I.F. sports
- Hired coaching staff
- Managed purchasing and budget for athletic program
- Created schedules for all athletic teams

PROFESSIONAL EDUCATOR EXPERIENCE

Teacher
Escondido Charter High School
1997-2006

- Provided instruction to 35 high school students in an Individualized Learning Program
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ADDITIONAL PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

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Varsity/JV Football Coach
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- Coached defensive line, 2000-2001
- JV Head Coach- 2004

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San Pasqual High School
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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Understanding Classroom Bullying Through Student and Teacher Voice: A Whole-School Intervention Approach

by

Gary Robert DeBora

Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

University of California, San Diego, 2013
California State University San Marcos, 2013

Erika Daniels, Chair

While bullying has been prevalent in public schools for generations, the increased media attention to cases of suicide or homicide have thrust this epidemic into the spotlight. Bullying has become a student health and safety issue, as schools and lawmakers race to enact policies that deter bullying from occurring. The research investigated the lack of a universal definition of bullying and why a universal definition was a necessity in research, especially when involving possible strategies for teachers to identify bullying behaviors in their classrooms. The goal of the research was to understand students' and teachers' perceptions of bullying in the classrooms in a middle

school. Participants in the study included students from one sixth-grade classroom, one

seventh-grade classroom, and one eighth-grade classroom selected through the school's

Bully Awareness Program. One teacher from each of the three classrooms also

participated in the study. The student population consisted of 1660 students from a

suburban middle school located in a western state. Constructivist grounded theory and

student voice were used to qualitatively code an anonymous writing prompt, student and

teacher interviews, and classroom observations to provide rich data on both perceptions

of bullying and desired strategies to decrease bullying behaviors in the classroom that

could be shared with teachers during future professional development. Six main themes

were abstracted from the data: Definitions of Bullying, Examples of Bullying, About the

Bully, Preferred Teacher Interventions, Ways of Coping, and Teacher Data. A student's

positive relationship with a teacher or staff member was identified as an important factor

in coping, as well as their overall outlook when confronted with different bullying

situations. Also identified were foundational strategies for teacher trainings.

Implications for educators, teacher training, and future research were discussed.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Research and anecdotal evidence suggest that schools are no longer the safe

havens for children in today's American society that they once were. Students today

have more fear about school violence, physical complaints, and depression regarding

school (Reid, Monsen, & Rivers, 2004: Twemlow, Fonagy, & Sacco, 2001). Their

growing response to these dangers is avoidance. Every day an estimated 160,000

students stay home from school for fear of being bullied (Vail, 1999). Almost 30% of

youth in grades six through ten report being involved in bullying as a victim, the bully, or

both, and 1.8 million students carry a weapon to school every day in the United States

(Nansel, Overpeck, Pilla, Simons-Morton, & Scheidt, 2001). One student out of every

ten in middle school reports being bullied, a trend that is on the rise in the United States

(Brown, Birch, & Kancheria, 2005).

The middle school years are a pivotal time for addressing the effects of bullying on

children's self-esteem and academic success. In grades six, seven, and eight, students are

entering into a period of physical, emotional, and social change. For many, peers surpass

parents as the main influence on how adolescents perceive themselves and others. This

shift of influence can be positive or negative for the middle school student. It is during

this time of development that effects of bullying have the largest negative impact on

children, as adolescents become more self-aware and peers become more influential than

during their primary years. Educating the entire school on how to support child

development and discourage bullying behaviors will assist in the healthy development of

students' self-confidence as they navigate the adjustment period of adolescence (Juvonen,

Graham, & Schuster, 2003).

As children enter their pubescent years, incidents of bullying occur so frequently and repeatedly that resources for parents and school systems cannot keep up with the pace of these incidents (Brown, Birch, & Kancherla, 2005). It is imperative that teachers, administrators, counselors, and students learn to identify bullying behaviors and take steps to prevent them from occurring whenever and wherever necessary. Parents, school administrators, counselors, school psychologists, and community members need to use resources to help change the school's prevailing culture of "kids will be kids," and understand that students in today's schools are still intellectually struggling with the notion held by previous generations that view bullying as "rites of passage."

Increasingly, school community members have looked to their local and State legislators to address bullying, which has been viewed as a neglected issue facing the students and school systems (Swearer, Espelage, & Napolitano, 2009). As new legislation is enacted in most states, California revamped existing legislation with additions to the Safe Place to Learn Act (2002), which holds schools and teachers more accountable when addressing bullying. Because teachers interact with students in defined spaces and time intervals every day, they play a vital role in identifying incidences of bullying, as well as being able to effectively intervene. With the passage of the Safe Place to Learn Act, teachers now have the added legal responsibility to report such incidents. Professional development for teachers is needed now more than ever to help assist all students during the period of time when the immature adolescent is experiencing significant social, emotional, and physical development. For most children, this period of development usually occurs in middle school.

Statement of the Problem

Bullying behaviors in the classroom continue to be reported by students (Brown, Birch, & Kancheria, 2005). This study addressed this issue by first examining the different perceptions that teachers and students give for the concept of 'bullying'. While much research has been conducted on bullying in general, in-depth examination with representation from teacher and student voice has been limited. After their perceptions were clarified, differences within the perceptions were identified in order to help with possible interventions and training for teachers to better identify and intervene in situations where students believe there is bullying occurring. With this perception difference identified, preventative measures could be taken to decrease bullying in the classroom, which could have a positive effect on the school climate as a whole.

Before there can be prevention, however, there has to be education provided to teachers in the form of professional development. For some teachers who already practice classroom management techniques that include actively addressing bullying behaviors when they occur, the suggestions for improvement within this research will be reminders to continue the positive work they are currently implementing to help students learn in the most positive climate possible. These advanced teachers will also find the new requirements of California Legislation AB 9 are just an extension of practices already part of the fabric in their classrooms. For those teachers who are not as versed in addressing bullying, most fall within three categories when it comes to bullying: those who are unaware, unwilling, or unable to intervene.

Teachers who are unaware that bullying occurs in their classrooms and /or the school in general could benefit from considerable training with scenarios that will

demonstrate the covertness of how bullying occurs in the classroom (Boulton, 1997). Without identification of the problem, these teachers will not know when to intervene and correct the behavior or when to call a counselor or administrator for help. Teachers who are unwilling do not see the benefits of the intervention, do not have the confidence to carry out the intervention, are afraid to admit their lack of knowledge in the area, are in denial that bullying behaviors are occurring in their classroom, do not like their job, do not believe it is in their job description, or may exhibit a combination of any or all of the above reasons. Therefore, they may do very little extra to help students. Teachers who are unable to assist victims of bullying represent different attitudes and ability levels from the previous two categories of teachers, and may need multiple strategies that allow them to develop their learning capacity in this area of bullying detection. Teachers who are unable to comprehend the concepts in the training and apply the knowledge to classroom situations may be too young and inexperienced in pedagogy, may not have the developed skill set to apply knowledge to situations because they have not experienced the range of situations that could occur within their class, or represent a combination of the two (Bowman, Rigby, & Hoppa, 2008).

This study was also conducted to supplement the current state of bullying research and legislation. To explain the rationale behind the universal definition of bullying, a literature review was conducted that includes the history of bullying that provided a foundation upon which to build this study and also highlighted gaps in the research that this study investigated. Added to the review of bullying behaviors in terms of individual characteristics of the parties involved, a historical view of interventions was also examined. A lack of middle school teacher interventions in the classroom based on

student and teacher feedback was discovered. The research study compiled strategies that were provided by writing prompts and interviews with current middle school students and teachers. Current teacher practices were observed during the study, and individual teacher interviews helped create suggested practices that may decrease the amount of bullying experienced by students in the classroom.

Purpose

The purpose of this research was to explore teachers' and students' perception of bullying within a classroom setting and then to use those perceptions to identify possible differences that could help to decrease the ever-increasing presence of bullying in the classroom. Findings from this research could also be helpful to schools conducting professional development designed to help teachers gain efficacy in identifying and intervening where bullying may be occurring within their classroom. While research on the phenomenon of bullying has increased over the past decade, it has been focused on identifying characteristics of the individuals involved and on understanding why bullying occurs in schools. The inclusion of student voice to define and identify incidents of bullying in the classroom has been limited. The gap between what a teacher identifies as bullying and what a student identifies as bullying is real (Naylor, Cowie, Cossin, de Bettencourt, & Lemme, 2006) and is an area of research that could benefit both teachers and students in promoting a safe classroom culture.

While the overreaching goal of this study was to explore students' and teachers' perceptions of bullying in classrooms to help decrease instances of bullying in classrooms, there are specific areas that were dissected to provide a catalyst for such a reduction of these harmful behaviors within the classroom. There continues to be a need

for a universal definition of bullying to keep factors consistent, to identify both the gaps between students' perception of bullying and teachers' perception of bullying, and to recognize the importance of the teacher when conducting anti-bullying preventions. This research examined these areas, along with considering effective strategies from previous studies for teachers to incorporate within any proposed school wide bully prevention program.

This study documented the differences in how bullying is perceived by both teachers and students and analyzes those differences in order to develop training programs to make classrooms as safe as possible. According to prior research, there was a need to examine the reactions to bullying under natural settings (Black et al., 2010; Swearer, Espelage, & Napolitano, 2009) and a second phase of the research focused on student interviews and classroom observations to help triangulate the gathered data in order to validate the findings and better understand the nature of school classroom bullying.

This researcher recognized the importance of combating cyberbullying. However, the scope and complexity associated with the multiple characteristics and backstory make it too large of an area to include with this research. Cyberbullying usually occurs outside of the face-to-face classroom, and although teachers may have to support children suffering the effects of cyberbullying, the identification of cyber-threats is outside the scope of a teacher's job duties. Cyberbullying is an increasing avenue children are using to deliver hurtful information about another person, and the complexities associated with the electronic structures they use to deliver their words to the intended target deserve its own focus and research. This is an area that deserves

focused research as well but is beyond the scope of this study, which focused on the confines of the interactions within the classroom setting.

Significance of the Study

Existing research suggested that teachers are reporting less bullying at school than students (Olweus, 1991, 1997). Among many possible explanations for this difference in frequency of reporting may be how that teachers' perceptions of bullying differ from that of students. Those differences have only been measured in a limited number of studies (Menisini & Fonzi, 2003; Naylor et al., 2006), and this research builds on previous results that were mostly concluded from data gathered outside the United States. Identifying teachers' and students' perceptions of bullying was included within the analysis of their definition of bullying.

Due to the lack of an universally accepted definition of bullying in the research, identifying bullying behaviors is difficult. When combined with the sensitive nature of working with children, empirical research on bullying becomes even more complex. Most studies about the prevalence of bullying, and the effectiveness of interventions, were conducted by self-surveys by students and teachers, teacher recommendations of students who may fit the criteria of a bully or a person being bullied, and behavioral data that could be misleading due to circumstances of the particular situation.

An intensive electronic search of the research elicited only three studies where both the teachers' and students' definitions of bullying were described and analyzed (Boulton, 1997; Menisini & Fonzi, 2003; Naylor et al., 2006). All three studies were conducted outside the United States, with two (Boulton, 1997; Naylor et al., 2006) located in the United Kingdom, and the third (Menisini & Fonzi, 2003) examining

teachers and students in Italy. The limited amount of research in this specific area

suggests an imperative need for the current study.

Boulton (1997) investigated teachers' definition of bullying, along with their

attitudes about bullying and how confident they feel intervening in bullying incidents.

His findings included 25 percent of teachers with the following limited definition:

> In terms of defining bullying, the vast majority of the
> teachers…believed that physical assaults, verbal threats, and forcing
> people to do things that they don't want to do should be regarded as
> bullying. However, about one in four did not believe this to be the
> case for name calling, spreading nasty stories, intimidating by
> staring, and taking other people's belongings. Moreover, a
> significant proportion did not view leaving people out or laughing at
> someone's misfortunes as bullying (p.230).

Comparatively, Naylor et al. (2006) only found 10 percent of teachers responded with

this more restrictive definition of bullying, but surmised that his significant findings

could be contributed to the fact that his sample of teachers came from a school where

there was already an anti-bullying support system in place, and the extra education

regarding bullying for those teachers may be why they had a more inclusive definition.

In Italy, Menisini and Fonzi (2003) found, as they showed each group a set of cartoons

depicting different types of bullying, that students had a less sophisticated definition of

bullying than did teachers. With these three studies highlighting the differences in

teachers' and students' definition of bullying, and the lack of research on this topic within

American schools, the need for additional research was evident.

Research-based investigation of strategies with bully-victims to stop bullying,

how effective the victim perceived the intervention strategies' success, and the

importance of bully prevention before students leave the educational system has been examined (Black et al., 2010; Flaspohler, Elfstrom, Vanderzee, Sink, & Birchmeier, 2009). When children are either the bully or the victim, their feeling of well-being is jeopardized much more than in isolated incidents. As with other learned behaviors, students who bully without correction or intervention continue down a destructive path of unhealthy behaviors exhibited well after they leave the educational environment. There is also a need for observational research in natural settings with bullying behaviors to supplement interviews and surveys (Black et al., 2010; Swearer et al., 2010).

This study adds to prior research by examining reasons for the differences between what teachers perceive as bullying and what students perceive as bullying. Using the voice of both the teacher and student to determine a common definition of bullying, schools can better develop professional development for teachers to more effectively identify bullying, and to intervene. A renewed need for teachers to intervene is highlighted by new legislation requiring them to help students who are victims and those who bully. To help teachers with building capacity to identify and intervene when bullying behaviors are witnessed or reported, this study used student voice as a guide to develop professional development that can be used directly in the classroom to help teachers decrease bullying behaviors. Teachers would also be more empowered to intervene if they developed an awareness of the complexity of bullying situations. This study showed that bullying could take many forms and occur both quickly and throughout the entire physical classroom environment.

Various elements of training are needed, and Bolton (1997) reports that teachers desire more training to help stop bullying. As this research showed, specific classroom

strategies can be examined to help teachers establish a safe classroom environment where all students are respected. The current research can also help the physical environment of the classroom, so teachers can be better prepared to instruct using methods that deter and decrease instances of bullying. Last, teachers can be trained to be more available, accessible and willing to help, all of which may increase the possibility of students reporting bullying behavior to them (Eliot et al., 2010).

Research Questions

The overarching questions that guided this study are first, what similarities and differences are there in a teacher's definition of bullying compared to a student's definition of bullying, and second, how do the similarities and differences in the perception of what bullying is determine reporting of, documentation of, and response to incidences of bullying? The specific questions this research intended to explore include:

1. How do middle school teachers define bullying?

2. How do middle school students define bullying?

3. What are the students' experiences with being bullied, being the bully, or being a bystander to a bullying situation within a classroom?

4. What incidences of bullying to students do teachers act upon?

Identifying differences between a teacher's perspective of bullying and a student's perspective of bullying provided suggestions on possible reasons bullying is occurring in the classroom. In addition, what students react to as far as interactions that may be perceived as bullying was also important to consider. These differences were used to create strategies that both teachers and students can use to help decrease bullying episodes in the classroom. Regardless of the differences, coding written responses from

students and teachers provided vital input into the interactions within the classroom, and helped answer the second global question.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted to help determine effective methods for gathering data regarding students' experiences and perceptions of bullying within the classroom environment. The researcher elicited written responses from a classroom of eighth grade students by having them complete a written response to the following prompt:

> Please provide your definition of bullying. You can include examples to
> help describe your definition. Then, write about a time in a middle school
> classroom when you experienced bullying, either as the bully, the target,
> or a bystander. Describe what happened. Was there an adult present
> during this incident? If so, what did they do? If there was no adult
> present, what would you have wanted the adult to do that would have
> helped you? How did the incident end?

Preliminary analysis of the data suggests the following emergent themes regarding the definition of bullying by students: physical and mental harm, verbally or physically abusing the one being bullied, name-calling, and doing something to hurt the person. Examples seen in the classroom include: name calling, taking of personal items, and spreading rumors.

Researcher Epistemology

This study identified definitions of bullying through teachers' and students' written experiences and examined the similarities and differences of those definitions in order to suggest possible professional development training for teachers in the areas of identifying incidents of bullying and intervening with a confident plan when incidents of bullying occur within a classroom. There has been limited research on student voice in

classroom situations of bullying, even though students in the research continuously report incidents of bullying within the classroom.

Theoretical Framework

Grounded Theory

Grounded Theory Method was developed by sociologists Glaser and Strauss (1967) from the methodologies of ethnographic fieldwork and case studies. They developed a written set of guidelines and methods for conducting research that focuses on the study process, which allows for the examination of individual and interpersonal processes (Charmaz, 2006). Grounded theory uses data collection as a main point of analysis and includes interviews, observations, letters, books, and any other documentation that may add to the research topic. Concepts emerge from coded information that forms categories from the concepts that are related to the same phenomena. The researcher then examines links between different conditions in their social context (Corbin & Strauss, 1990).

In the years following their 1967 publication, Glaser and Strauss disagreed on how to apply their method, resulting in a split in paradigms that is still debated today (Charmaz, 2006). Both have attempted to clarify their concepts of the relationship between data and theory. The difference in the two may best be summarized as to whether the researchers have no preconceived notions and use theoretical codes as they emerge, or whether the researchers use their previous knowledge while engaging in a more structured coding process that is consistently looking for conditions, interventions, and consequences in the data that builds to theoretical conclusions (Kelle, 2005). From this split, a more recent version of grounded theory, constructivist grounded theory, has

emerged that assumes the researcher constructs both the data and the theories only after his or her interaction with the participants and the overall setting (Charmaz (1995).

Constructivist Grounded Theory

Charmaz (2000) was a student of Glaser and Strauss, and she is the leading proponent of constructivist grounded theory (CGT). Differing from pure grounded theory assumptions, Charmaz rejected the notions of themes 'emerging' from the data and posits that the researcher is more of an objective recorder of the data. Charmaz (2000) declares, "Data do not provide a window on reality. Rather, the 'discovered' reality arises from the interactive process and its temporal, cultural, and structural contexts" (p. 524). This main distinction allows the researchers to immerse themselves in the data and become coproducers of data that is discovered with the participants through coding.

An important piece of data of grounded theory is interviews. A constructivist approach to interviews will differ from traditional grounded theory in three main ways: the roles of the participant and researcher in the interview, the relationship that is developed during the interview, and the position the researcher takes as he or she becomes the author of the story (Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2006). The roles of the participant and researcher are intertwined during an interview, with both working together to construct meaning from their experiences in the research. The researcher should establish a relationship with the participant that allows for a rich dialogue that negates any power imbalance that may be present. This collaborative relationship adds richness to the descriptions of both the structure and the process of the data, and the researcher uses that descriptiveness when reporting the final theories.

Student Voice

Cook-Sather (2006) suggested the following: "Young people have unique perspectives on learning, teaching, and schooling: that their insights warrant not only the attention but also the responses of adults: and that they should be afforded opportunities to actively shape their education (p. 360)." Since the main purpose of this study is to decrease incidents of bullying between and among students, examining the students' own beliefs about bullying is appropriate for this study. Recent years have seen an increase in exploring the importance of student voice in schools, and the research during the same time has shown student voice to be an important factor in educational research and reform (Cook-Sather, 2002/2006; Fullan, 2007; Kozol, 2007) and motivation (Daniels, 2010; Daniels & Arapostathis, 2005). There is only limited research pertaining to student voice in bullying situations (Black, Weinles, & Washington, 2010).

Student voice is a term that describes the possible ways youth may have to actively participate in decisions regarding their school experience (Fielding, 2001; Goodwillie, 1993; Levin, 200; Mitra, 2004). In the 1960s and 1970s, student power movements in mostly higher educational settings advocated for the rights of students to engage in the policies and procedures that affected their education, but that movement all but vanished as the seventies progressed (Levin, 2000). As student voice has reemerged in education, its focus has shifted away from student empowerment to student outcomes and school reforms. Using student voice gives students the ability to share their opinions and translate their opinions into language that adults can understand and act upon (Mitra, 2004). Students can articulate their unique perspective on the levels of respect afforded to them by teachers and other adults, and research suggest positive gains in educational

reforms in areas of teacher training, curriculum, and teacher-student relationships when student voice is heard and acted upon (Fielding, 2001; Mitra, 2003/2004; Oldfather, 1995; Rudduck & Flutter, 2000).

Not only can student voice represent the unique perspective of the student in the educational setting, but it can also benefit the students who participate (Mitra, 2004). Research conducted in a United States' middle school classroom found that increasing student voice in schools helped students with their sense of ownership, and also identified gains in their sense of abilities to create positive changes for themselves and their fellow students (Oldfather, 1995). These attributes not only produce positive changes in academics, but they could also lead to a more positive social image that may decrease bullying situations in schools. The positive change could be accomplished by the student negating the underlying circumstances that cause them or others to engage in these destructive behaviors. With research on student voice and its impact on bullying being limited, what students' perception of bullying consists of, and how teachers and schools can work with students to decrease bullying incidents in the classroom, is needed. While student voice has seen an increase in research by education reformers (Fullan, 2007; Kozol, 2007), this topic has limited research with respect to bullying in the educational setting.

Summary of Theoretical Frameworks

Constructivist grounded theory (CGT) was used to examine research question one: "How do teachers and middle school students define bullying?" The writing prompt was coded for similar and different themes in the writing. CGT was also used to examine research question three: "What strategies can be implemented by a teacher to help

decrease bullying behaviors within their classroom?" Themes were coded by observing middle school classroom behavior. Student voice was used to explore question two: "What are students' experiences with being bullied, being the bully, or being a bystander to a bullying situation within a classroom?" Students were interviewed to provide depth to the research from a group that has been underrepresented in previous research.

Methods

A three-phased, qualitative research design included documenting, data coding, and analyzing a writing prompt completed by middle school students and teachers. The first phase included a qualitative analysis of an anonymous writing prompt. The purpose of this phase was to establish how students and teachers define the notion of bullying. The responses were coded for themes related to a definition of bullying, and to establish differences between what students report as bullying and what teachers report as bullying.

In the second phase, interviews with individual students and teachers were conducted in order to gain deeper insight into the incidents of bullying within the classroom. These interviews provided student voice in the areas of identifying the conditions that surround bullying in the classroom, and also suggested intervention that teachers can use to help decrease bullying incidents in the classroom. Interviews with teachers added depth to possible bullying incidents from the teachers' perspective, and helped clarify the differences between a teacher's definition of bullying compared to the definition provided by students.

The third phase consisted of classroom observations and recording interactions between teachers and their students as well as interactions between different students.

The purpose of this phase was to triangulate the findings from the writing prompt with illustrative behaviors that are either addressed, ignored, or somehow identified in order to help show how different behaviors can be interpreted as bullying behaviors by the students, the teacher, or both.

Definitions of Key Terms

Bullying. While there are shared characteristics between the different definitions, there is presently no universally accepted definition of bullying. One of the most consistently used definitions is one developed by Black, Weinles, and Washington (2010), who combine characteristics of other definitions along with the relatively newer phenomenon of cyberbullying. They created a useful definition that states, "a chronic abuse of power where the oppressor uses physical, verbal, social, or emotional aggression to intentionally and repeatedly hurt another person" (p. 138).

Cyberbullying. Refers to bullying that is conducted over electronic means. The researcher believes this form of bullying to be unique in its method, intent, and lack of physical environment, and therefore should be studied as an independent topic. Since this form of bullying does not occur with a physical interaction between the bully and the target, this method of bullying is not addressed within this study.

Victim. Refers to a person who is powerless to stop the harmful behaviors of a bully from occurring (Coloroso, 1993).

Target. Refers to the person to whom the intended bullying is directed. Target differs from victim in that a target is not necessarily affected by the attempted act of bullying being leveled against him or her.

Bully-victim. Refers to a person who is (or has been) both a bully, as well as a victim (Coloroso, 1993). An example of this may be a student who is bullied by a friend of an older sibling, and who then who in turn bullies a peer.

Bystander. Refers to a person who is a witness to the bullying incident (Coloroso, 1993). The bystander's choice to act on behalf of the victim, engage with the bully, tell an adult, or do nothing has a major effect on the outcome of the bullying incident (Swearer et al., 2010).

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The intent of this literature review is to discuss existing research on bullying and bully prevention as they provide the foundation for this proposed study. Within this review, a discussion on the lack of a universal definition of bullying, and how that lack of a definition impacts the methods and outcomes of the research will be presented. Next, a history of bullying research both in Europe and the United States will be examined, identifying gaps in the research that lead to this proposed study. Third, portraits of bullies, victims, and the different contexts of bullying episodes will be discussed to help teachers identify possible bullies and targets in their classrooms. Finally, a review of bullying legislation and teacher training will be presented.

Definitions of Bullying

The definition of bullying continues to evolve and, to date, no universal definition exists. Olweus (1993) provided the foundational definition of bullying as, "When one person picks on, harasses, or pesters another" (p.8). Olweus included direct and indirect behaviors in his definition, and also noted a concept of 'mobbing' to show the prevalence of group behaviors towards an individual. While this definition helped establish the platform from which the definition would grow, researchers are developing a more specific definition in order to provide stable measurements of bullying factors.

A universal definition of bullying is needed in order to measure and examine the same elements both between and within studies (Bauman and Del Rio, 2006; Maunder, Harrop, & Tattersall, 2010). Bauman and Del Rio defined bullying as, "A subset of more general aggression, distinguished by an intent to harm, the repetitive nature of the acts, and the power imbalance between bully and target" (p. 219). In contrast, Black, Weinles,

and Washington (2010) used, "a chronic abuse of power where the oppressor uses physical, verbal, social, or emotional aggression to intentionally and repeatedly hurt another person" (p. 138). As more research is conducted, a more detailed definition of bullying continues to evolve. While Faris and Felmlee (2011) used the term "aggression" to replace "peer victimization" or "bullying," they were not as focused on finding a universal definition as Swearer, Espelage, Vaillancourt, Hymel (2010) who noted that a lack of such a definition caused problems with both intervention and measuring bullying in research. However, at this time there is still no universal definition of bullying.

For the purpose of this study, it is important to include a definition of bullying that was adapted by Unnever and Cornell (2004) for a survey presented to middle school students. To help students report incidents of bullying, they first needed a working definition in age-appropriate terms. The explanation of bullying provided to students was:

> We say a student is being bullied when another student, or several other students:
> - say mean and hurtful things or make fun of him or her or call him or her mean and hurtful names;
> - completely ignore or exclude him or her from their group of friends or leave him or her out of things on purpose;
> - hit, kick, push, shove around, or lock him or her inside a room;
> - tell lies or spread false rumors about him or her or send mean notes and try to make other students dislike him or her and other hurtful things like that.
> When we talk about bullying, these things happen repeatedly, and it is difficult for the student being bullied to defend himself or herself. We also call it bullying, when a student is teased repeatedly in a mean and hurtful way. But we don't call it bullying when the teasing is done in a friendly or playful way. Also, it is not bullying when two students of about equal strength or power argue or fight. (Unnever & Cornell, 2004, pp. 378)

Given the evolution of the definition of bullying and the importance of a consistent definition have been presented, a review of the historical research of bullying from the earliest seminal studies in European countries to the most current research in the United States is examined. With an analysis of various facets of bullying, an overall picture emerges that underscores the importance of action to reduce the detrimental effects of bullying on the development of young people.

Bullying in Europe

Although bullying is not a new phenomenon, empirical research on bullying is relatively recent, with the distinction between aggression and bullying beginning to be examined independently in the 1970s. Widely considered the grandfather of bullying research, Olweus (1978) studied bullying in Norway and produced an anti-bullying program from his research. He continued to implement his program throughout the country, and his research became the foundation of a prevention program used throughout Norway's educational system. His seminal research described the characteristics of bullies, and for the first time a picture emerged of what a bully may look like as far as characteristics, gender, and family background.

Olweus (1993) complied studies and the corresponding implications from research examining bullying in the country of Norway that he researched from 1973-2005. His research also provided an intervention program, which became a model all over the world for schools to implement with the goal of deterring bully behaviors against students. Partly as a result of the research findings provided by Olweus (1993), Norway implemented a nationwide anti-bullying program based on survey questions and

interventions. On the basis of the nationwide self-survey, 15 percent of the total

population of students were involved in bully/victim problems (Olweus, 1993). The ratio

in Olweus' study equated to one out of every seven students being victimized, a figure

that has been disputed by others in more recent research (Rigby, 2005; Nansel et al.,

2001). These data did not translate to other countries as Rigby (2005) noted. Olweus

provided identification cues for teachers and parents to determine whether a child might

be a bully, victim, or both (the latter also referred to as a bully-victim). While Olweus'

work was the beginning of attempts to identify bullying and present data on why bullying

is harmful to students, a limitation to the research is that the 1993 publication did not

address either cyberbullying or relational bullying.

Research on bullying continued to develop during 2000-2010 period and extended

to other countries. Rigby (2005) examined bullying behaviors in Australia for the past 25

years. As he has attempted to translate his findings to the United States and other

countries, he concluded that the translation is not always generalizable based on the

reported data. The purpose of Rigby's study was to examine how social influences affect

bullying. The author built on previous Australian-based research, which showed that

bullying increased when students enter secondary school. Rigby had asked 400 (200

primary and 200 secondary) Australian students to complete a survey and the findings

suggested that many different students admitted to bullying. Boys were reported as

bullying more than girls, and a higher frequency of bullying was found at the secondary

level.

As research continued during the first decade of the 21st century, it appears that

boys were more likely to tell an adult they were being bullied than girls (Unnever &

Cornell, 2004). The importance of these findings was twofold. First, the extent of which teachers influenced students through their expectations was not as clear prior to 2004. The findings of Rigby's (2005) study recorded that few students believed teachers did not have an expectation of them in interpersonal relations with peers. The conclusion that students' expectation of teachers and bullying had little effect on students' interactions with each other would serve as an important factor in anti-bullying programs discussed later in this review. Second, Unnever and Cornell (2004) found that one prevention program included a meeting between the bully and the victim, which Sherer and Nickerson (2010) contradicted as an ineffective intervention.

Bullying in the United States

Findings in Europe, however, were not met with the same success in the United States. Rigby (1991) attempted, as has Olweus, to translate findings from research conducted in Europe and Australia to America. Both Rigby and Olweus have conducted research in the United States, and they have agreed that differences exist in their results. Nansel, Overpeck, Pilla, Ruan, Simons-Morton, and Scheidt (2001) further examined bullying in the United States using extent data from the World Health Organization's Health Behavior in School-Aged Children survey comprised in 1998, which began an explosion of research in North America that continues today.

The first years of the 21st century were a vital time to study and try to decrease bullying. There was an explosion of school violence, including the 1999 shooting at Columbine High School in Colorado. Other shooting incidents followed in which bullying appeared to play some sort of role whether primary or tangential. Cook, Williams, Guerra, Kim, & Sadek (2010) identified over 600 empirical research studies

related to bullying since the year 2000. More recent data explored bullying as school violence escalated across America. Communities looking for answers to student tragedies spurred the need for research.

One study, completed in the United States began in 2001, gave researchers a benchmark from which to proceed. Nansel, Overpeck, Pilla, Ruan, Simons-Morton, and Scheidt's (2001) work suggested that youth may be more socially accepted when taunting their peers about the appearance rather than about race. Sixth-grade students across the country completed survey data from the Health Behavior of School-Aged Children (HBSC), and the findings gave future investigators data to compare with regional studies. While some of the findings were later contradicted by authors who de-segregated and highlighted single variables in later studies, Nansel et al. (2001) exposed the problem of bullying into North America and opened the eyes of many, allowing Americans to join the European nations in a more systematic examination of bully behaviors.

Other studies (Coloroso, 2003: Juvonen & Graham, 2003) identified four types of students who are most affected by bullying: the bully, the victim, and the bully-victim, and the bystander. Understanding the characteristics of these groups of students was critical for identification and interventions to deter destructive behaviors for each of the four types of students. While findings revealed three of the four types of students displayed social problems, bully-victims demonstrated the most problems with school, social conduct and peer relationships. Juvonen and Graham (2003) was some of the first research that includes this group of students who both bully and are victimized, and future research on this specific group would continue as a result of these findings. Bystanders as a group have not been studied individually with regards to possible social

problems associated with witnessing bullying behaviors, and more research is needed that targets this group of students.

Those earlier studies found that bullies were socially superior among classmates, which is contradicted with more recent research findings that suggest bullies are able to climb the social ladder as perceived by their classmates, they decrease their bullying behaviors (Faris & Felmlee, 2011). This study also showed the emergence of classifications of bullying. References to physical and verbal aggression were consistent with other research, but this study notes a "public humiliation" factor that did not align with either physical or verbal bullying. This led to the beginning of a third classification known today as relational bullying (Bauman & Del Rio, 2006; Wang, Iannotti, & Nansel, 2009).

Although researchers continue to examine the effects of bullying in the United States as compared to other countries, it is important to note that Smorti, Menesini, and Smith (2003) found five countries (Spain, Italy, Portugal, England, and Japan) that did not have a single word that captured the precise meaning of bullying as it is used in the United States.

Students Who Bully

Additional research examined who bullies whom and at what ages it occurs (Rodkin, & Berger, 2008). As early as grades four and five, students had well-defined perceptions about which students in their schools are the bullies and who those students target. Rodkin and Berger (2008) found these younger students were able to behave in ways that defined their social status. At an early age, they knew which boys and girls they could bully to improve their own social standing. Students as young as six or seven

could also express the dislike of bullies, even if they did not possess the resiliency skills or intervention strategies to help friends or themselves escape a bullying incident.

The trend among students being bullied increased during the middle school years, as students transferred from elementary school to middle school, which frequently meant interacting with an increased number of peers on a larger campus. Because of this changed social structure, middle school has been identified as the time many students are most likely to be exposed to bullying situations, either as a bully, victim, bystander, or some combination of multiple roles (Swearer, Espelage, and Napolitano, 2009). During these years, students often engage both as a bully and as a victim in the largest percentage according to research, with reports of one to thirteen percent of students identifying themselves as having participated in both roles during middle school years (Wenix, 2002).

There is little agreement in the research as to a profile of a typical bully. While some researchers identified a bully as a student who was popular and attractive (Swearer, Espelage, Vaillancourt, & Hymel, 2010), others noted the bully as someone who was trying to climb the social ladder (Faris & Felmlee, 2011; Swearer, Espelage, Vaillancourt, & Hymel, 2010). Findings from these two studies agreed with earlier research in regards to the fact that males were more physically aggressive than girls and appeared to participate in more bully episodes than girls (Faris & Felmlee, 2011; Olweus, 1978; Swearer et al., 2010).

Why Students Bully

Faris and Felmlee (2011) contrasted some previously held views of why students bully, including aggression as a perceived effective strategy for improving social status.

Aggression and social status were linked so tightly that conflicts appeared to result when social order was disputed (Gould, 2002). In other words, aggression was the accepted glue that held the social structure of a particular group together and is the agreed upon way to move up the social ladder.

While there was an abundance of research that examined bully behaviors in elementary school grades in past years, current research has mostly been centered on middle school aged students because the intersection of self-image with peer interaction becomes very important to middle school-aged students. Though there is some suggestion that bullying behaviors become more acceptable among middle school students due to changing perceptions of the opposite sex, the need to attain social status and affection from peers remains the dominant reason students bully other students (Faris & Felmlee, 2011; Veenstra et al., 2010).

Bully Legislation

The 1999 shooting at Columbine High School in Colorado was the first high-profile incident of violent behavior where bullying was perceived as the underlying cause (Greene & Ross, 2005). In response, Georgia became the first state to pass anti-bullying legislation that specifically addressed the harmful effects of bullying. Since that time, 49 states have followed Georgia's lead and passed laws that specifically focus on bullying. As of this writing, only Montana has not passed legislation that directly deals with bullying as a mental health and school safety issue for children.

Much of the legislation before 1999 was focused around school safety but failed to specifically mention bullying. Many states continue to update their legislation as new forms of bullying are discovered. Georgia recently strengthened their legislation to

address the prevalence of cyberbullying, which is the bullying of another through electronic means (http://www.bullypolice.org/ga_law.page, 2012). In California, a section of the Education Code (that schools must legally site when disciplining students) was amended to include a specific charge of bullying under the 48900 section that outlines student offenses. With this new legislation, there are concerns regarding the motivation and effectiveness of the mandates now placed on schools. For example, Concerned Christians of America joined with the Illinois Family Institute to voice concern that new legislation could be challenging some students' moral and religious stand on homosexuality and transgender identity (Associated Press, 2012). The existing research base continues to evolve as academics and educators continue their exploration of the topic.

The United Sates government in 2011 published a report called Analysis of State Bullying Laws and Policies (US Department of Education, 2011). Among the key findings were that although 46 states had bullying laws, three states did not define the behavior that is prohibited. Thirty-six states included provisions in their Education Codes prohibiting cyberbullying, and thirteen of those states authorize the schools to address off-campus incidents if the result of the behavior creates an unsafe or hostile school environment. One essential component of the school environment is the student-teacher relationship, which is a topic that bully researchers are beginning to investigate more thoroughly.

Student-Teacher Relationship

A positive relationship between a teacher and a student may be a powerful deterrent to bullying in the classroom. Without a supportive relationship from a teacher,

a high response rate of "fighting back" (Black et al., 2010) and the concerns of future

unhealthy behavior (Swearer et al., 2010) have been reported. Crothers, Kolbert, and

Barker (2006) highlighted a disparity between how students prefer bullying be corrected

and how both the bullied and the bystander actually respond. Due to the lack on

intervention by teachers, students had to use alternative methods in reacting and coping

with incidents.

Feeling more connected to the school and staff has been shown to decrease the

likelihood that individuals will participate in violence against other students and increase

the likelihood that they will tell an adult (Johnson, Burke, & Gielen, 2011; McNeely &

Falci, 2004; Oliver & Candappa, 2007). Teachers who make connections with students

often facilitate this level of comfort, which allows students to foster compassionate

understanding and reduce their bullying behaviors towards others. A positive teacher-

student relationship often facilitates conversation about race, religion, and sexual

orientation, which are critical topics in terms of why, how, and in what forms bullying

behaviors occur on a school campus. Discussions about these topics can also help lead to

a safer school environment and educate students on individual differences that occur in

society (Robinson & Espelage, 2011).

Teacher Training

Teachers and other school personnel have perceptions of bullying that do not fully

encompass the different forms of bully behaviors (Maunder, Harrop, & Tattersall, 2010).

It appears that teachers are undertrained to identify the three major types of bullying

which are physical, verbal, and relational (Crothers, Kolbert, & Barker, 2006). This lack

of training may help explain why they are hesitant to intervene when peer victimization is

occurring in their presence. For example, Crothers et al. (2006) identified what

interventions middle school. Out of 15 choices in the survey, students identified three

preferred responses teachers should use to intervene. The top preference was making "

the classroom so that bullying can't happen by having teachers know what is going on at

all times" (p. 481). Findings from the survey also reported students' appeal for teacher

intervention not only to stop and prevent bullying but also to educate and inform both

bullies and their parents about the student's bullying behaviors.

Researchers do not clearly understand why bullying behaviors and preferred

interventions are perceived so differently by students and teachers. While teachers and

students appear to agree that teachers need more regular interaction on the playground

than in the classroom, many teachers appear to be unaware of the incidents occurring

within their own classrooms (Newman & Murray, 2005). Observations suggest that bully

episodes only last an average of 26 seconds, with some instances occurring in a mere two

(Atler & Pelper, 1993). Teachers also make limited contact with students involved in

bullying, which some researchers suggest may be a reason students are unwilling to seek

(Bauman, Rigby, & Hoppa, 2008; Crothers et al., 2006; Olweus, 1993). Consequently,

teacher's interaction with students has been shown to be effective in reducing bullying.

Some teachers do not mention their lack of interaction as a concern because

teachers may not see it as an accurate portrayal of their involvement. Pepler, Craig,

Ziegler, and Charach (1994) found a disconnect between how believed they intervened

and students' perception of those interventions. While teachers reported that they

intervened often when bullying behaviors were noticed, only thirty-five percent of

students agreed with the same statement. Therefore, most middle school students

surveyed opted for a different strategy than teacher involvement, usually turning to a physical option when confronted with a bully situation.

Novice or professionally younger teachers explained bullying to be more physical and, to a lesser degree verbal, but did not include relational aspects in their definitions (Bauman & Del Rio, 2006). Some research asserts that teachers who witness or learn about violence in schools could impact their capacity to help (Galand, Lecocq, & Philippot, 2007), but more research would be needed to support this assertion. Boulton (1997) found that eighty-seven percent of teachers desired more training on how to stop bullying, which indicates that teachers do want to help students, and schools might address this desire by developing school-wide bully prevention programs. How teachers would be trained to identify and intervene is beyond the scope of this literature review, but findings from this study do suggest possibilities and are discussed in chapter five.

Summary of the Bullying Literature

A review of the existing research showed that there is no universally accepted definition of bullying, but studies do identify characteristics of bullying behaviors and describe those characteristics in school settings. Providing teachers with training regarding bullying and setting a positive culture at school that is conducive to learning and appear to be vital in the development of healthy students and the reduction of bullying behaviors. The research reviewed in this chapter suggest that teachers play a vital role in the culture of a school, including influencing the extent to which bullying behaviors are tolerated and the level of comfort students have in reporting incidents of bullying. While students appear to want teachers to set a positive tone by identifying and intervening when bully behaviors occur in a teacher's presence, the lack of training limits

a teacher's ability to respond in an effective manner. School districts have yet to provide enough resources that would have a positive impact on decreasing bullying behaviors at their schools, while increasing the positive climate of the student body (Bauman, Rigby, & Hoppa, 2008).

Most students are not equipped to remedy bullying on their own. Those who try to do so tend to use aggressive behaviors that do not solve the root of the issue. In addition, the impact on emotional development affected by such behaviors cannot be ignored. For the bully, negative feelings about school, trouble solving problems in a social context, challenges in the home environment, poor parenting, and negative peer influence are all characteristics that appear to have negative, long-lasting effects on children (Cook et al., 2010). In a follow-up study of school bullies, Olweus (1993) found that boys who were identified as bullies in grades six through nine had three or more court convictions by age 24, compared to ten percent of the control students.

The characteristics of a victim included a lack of social skills, difficulty solving social problems, and rejection and isolation by peers (Cook et al., 2010). Teachers and schools need to support and educate victims in order to help them negotiate through incidents of bullying, as well as become resilient to their effects.

The bully-victim was a person who needs support and education (Coloroso, 1993). Characteristics of these students included negative attitudes about themselves and others, had low academic performance, poor social skills, and negative peer influences (Cook et al., 2010). Counseling support may be vital in helping these students adapt to the changing school environments as they proceeded through the middle school grades. Such support might provide social training to help them navigate through a wide array of

bully situations that middle school brings. Communication with parents may also help, as techniques discussed at school can be practiced in a safe home environment, and feedback can help prepare students to put their new skills into practice.

In the next chapter, the study's methodological approach will be described. The framework for this methodology is constructed from constructivist grounded theory (CGT) and student voice. CGT was used is three ways. First, it was used to code a written response by students and teachers who described their experiences with bullying situations on campus. Second, CGT provided a theoretical and conceptual framework used when conducting follow-up student and teacher interviews regarding their experiences with bullying situations. Third, CGT guided the research questions regarding how students and teachers define bullying. Student voice provided a framework for collecting the students' experiences with bullying.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research was to explore teachers' and students' perception of bullying within a classroom setting and then to use those perceptions to identify possible differences that could help to decrease the ever-increasing presence of bullying in the classroom. In the first chapter of this proposal, the need for research on teacher and student definitions of bullying was established as a vital component of allowing children the safest possible learning environment, as well as a professional development opportunity for teachers. The need to identify the possible differences between the teachers' and students' definitions of bullying within the classroom environment was highlighted. Chapter One also reviewed theoretical frameworks and methodological approaches that the study used to collect and analyze the data. The second chapter reviewed literature on bullying, including the lack of a universal definition, a historical perspective of bullying in Europe and the United States, background on the types of students involved with bullying situations and different contexts of bullying episodes, and the need for professional development for teachers. This chapter will describe the research design methodology that was used to obtain definitions and instances of bullying from teachers and students, and what the possible gap (or lack thereof) could identify in terms of decreasing bullying instances in the classroom.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this research was to explore teachers' and students' perception of bullying within a classroom setting and then to use those perceptions to identify possible differences that might decrease the ever-increasing presence of bullying in the classroom.

This three-phased qualitative study gathered and analyzed data from a writing prompt completed by students and teachers, as well as classroom observations and interviews.

The overarching questions that guided this study were: What similarities and differences are there in a teacher's definition of bullying compared to a student's definition of bullying? and How can these similarities and differences be used to guide teacher training in a way that might decrease instances of bullying within their classrooms? The specific questions this research explored in order to answer the larger questions were:

1. How do middle school teachers define bullying?

2. How do middle school students define bullying?

3. What are the students' experiences with being bullied, being the bully, or being a bystander to a bullying situation within a classroom?

4. What incidences of bullying to students do teachers act upon?

Design of the Study

Qualitative Methods

Qualitative methods identify a social phenomenon and attempt to understand it in greater depth with the larger goal of ultimately improving humankind (Esterberg, 2002). Qualitative research provided the most appropriate means to exploring the research questions due to the human elements that surround the epidemic of bullying. Bullying is a social construct that is best witnessed, identified, and mediated in the naturalistic setting of where it is occurring. The purpose of this research was to explore teachers' and students' perception of bullying within a classroom setting and then to use those

definitions to identify differences that could help to decrease the ever-increasing presence of bullying in the classroom. This research was needed due to the harmful effects of bullying combined with the ever-expanding legal responsibilities of teachers now required to identify and intervene when bullying situations occur. These improvements were for the emotional health and well-being of students as well as for their academic benefits.

Methodological Approach

Constructivist grounded theory (CGT) methods were used to examine the definition of bullying from both the teacher and student perspective, and student voice was present as a framework to highlight the thoughts of those individuals who are most affected when constructing meaningful teacher training to combat bullying in the classroom. Interviews were used to provide rich meaning about how students and teachers experience bullying behaviors. Ethnographic field notes were completed from classroom observations on student behavior and teacher/student interactions.

Context

Research Site

The setting of the research was South Eastern Middle School (SEMS), a suburban middle school in San Diego County. The middle school consists of three grade levels six, seven, and eight. The school is situated on 23 acres of land. The school day is a regular scheduled seven period day. On Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays, classes are in session from 8:02 a.m.- 2:10 p.m. On Wednesdays, there is an early release schedule to allow for professional development in the afternoon. The day is shortened to 8:02 a.m.

- 1:19 p.m. in order to include the time for professional development within the teachers'
contracted hours.

The surrounding area is a planned community located between a set of mountains
and a stream, that form a natural valley that fits over 1000 homes within over 80 Home
Owners' Associations. There is a mix of smaller single family homes ranging from
1800-3000 square feet, large single family homes with an excess of 3000 square feet,
three apartment complexes designated for families who qualify for affordable housing,
and an assortment of condominiums and town homes. There is a town square, with
shopping and eateries, and the community is less than three miles from a major California
university.

Participants

Participants included students and teachers from the middle school who
volunteered to participate. There were approximately 1620 students in the school, with
approximately 480 eighth graders, 545 seventh graders, and 595 sixth graders. One
classroom from each grade was selected based upon teacher's volunteering their
classroom time for the completion of the writing prompt. Selection of specific classes
allowed the researcher to narrow the target population and better control the environment
for the writing prompt. It also allowed for a more reasonable expectation of total prompts
completed in a more specific timeframe. Lastly, this sample of participants also had the
opportunity to volunteer for the follow-up interviews.

The three teachers of these individual classrooms received a voluntary writing
prompt regarding their experiences with bullying situations within their classrooms. The

racial make-up of the student body was 62% white, 21% Hispanic, 4% African American, and 13% other (http://www.smusd.org/Page/12).

Recruitment

The process of informing students about the opportunity to participate in this research began with the identification of the classrooms. An email to all three teachers was sent as a confirmation of their willingness to volunteer their classrooms for this study. These teachers had previously expressed their desire to help with the research due to their involvement with the school's Bully Awareness Committee (BAC).

The BAC is a committee comprised of an administrator, two counselors, and any students, teachers, staff, and parents who choose to attend meetings. The current committee has five teachers and one parent who volunteer their time to be a part of the committee. The committee meets every Tuesday to develop ideas of how to educate the student body and promote a more positive school climate. Most of their ideas center around educating students through the school's closed circuit television station called SEMS TV. The committee also works with teachers, the Associated Student Body (ASB), and other student groups for theme music that promotes a positive message, ideas for Red Ribbon Week, and themes for dress up days associated with Peace Week. The students and teachers also enact vignettes on SEMS TV that highlight academic vocabulary associated with bullying, as well as helpful hints for staff and students who may become bystanders in bullying incidents.

The BAC has become more ingrained into the culture of the school over the three years it has been in existence. The members designed a t-shirt with a logo and school colors to identify them as ambassadors to a positive school culture, and the committee

purchased curriculum specifically designed for middle school called *Let's Get Real*. This curriculum uses real students in a total of seven individual segments that depict different types of bullying. This curriculum is broken down into categories, and counselors go into every classroom to discuss the vignettes with the class. The more sensitive areas, such as bullying based on sexual orientation, are discussed in the eighth grade classes, while bullying due to race is discussed in seventh grade classrooms. Sixth grade classrooms discuss bullying due to appearance, religion, and other more commonly reported characteristics. The three teachers who volunteered to participate in the research reported in this study were all members of the BAC.

The researcher asked students in the same classes to volunteer to participate in the interviews. The assent form for the interviews was located on the same form as the writing prompt (See Appendix A). This allowed one conversation between students and their parents regarding the depth of the student's participation in the study.

Teachers were asked to participate in the study during a regularly scheduled BAC meeting. They were assured that no negative consequence would occur should they decide to decline participation.

Methods

Data Collection for Phase One- Writing Prompt

Collection of data from the participants began after approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The researcher identified three teachers who were willing to allow the researcher and the assistant to present the study to their classes. One teacher from each grade participated. Once the classrooms were identified, the researcher and research assistant provided the class with the overview of the study and the assent forms for the

students to take home and discuss with their parents (See Appendix A). The researcher

assured all students that there was no penalty or negative consequence for declining to

participate in the study. Students who returned the completed form the following day

participated in the writing prompt portion of the study during the class period. Students

who did not return the assent form were given the opportunity to read silently or work on

schoolwork while the participants completed the prompt. Students completed the writing

prompt in an average of 12 minutes.

An anonymous writing prompt was used that asks the participants to describe

their knowledge of and experiences with bullying. The writing prompt for students was

general enough that a wide range of student participants could complete the prompt with

their personal experiences. The prompt that was used to elicit rich data from the student

participants was:

> Please provide your definition of bullying. You can include examples to
> help describe your definition. Then, write about a time in a middle school
> classroom when you experienced bullying, either as the bully, the target,
> or a bystander. Describe what happened. Was there an adult present
> during this incident? If so, what did they do? If there was no adult
> present, what would you have wanted the adult to do that would have
> helped you? How did the incident end?

This prompt was handed out by the research assistant once the researcher had left

the class. The research assistant collected all completed prompts and placed them in a

sealed envelope. All envelopes were placed in a locked drawer of the researcher's office.

The only identifying characteristics asked for was the gender of the participant.

The prompt for teachers was similar to the prompt for students. There were four

changes in the prompt. The first difference was in sentence three, where the teachers

were only asked to recall incidents where they were bystanders. The second difference

was in sentence five where the prompt asked if there were any other adults in the room.

The third difference was in the addition of the word "other" in sentence seven. The

fourth change asked how the teacher responded at the end of sentence seven. The prompt

used for teachers was:

> Please provide your definition of bullying. You can include examples to
> help describe your definition. Then, write about a time in a middle school
> classroom when you experienced bullying as a bystander. Describe what
> happened. Was there another adult present during this incident? If so,
> what did they do? If there was no other adult present, how did you
> respond to witnessing the incident? How did the incident end?

Instructions regarding the prompt included the expectation that completion of the

prompt would take 10-20 minutes on average. The researcher gained permission from

both the school district and the individual school to conduct the study. Due to the data

collection being completed during the school day, no other reward was offered for

participation.

Data collection in Phase One consisted of collecting the responses from writing

prompts and ensuring their separation by grade level. The coding and collection of data

occurred on an on-going basis once writing prompts were returned. The continual coding

of the prompts was an important step in CGT designed to unearth themes, strategies,

successful or unsuccessful implementation of strategies, and longitudinal effectiveness of

strategies related to bullying situations (Charmaz, 2000). The final analysis of the

writing prompts led to suggestions presented to administration for implementation at

future professional development sessions with the entire school staff.

Data Collection for Phase Two- Interviews

Data collection in Phase Two consisted of multiple recorded interviews with individual students and teachers after the timeframe for the writing prompt completion had passed. The number of participants who also agreed to individual interviews was nine students from sixth grade, five students from seventh grade, and seven students from eighth grade. The researcher randomly selected five participants from the students, and all three teachers agreed to be individually interviewed. Random selection of the participants meant that all names were placed into a box, and the research assistant blindly selected the first five pieces of paper she touched. The researcher conducted one-on-one interviews during the school day in a private location on campus that was convenient for each participant.

The same assent form collected for the writing prompt identified those students willing to participate in the interviews. With interviews lasting between 10 and 25 minutes for each individual interview, scheduling consisted of time during class that was agreed upon by the researcher and the teacher. Since the student participants were selected from the same classes that completed the writing prompt, both the students and the teachers worked with the researcher to schedule individual interviews. The teacher allowed time during classes when students would miss the least amount of work. The three teachers also agreed to work with any student who needed extra attention due to missing class to complete the interview. Accommodations were made to provide as many different time options as possible, and the researcher made himself available to participants both during and after the interviews to ensure the participants' comfort with the interview.

Student interviews were held in a private conference room behind the librarian's office. The research assistant had a list of students to be interviewed and called them into the office so the general student population did not see the researcher. The use of this private office during class time allotted for the least amount of student traffic. This concealment helped ensure the safety of students, some of whom wanted to describe instances of bullying but were fearful of being seen talking to the researcher, who is also an assistant principal at the school. Both of the school's guidance counselors were available for any student who wanted to talk about their experience. During the introduction of the interview process, it was reiterated by the researcher that there was no penalty for declining to participate, and the participant could stop and exit the interview at any time without penalty. Those insurances were also a part of the transcript. After the interviews, the students left the office and the researcher remained in to also ensure confidentiality and safety of the participants.

During the introduction of the interview process with the teachers, it was reiterated by the researcher that there was no penalty for declining to participate, and the participant could stop and exit the interview at any time without penalty. The teachers already knew the researcher was currently enrolled in a doctoral program and was focusing on decreasing bullying, so the level of participation was surprising.

A digital recorder was used during all interviews, and the researcher took notes on the non-verbal actions of the participants as well. The researcher reminded the participants that their participation was continually voluntary, and they could refuse to answer any question they did not like, and they could stop the interview at any time without penalty. All recordings of the interviews were destroyed at the conclusion of the

study. Data collected from these student and teacher interviews were kept in a locked drawer of the researcher's private office. A copy of the interview protocol can be found in Appendix D. Interviews provided a forum for participants to expand on their response to the writing prompt.

While conducting each interview, the researcher used minimal follow-up questions to help capture the students' and teachers' meanings, as the researcher took the role of an active listener that allowed the participant to speak freely (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Recordings of all interviews were transcribed along with additional recorded observations by the researcher regarding the participants' tone, non-verbal gestures, and voice inflections.

Data Collection for Phase Three- Classroom Observations

The need for research using objective observations performed in the natural environment of the school setting was vital to construct an accurate portrayal of the magnitude of bullying (Atlas & Pepler, 1998). This form of research allowed for a more congruent set of data due to the behaviors being measured by trained researchers operating with the same knowledge and guidelines. Different methods of data collection appeared to provide contradictory results. For example, observations in the natural setting indicated bullying being most prevalent on the playground, while student surveys indicated the highest level of bullying occurred inside the classroom (Atlas & Pelper, 1998; Crothers, Kolbert, & Barker, 2006; Ziegler & Pelper, 1993). By conducting classroom observations, the researcher compared what the participants are sharing in writing prompts and interviews with what behaviors are occurring in actual classrooms.

In Phase Three, the researcher conducted classroom observations. These observations occurred after initial coding of the writing prompts has occurred, and paralleled the time of the student and teacher interviews. The researcher completed a total of 12 classroom observations. The researcher observed a sixth grade classroom, a seventh grade classroom, or an eighth grade classroom at various times every week for one month. These observations were completed during the second semester of the school year. The students had been with the teacher and each other for a complete semester, and their comfort level was to the point where interactions could occur naturally even if there were an observer in the classroom. Field notes were taken for the entire period, with specific attention being paid to the interactions between students and the teacher, and between student and each other during the class period.

All writing prompts, interview transcripts and notes, and classroom observations were identified through a symbolic numbering system to ensure confidentiality and were kept in a locked desk in the private office of the researcher.

Timeline

The timeline of the study began with the distribution and collection of the writing prompt after gaining IRB approval. The collection occurred in January during the first week back after a three-week winter break from school. The collection of the prompt responses by students included consent forms that identified participants for interviews. One teacher from grade six, one from grade seven, and one from grade eight had previously expressed interest in helping facilitate the writing prompt. Students and teachers completed the writing prompt in class. Student interviews and teacher interviews occurred during February and March. Interviews occurred parallel with

classroom observations. Due to the overwhelming support from the three classroom teachers, individual student interviews were completed in a week. During the last week of February and throughout the month of March, 12 classroom observations were completed. Each classroom was observed four times, and every observation occurred during the same class period. Data analysis occurred on an on-going basis once writing prompts were returned. The interviews were sent to a professional transcribing service in England, and the written documents were emailed back to the researcher within 48 hours. Qualitative coding began shortly after the writing prompts were returned and continued throughout the data collection period. Data collection was completed by early March, and data analysis was completed by April 1, 2013.

Data Analysis

Data was analyzed from Phase One using qualitative coding consistent with CGT practices. Descriptive coding was the initial step in analysis where codes were developed from the data (Glaser, 1992; Saldana, 2013). This form of coding was present throughout the research on a consistent basis. In vivo coding was used to keep the themes in the voice of the participant (Saldana, 2013).

Phase Two consisted of interviews with students and teachers. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. Similar coding from Phase One was used in this phase as well, including descriptive and in vivo coding. Comparisons of developed categories provided 'thick' (Geertz, 1973) data from which to draw experiences and themes from during the coding of the interviews. These interviews were also authentic student voice accounts that highlighted the needs and desires of students that are a vital process within this research. Interviews with teachers were coded with the same qualitative methods as

Phase One. The researcher envisioned the result to be each participant's personal account of their experiences with bullying in the classroom, and are described in chapter four, as much as possible, in their own words.

Classroom observations in Phase Three used qualitative coding procedures that mirrored Phase One.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted to determine effective methods for gathering data regarding students' experiences and perceptions of bullying within the classroom environment. The researcher elicited written responses from an eighth grade classroom with 34 total students. There were 28 male students in the class and six females. Five females wrote about experiences in the classroom, and one only wrote her definition of bullying. There were 14 male students who wrote about experiences of bullying in the classroom, and 14 male students only wrote their definition of bullying. Preliminary analysis of the data suggested the following emergent themes regarding the definition of bullying by students: physical and mental harm, hurting the person, verbally abusing them, and doing something to hurt the person. Examples seen in the classroom included: name calling, taking of personal items, throwing items at a person, and spreading humors.

Physical and Mental Harm

More students grouped these two terms together than any other characteristic when they defined bullying. A total of seven out of the 34 students included these two terms together in their definitions of bullying. It was interesting to note how the two terms were used together in the definition, but other methods were not mentioned. Many definitions that used these terms together were followed by examples. While there were

different examples of physical harm, the only example of mental harm given was name-calling.

Verbal and Physical Abuse

It was interesting to note how these two terms were used together when students gave their definition of bullying. These two terms used together were the second most frequently used terms. Students who used these terms in their definitions not only gave examples that included name-calling as verbal abuse, but they also incorporated put-downs and spreading rumors as ways in which verbal abuse was applied.

Most examples given of verbal abuse that were observed in the classroom included name-calling, cussing, and put-downs. Three students specifically identified the locker-room in Physical Education (PE) classes as places where they saw and heard the verbal abuse occurring.

Name-Calling

It was interesting to note that five students listed name-calling specifically in their definitions of bullying and not as an examples. These students gave examples of what names they had been called, had heard others being called, or had called to others. Name-calling was also the top example given of how bullying is seen in the classrooms, with 12 students identifying times in the classroom where students were called names by others in a variety of situations.

<div align="center">

Ethical considerations

</div>

The main ethical concerns with the research involved the interviewing of students about their possible experiences in bullying situations. Students who volunteered for a follow-up interview were presented with a consent form to be signed by both themselves

and their parents. When discussing their personal experiences with bullying, it was possible the participants experienced discomfort, fear, pain, anger, frustration, or sadness as they described their responses. The researcher provided a list of counseling resources that were available to participants at little or no cost in their community. The list was also available on the school's website.

All involvement was on a voluntary basis, with participants either completing the anonymous writing prompt or declining to participate by not completing the prompt. Students and teachers were also instructed that they could stop the interview at any time without any penalty. Even in a no-pressure sitaution, it was possible the participants experienced discomfort, fear, pain, anger, frustration, or saddness as they wrote their response. Both of the school's counselors were available to any student or teacher who experienced any negative feelings they wanted to discuss. Other ethical concernsweare controlled for through the anonymous and voluntary nature of the prompt.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The purpose of this research was to explore teachers' and students' perceptions of bullying within a classroom setting and then to use those perceptions to identify possible differences that could help to decrease the ever-increasing presence of bullying in the classroom. Three data collection instruments were used: a writing prompt, individual interviews, and classroom observations. A pilot study was conducted in which 22 out of 37 students completed the writing prompt. The overarching questions that guided both the pilot and this larger study were: What similarities and differences are there in a teacher's definition of bullying compared to a student's definition of bullying? and How can these similarities and differences be used to guide teacher training that might decrease instances of bullying within their classrooms? The specific questions this research intended to explore to answer the larger questions were:

1. How do middle school teachers define bullying?

2. How do middle school students define bullying?

3. What are the students' experiences with being bullied, being the bully, or being a bystander to a bullying situation within a classroom?

4. What incidences of bullying to students do teachers act upon?

In the first phase of this qualitative research study, a writing prompt was administered to participants to elicit their perspective on a definition of bullying, as well as their experiences with bullying in the classroom. The student population invited to complete the writing prompt included one sixth grade classroom, one seventh grade classroom, and one eighth grade classroom from a middle school consisting of grades 6-8. A total of 41 participants out of a possible 101 students within the three classes

completed the writing prompt (response rate of 40.6%). The sixth grade classroom had a total of 35 students. The total number of participants who completed the writing prompt was 17 (14 females, 3 males). The seventh grade classroom saw 8 completions of the writing prompt (6 females, 2 males) out of a total class roster of 33 students. The eighth grade classroom consisted of 33 students, and 16 students (10 females, 6 males) completed the writing prompt. The three individual teachers also completed the writing prompt.

In the second phase of this study, one-on-one follow up interviews were conducted with participants from the same classrooms that completed the writing prompts. These interviews provided further insights regarding bullying perceptions, behaviors, and interactions between students and teachers within a classroom environment. Five students were randomly selected from each grade-level classroom to be interviewed. Each participant was individually interviewed. The sixth grade students interviewed included three girls and two boys. In seventh grade, one participant declined to be interviewed after first volunteering, reducing the total to four participants in that grade (two girls and two boys). In eighth grade, three girls and two boys were interviewed for a total of 14 individual participant interviews. The three teachers who completed the writing prompts were also individually interviewed. The researcher recorded the audio of all interviews. These audio recordings were professionally transcribed, and the researcher coded the interview transcripts in the same manner as the writing prompts, and classroom observations (Saldana, 2013). Total student participation is represented in Figure 4.1

Student Participants
n=55
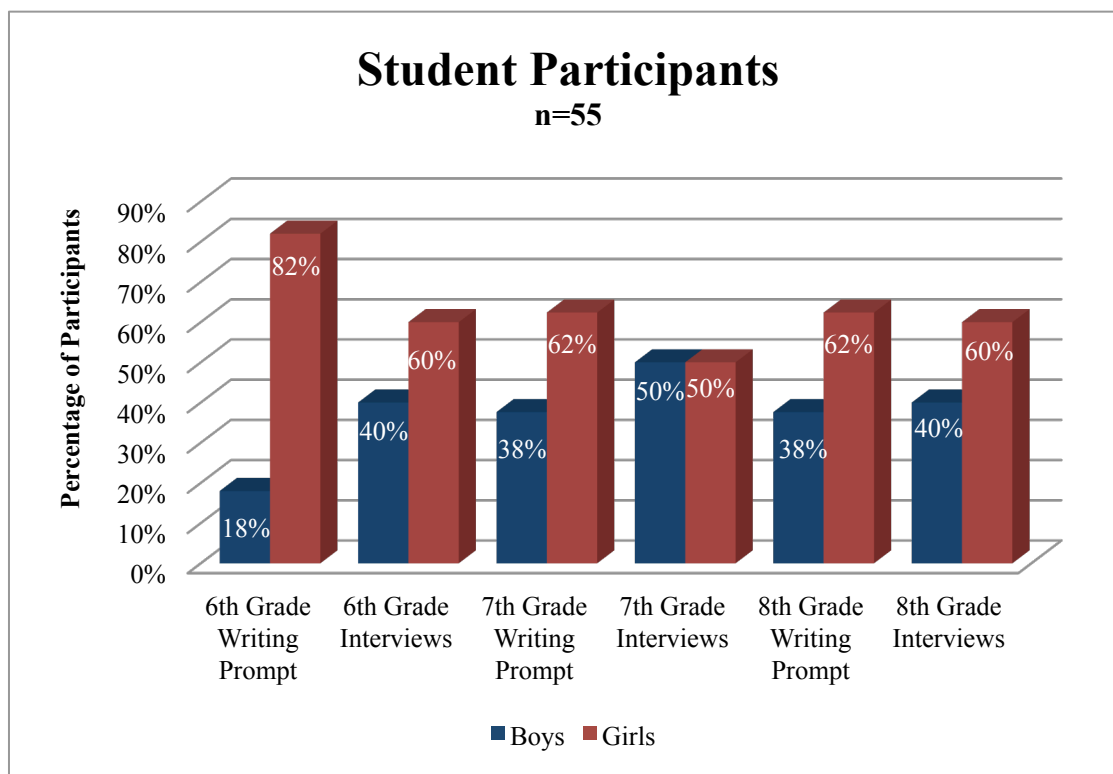
Figure 4.1. Gender and grade level totals of all student participants.

In the third phase of the research, a total of 12 classroom observations were

completed, four observations in each of the three classes, in an effort to triangulate data

on student behaviors and student-to-teacher interactions in possible bullying situations.

These classroom observations conducted during the second semester of the school year

provided insight into teacher methods of classroom management and classroom climate

but did not yield as much student interaction data as anticipated. Based on past

experiences of being an assistant principal and conducting classroom observations, I

recognize that students usually appear more comfortable in classrooms the longer the

school year progresses. This comfort lent itself to students acting in a more natural way,

which may have included behaviors perceived to be bullying. Although these

observations were completed in April, very few behaviors were perceived by the other students and researcher to be consistent with bully behaviors.

Coding in all three phases of research included Descriptive Coding, used to identify and categorized the topic of the data (Saldana, 2013). Descriptive Coding resulted in a categorized inventory of the data into six main themes that will be discussed in this chapter. While analyzing the data, the researcher used in vivo coding to highlight the voices of the participants themselves. It was important to report the data exactly as the students and teachers expressed them to provide voice to their perspectives. This chapter discusses the findings of the three phases by grouping the data into six main themes: definitions of bullying, examples of bullying, about the bully, preferred teacher interventions, ways of coping, and teacher data. The themes will be described in detail, and a summary will end the chapter.

Qualitative Themes from Student Data

Definitions of Bullying

While some adults believe middle school aged students may not be able to articulate their thoughts as clearly as adults, the collected data showed that they have strong perceptions of what bullying is when they see it, and they have strong feelings regarding bullying behaviors. Their words carry an emotion that is both visible and powerful, as one eighth grader expressed:

> Bullying to me, is that it is when one person targets another person and means to get a reaction. Bullying is very hurtful, especially to the person being targeted. It also is a form of judgment. An example of bullying is if you are not wearing the 'in' clothes, people will tease you.

There were a total of 55 responses (38 female, 17 male) provided by the student participants regarding a definition of bullying. This number is greater than total sample size because some participants offered more than one definition in their responses. Some specific characteristics of their definitions included:

- 25 student included the term "verbal"/ "emotional"/ "mental"

- 23 students included the term "physical"

- 17 students included the term "hurt"

- 5 students included the term "mean"

- 5 students included the term "picked-on"

- 3 students included the term "continually"/ "repeatedly"

- 3 students included the term "thinks they are better than…"

The frequency of terms used by students is shown in Figure 4.2.

Specific Terms in Bullying Definition
n=55 (open response to prompt)
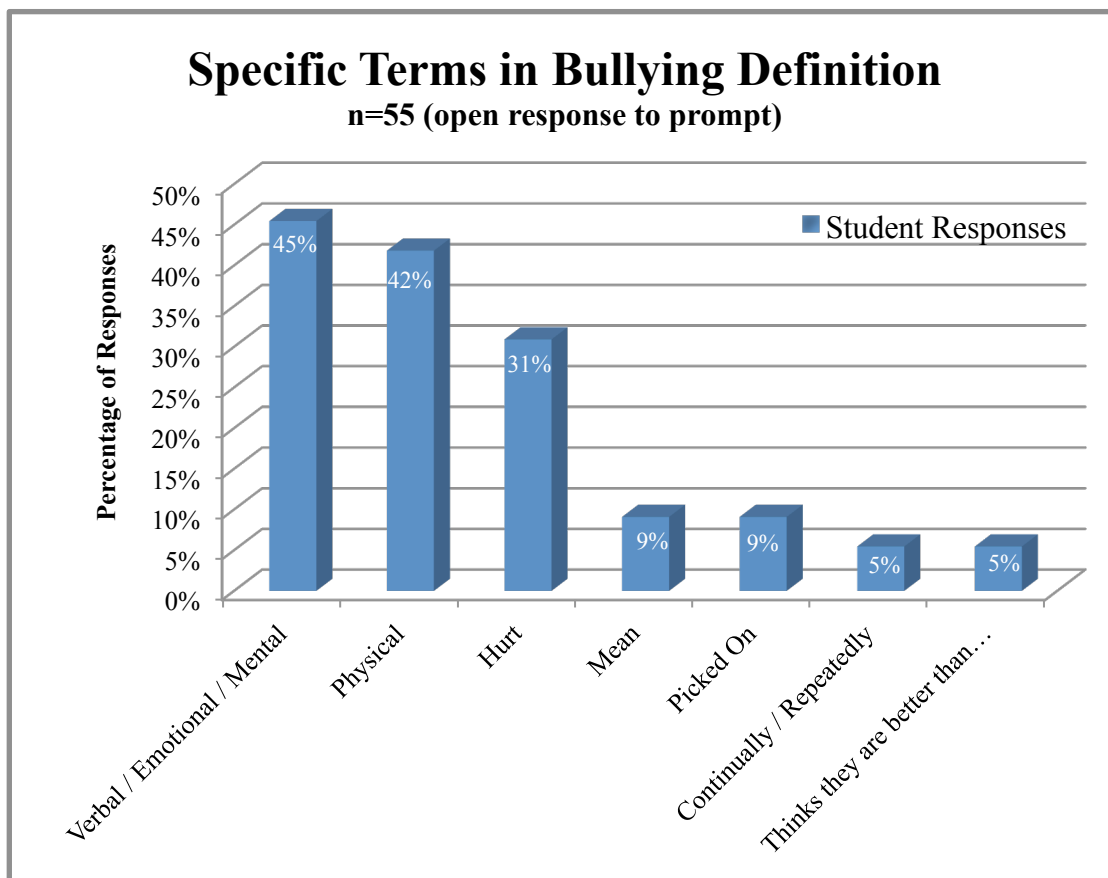
Figure 4.2. Frequency of specific terms used by student participants in their definition of
bullying.

While most of the participants identified both a physical and verbal component to
bullying, only three included a variable of repetition in their definition. This differs from
the existing research, which stresses three variables to a bullying definition where the
bully actions are repeated, there is an imbalance of power, and there is intent to do harm
(Coloroso, 2003). The three participant definitions that include, "thinks they are better
than…" suggested the participants were acknowledging the imbalance of power inherent
to bullying. One female student described it as the following:

> Bullying is something people do not- something people do consciously when they are insecure about themselves or if they're feeling alone or not necessarily alone like maybe they have a bad situation at home, and to make themselves feel better they put other people down. They tell somebody how they look to make themselves feel prettier to try and put others down because they think they are better than them.

Likewise, terms "mean" and "pick-on" both showed intent to do harm. These word choices and their comparisons to the current research will be examined further in Chapter Five.

Most of the definitions provided by the students included examples to illustrate their points. Students used these examples to better explain their definitions and their emphasis when giving their definitions were strong, clear, and concise. This was similar to the three teachers who participated in the study. All three teachers also used examples in their definitions, and all three teachers referenced "put-downs" as an example of bullying. All teachers also included the characteristic of the negative impact bullying has on the target.

During the individual interviews, the researcher noticed the participants had fewer pauses when giving their definition, and participants used a more authoritative voice when answering the question regarding their definition of bullying. Similar observations were made during the individual teacher interviews.

Examples of Bullying

Student participants provided numerous examples of bullying, both within their definitions and as independent terms. From the 41 student participants who completed the writing prompt and the 14 students who participated in follow-up interviews, a total of 78 examples of bullying behaviors were given. Sixty examples were of verbal

bullying, and 18 examples were of physical bullying. The significance of the amount of

verbal examples will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5.
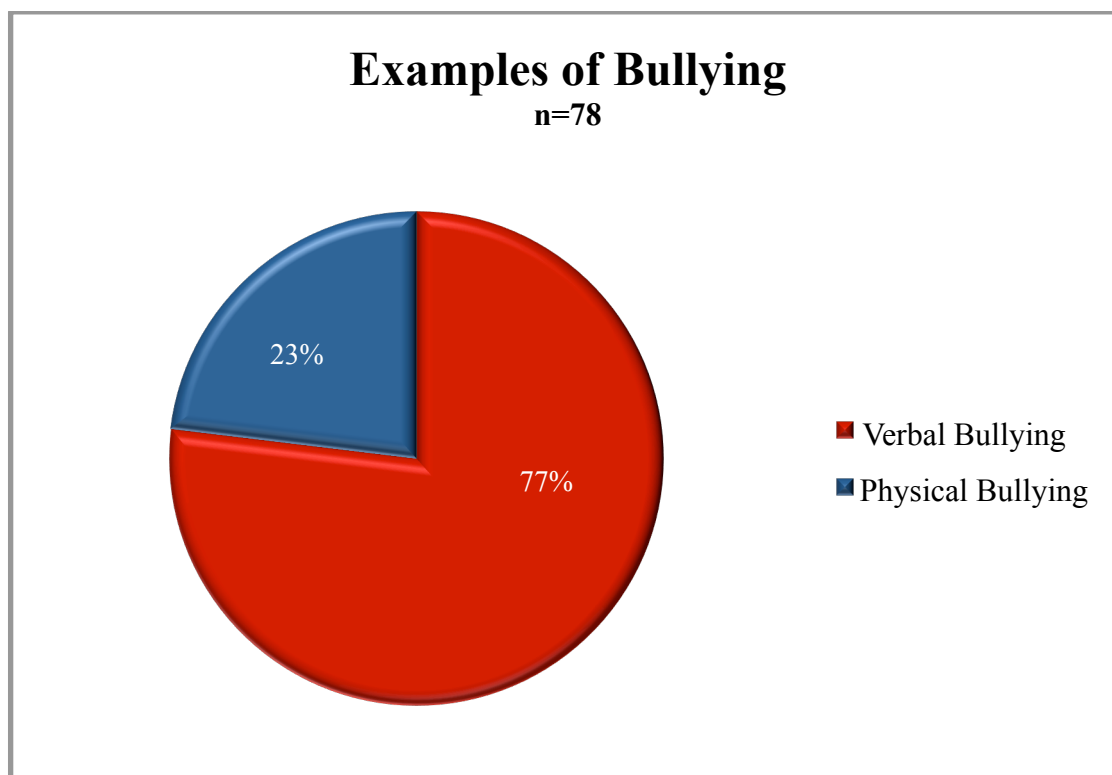
Figure 4.3. Frequency graph describing the number of verbal examples of bullying and

the number of physical examples of bullying provided by student participants.

One eighth grade student placed examples within his definition with this writing prompt

response:

> To me bullying is when someone is hurting another person. This includes
> physical and mental pain. Bullying could be punching and kicking or
> bullying could be insulting with words. Both kinds of bullying are hurtful
> and mean and should never be done.
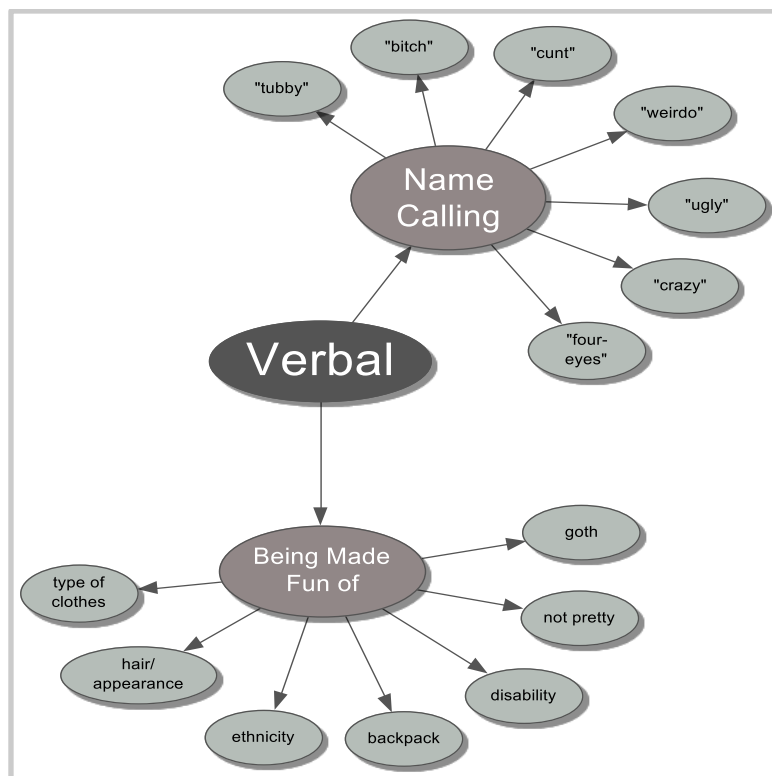
Figure 4.4. Hierarchy web that describes the breakdown of verbal bullying examples

provided by student participants.

As Figure 4.4 shows, "Name calling" was a leading sub-category of verbal

bullying, with 18 examples given of specific names the participants had been called,

participants had heard someone else being called, or who participants themselves had

admitted calling another student. Specific names like "tubby," "bitch," "cunt," "weirdo,"

"ugly," "crazy," and "four-eyes" were given by participants, and two of the participants

became noticeably upset when describing these names to the researcher. One of the

student participants started to cry when she recounted the name-calling:

> Okay. I was called bitch and cunt and stuff like that. It was over and over
> by the same person. I think he was calling me those names because
> people think I am stuck up sometimes or because I never really talked to
> them before and so they think that I'm, like, if I don't talk to them I'm too

good for them or whatever. But I just never really talked to them. But it doesn't mean I am stuck up.

"Being made fun of" was the other leading example of verbal bullying, with 18 participants starting their sentence with that phrase and then providing specific examples of what on the student was being pointed out by the bully. Targeted areas that the bully would make fun of included:

- type of clothes (4 separate references)

- hair/appearance (4 separate references)

- ethnicity/race (3 separate references)

- backpack (2 separate references)

- not pretty (2 separate references)

- disability

- goth

A specific comment heard by a participant from a girl who continually commented on another student's race was "Asians should go work in the salons." This comment frustrated the participant, who admitted during an interview that she finally told the girl to "Stop being racist."

The 18 examples of physical bullying included pushing (mentioned five times), shoving (mentioned three times), punching (mentioned two times), slapping, taking a chair from another student, passing mean notes, pinching, poking, and putting a backpack in the trash. In one unexpected incident, a student threw a wooden hanger at the victim.
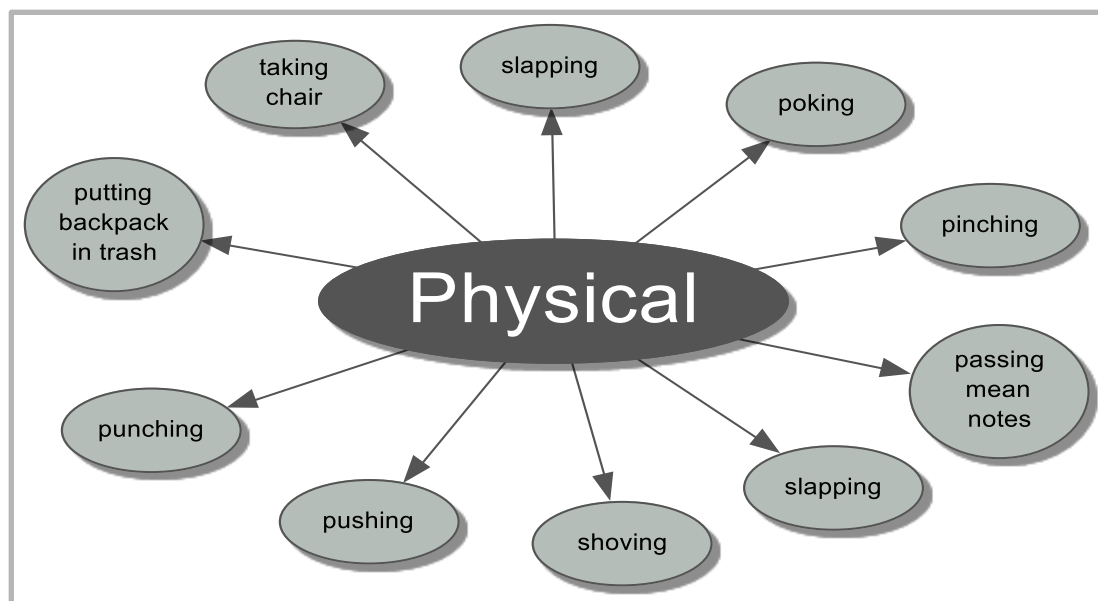
Figure 4.5. Visual description of physical examples of bullying provided by student

participants.

About the Bully

Participants commented on why they thought bullies acted in the ways they did,

giving a perspective on bullies as seen through the eyes of their victims, bystanders, and

even from bullies themselves. Unsolicited opinions on why bullies act the way they do

included "Bullies think they are the best," "Bullies feel like everything is theirs," "Quiet

kids get picked on," " Bullies were once bullied," and two separate participants expressed

the notion that bullies "do it for the fun of it."

Insight into the mind of a bully was gained during the interviews when two

separate participants admitted to being a bully in previous grades, and they both were

willing to share their thoughts, actions, and motivations with the researcher. While both

expressed remorse over the way they acted, both also detailed what they did to a student,

how long the behavior was repeated, and when it stopped.

The first bully was a male who admitted to bullying a student when they were both in fifth grade. His behavior, which started in the classroom and spread to other areas of the campus, included calling the victim names and also became physical with the bully pushing the victim on several different occasions. Admitting that they were never friends, the bully discussed how he continued calling the victim different names over the course of three months:

> He was like the smallest kid. He wasn't the smallest kid, he was tall like this tall and I was like this tall. And he was like the kid that you know wouldn't do anything back, like if you are a lion, you are not going to go at the strongest like gazelle or something, you are going to go for the weak one. Like he was the weak one in that case.

The bully explained that the bullying stopped when the class was reassigned seats, and the two students were separated. He appeared confused when reflecting on the situation, and although he never apologized to the victim, he expressed regret at the end of the conversation.

The second participant who admitted that she had bullied another student was forthright in her admission of misjudging a student by the way he looked and acted in class and therefore spread a rumor that the victim was gay.

> I guess I have kinda been a bully, because there is this guy named (coded) and I guess we've all misjudged him because he is like the class clown and everything, and we all sort of gossip about him behind his back and everybody says mean words about him. I don't say any mean words about him, but I sort of agree with them. So I guess it make me the bully, but sometimes I go around and spread things that I don't really mean to and I talked to my parents afterwards.

This student appeared nervous about sharing this information and tried to qualify her comments both by first explaining that she did not say any words and then by including "everybody" into the admitted actions. She continued:

> Like people kept saying that he ay gay and- because he started humping
> boys and stuff everybody thought he was gay and everybody already
> knew, but like I told my friend and I'm like, "Did you know (coded) was
> gay," and she was like, "No, I had no idea," and then she goes spreading it
> on other kids and he was my friend and now he doesn't talk to me
> anymore and I feel really bad about it because I was the one who kinda
> spread it, but it wasn't just me though with other kids too, but I don't
> wanna explain it.

While describing the victim as the "class clown," the bully never actually called the victim gay to his face but rather told her friend that she thought he was gay over the course of separate conversations. When the bully heard her friend telling other students in the class that the victim was gay, she did not do anything to correct the conversation or stop the rumor. After a few weeks, the bully apologized to the student and admitted that the conversation was weird because the victim did not know what the bully was apologizing for. The bully admitted that she had begun talking with him and realized how nice of a person he was, so she felt the need to apologize, "If I have ever done anything you thought was mean." She also went back to her friend and admitted that she had created the rumor about his sexuality and apologized to her friend.

Preferred Teacher Interventions

Student participants suggested 32 possible teacher interventions through both the writing prompts and the interviews. The top intervention students wanted to see from teachers when bullying was occurring in the classroom was for the teacher to talk to the bully. Suggestions for how to do this fell into six subcategories depicted in Figure 4.6.

Preferred Teacher Intervention
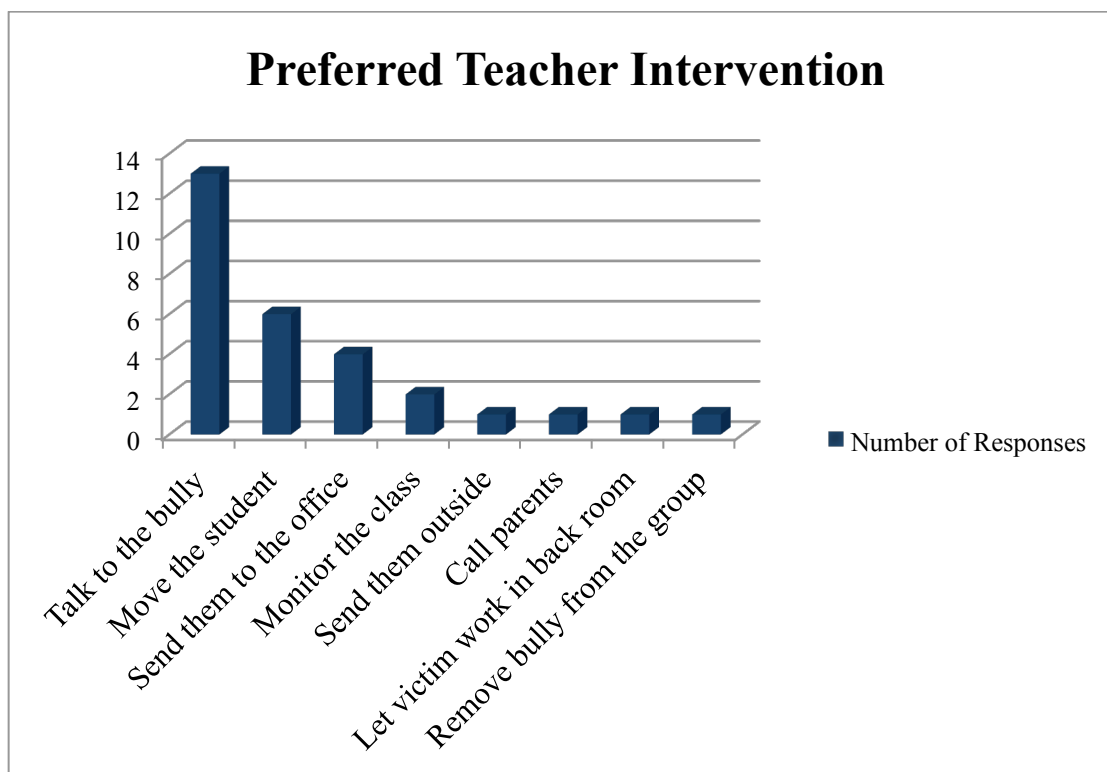
Figure 4.6. Frequency of specific interventions students would prefer teachers use when addressing bullying situations within the classroom.

While the majority of student responses focused on the teacher communicating with the bully, they differed on how, when, and where that communication should be delivered. Figure 4.7 illustrates the different ways in which student prefer teachers to talk with bullies.
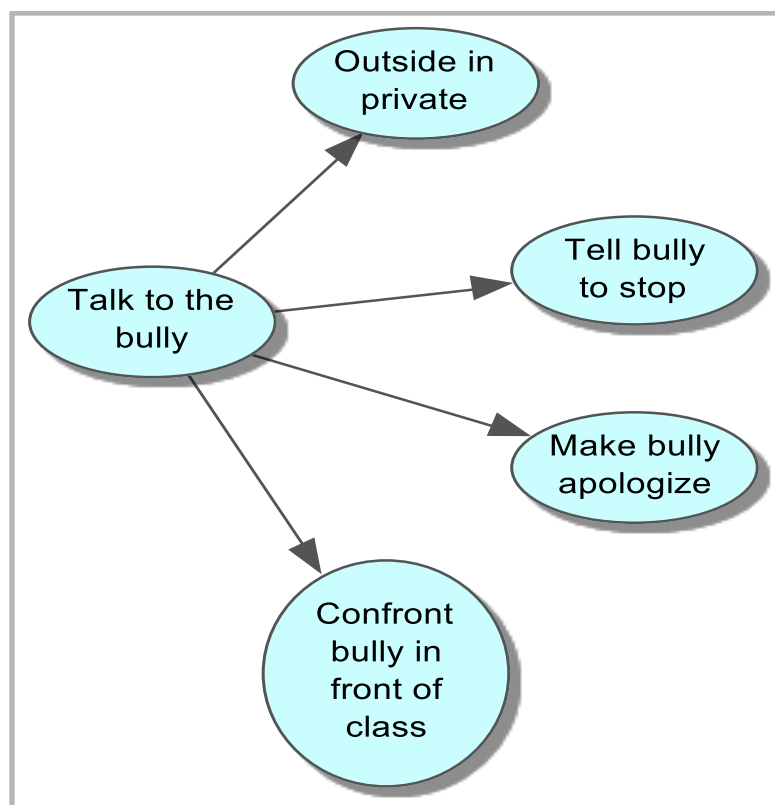
Figure 4.7. Visual representation of ways in which student participants wanted the

teacher to talk to the bully.

The majority of these interventions do not involve outside resources like

administrators or parents, which is consistent with current literature. The impact of these

interventions in future teacher trainings will be discussed in Chapter Five.

It was interesting to note how numerous interventions suggested by the student

participants were relatively low-level in term of severity and effort required. Students

seemed to want action taken to stop the behavior but did not believe harsh action like

suspension from school or expulsion from school were necessary. While four students

did mention having the bully sent to the office, none followed up with what the Assistant

Principal should do with the student from that point. Only one student mentioned that the

teacher should call the parent, which to students may seem more of a mid-level discipline than what the teacher does with the students or class without getting outside people involved. Some students provided interesting responses regarding how their parents would overreact if they were told about bullying that was occurring in school. This suggestion is discussed more in Chapter Five.

Ways of Coping

An unexpected theme that arose was the willingness of the participants to share ways they coped with being bullied or how they would cope if in a bullying situation within a classroom environment where they did not tell the teacher. There were 70 total strategies reported by the participants. Twelve strategies suggested by the participants included telling the teacher. Those strategies were presented in the previous section. The remaining 59 strategies were alternatives to telling the teacher, and the most commonly mentioned coping mechanism was telling their friends. A total of 17 participants included telling their friends as a way to cope with being bullied, and the reaction of the friends varied with the following reactions:

- "My friend stayed with me."

- "My friend was supportive."

- "My friend talked to the bully."

- "My friend reassured me by telling me that I was awesome."

- "My friend told me to tell."

- "My friend stood up for me."

- "My friend helped me through it."

Other than speaking to the teacher or their friends, five participants reported that they would tell another adult on campus, with three participants telling a counselor and two telling a campus supervisor.
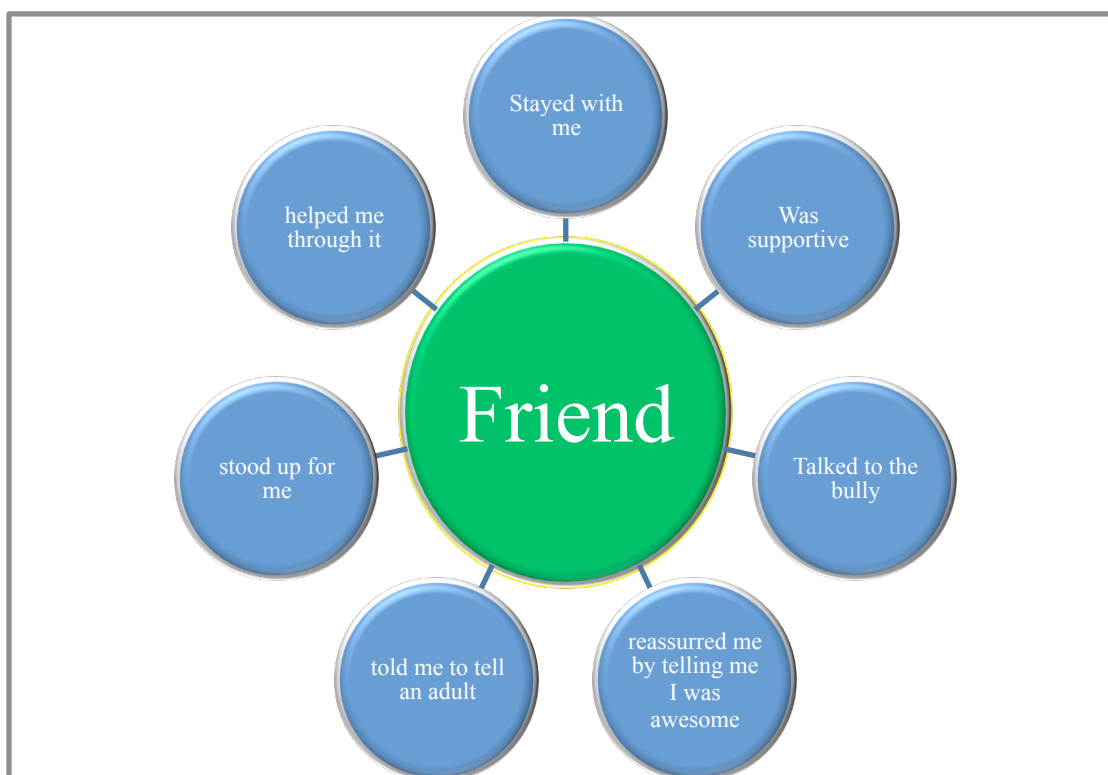
Figure 4.8. Visual representation provided by student participants that describes how their friends were a support system for them in situations of bullying.

Student participants omitted their own parents as adults they would tell. While three participants did say they would tell their mom (dad was never mentioned independent from mom), there were four participants who specifically stated that they would not tell their parents because "they overreact." In one instance, the participants went on to say that their parents would even "make the situation worse." This idea of not telling their parents about a bullying situation will be analyzed in Chapter Five.

Teacher Data

Three teachers participated in this research study. These three teachers were chosen because they volunteered their classrooms for participation in the writing prompts and observations and were not only willing to be interviewed after their competition of the writing prompt but also volunteered to be observed on four separate occasions throughout the two-month period of data collection.

The primary similarity among these three teachers was the presence of raw emotions when discussing their personal experiences in middle school. All three shared their experiences with being bullied in middle school. Whether they were bullied because of their race, their height, or some other social factor, their victimization still motivated them to be as diligent as possible. One teacher wrote about sharing her experiences with her class and the impact it had on the students:

> I also shared a personal experience with my class on a bullying situation
> that I experienced when I was their age, and how my own personal
> experience played out. I noticed a profound change from the entire group
> after this brief lesson, and haven't notice any further bullying type of
> activities or clashes within the group since. There was no other adult
> present during this experience with my class.

She also wrote about her experience and described how she was a bystander who did not intervene:

> These acts or words are routinely experienced. In middle school years it
> was often issues of race. Many 'white rich' kids were rude and cruel on a
> regular basis towards the 'black poor' kids. Many of us were of different
> ethnic backgrounds, but all of us stood by and watched the targeted black
> students endure vulgar verbal lashings. The 'N' word was easily and
> frequently accompanied with 'stupid, poor N.' Most of the black students
> either fought back or silenced their voices; but many of us remained silent
> bystanders because we could be next. If adults were present one would
> not notice since none ever did anything on those occasions.

Their method of teaching, their movement around the classroom, and they addressed the element of bullying in their classrooms from both an interpersonal point-of-view and as a social point-of-view were all characteristics which affected the way they conducted their classrooms. All three admitted their past experiences helped shape how they speak to their students, how they are diligent in monitoring student behavior in their classroom, and how they try to implement a positive classroom culture in their curriculum and class activities.

During the interviews, all three teachers discussed their classroom environment in detail. All three teachers addressed bullying in their classrooms at the beginning of the year as part of their classroom procedures and expectations. They also incorporated different aspects of bullying into their curriculum. All three mentioned their classroom set-up as key to their classroom environment. One teacher shared:

> Day one, we go through the classroom rules and I followed Harry Wong's deal and we only have about four or five of them, but I think the second one says respect everyone and part of that, I am a firm believer in that having an athletic background that I kind of bestow upon the students that we are a team in this room and together we will all achieve that whatever apex we went through whether it's a A, whether it's- have a great time in this subject area, whatever the case may be. But the rules were established and as I say, we kind of agreed verbally on a contract that we would abide by those rules.

Arranging a large number of students in a collaborative setting while still being able to physically move freely about the room was important to each of the three teachers. All three also mentioned how they discussed the proper way students need to speak both to the teacher and to one another.

The three teachers observed all moved about their classroom and rarely sat down during the class period. Whether the teachers were giving direct instruction to the class,

engaging the class in a dialogue regarding the material, or overseeing students working

independently or in small groups, these teachers circulated around the classroom on a

continual basis. This physical monitoring was apparent even when video clips were

being shown or when students were completing tests and exams. This physical proximity

to students helped the teachers keep control of their classroom. Students had to

continually be on task because they knew the teacher was circulating around the room

and observing the work and interactions of the students throughout the entire class period.

One teacher explained how this physical movement allows her to watch for signs that

something may be wrong:

> Um, yea and I try to be proactive and I tried to look for the signs just- if a
> student is quieter or they don't seem comfortable and maybe someone's
> laughing around them, but they are not laughing with them. I try to look
> for those signs and get them to a counselor or to you as soon as possible.

The three teachers also shared the characteristic of using strong verbal cues for

their classes. These teachers were supportive of students who gave an effort to

participate in dialogues and conversations, even if their comments were not on target.

Their verbal praise would consist of comments like "Good point," "Thank you for

sharing," and "Good insight." These phrases were used to keep students engaged even if

they were not giving the information that was being sought by the teachers' questions and

also as a reaffirmation that the student's opinion had worth in their classroom.

One influencing factor in the fact that bullying was not witnessed during

classroom observations could be the seating arrangements in the rooms. The traditional

style of rows and columns of desks was not used in any of these classrooms. Teachers

had paired up students, and there was ample room in between the paired groups for the

teacher to navigate through the 30-35 desk/chair combinations, increasing their presence

throughout the classroom. One teacher had the class arranged in groups of four students,

but still had the desks in rows so that all students were facing the front of the classroom.

This design allowed for group work and student interactions but held students

accountable for listening when the teacher happened to be in front of the entire class

giving whole class instruction. The connection between classroom seating and student

behavior will be examined more thoroughly in Chapter Five, but initial analysis shows

that both students and teachers believed where students sit makes a difference in reducing

the frequency of bullying incidents.

Summary of Results

This study explored teachers' and students' perception of bullying within a

classroom setting and then used those perceptions to identify possible differences that

could help to decrease the ever-increasing presence of bullying in the classroom. Using

Constructivist Grounded Theory and Student Voice as the theoretical frameworks, the

researcher employed a three-phased qualitative methods design. Writing prompts,

individual interviews, and classroom observations were the three data collection methods

used in this study. The data were triangulated to answer the following two research

questions: What similarities and differences are there in a teacher's definition of bullying

compared to a student's definition of bullying? and How can these similarities and

differences be used to guide teacher training that will help decrease instances of bullying

within their classrooms? In vivo coding was used to prioritize student voice, and

descriptive coding compiled a categorized inventory of the data into six main themes:

- Definitions of Bullying- Students used an assortment of words to describe their perceptions of bullying. While evidence of the three variables current researchers use to label an action 'bullying' were mentioned in a limited number of definitions provided by the student participants, their definitions were descriptive and powerful.

- Examples of Bullying- Participants sited 60 examples of verbal bullying and 18 examples of physical bullying. While the specific examples had all been identified in prior research, the emphasis on verbal bullying over physical bullying was a significant finding.

- About the Bully- Characteristics related to why the bullies acted in negative ways were discussed by participants, which showed that students do understand the element of an imbalance of power to a certain extent. Deeper insight was gained when two participants shared their experiences as bullies, and they were both able to describe why they felt their negative actions were examples of bullying.

- Preferred Teacher Interventions- Student participants wanted the teacher to talk to the bully more than any other possible intervention when asked about the teacher's role in bullying situations within the classroom environment. Other responses included more low-level interventions that participants believed would make the victim feel safe and stop the bullying from occurring.

- Ways of Coping- Participants shared many strategies they employed when adults failed to act or when participants did not believe adults would act in a

reasonable way. The most common response would be to seek advice and support from their friends.

- Teacher Data- Teacher participants' definitions of bullying were more precise in including specific elements but still provided their personal insights into their perceptions of what constitutes bullying behaviors. They discussed bullying in their classroom expectations at the beginning of the year and incorporated bullying recognition and prevention throughout the year within their curriculum. All three also constantly moved around the classroom and rarely sat down during the period. They all used verbal commands, monitored individual and group work, and incorporated their personal backgrounds into creating an environment that reduced bullying behaviors.

In Chapter Five, these themes are combined with current literature to further explore the two overarching research questions for this study. Data from Definitions of Bullying, Examples of Bullying, and Teacher Data will be used to help explore the research question "What similarities and differences are there in a teacher's definition of bullying compared to a student's definition of bullying?" Results from About the Bully, Preferred Teacher Interventions, and Teacher Data will be used to investigate the second research question "How can these similarities and differences be used to guide teacher training that will help decrease instances of bullying within their classrooms?" Finally, a discussion regarding data presented in Ways of Coping will be explored to better understand the students' perspectives surrounding the limitation of telling a teacher or other adult in bullying situations.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

The final chapter presents a summary of the previous four chapters, conclusions drawn from the results, implications of this research, suggestions for future research, and interventions for classroom bullying and teacher interventions. The summary reviews the problem and purpose of the study, the theoretical framework used for the study, methodology, and the results for this study. Next, the research questions are reviewed along with a discussion of how this study collaborates with existing literature to explore those questions. Third, the study's limitations and implications for policy are examined. Finally, possible next-steps in teacher training are discussed.

Summary

Overview of the Problem

Research suggests that students hold many fears about their school experiences, including violence, physical altercations, and depression (Reid, Monsen, & Rivers, 2004: Twemlow, Fonagy, & Sacco, 2001). For many students in middle school, peers surpass parents as the main influence of how adolescents perceive themselves and others. It is during this time of developmental changes where bullying has the largest negative impact on children. Current research indicates that almost a third of students ages 12 to 18 years old reported having been bullied at school (Robers, Zhang, & Truman, 2010).

While there are many similar definitions of bullying, a universally accepted definition has not been agreed upon by researchers as of this publication date. Teachers are the first line of defense for bullying situations that may occur in the classroom, but research has shown that teachers feel undertrained to identify and intervene in some cases of bullying (Crothers, Kolbert, & Barker, 2006), which could be partially due to the

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absence of a clearly defined, universal definition of what bullying actually is. A clear, concise definition of bullying combined with enhanced teacher training might provide students with a safer learning environment.

While all aspects of bullying necessitate further research, studies using student voice to both define what bullying is and suggest solutions to mitigate instances of bullying have been underrepresented in the current literature. This research explored teachers' and students' perceptions of bullying within a classroom setting and then used those perceptions to identify differences that might help to decrease the ever-increasing presence of bullying in the classroom. The overarching questions that guided both the initial pilot and this larger study were: What similarities and differences are there in a teacher's definition of bullying compared to a student's definition of bullying? and How can these similarities and differences be used to guide teacher training that might decrease instances of bullying within their classrooms? The specific questions this research explored in an attempt to answer the larger questions were:

1. How do middle school teachers define bullying?

2. How do middle school students define bullying?

3. What are the students' experiences with being bullied, being the bully, or being a bystander to a bullying situation within a classroom?

4. What incidences of bullying to students do teachers act upon?

Theoretical Framework

Constructivist grounded theory (CGT) was used to examine the definition of bullying from both the teacher and student and informed the overarching questions: What similarities and differences are there in a teacher's definition of bullying compared

to a student's definition of bullying, and how can these similarities and differences be used to guide teacher training that might decrease instances of bullying within their classrooms? This study consisted of three phases: writing prompts completed by both students and teachers, individual interviews by both students and teachers, and classroom observations by the researcher. Student voice provided a framework for analyzing both the writing prompt in Phase One and the student interviews in Phase Two.

Methodology

A three-phased, qualitative research design consisting of a writing prompt, individual student and teacher interviews, and classroom observations in a middle school environment was conducted.

In the first phase, students and teachers completed an anonymous writing prompt. The purpose of this phase was to establish how students and teachers define the notion of bullying. The responses were coded for themes related to a definition of bullying and to establish differences between what students report as bullying and what teachers report as bullying.

In the second phase, interviews with individual students and teachers were conducted in order to gain deeper insight in the incidents of bullying within the classroom. These interviews highlighted student voice in identifying the conditions that surround bullying in the classroom and also suggested interventions that teachers might employ to help decrease bullying incidents in the classroom. Interviews with teachers added depth to understanding bullying incidents from the teachers' perspective and helped clarify the differences between a teacher's definition of bullying compared to the definition provided by students.

The third phase consisted of classroom observations to record interactions between teachers and their students as well as interactions between different students. The purpose of this phase was to triangulate the findings from the writing prompt with the students' behaviors that are either addressed, ignored, or somehow identified in order to show how different behaviors can be interpreted as bullying behaviors by the students, the teachers, or both.

Results

Qualitative measures were used to gather data for all three phases. A writing prompt was given to selected classes in the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades. Each phase was coded by the researcher using both Descriptive Coding and In Vivo Coding (Saldana, 2013). A total of 41 participants out of a possible 101 students within the three classes completed the writing prompt (response rate of 40.6%). The sixth grade classroom had a total of 17 out of 35 students who participated. The seventh grade classroom saw eight completions of the writing prompt out of a total class roster of 33 students. The eighth grade classroom consisted of 33 students, and 16 students completed the writing prompt. In total, 30 females and 11 males completed the writing prompt, and three individual teachers (two female and one male) also completed the writing prompt.

Individual interviews were conducted with both students and teachers, and the transcriptions were coded for themes. Five individual student interviews from sixth and eighth grade were completed. Four individual interviews from seventh grade were completed, as one participant decided not to participate after listening the introduction of the interview. There were no other student volunteers from seventh grade. Each of the three teachers who taught the observed classes was also interviewed.

Classroom observations were conducted, and the field notes from those observations were coded for themes. A total of 12 observations, four from each classroom, were conducted to view student interactions in the classroom setting.

The analysis of these data produced six main themes: definitions of bullying, examples of bullying, information about the bully, preferred teacher interventions, ways of coping, and teacher data.

Conclusions

Each phase of the research was developed to explore the specific research questions. By exploring the data from the four specific research questions, suggestions can be made with regards to the two overarching questions that guided this study. In the following sections, the subheadings are the core phrases from the four specific research questions, which were:

1. How do middle school teachers define bullying?

2. How do middle school students define bullying?

3. What are the students' experiences with being bullied, being the bully, or being a bystander to a bullying situation within a classroom?

4. What incidences of bullying to students do teachers act upon?

All research questions were connected with one another and examined through the lens of current critical research.

How Middle School Teachers Define Bullying

All three teachers included both verbal and physical characteristics within their definition of bullying. They all included the negative impact the bully's actions create for his or her target. None of the three definitions included the intent of the bully or the

nature of repeated occurrences, both of which are characteristics within the widely

accepted definition (Bauman & Del Rio, 2006; Black, Weinles, & Washington, 2010;

Coloroso, 2003; Olweus, 1993; Swearer, Espelage, Vaillancourt, & Hymel, 2010;

Unnever & Cornell, 2004). These teacher definitions were similar to those provided by

the student participants, which will be compared later in this chapter.

How Middle School Students Define Bullying

Student participants provided 55 definitions of bullying when the writing prompt

and interviews were combined. While the majority of definitions included both verbal

and physical characteristics, the finding that verbal characteristics were more prominent

deserved special attention. These students' identification of verbal characteristics could

highlight the misconception of thinking that "kids will be kids" and thus not in need of

intervention that has been prevalent in American society for generations (Brunner &

Lewis, 2008).

Similar to the teachers' definitions of bullying, the majority of students did not

include the characteristic of the bullying action being repeated over time. This is an

interesting finding that could lead to confusion when students in school describe the

victimization they are experiencing to an adult (Naylor et al., 2006). If a student were to

report that he/she was being bullied, it may be up to the adult to determine if there is a

difference between the student's term and another term (i.e., harassed, picked-on,

assaulted, etc.) that might be used to describe a single event.

Student participants used examples of bullying to highlight and clarify their

definitions. Within the total of 78 examples provided, 60 were examples of verbal

bullying, while the remaining 18 were physical examples. This disparity supports the

previously mentioned notion that students are more aware of verbal bullying than physical bullying. Whether this is due to the prevalence of verbal bullying on this particular school site would be an area for future research discussed later in this paper.

As depicted in Figure 4.4, verbal examples were categorized into two main themes: name calling and being made fun of. These two categories were evenly split, with 18 examples provided by separate students for each category. Some students provided examples of both while others noted only one of the sub-categories, but all participants who responded with examples gave them without prompting by the interviewer and without hesitation. Two female students started to cry while describing the names they were called, and one gave curse words as the examples without asking if it was acceptable to use such language. This display of raw emotion emphasized the sense of harm that words can cause to middle school students. While not showing the same level of emotion, all three teachers also described their personal struggles with bullying while they attended middle school, characterizing the experiences as severe incidents that shaped their school experiences.

The three teachers who were individually interviewed all shared experiences with verbal bullying while they were in middle school. All three were excluded due to a characteristic they over which they had no control, such as their race, height, or other social stigma. Their ability to describe events from their middle school years impressed upon the researcher the importance these verbal attacks had on their character development and indicated they have used these bullying experiences to shape the way they conduct their classrooms. A teacher's personal experiences with bullying and their

classroom environment is not an area that has been heavily researched (Jordan, 2007) as of this publication.

Students gave 18 different examples of physical bullying during the writing prompts and individual interviews. While instances of shoving, pushing, slapping, punching, and poking have all been identified in prior research as examples of bullying (Bauman & Del Rio, 2006; Coloroso, 2003; Maunder, Harrop, & Tattersall, 2010; Olweus, 1993; Nansel et al., 2001; Rigby, 2005), students in this study also described actions that could be considered not as severe because they do not include physical contact. Examples such as taking a chair, putting a backpack in the trash can, and passing mean notes to a target can have the same connotation of a power struggle and produce the same accompanying psychological effects on a student but could also be minimized by adults due to the passive nature of the behavior.

While other research may categorize these examples as relational bullying (Coloroso, 2003), these participants included them after saying, "Physical, like...," which may mean the students put the following examples into the realm of physical bullying due to the overt physical act. The perception of the student plays an important role in prevention programs, and how students view certain behaviors could be used to train teachers to be more aware of how the physical behaviors of students might be affecting their classroom. While examples given by students may not be the same as a definition, the examples highlight the types of behaviors that students perceive as bullying and could therefore help describe their definition of bullying.

Student Experiences with Bullying Within the Classroom

Students shared experiences with bullying in the classroom as a bystander, a victim, and as a bully. Out of the 14 individual student interviews, four students reported being a target (35% response rate), three reported being a bystander, two reported being a bully, and five reported that they had not had any experiences with bullying in the classroom. The student response rate of victimization in this study was 35%, which is consistent with current research (Levy et al., 2012).

The three students who perceived themselves as bystanders in situations of classroom bullying all expressed a desire to help the target. Their desire to help but at the same time lack of direct action is consistent with past research that found secondary student bystanders were less likely to directly intervene than elementary school students (Trach, Hymel, Waterhouse, & Neale, 2010). Acting on the desire to help is a notion that needs to be fostered in middle school classrooms and schools.

However, students did not struggle with how they thought teachers should react to incidents of bullying in the classroom. Findings from this study differed from other research that stated students who report to teachers want their conversation to remain confidential (Newman & Murray, 2005). Students interviewed for this study were vocal about their comfort with approaching a teacher to help the target during the class period. A possible ripple effect could be experienced if students see bystanders intervening and supporting the target, and a 'pay it forward' behavior sweeping through s school could improve the overall climate and culture of that school.

Among the 14 students interviewed, the five students who reported no incidents of bullying in the classroom fewer than found in previous research (Atlas & Pepler,

1998). Fortunately, there are students who either do not experience bullying during the middle school careers or who have the perception that the level of peer harassment that is common amongst youngsters is something other than bullying. This is positive because students who feel as though the behaviors of others is within a normal range could help other students who may feel bullied with strategies to increase their resiliency levels. These students who do not perceive bullying occurring could also help by sharing any strategies the adults are using that assist these students with their feelings of security in their classrooms. Either way, this group of students should be investigated for common personality and character traits in hope of nurturing those resiliency traits into the students who tend to be victimized.

There were two students who admitted to being bullies in the classroom. Gaining insight into why these students decided to victimize their peers provided valuable data. The male bully's responses supported existing research that boys will bully other boys in physical forms (Coloroso, 2003; Nansel et al., 2001; Olweus, 1993; Wang et al., 2009). He described his behavior as being "Like a lion going after a gazelle," which illustrates the raw emotions that even the bully can experience. The female bully's account of her behavior also supported past research that suggested girls bully in more verbal ways (Olweus, 1993), and their bullying behaviors are more often rumor spreading and name calling than in boys (Wang et al., 2009). Her perception of how masculine he was could have been a factor in her decision to continue to spread the rumor that he was gay. Implications of these data will be discussed later in this chapter.

How Teachers React

There is research on interventions students would prefer to see when teachers respond to bullying situations (Black et al., 2010; Crothers, Kolbert, & Barker, 2006). Teachers who do not react to incidents of bullying not only face the possibility of further damaging the target's confidence in a safe classroom, but they also may unintentionally promote bullying behavior by their lack of action (Green, Oswald, & Spears, 2007). According to the teachers interviewed by Green and colleagues, there could be a misconception amongst other staff that intervening is a situation-specific skill that includes dangerous interactions between teachers and volatile students. To the contrary, the three teachers interviewed for this study all expressed how procedures, curriculum implementation, seat rearrangement, and class discussions that take place throughout the year are vital to promoting a positive and inclusive environment that does not allow bullying to fester in their classrooms.   The teachers also expressed their immediate attention to incidents they perceived as bullying in nature. The revelation that the teachers in this study were quick to respond is encouraging because research has shown that teachers take bullying more seriously than students (Maunder, Harrop, & Tattersall, 2011) and are in the frontline position to address and curtail incidents.

Due to the low level of reported teacher involvement in bullying incidents for other teachers who instruct at the school but who were outside this research, students also described ways in which they believed teachers should intervene. These interventions would be considered by some to be low-level interventions because they do not involve outside resources like a parent, counselor, or administrator. These interventions also do not require extensive follow up on the part of the teacher. The suggestions provided by

students included different ways in which teachers talk to the bully and are supported by past research (Crothers, Kolbert, & Barker, 2006).

Findings from this study indicated that students suggested alternative strategies (both theoretical and practical) to help themselves and their friends cope with bullying when teachers failed to either identify or intervene in situations of classroom bullying. They also shared ways they would cope if they found themselves to be a target. While the two student interviewees who perceived themselves as victims did describe additional ways of coping besides involving the teacher, the other 13 interviewees provided ways they would cope with being a victim. A total of 70 strategies were suggested by participants in the writing prompts, interviews, or both. A total of 17 responses included some aspect of telling a friend, which highlights the importance of using peers as a support system (Rodkin, 2004). The peer connection also suggests the importance of bystanders, as friends who witness or who are told after a bullying situation occurs, who can be the first line of defense for the target.

Parental Reaction

Out of 70 total strategies students mentioned that they would use to help themselves or a friend cope with a bullying situation, only three said they would tell their parents. Two of the students interviewed discussed the prospect of their parents' involvement using phrases like, "they would overreact," and "they would make the situation even worse." These powerful statements added credibility to prior research suggesting that adult involvement has the potential to make the situation even worse (Owens, Shute, & Slee 2004). This desire to initiate parental involvement may also be a factor in how different generations perceive bullying. If children hear their parents

talking in a certain way about a child's interactions at school, if the parent does not show the correct level of support to the child, and especially if the parent models behavior that their child perceives as bullying, then the child is less likely to seek their parents out for support.

As an assistant principal, the researcher anticipated a larger percentage of responses to include parental intervention as a desired outcome. Experiences throughout eight years of being an assistant principal at the middle school have shown the researcher a high percentage of parental involvement in both the academic and social development of the students. This level of involvement did not manifest itself in the current research, and the responses by the students that parents would over react or make the situation worse was an unexpected finding.

Limitations

In this section, the limitations of the study are expanded upon from their first mention in Chapter Three. A more in-depth examination of the study's limitations and their impact on the research is possible after reflection on the entire research process.

Generalizability

This research only studied one middle school in one southwestern state in America. Differences in student populations, demographics, and lived experiences exist both within districts and across districts. School policies and practices also differ between schools, districts, and states. These differences all combined to limit the context generalizability of the results. In spite of this limitation, however, triangulation of data sources and a pilot study conducted at the outset of the research suggested that the results are credible as is the goal of qualitative research (Creswell, 2008).

Qualitative research and student voice are methods used and perceptions gained to provide depth of understanding to a situation. It is not designed to answer a specific question with results that can then be used across all social contexts. This study moved understandings in current research forward while recognizing these implications may not have the same level of effect for other schools. By providing precise data and analysis through transparent methods, the value of research can supersede any traditional needs for generalizability as general desired in quantitative studies.

Positionality

The researcher's current position as an assistant principal at the middle school where the research was conducted allowed for intimate access to and knowledge of the school culture and environment, but it also had the potential to influence student and teacher responses and behaviors. The researcher had a vested interest in improving the culture of the school for many reasons, and it is impossible for a researcher to separate him or herself from their research. While an assistant principal at the same school where the research is being conducted may produce some limitations, in this case it also provided keen insight for future teacher trainings based on the information suggested by both student and teacher participants. The fact that all teachers announced the presence of the researcher in their room during the first classroom observations could have changed the way students behaved and interacted during those observations and possibly future observations. However, student behavior at both academic and non-academic levels were not always perfect, allowing for the possibility that the researcher had been successful at blending into the classroom environment.

Teacher actions may have also been influenced by the presence of one of their supervisors. Although many conversations were used to address any concerns and to clarify the intent of the study, teachers may have still felt as though the researcher was in the role of administrator instead of a researcher.

The limitation of positionality lends itself to future research both for myself as a school leader as well as outside researchers investigating bullying though the lens of an outside clinician. Multiple directions are reviewed in the following section.

Implications of the Research

This study's findings have implications for the many different stakeholders associated with a child's experiences with bullying in a middle school classroom. A discussion of these implications occurs in the following three sections: implications for educators, implications for teacher training, and implications for future research.

Implications for Educators

Educators have been assigned the difficult task of educating students about bullying, identifying incidents when bullying occurs, and intervening when students are being bullied. As a district, there is evidence that implementing a bully prevention program can have positive outcomes on student behaviors (McManis, 2012). New laws mandate that school districts have bully prevention programs in place in all schools to help decrease bullying (US Department of Education, 2011). While districts scramble to implement a program that both meets the legal requirements and is effective for each school's different populations, individual schools are feeling the pressure from their district office, legislative bodies, and community to be on the cutting edge of bullying prevention.

School site educators face many challenges today. While the focus of school communities usually centers on academic performance, parents also want to know their children will be safe when they are at school. Recent school shootings such as the one at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Connecticut as well as tragedies like the 2013 Boston Marathon Bombings have left communities feeling vulnerable and looking to the professionals for support and comfort. School safety and academic success are linked together (Glew, Fan, Katon, & Rivara, 2008), and school administrators must balance both safety procedures and academic demands unlike any other time in recent history. As this research demonstrated, students at the middle school level have the ability to provide valuable insight and suggestions to administrators who attempt to manage the safest school possible. Establishing school wide bully prevention programs can help school climate by providing a voice to students who want to express their fears, anxieties, and stories of victimization in a safe place where they will be heard and supported (Coloroso, 2003; Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Olweus, 2003).

Schools can use research-based programs on bully prevention and adjust their curriculum and means of implementation to fit their individual sites (McManis, 2012). What the majority of prevention programs offer is a blueprint of effective strategies that are needed to make the programs as successful as possible. Elementary schools will use different curriculum with a different focus than middle schools or high schools. The conversations that need to occur in both classrooms and other forums will also differ between both age levels and other characteristics. Schools must conduct a needs assessment to identify specific areas to address when implementing a bully prevention

program. As schools identify their areas of need, most programs can be adjusted in ways that do not decrease their overall level of effectiveness.

Three classes were asked to participate, allowing 104 students the opportunity to share their experiences with bullying in a classroom setting. Since the student population of the school is currently over 1600 students, even the student voice is a limited but still powerful representation. The participants' words and actions regarding bullying behaviors in a classroom allow researchers and educators to gain vital information about their school experiences. Through the students' voices, practitioners might examine the policies and practices at their respective middle schools to ensure students are being respected, cared for, and listened to in the best possible learning environment for the betterment of all students and staff. While all students have perceptions that add value to a school culture, this sample was a representation of the student body, and the data obtained through their participation was significant and valuable in illustrating potential troubles and possible solutions to bullying in the classroom.

As diligently as school site educators work in establishing a climate of safety, learning, respect, and empathy within the school, this study and others (Black et al., 2010; DeMaray & Malecki, 2003; Swearer et al., 2010) demonstrate that the relationships teachers form with students can have just as strong an impact as policies and procedures that schools can implement. The number of student responses focused on teachers suggested the teacher plays the central role in decreasing the effects of bullying on students. Responses focused on wishing the teacher would conduct most of the discipline within any given situation to the examination of teachers being the main adult students would feel comfortable going to when bullying has occurred. When considering the

finding that so few students would tell their parents, the role of teacher becomes even

more important. As this study highlights, friends can be a strong area for support

(Rodkin, 2004) for victims of bullying but having an adult to go to offers a level of

comfort due to the teacher's dual role as supporter (Johnson, Burke, & Gielen, 2011) and

authority figure (Landau, Milich, Harris, & Larson, 2001; Roberts, 2006) in the

classroom.

Implications for Teacher Training

Training for teachers should be adaptive, moving from a focus on creating policy

to a more concentrated effort on building relationships with students (Black et al., 2010).

As teachers build relationships with students, not only can they detect changes in

behavior that may be cause by a bullying incident, but teachers can also learn from

students what strategies may help produce a more positive classroom culture (Crothers,

Kolbert, & Barker 2006). Teachers who can actively listen to what the students voice as

concerns and ideas are a valuable commodity for schools. Teachers who can also

incorporate those ideas into the structure of the classroom are the teachers who forge the

strongest bonds with students, and who can make the largest impact on a student's

academic and social development. As one teacher noted in her writing prompt:

> Just this year, I witnessed a few of my students treating a fellow classmate
> unfairly (i.e. Pre-judging her based on her appearance, laughing at her
> choice of artistic talents, etc.), and because of this I decided to address the
> entire group neutrally on the concepts of being a strong team (Together
> Everyone Achieves More, divided- even the strongest of structures fall)
> and always supporting your teammates to accomplish the common goal
> (whatever that may be). I also shared a personal experience with my class
> on a bullying situation that I experienced when I was their age, and how
> my own personal situation played out. I noticed a profound change from
> the entire group after this brief lesson, and haven't noticed any further
> bullying type of activities or clashed within the group since.

Teachers yearn for more training that helps identify and intervene in bullying situations (Boulton, 1997). The ability to talk to students was highlighted in this study by the number of student responses that centered on verbal communication between the teachers and students. As one student described in their interview:

> My history teacher- he is against bullying and I was actually called a bitch in history one time. And he took care of it and talked to the kid and talked to me and asked me what I wanted to do. Asked if I wanted to move away from him and I did and he worked it out very well.

Since students cited specific ways in which teachers might address bullying incidents, teacher training should include instruction on how to talk to students in different environments, how to better communicate with students about behavioral expectations, and how to best determine what specific tone, emphasis, or setting is most appropriate. These scenarios would be focus on the social aspects of communication instead of academic discussions and would build rapport with students even when the teacher is being the authoritative figure (Landau, Milich, Harris, & Larson, 2001; Roberts, 2006).

Within the classroom setting, training on how to set-up and monitor their classroom to decrease bullying follows similar suggestions for overall good teaching practices (Marzano, 2003, 2003). This study suggests that teacher proximity to students, consistent monitoring, and clear behavioral expectations that are a part of productive classroom cultures. Reinforcing these behaviors as norms in the classroom could improve student learning and decrease negative behaviors. A seating chart that is conducive to learning may also be beneficial in limiting negative student interactions.

What teachers teach might be just as important as how teachers instruct. In this study, students gave many more examples of verbal bullying than physical. If students

relate the harm associated with bullying in verbal ways as much as or even more so than with physical characteristics, perhaps prevention programs can focus on social skills and respect aspects of a student's education to decrease verbal incidents that students describe (Boulton, 1997; Naylor et al., 2006).

Implications for Future Research

Interviewing bullies to gain perspective on why they harass their peers, both when they admit that they regretted doing so or express no remorse at all, would be an area for future research. If bullies can admit that they regret their actions, and they also admit that they would not want to be the target of bullying similar to the behaviors they are displaying to their victims, exploring why they then decide to bully anyway would be valuable knowledge for all stakeholders.

A second potential area of future research would be the use of student voice in elementary school studies. Research shows that bullying can begin as early as three years old (Crick, Casas, & Ku, 1999), and student voice would be a powerful piece of the bullying puzzle in elementary school. Bazelon (2013) used student voice to create powerful testimonies of how bullying can damage both students' social capital and their academic futures It also appears to factor into children hurting themselves due to the shame brought on by the social exclusion of repeated bullying behaviors. Reading the stories in the children's words is a reminder of how fragile their development is and reemphasizes the importance of parental and school support.

As more research is conducted in the area of bullying, depression appears to be a factor that presents itself in an alarming number of incidents (Bramness et al., 2010; Brent, 1993; Borowsky, Ireland, & Resnick, 2001; Salmon, James, Cassidy, & Javaloyee,

2000). Additional research is needed to explore how depression affects children during middle school years and how schools can work with students and parents to decrease levels of depression. In a highly publicized case of students bullying another in high school, Phoebe Prince committed suicide in part due to the harassment experienced by peers (Bazelon, 2013). The media was drawn to this case for many reasons, one of which was because investigators decided to prosecute the students who were harassing Phoebe. This was an unprecedented decision at the time. As Bazelon reviewed the case, she found a clinical diagnosis of depression from a psychologist Phoebe had visited prior to committing suicide. This current study suggested that having a teacher that a student feels comfortable talking to, a teacher who discusses bullying within the context of their class lessons, or a teacher who was trained to be more observant of behaviors changing may help prevent tragedies like the Phoebe Prince case.

Another area of future study should also look at those students who reported experiencing no bullying during the study. This group of students could have personality or character traits that add to resiliency, or they may possess certain social skills that they use to identify situations where they need to leave. How these students choose their peers would also be an area of interest to explore as educators work to decrease bullying across educational experiences. DeMurray and Malecki (2003) found that support given by both adults and peers is a main factor in how students react to bullying situations. If we can identify the skills and strategies these students employ as well as the personality or character traits they possess, educators and parents can instill them into those children at greater risk of becoming victimized.

Implications for Social Justice

While the entire premise of bullying is a social justice issue, this research highlighted the importance of identifying bullying and then intervening whenever possible to help keep all students safe while attempting to decrease the amount of bullying middle school children may endure throughout their development. While research for middle school students was the primary focus of this research, there is also research that underlines the importance of confronting bullying due to the long-term harmful effects (Schafer et al., 2004). Surveys by adults have shown a lower level of self-esteem, a lower level of trust in others, and more difficulty in maintaining relationships in adulthood for those adults who reported being continually bullied through secondary school.

A possible remedy to these insecurities reported by victims may be the attendance of post-secondary school, where students are able to establish new relationships and generate positive feelings of self-worth (Schafer et al., 2004). Creating environments where students can build back their self-esteem would be an area of focus for colleges and universities as they promote their campus culture. It would also provide a pipeline for undergraduate and graduate students to critically analyze their past experiences and offer new perspectives on possible interventions and research to help future generations of students of all ages.

As schools attempt to change the culture and climate of their environments, suggestions have been presented in research to help that process begin as early as possible (Swearer, Turner, & Givens, 2008). The largest impact may include a climate at the elementary level where students are not limited by traditional gender norms and

expectations. If younger children are allowed to discuss differences between individuals with informative adults, secondary school cultures may become more inclusive environments of acceptance and respect. As these students move through the upper grades, they will bring their ideals with them, improving the culture in each subsequent year.

School Climate

When the implications for educators, teacher training, future research, and social justice are combined, a potential road map for how to decrease bullying in schools emerges. By raising the awareness of bullying within the school context, by educating all stakeholders in the identification of bullying and appropriate responses that students desire, by creating a district and school policy in order to help stakeholders speak the same language, and by creating the most positive school climate possible, schools can be places of academic learning where every person who is associated with that school understands that bullying is not tolerated. These individual areas of focus come together to create a school climate where bullying is identified and interventions are implemented, while the students have a shared governance of the school's response to bullying situations.

Raising awareness of bullying within a school context takes a focused effort from staff, students, and parents. The creation of a bully prevention committee would be a necessary first step to provide a command center for resources, education, and training for teachers and students. The committee would need administrative support to interrupt the normal function of the classroom environment, providing curricular lessons and awareness on a consistent basis throughout the school year.

As classrooms engage in dialogue regarding bullying, teachers promote a safer environment to students and share experiences that allow the teachers to be seen as confidants to students who are possibly struggling with a bully situation. These students may feel more comfortable going to a teacher when there is a common language spoken within the school culture, and the students have a clear understanding of how any given teacher would intervene in a bullying incident. With the majority of teachers providing the same message of concern and support for students, the school campus becomes more aware of and proactive with decreasing bullying incidents.

The improved school climate that originated inside the classroom is able to spread to all areas of the school campus and is bolstered by the school district policy that is implemented in order for schools to communicate using a common language and conveying common expectations. Currently, the district where this study was conducted does not have a specific bullying policy outside of the state laws requiring a plan for reporting incidents. School districts that mandate every school establish a Bully Awareness Committee (BAC) that meets the individual needs of the school would add a level of support to staff and students that would further increase the awareness, education, and relationship building that is vital to decreasing bullying at every grade level and across all demographics.

Thapa, Cohen, Guffey and Higgins-D'Alessandro (2013) reviewed school climate research and found that focusing on five essential dimensions of a school would improve the overall climate of the school environment. If school staff focus on improving safety, building relationships, enhancing teaching and learning, and creating a positive

institutional environment, schools will see not only the benefits of more socially engaged and emotionally stable students, but academic performance will also be increased.

There is no time to waste. Schools need to create a committee consisting of counselors, administrators, teachers, and most importantly students who can share ideas on how to educate the entire school on a commonly-constructed definition of bullying, provide resources and education through a website linked to the school page, and provide each classroom with curriculum that helps teachers and students formulate a classroom identity of care and respect through conversations regarding bullying.

When all classrooms engage in these conversations, it spreads the message that bullying will not be tolerated throughout the entire school. With administrative support, teacher trainings need to be conducted on topics such as how to both identify bullying incidents and then intervene when they occur. These trainings can emphasize the importance of low-level interventions that the students seem to prefer. With district support, parent nights need to be scheduled so that all stakeholders understand the school's expectations as they relate to the respectful treatment of all students by all students. The benefits of these steps will be positive and immediate, and students will begin to understand that there are adults who care about their well-being. That sense of comfort may contribute to the feeling that they need to confide in a trusted school adult, and the benefits of that relationship will be seen in increased self-confidence, test scores, and overall personal worth that every student deserves to experience during their educational journey.

Overarching Questions

This study started with two overarching questions: What similarities and differences exist in a teacher's definition of bullying compared to a student's definition of bullying, and how can these similarities and differences be used to guide teacher training that might be decrease instances of bullying within their classrooms? In this study, areas where students and teachers were parallel in their definitions of bullying included the possibility of a one-time incident being perceived as bullying. While this puts an added level of importance on identification and intervention for teachers, it also underscores the importance of creating a nurturing teacher-student relationship. Differences in the definitions can be used to provide education to teachers, staff, and even parents so the gap between the generations can be bridged for the betterment of students.

All stakeholders play a vital role in the culture of a school, but two of the larger groups that can improve the culture and climate of a school are the teachers and students. While students yearn for teachers to set a positive tone by identifying and intervening when bully behaviors occur in a teacher's presence, the current lack of training limits a teacher's ability to respond in an effective manner. Research indicates that school districts have yet to provide the essential resources that would have a positive impact on decreasing bullying behaviors at their schools, while increasing the positive climate of the student body (Bauman, Rigby, & Hoppa, 2008).

Schools that wish to improve the culture of their campus need to provide education to both students and staff, promote a culture change that includes more teacher responsibility for identifying and intervening when bullying incidents occur, and the

continual development of staff to help stay current on the possible characteristics of what bullying "looks like" within their classroom.

Students armed with techniques to respond to bullying and an environment that promotes safety for all learners can help create a positive impact to the school that will last well after they have moved on to high school. Teachers prepared to identify and intervene when bullying incidents occur will help students feel comfortable reporting other incidents that are initiated outside the direct view of staff. These positive actions will start a ripple effect that will spread through a school that supports and educates bullies and victims and communicates with parents to ensure a consistent message to maturing students. The positive development will have far-reaching effects into adulthood and shift the larger culture of the United States into one of respect and education for all and bully-free school campuses.

Consent to Participate in Research

California State University
SAN MARCOS

Invitation to Participate

Gary DeBora, a graduate student in the joint doctoral program at California State University San Marcos (CSUSM) and University of California, San Diego (UCSD), is conducting a study that seeks to identify personal situations of bullying that will help determine strategies to implement in the classroom and school to eliminate bullying on the school campus. You are invited to participate in this study because you have been identified as being a part of San Elijo Middle School.

Purpose

The purpose of this research is to explore teachers' and students' perception of bullying within a classroom setting and then to use those definitions to identify differences that could help to decrease the ever-increasing presence of bullying in the classroom.

Description of Procedures

Step 1: The Writing Prompt

You will complete the writing prompt:

> **Please provide your definition of bullying. You can include examples to help describe your definition. Then, write about a time in a middle school classroom when you experienced bullying, either as the bully, the target, or a bystander. Describe what happened. Was there an adult present during this incident? If so, what did they do? If there was no adult present, what would you have wanted the adult to do that would have helped you? How did the incident end?**

You will then turn the prompt into a marked, green envelope at designated drop-off sites around the campus. Locations of the drop-off sites include the front office, the Campus Check-In Station, the Counseling Office, and the Assist Principals Office.

Risks and Inconveniences

There are minimal risks to participating in this study. These include:

- Time. The completion of the writing prompt may take 20-40 minutes.

- Coercion. You may feel coerced into participating in this study. You may experience discomfort or an obligation to participate in the study if a staff member recruited you for the study.

- Emotional feelings. You may experience negative feelings that surface while recalling a bullying situation.

Safeguards, Confidentiality, and Voluntary Nature
The following safeguards addresses the aforementioned potential risks and inconveniences:

Time. If the length of the writing prompt is an inconvenience for you, you may stop participating at any time without any consequence to you. There are no consequences of any kind if you decide not to participate.

Coercion. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and will not in any way affect you or your standing as a student. If you agree to be in this study, but later change your mind, you may withdraw at any time. There are no consequences of any kind if you decide not to participate in the study.

Emotional feelings. A list containing local resources available to you at little or no cost is included in the event that you become distraught while completing the writing prompt.

Step 2: The Interview
You will complete an interview regarding your experiences with bullying in the classroom.

Risks and Inconveniences

There are minimal risks to participating in this portion of the study. These include:

- Time. The completion of the interview may take 30-60 minutes.

- Coercion. You may feel coerced into participating in this study. You may experience discomfort or an obligation to participate in the study if a staff member recruited you for the study.

- Emotional feelings. You may experience negative feelings that surface while recalling a bullying situation.

Safeguards, Confidentiality, and Voluntary Nature

The following safeguards addresses the aforementioned potential risks and inconveniences:

Time. If the length of the interview is an inconvenience for you, you may stop participating at any time without any consequence to you. There are no consequences of any kind if you decide not to participate.

Coercion. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and will not in any way affect you or your standing as a student. If you agree to be in this study, but later change your mind, you may withdraw at any time. There are no consequences of any kind if you decide not to participate in the study.

Emotional feelings. A list containing local resources available to you at little or no cost is included in the event that you become distraught while completing the interview.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation is entirely voluntary, and may be withdrawn at any time. You can choose to complete just the writing prompt, just the interview, both the prompt of the interview, or neither.

There are no consequences if you decide not to participate.

Benefits

Although your participation will yield minimal benefits to you, we believe that the study has the potential to positively affect the climate and culture of individual classrooms, as well as the entire student population.

Questions/Contact Information

This study has been approved by the California State University San Marcos Institutional Review Board (IRB). If you have questions about the study, you may direct those to the researcher, Gary DeBora, gary.debora@smusd.org, (760)290-2823, or the researcher's advisor/professor, Dr. Erika Daniels , edaniels@csusm.edu, (760) 750-8547. Questions about your rights as a research participant should be directed to the IRB at (760) 750-4029. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

To parents: If you would like to see the interview questions in advance, please contact me at the information above.

☐ I agree to allow my child to participate in this research study. I agree to have the writing prompt analyzed.

☐ I agree to allow my child to participate in a follow-up interview.

I am a ☐ female ☐ male

_____ _____ _____
Participant's Name   Participant's Signature   Date

_____ _____ _____
Parent/Guardian's Name   Parent/Guardian's Signature   Date

_____
Researcher's Signature

California State University
SAN MARCOS

___

I am a: ☐ female   ☐ male

You will complete the writing prompt:

Please provide your definition of bullying. You can include examples to help describe your definition. Then, write about a *time in a middle school classroom* when you experienced bullying, either as the bully, the target, or a bystander. Describe what happened. Was there an adult present during this incident? If so, what did they do? If there was no adult present, what would you have wanted the adult to do that would have helped you? How did the incident end?

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Consent to Participate in Research

California State University
SAN MARCOS

Invitation to Participate

Gary DeBora, a graduate student in the joint doctoral program at California State University San Marcos (CSUSM) and University of California, San Diego (UCSD), is conducting a study that seeks to identify personal situations of bullying that will help determine strategies to implement in the classroom and school to eliminate bullying on the school campus. You are invited to participate in this study because you have been identified as being a part of San Elijo Middle School.

Purpose

The purpose of this research is to explore teachers' and students' perception of bullying within a classroom setting and then to use those definitions to identify differences that could help to decrease the ever-increasing presence of bullying in the classroom.

Description of Procedures

You will complete the writing prompt:

> **Please provide your definition of bullying. You can include examples to help describe your definition. Then, write about a time in a middle school classroom when you experienced bullying as a bystander. Describe what happened. Was there another adult present during this incident? If so, what did they do? If there was no other adult present, how did you respond to witnessing the incident? How did the incident end?**

You will then turn the prompt into a marked, green envelope at designated drop-off sites around the campus. Locations of the drop-off sites include the front office, the Campus Check-In Station, the Counseling Office, and the Assist Principals Office.

Risks and Inconveniences

There are minimal risks to participating in this study. These include:

- Time. The completion of the writing prompt may take 20-40 minutes.

- Coercion. You may feel coerced into participating in this study. You may experience discomfort or an obligation to participate in the study if a staff member recruited you for the study.

- Emotional feelings. You may experience negative feelings that surface while recalling a bullying situation.

Safeguards, Confidentiality, and Voluntary Nature

The following safeguards addresses the aforementioned potential risks and inconveniences:

Time. If the length of the writing prompt is an inconvenience for you, you may stop participating at any time without any consequence to you. There are no consequences of any kind if you decide not to participate.

Coercion. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and will not in any way affect you or your standing as a student. If you agree to be in this study, but later change your mind, you may withdraw at any time. There are no consequences of any kind if you decide not to participate in the study.

Emotional feelings. A list containing local resources available to you at little or no cost is included in the event that you become distraught while completing the writing prompt.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation is entirely voluntary, and may be withdrawn at any time by simply choosing not to complete the anonymous survey.

There are no consequences if you decide not to participate.

Benefits

Although your participation will yield minimal benefits to you, we believe that the study has the potential to positively affect the climate and culture of individual classrooms, as well as the entire student population.

Questions/Contact Information

This study has been approved by the California State University San Marcos Institutional Review Board (IRB). If you have questions about the study, you may direct those to the researcher, Gary DeBora, gary.debora@smusd.org, (760)290-2823, or the researcher's advisor/professor, Dr. Erika Daniels , edaniels@csusm.edu, (760) 750-8547. Questions about your rights as a research participant should be directed to the IRB at (760) 750-4029. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

☐ I agree to participate in this research study. I agree to have the writing prompt analyzed.

☐ I would like to participate in a follow-up interview.

I am a ☐ female ☐ male

_____ _____ _____

Participant's Name Participant's Signature Date

_____
Researcher's Signature

California State University
SAN MARCOS

You will complete the writing prompt:

Please provide your definition of bullying. You can include examples to help describe your definition. Then, write about a time in a middle school classroom when you experienced bullying as a bystander. Describe what happened. Was there another adult present during this incident? If so, what did they do? If there was no other adult present, how did you respond to witnessing the incident? How did the incident end?

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APPENDIX C TEACHER INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

Consent to Participate in Research

California State University
SAN MARCOS

Invitation to Participate

Gary DeBora, a graduate student in the joint doctoral program at California State
University San Marcos (CSUSM) and University of California, San Diego (UCSD), is
conducting a study that seeks to identify personal situations of bullying that will help
determine strategies to implement in the classroom and school to eliminate bullying on
the school campus. You are invited to participate in this study because you have been
identified as being a part of San Elijo Middle School.

Purpose

The purpose of this research is to explore teachers' and students' perception of bullying
within a classroom setting and then to use those definitions to identify differences that
could help to decrease the ever-increasing presence of bullying in the classroom.

Description of Procedures

You will complete an interview with the researcher about your experiences with bullying.

The research questions include:

1. How do you define bullying?
2. What grade were you teaching when this bullying incident occurred?
3. Have you ever witnessed a bullying situation in the classroom? If not, have you
   witnessed a bullying situation in other areas of campus (If no, skip to question 5)?
4. Would you please review your role in the bullying incident in the classroom?
5. Where did this bullying situation take place within the classroom?
6. Were there any other adults around at the time? Did they see? Did they respond?
   Did they help?
7. If there was another adult around, how did they respond? Did their response stop the
   bullying?
8. In your view, how should teachers respond to bullying situations that occur in the
   classroom?
9. What would you do if a student reported a bullying incident to you?

Risks and Inconveniences

There are minimal risks to participating in this study. These include:

• Time. The completion of the interview may take 30-60 minutes.

• Coercion. You may feel coerced into participating in this study. You may experience

discomfort or an obligation to participate in the study if a staff member recruited you for the study.

- Emotional feelings. You may experience negative feelings that surface while recalling a bullying situation.

Safeguards, Confidentiality, and Voluntary Nature
The following safeguards addresses the aforementioned potential risks and inconveniences:

Time. If the length of the interview is an inconvenience for you, you may stop participating at any time without any consequence to you. There are no consequences of any kind if you decide not to participate.

Coercion. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and will not in any way affect you or your standing as a student. If you agree to be in this study, but later change your mind, you may withdraw at any time. There are no consequences of any kind if you decide not to participate in the study.

Emotional feelings. A list containing local resources available to you at little or no cost is included in the event that you become distraught while completing the interview.

Voluntary Participation
Your participation is entirely voluntary, and may be withdrawn at any time by simply choosing not to complete the anonymous survey.
There are no consequences if you decide not to participate.

Benefits
Although your participation will yield minimal benefits to you, we believe that the study has the potential to positively affect the climate and culture of individual classrooms, as well as the entire student population.

Questions/Contact Information

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☐   I agree to participate in this research study.

☐   I agree to have the interview audiotaped.

_____   _____   _____

Participant's Name   Participant's Signature   Date

_____
Researcher's Signature

Interview Protocol

California State University
SAN MARCOS

The research questions include:

1. How do you define bullying?
2. What grade were you in when this bullying incident occurred?
3. Have you ever experienced a bullying situation in the classroom? If not, have you experienced a bullying situation in other areas of campus (skip to question 5)?
4. Would you please review your role in the bullying incident in the classroom?
5. Where did this bullying situation take place within the classroom?
6. Were there any teachers around at the time? Did they see? Did they respond? Did they help?
7. If there was a teacher around, how did they respond? Did their response stop the bullying?
8. In your view, how should teachers respond to bullying situations that occur in the classroom?
9. If there were no teachers around, did you report to a teacher what happened? What about your parent or guardian? Did either or both of them do anything to help you?
10. Did the bully do anything to bother you again or was it just that one time? If they did bother you again, what did they do this time and all the other times?
11. How did you respond each time?
12. Do you do anything to self-monitor yourself in an effort to make yourself feel better such as remember to take deep, calming breathes, give yourself a pep talk, confide in a family member, teacher, guidance counselor, friend, or someone else who you trust, write in a journal, distract yourself with an enjoyable activity, etc.?

Interview Protocol

California State University
SAN MARCOS

The research questions include:

1. How do you define bullying?
2. What grade were you teaching when this bullying incident occurred?
3. Have you ever witnessed a bullying situation in the classroom? If not, have you witnessed a bullying situation in other areas of campus (If no, skip to question 5)?
4. Would you please review your role in the bullying incident in the classroom?
5. Where did this bullying situation take place within the classroom?
6. Were there any other adults around at the time? Did they see? Did they respond? Did they help?
7. If there was another adult around, how did they respond? Did their response stop the bullying?
8. In your view, how should teachers respond to bullying situations that occur in the classroom?
9. What would you do if a student reported a bullying incident to you?

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UCSD-CSUSM JOINT DOCTORAL PROGRAMS
COVER SHEET FOR IRB APPLICATION
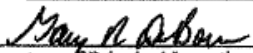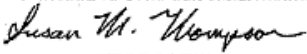
Instructions to Principal Investigator:
1. Project must qualify for Joint IRB review.
2. Complete and sign this Cover Sheet.
3. Submit this Cover Sheet with the complete IRB application to the Reviewing IRB (CSUSM IRB submissions, submit an electronic copy per the IRB application instructions).
4. The Reviewing IRB will review the IRB protocol and communicate with the Relying IRB. A representative of the Reviewing IRB and Relying IRB will sign this Cover Sheet to document completion of the review process.
5. Upon completion of review and approval of the IRB protocol, the PI will receive a copy of this Cover Sheet signed by the Reviewing and Relying IRB representatives. At that time, research may commence.

Reviewing IRB: Select the IRB based on the primary affiliation of the faculty member supervising this research. Note: Projects that involve VA facilities, UCSD MRI facility, or Rady Children's Hospital must go through the UCSD IRB. Projects that involve the Center for Children and Families must go through the CSUSM IRB.

Reviewing IRB:		CSUSM		

B. Project Information

Project Title	
Understanding Classroom Bullying Through Student and Teacher Voice: A Whole-School Intervention Approach	
Name of Student/Principal Investigator *Gary R. DeBora*	Name of JDP Program *Educational Leadership/Social Justice*
Student e-mail Address *gdebora43@yahoo.com*	Phone Number *760-519-4174*
Name of Responsible Faculty Member *Dr. Erika Daniels*	Home Campus *CSUSM*
Faculty e-mail Address *edaniels@csusm.edu*	Phone Number *760-750-8547*
Project Funding Source (if any) *N/A*	

_____   12/4/2012
Signature of Principal Investigator   Date

_____   12/18/12
Representative of Reviewing IRB   Date of Approval

_____   1/14/13
Representative of Relying IRB   Date of Acceptance

For Reviewing IRB: For expedited review, please indicate approval category here (e.g., new project, amended project)	

5/24/11 LJS AD/rev 8/16/11per AD

California State University
SAN MARCOS

Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects(IRB)   California State University San Marcos
Tel: 760-750-4029   irb@csusm.edu   www.csusm.edu/irb

Human Subjects Research Approval Form

IRB #: 2012-197

To: Erika Daniels

Gary DeBora

Project Title: Understanding Classroom Bullying Through Student and Teacher Voice: A Whole-School Intervention Approach

This letter certifies that the above referenced project was reviewed and approved by the University's Institutional Review Board in accordance with the requirements of the Code of Federal Regulations on Protection of Human Subjects(45 CFR 46), including its relevant subparts.

Continuing Review

This approval is valid through the expiration date shown below. If this research project will extend beyond that date, a continuing review application must be submitted at least 30 days before this expiration using the Continuing Review form available on the IRB website. (www.csusm.edu/irb)

Modifications to Research Protocol

Changes to this protocol (procedures, populations, locations, personnel, etc.) must be submitted and approved by the IRB prior to implementation using the Minor Modification Form available on the IRB website.

Unanticipated Outcomes/Events

The CSU San Marcos IRB must be notified immediately of any injuries or adverse conditions.

☑ *Approved Information Sheet or Consent Form(s) are attached. Only approved consent forms may be used to obtain participant consent.*

Approval Date: 12/19/2012

Expiration Date: 12/18/2013

Susan Thompson
IRB Chair

The California State University

Bakersfield • Channel Islands • Chico • Dominguez Hills • East Bay • Fresno • Fullerton • Humboldt • Long Beach • Los Angeles • Maritime Academy • Monterey Bay • Northridge • Pomona • Sacramento • San Bernardino • San Diego • San Francisco • San Jose • San Luis Obispo • San Marcos • Sonoma • Stanislaus

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