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Resisting Bullying: Narratives of Victims and Their Families

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Abstract

Bullying has severe consequences for school-aged adolescents who have experienced repeated victimization and for the families as well. While there is a considerable body of research on bullying and its effects on victims, very little research has been devoted to studying the experiences and resistance of the targeted young people and their families in the bullying situations. The literature on bullying characterizes victims as unable to defend themselves; this depiction is limited, simplistic, and one-dimensional. This dissertation presents an alternate view, focusing on the experiences and responses of victims and their families. The thesis draws on a poststructural view and a response-based framework to present a new perspective on the victims of bullying—a perspective that contrasts with the common depiction of “helpless, powerless victims” and foregrounds the personal agency of young people who have responded to bullying.

Data for this study was collected in the form of narratives from the families and eleven to fifteen year old school adolescents who have been targets of ongoing bullying. The sample consisted of four families and five adolescents. The interview questions were based on Allan Wade’s response-based approach. The participants’ narratives focused on their responses to bullying. Each narrative was read thoroughly for themes related to the skills and the knowledge adolescents have used in responding to peer aggression. Similarly, parents’ narratives were examined for themes of their responses to the bullying of their children. The conclusion from the findings indicated that the parents and adolescents responded to bullying in many small but prudent and resourceful ways.

The study makes a methodological contribution by introducing a data gathering and analysis protocol that invites forward accounts of responses to transgressions typically overlooked by dominant discourses focused on victimization. The dissertation suggests a novel approach to listening and responding to young persons and their families who face marginalization, violence, and racial discrimination.

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And finally, Shyam, you were always there with me.

Dedicated

To Shyam, my love forever . . .

Understanding marginality as a position and a place of resistance is crucial for oppressed, exploited, colonized people. If we only view the margin as sign, marking the condition of our pain and deprivation, then a certain hopelessness and despair, a deep nihilism penetrates in a destructive way the very ground of our being. It is there in that space of collective despair that one's creativity, one's imagination is at risk, there that one's mind is fully colonized, there that the freedom one longs for is lost. Truly the mind that resists colonization struggles for freedom of expression. That struggle may not begin with the colonizer; it may begin within one's segregated colonized community and family.

bell hooks, *Marginality: As Site of Resistance*, 1990, p. 341

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Preface

Tensions: Deconstructing Terminologies

‘When I use a word,’ Humpty Dumpty said in a rather scornful tone, ‘it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more and nor less.’

‘The question is,’ said Alice, ‘whether you can make words mean so many different things.’

‘The question is,’ said Humpty Dumpty’ which is to be master—that’s all’

Lewis Carrol, *Through the Looking Glass*

Descriptions of terminologies are arbitrary and their “meaning is understood in relation to an infinite network of other words in a language” (Kvale & Brinkman, 2006, p. 230).

Terminologies usually have fixed and authoritative meanings attached to them, but they do not always reflect the infused meaning embedded in it. These authoritative meanings become a part of common language in everyday life because of the presumptions of the authoritativeness of the written meanings. The poststructuralists affirm that meaning of each word in a language is never fixed, single, and unanimous (Schwandt, 2001b). There are always *other and different* meanings attached to it.

The process of deconstruction as Schwandt (2001b) explains, is to “displace or unsettle the taken for granted concepts, such as the unity of the text, the meaning or the message of the text, and the authorship of the text” (p. 53). A deconstructive reading of the terminologies

unravels the complexities of a term, presumptions, “and the binaries oppositions built into modern thought and language” (Kvale & Brinkman, 2006, p. 231). Examples of binaries include good/bad, rich/poor, educated/uneducated, and bully/victims. The dilemma associated with assigning terminology to phenomena has been a challenge during this study, and I would like to explore these before proceeding.

I chose to adopt the term “bully” for this study because it speaks to a domain that deserves attention, and in a language familiar to many participants in that domain including educators, students and parents. And yet the term is problematic in many respects, as it suggests as its binary opposite “victim”, and it obscures many other potential descriptions of bullying acts that do a more effective job of uncovering power dynamics and highlighting their abusive dimension.

The word *bullying* as Olweus (1999) defines is intentional conscious desire to hurt another person repeatedly. It also includes an imbalance of power between two people. Olweus also suggests that an incident of bullying need not be physical or violent in order to be called bullying. The mainstream view of bullying corresponds well with this definition.

At the same time, as mentioned, the widely accepted definition of bullying activity encompasses many other types of violence that go on under the umbrella term of bullying. To date, many individual factors such as sexism, homophobia, and racism have been identified as contributing factors to bullying. Racial prejudice and stereotyping of other racial minorities have led to aggressive behaviours towards peers of different racial background in the form of bullying (Sloane, Tarrasch, & Hallis, 2000; Spriggs, Iannotti, Nansel, & Haynie, 2007). In schools, racial violence against peers is rarely reported as racial aggression and is sometimes trivialized as bullying. Racial bullying of young adolescents by their peers is a complex social phenomenon

with grave consequences that is inadequately captured by term “bullying” (Connolly & Keenan, 2000; Larochette, Murphy, & Craig, 2010). Yet, racism in schools is typically addressed as bullying, undermining the gravity of the act.

Research studies in bullying behaviours confirm that bullying is an abuse of interpersonal power (Duncan, 1999) but these studies fail to address gender, racial violence, and sexual harassment, which are often a contributing factor to bullying (Gadin, 2012; Stein, 1995). Stein (1995) argued that the antecedents of sexual harassment are evident in teasing and bullying behaviours tacitly accepted by parents and teachers. Mac an Ghail (1999) confirms, “A popular discourse has been constructed that serves to depoliticize the sexual and racial violence taking place at the microcultural level of playground and class room” (p. 128). As a result, we notice that sexual, racial violence, and homophobia are missing from standard definitions of bullying (Renold, 2002; Stein, 1995).

The binary of bully/victim also create tensions. Young persons are characterized dichotomously as good or bad, weak or strong, powerful or powerless. My identification with a poststructuralist worldview prompted discomfort with the inherent rigidity of these terms, creating a conflict and a paradox for me in defining victims/bullies in rigid categories. The dichotomy between bully and victim overlooks active resistance on the part of the victimized and at the same time overlooks the degree to which so-called-bullies are themselves frequently victims of racialized discrimination or other forms of violence. Ma (2001) suggests that there is a bully-victim cycle and bullies can be victims too in this cycle. Rigby (2002) says that the bullies and victims both have been blamed in the bullying literature for different reasons. Therefore, we should move away from the rigid categorical presentation of these young persons. As we know, no one is entirely powerful or powerless, good or bad, and a binary view clouds our

abilities to see beyond hard-edged categories (Monk, Winslade, & Sinclaire, 2008), and to anticipate new terminology for thinking and speaking about victims/bullies from a different perspective.

Another word that created tension was the use of word “children” in the literature on bullying. This word is universally accepted in the literature even if the young persons involved in the incidents are adolescents. The participants of my research were adolescents, but to be consistent with the terminology used in the current literature, I had to refer them as children.

The words are inadequate and I was faced with the dilemma and tensions in choosing these words in order to speak to an audience familiar with it. I used these words to be consistent with the language of the current literature on bullying. Though the terminologies will change if we question, challenge and unpack the meanings embedded in those terms.

The vagaries of language prompted other related dilemmas in this thesis. For instance, I used Foucault’s theory of power and resistance, characterizing it as “poststructuralist”. Ironically, Foucault did not identify himself as a poststructuralist, although his work has been taken up by poststructuralists because of the way he points to positive expressions of power in the face of oppressive forces, and provides a way to make sense of identity in non–essentialist terms. It should also be noted that poststructuralist scholars are not a homogeneous group; there are “poststructuralisms” and the theoretical terminology is as subject to multiple readings and nuances as the other words I have deconstructed. I have chosen here to adopt the term “poststructuralism” because it is in wide circulation to denote the epistemological position I have taken up in the thesis.

Chapter 1: Introduction

You may shoot me with your words, you may cut me with your eyes, you may kill me with your hatefulness, but still, like air, I'll rise!

Maya Angelou (1978, p. 41)

One isn't necessarily born with courage, but one is born with potential. Without courage, we cannot practice any other virtue with consistency. We can't be kind, true, merciful, generous, or honest.

Maya Angelou (2006, p. 224)

Peer victimization among school children has become a growing concern for school administrators, teachers, and parents. Bullying in schools is not a new phenomenon; it has been prevalent in schools for a long time, but has become a global concern in the last three decades due to several tragic events related to school shootings and suicides linked to bullying and victimization (Marr & Fields, 2000; Smith, Cowie, Olafsson, & Liefhoghe, 2002; Ttofi, Farrington, & Baldry, 2008). These tragic events in schools in North America and around the world have compelled school authorities, researchers, and societies at large to recognize and fully appreciate the gravity of the problem. Research studies from various countries such as Australia (Rigby, 2005; Slee, 2005); Canada (Craig & McCuaig, 2011; Hymel, Rock-Henderson, & Bonnano, 2005); Japan (Morita, Soeda, Soeda, & Taki, 1999); Norway (Olweus, 1999); and the United States (Nansel, Overpeck, Pilla, Ruan, Simons-Morton, & Scheidt, 2001; Swearer & Espelage, 2004) confirm the severity of this problem. This dissertation reports on a novel approach to research into the experiences of bullied adolescents that I conducted in the hopes of contributing to addressing this distressing social phenomenon.

The characteristic features of school bullying described in the following paragraphs are consistent across different cultural settings (Kyriakides, Kaloyirou, & Lindsay, 2006). In the

following sections, I will offer an overview of the problem that will include a definition of bullying, its characteristics, types, context, consequences, and participants. It will be followed by a description of experiences of victims, a post-structural view of identity, a response-based approach, and a statement of personal interest in this topic.

Overview of the Problem: Introduction to Bullying

Defining bullying

A succinct definition of bullying is essential to understanding the phenomenon and conducting research in the field. Most definitions of bullying are based on survey research and to date there is no universal definition that has been accepted by all researchers (Ross, 2003). Mishna (2004), in her studies on understanding bullying, discusses the difficulties associated with defining bullying behaviours. She argues, “Even when individuals may have a clear definition of bullying, other factors may impede their ability to be guided by their own definitions” (pp. 242-243). In her study, there were differences among teachers, parents, and children in describing what constitutes a bullying behaviour (Mishna, 2004).

The pioneering research on bullying was conducted by Dan Olweus and his colleagues in Sweden and Norway during the 1970’s. Olweus began research on bullying after three school boys committed suicide in Norway as a result of persistent bullying. In the beginning, he defined bullying as behaviours intended to inflict injury or discomfort upon another individual (Olweus, 1972). Commenting on his definition, Olweus (2010) writes, “At the time of initiation of my research it was not possible or even desirable to set forth a very stringent definition of peer harassment or bullying” (p. 11). Since the formulation of this first definition, the means of bullying have evolved, and continual research has provided an inclusive definition of bullying that reflects current victimization and bullying patterns. Whether it occurs through repeated

attacks or a single incident, bullying is a willful and deliberate and systemic abuse of power through aggression against a targeted child and adolescent (Olweus, 1993,1999, 2010; Pepler & Craig, 2000; Smith & Sharp, 1994). A subset of aggression among school children, bullying can range in severity from acts of verbal aggression, such as name calling, spreading rumours, shunning, and threatening, to acts of physical violence on school playgrounds. Bullies acquire power over their victims physically, emotionally, and socially; thus bullying is most frequently defined as a set of intentional, generally unprovoked negative behaviours that are systematically repeated over time, and are targeted against a weaker child or group of children to cause physical and psychological harm to the victim (Craig & Pepler, 2007; Hazler, 1996; Juvonen & Graham, 2001; Olweus, 1994, 1999, 2002; Pelligrini, 1998).

Although a single incident of serious harassment can be regarded as bullying under certain circumstances, “the term bullying most often refers to a series of negative actions that occur frequently over time” (Ross, 2003, p. 27). This characteristic, single versus repeated occurrence has been a point of dispute in bullying literature. Some researchers do not consider an act of aggression to be bullying unless it has been repeated a number of times to the same child (Farrington, 1993; Smith & Thompson, 1991). On the other hand, other investigators believe that a one-time serious attack can also be considered bullying if it creates *terror* for the victim. It is the anticipation of future attacks and feeling of shame that increases the severity of a single attack and makes it an act of bullying (Byrne, 1994; La Fontaine, 1991; Smith & Thompson, 1991). Concurring with this statement, Arora (1996) states, “One physical attack or threat to an individual who is powerless might make a person frightened, restricted or upset over a considerable length of time, both because of the emotional trauma following such an attack but also due to the fear of renewed attacks” (p. 319). Therefore, Rigby (2002) emphasizes that not

considering a one-off incident as bullying is wrong. Through repeated attacks the bully's dominance and power is established, and the consequent bully-victim pattern of behaviour may continue for a long time (Olweus, 1993; Pelligrini, 2002).

Bullying behaviour is first identified in elementary schools, peaks in the middle and junior years, and declines in frequency—though not necessarily in intensity— during the high school years (Batsche & Knoff, 1994; Nansel et al., 2001; Olweus, 1995; Pelligrini & Long, 2002; Pepler et al. 2006).

Most researchers and practitioners in this field agree on the three main criteria for the classification of behaviour as bullying. First, Olweus (2010) states that there must be *intentional harmful behaviour* toward another child. Intentionality of the aggressive behaviour is important as it establishes that the aggressive behaviour was not an accident. Harmful behaviour can range from physical attacks to mean faces, gestures, or excluding someone from a group. Second, the harmful behaviour is *repeated over time to the same child*. Third, the relationship involves an *imbalance of power* between bully and victim; victims exposed to harmful behaviour are typically unable to defend themselves mostly due to the power imbalance (as has been documented throughout bullying literature). Coloroso (2002) argues that a fourth criterion, *terror*, should be added to this list. She writes that threats of future systematic, unprovoked, and organized aggression by bullies create terror in a victimized child's mind. Once bullies have created terror in the mind of a victim, they can act without fear of retaliation or recrimination because the victimized child has been rendered powerless (Coloroso, 2002; Mishna, Pepler, & Weiner, 2006). The terror aspect is very real in the mind of a victim, and usually leads to much emotional distress. In many cases victimized children refuse to go to school due to the terror of facing the bully in front of their peers. In such cases, "the terror stuck in the minds of the bullied

child is not a means to an end, it is an end in itself” (Coloroso, 2002, p.14). Bullies choose their target strategically and count on victims’ feeling of helplessness and subsequent inability to fight back or report bullying to teachers or parents. Bullies also count on bystanders being supportive of their aggression or apathetic to bullying incidents. Thus, a cycle of bullying begins.

Bullying and harassment

Most researchers differentiate between harassment and bullying. Harassment refers to verbal abuse and often does not fulfill the three main bullying criteria. However, with the increase in cyberbullying, incidents of Internet harassment have increased. With the advance of technology, the Internet has become a preferred medium for harassment. Therefore, it is clear that an acceptable criterion for accepting Internet harassment as bullying should be established. (Wolak, Mitchell, & Finkelhor, 2007).

Context of the Problem

Most bullying episodes involving children occur within school contexts with most incidents reported on the playground, followed by hallways, washrooms, lunchrooms, classrooms, text-messaging, and the Internet (Beaty & Alexeyev, 2008; Macklem, 2003; Olweus 1999; Ross, 2003). To understand bullying experiences and responses of children and their parents, it is essential to understand the contexts in which the incidents occur. There are many participants in school contexts and each contributes to the episodes of bullying. The social context and climate of an individual school can affect the extent of the bullying that occurs in that school (Astor, et al., 2002; Orpina & Horne, 2010; Porter, Plog, Jens, Garity, & Sager, 2010; Twemlow, et al., 2010). The social dynamics of the peer group always plays a major role. It can help to lessen the intensity of bullying or it can contribute to the severity of bullying. (Salmivalli, Karna, & Poskiparta, 2010). Teachers’ attitudes toward bullying behaviours play an extremely

important role in the severity and frequency of bullying in schools (Craig, Henderson, & Murphy, 2000).

Types of Bullying

Although there are different ways and means of bullying, the goal of the perpetrator is always the same. Bullying involves people or group of people devaluing others to make themselves look superior. Bullies aim to establish their power and humiliate victims (Hazler, 1996). Bullying has direct and indirect forms. Direct bullying involves overt aggressive activities against an individual, whereas indirect, covert bullying or relational bullying involves no direct interaction between bully and victim. Within these two broad categories, several types of bullying have been identified in the literature (Donahue, 2004; Ericson, 2001; Olweus, 1993), including verbal, physical, relational, and cyber bullying. Verbal bullying, a form of direct bullying, is one of the most common types used in schools. It includes taunting, name-calling, racial slurs, teasing, insulting, spreading rumours, and threatening.

Verbal bullying

Verbal aggression as defined by Infante and Wigley (1986) is “attacking the self-concept of another person instead of, or in addition to, the person’s position on a topic of communication” (as cited in Meyer, Roberto, Boster, & Roberto, 2004, p. 452). Verbal attacks directly target the child’s character, competence, physical appearance, disability, or background (Infante & Wigley, 1986; Infante, 1995). Verbal assaults are easy to inflict, and can be whispered in the presence of adults and peers without detection. These are quick and painless for the bully but extremely harmful to the victim. Younger children who have not yet developed a strong sense of self are most vulnerable to verbal abuse. In most cases, the children will internalize the negative personal attributes of the verbal attacks. For example, being called

stupid, fat, or ugly may lead children to self-blame for their victimization, leading to low self-esteem and perceived incompetence (Kochenderfer-Ladd & Ladd, 2001). In this way, verbal aggression serves a “unique function of transmitting a message to the victims about themselves . . . They may begin to believe what is said about them—whether it is true or not” (Kochenderfer-Ladd & Ladd, 2001, p. 43.).

For most children, repeated verbal bullying (name-calling, extortion, mocking, racist comments, and sexual harassment) are the most difficult to deal with because they are difficult to detect and usually ignored by adults and teachers. Children report that teachers and adult responses to their complaints vary widely; children are often advised by adults to ignore verbal aggression (Charach, Pepler, & Ziegler, 1995). Research reports that teachers’ responses to victims’ complaints about verbal bullying are guided by their own perception of bullying (Mishna, Scarcello, Pepler, & Wiener, 2005). Furthermore, research studies on the attitude of teachers, counsellors, and prospective teachers toward bullying demonstrate that they identify physical aggression and threats as bullying and deserving of intervention, while verbal threats and insults are considered less serious and therefore not perceived to require strong responses (Craig, Henderson, & Murphy, 2000; Hazler, Miller, Carney, & Green, 2001).

Verbal aggression, if allowed to continue for too long, generally destroys children’s self-confidence and motivation to attend school (Geiger & Fischer, 2006). Furthermore, Infante, Chandler, and Rudd (1989) report “verbal aggression can lead to physical aggression when children do not have skills to deal with social humiliation” (as cited in Meyer, Roberto, Boster, & Roberto, 2004, p. 453). Though girls and boys both use verbal bullying, Owens (1996) and Smith et al. (1999) found that girls use more verbal bullying, whereas boys use more physical bullying.

Physical bullying

Physical bullying is the most common cause and most readily identifiable form of direct bullying. It also accounts for as much as one third of bullying incidents reported by children (Coloroso, 2005). *Physical bullying* is defined as unprovoked, negative, physical actions that have hostile intent, cause distress to victims, are repeated over time, and involve a power differential between bullies and their victims (Craig & Pepler, 2003; Olweus, 2010). Actions can include hitting, kicking, slapping, spitting, and inflicting physical harm to the person (Peterson & Ray, 2006). Physical bullying also includes damage to clothes and property such as the knapsacks or books of the victimized child.

In physical bullying, bullies tend to pick on students who appear to be weak and unlikely to fight back. In a large national survey study conducted in the U.S., Nansel, et al. (2001) found that boys reported experiencing more physical bullying than girls. In their Canadian survey study on the development trajectory of bullying for ages 10 to 17, Pepler et al. (2006) found similar results. They report, “the high and moderate bullying trajectory group included more boys than girls and the trajectory group for low involvement included more girls than boys” (as cited in Underwood & Rosen, 2011, p. 14). Furthermore, a number of studies report that boys are involved in physical and direct aggression at a higher proportion than girls (Dodge, Coie, & Lynam, 2006; Card, Stucky, Sawalani, Little, 2008). A recent study of school bullying among adolescents in the U.S., “indicates high prevalence rates of having bullied others or having been bullied at school at least once in the last two months: 20.8% physically, 53.6% verbally, 51.4% socially, or 13.6% electronically” (Wang, Iannotti, & Nansel, 2009).

Relational bullying

A third type of bullying, referred to as *relational bullying* is a more covert and indirect form that may be more difficult to detect as an observer. Relational aggression is a behaviour that involves the manipulation of peer relationships and social exclusion. This manipulative behaviour causes or threatens to cause damage to friendship and acceptance in peer groups (Crick et al., 1999). It is the “systematic diminishment of a bullied child’s sense of self through ignoring, isolating, excluding, or shunning” (Coloroso, 2005, p.17). Coloroso (2005) further adds, “Shunning, an act of omission, joined with rumor, an act of commission, is a forceful bullying tool. Both are unseen and hard to detect” (Coloroso, 2005, p. 17). Relational bullying is also referred to as *social bullying* because this form of bullying operates by manipulating the social relationships of a child. Bullies accomplish their goal through covert social manipulation, including gossiping, spreading rumours, or persuading someone to harm or exclude another peer from a particular activity or a group (Bjorkqvist, 1994; Crick and Nelson, 2002; Wang, Iannotti, Nansel, 2009). Relational bullying can be used to alienate and reject a peer or to damage friendships. Typical behaviors in relational bullying are eye-rolling, turning away from someone, or setting others up to look foolish.

Relational bullying could begin as early as at age three and continue through the adolescent years. Even a single instance of relational segregation can emotionally distress a child. Pairing shunning with the spreading of rumours can be a vicious means of bullying at the onset of adolescence, when all children have a strong desire to fit in with others. At this critical stage in teenagers’ developing years, they are experiencing physical, emotional, and sexual changes. At this time adolescents are trying to figure out who they are, and there is a strong need to “fit in” and be accepted, particularly among same-age, same-sex peers. This contributes to

adolescents' desire to look and dress like their peers (Crick et al. 2001). Relational bullying is not as visible as a black eye or a bruise, but the emotional scars of this type of victimization can last for lifetime. In many cases, victims are not even aware of their exclusion from the peer group but gradually find out that "they are no longer accepted members of the group. No reason is given for their exclusion, so it is difficult for [them] to grapple with it and painful to accept it" (Ross, 2003, p. 75).

In a study conducted by Galen and Underwood (1997), boys reported that physical aggression is more harmful than social aggression, while girls rated physical and social aggression as equally harmful. The same study confirmed that as girls get older, social or relational aggression increases in severity for them as compared to boys (Galen & Underwood, 1997).

Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying has emerged as a recent form of bullying. It is a form of indirect relational bullying that has become increasingly frequent with adolescents. Cyberbullying can be defined as willful and repeated harm inflicted through electronic media such as personal computers, e-mail, instant messaging, Facebook, chat rooms, websites, text messaging, and video clip bullying through mobile phone cameras (Wang, Iannott, & Nansel, 2009). The list of ways to subvert the use of electronic media is long and new methods continue to emerge in the high-tech field. According to Wilard (2004), cyberbullying can occur in various forms including flaming, harassment, cyber-stalking, denigration (put-downs), masquerading, outing, and trickery and exclusion.

Despite its recent emergence, cyberbullying is becoming one of the most common means of bullying among adolescents. Reports of electronic bullying perpetration range from 4 to 18%,

and rates are considerably higher at 7 to 35% for victimization (Agatston, Kowalski, & Limber, 2007; Hinduja & Patchin, 2009; Mitchell, Ybarra, & Finklehor, 2007). Kowalski and Limber (2007) in their study of 3,767, middle school students from the Southwestern and Northwestern U.S. found that 22% of students reported being involved in cyberbullying, including 4% as bullies, 7% as victims, and 7% as both. In a Canadian study of 264 students from three junior high schools, Li (2006) reported that almost 50% of students were both bully and victim and 25% of those had been cyberbullied.

Although the intent of bullying is the same, cyberbullying and traditional bullying differ in many ways. Cyberbullying is covert and adults may underestimate the number of youth involved and affected by it. It gives the perpetrator complete anonymity and is therefore difficult to detect (Keith & Martin, 2005). The sense of anonymity and lack of face-to-face contact with the victim gives the bully a feeling of disinhibition. The feeling that cyberspace is impersonal gives them a free pass to say nasty things (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008; Shariff, 2008; Slonje & Smith, 2008). Cyberbullying has the potential to reach a wide audience with just a click on the keypad of the mobile phone or a click of the mouse on the computer (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009; Kowalski & Limber, 2007; Shariff, 2008; Slonje & Smith, 2008). In a short period, cyberbullying has resulted in serious victimization and requires attention. In many ways, it is a new medium in the hands of bullies.

The severity of cyberbullying varies. It can range from obscene messages to serious death threats. With no boundaries and no consequences to face, children use this technology to vent their frustration in a manner that can be very destructive for victims (Keith & Martin, 2005). Traditionally, home was the safe place to escape from the school bully, but most of the cyberbullying is executed at home; therefore, there is no escape. Since most cyberbullying does

not happen at school it is difficult for school authorities to take action. At school, victimized children must face peers who know about their victimization. Li (2006), in a study of 264 Grades 7 to 9 students (130 males and 134 females) found that over 50% of the students knew someone who had been cyberbullied. Furthermore, over 25% of the students studied had experienced being cyberbullied, and one in six had cyberbullied others. These findings were consistent with previous studies in the U.K. (Beran & Li, 2005) and New Hampshire, U.S. (Li, 2005). This confirms that cyberbullying is increasing and requires systematic intervention.

Studies examining cyberbullying by gender reported mixed results (Kowalski, Limber, & Agatston, 2008; Slonje & Smith, 2008). Some studies have found that boys are more likely than girls to cyberbully others. Male students are more likely to be involved in bullying and cyberbullying than female students. In his study, Li (2006) reported that 52% of boys engaged in cyberbullying as opposed to 26% of girls. These findings are consistent with previous studies conducted by Borg (1999) and Boulton and Underwood (1992). However, some research studies have reported that girls are involved in cyberbullying as perpetrators and victims at a rate equal to or higher than boys (David, Ferdon, & Hertz, 2007; Hinduja & Patchin, 2009; Kowalski, Limber, & Agatston, 2008). Future research is needed to clearly establish the gender differences in cyberbullying. Research in the area of cyberbullying is still in its beginning stages and there are many issues to be explored, including emotional, social, and psychological impacts.

The Bullying Triad

The literature on bullying categorizes three major characters in bullying episodes: bullies, victims, and bully-victims. Each category has distinct characteristics that are common to all three categories. Bullies are also referred to as non-victimized aggressors (Schwartz, 2000). Similarly, bully-victims have also been referred to as aggressive-victims in the literature

(Unnever, 2005). However, the majority of the literature uses the terms bullies, victims, and bully-victims.

The bullies

Children who bully come from all facets of society. They can come from any socio-economic status, race, or religious background. Bullies are children who use unprovoked physical, relational, or verbal aggression against their peers. In general, researchers have found that bullies can be characterized as aggressive toward their teachers, siblings, parents, and others, as well; their aggressive attitude is stable across contexts such as home and school (Olweus, 1994). Many studies portray children who bully as having a positive attitude toward power and aggression, a strong desire to dominate, reduced empathy for others, and a tendency to be impulsive (Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Macklem, 2003; Veenstra et al., 2005). Research studies report aggressive behaviour of children who bully as intentional and goal-directed. It is usually targeted against a weaker child who has no friends or will give the bully what they want (Macklem, 2003; Pellegrini & Long, 2002). Bullies' attitudes toward aggression help them to self-justify their bullying behaviour toward their peers (Pellegrini, Bartini, & Brooks, 1999). They are unlikely to take responsibility for their actions, and often blame their victims for provoking them (Haynie et al. 2001; Schwartz, 2000). There are indications that children who bully do not perceive their behavior as severe or hurtful to victims and feel no remorse or empathy for their victims. In many cases, bullies say that victims "asked for it" (Ross, 2003, p. 50) and "it's Easy, it Works, and it makes me feel Good" (Sutton, Smith, & Sweetenham, 2001, p. 74).

Despite their aggressive attitude, bullies can be popular and well-liked leaders in the early grades. Some children are attracted to bullies because of their macho images, but the popularity

of bully's decreases as children mature and move to higher grades (Ross, 2003, p. 48). However, bullies usually have a small number of like-minded aggressive peers who seem to admire and support them. Rodkin, Farmer, Pearl, and Van Acker (2006) found that aggressive boys were considered "cool" within their own peer groups and used their popularity to influence peers to bully others. Many children who themselves would not initiate aggressive behavior are happy to be part of a bully-led peer group and be involved in aggressive behaviour. Bullies usually rely on their clique of supporters to continue their aggressive behaviour. It is interesting to note that most of the time the supporters of the bullies act according to the wishes of the bullies and often against their own convictions (O'Connell, Pepler, & Craig, 1999; Salmivalli et al. 1996). The phenomenon of belonging to the popular, aggressive group also is particularly prevalent among girl bullies and their friends.

No evidence has been found in the research to support the popular notion that bullies are insecure, nervous, and suffer from low self-esteem (Smith et al., 1999). Most studies indicate bullies feel good about them and believe they are physically attractive. Being a bully is a part of their social status and they enjoy the rewards of bullying.

Most of the research published in the last several decades documents that boys are more involved in bullying than girls (Alaskar & Brunner, 1999; Olweus, 1999). This conveys the message that there are more male bullies than female bullies. However, this view has been challenged as it can be argued that the way the aggression was defined led to an overrepresentation of boys as bullies. Studies on bullying in the past several decades have defined aggression only in terms of direct physical aggression and verbal attacks (Coie & Dodge, 1998). It was also reported that since as a group, boys exhibit more aggression than girls, many studies on aggression excluded girls from their samples (Crick & Rose, 2000). Furthermore,

Olweus (2010) argues if the “definitions and operationalization of aggression were broadened to include more indirect and subtle forms, this might well result in a different conclusion”

(Olweus, 2010, p. 23). Recent research on this subject documents that girls are reported to be more involved in relational social bullying and cyberbullying while boys are more involved in physical and direct bullying (Card, Stucky, Sawalani, & Little, 2008; Dodge, Coie, & Lynam, 2006; Hinduja & Patchin, 2009; Kowalski, Limber, & Agatston, 2008). This could also account for underrepresentation of female bullies. Crick et al. (1999) cautiously suggest that there are no or minimal gender differences in aggression when both physical and relational bullying are considered (as cited in Olweus, 2010).

Bully-victims represent another subgroup in the bullying field. The bully-victim group displays characteristics from both bully and victim groups.

The bully-victims

There is a small subgroup of bullied children who are aggressive toward their peers as a reaction to their own victimization. They have been described in various ways: as bully-victims, aggressive-victims, provocative-victims, ineffectual-aggressors, and/or, aggressive-victims (Olweus, 1978; Pellegrini, 1998). Victimized children who are aggressive as a reaction to being bullied, were first described by Olweus (1978). Since then, this group of children has been the subject of extensive investigation by several research groups (Perry, Hodges, & Egan, 2001; Perry, Willard, & Perry, 1990; Schwartz, Dodge, Pettit, & Bates, 1997; Schwartz, Proctor, & Chien, 2001). Approximately 4% to 19% of adolescents have been classified as bully-victims, individuals who have experienced both bullying and victimization (Craig, 1998; Haynie, et al. 2001).

Although the majority of victims are submissive and passive when bullied, bully-victims

respond in an aggressive manner. Based on their frequently irritable, restless and hostile character, as reported by their teachers, Olweus (1978, 2001) describes them as provocative-victims whose aversive off-task behaviour (e.g., roaming around the classroom, not participating in the classroom activities) attracts attention of bullies and establishes them as persistent targets of bullying. Olweus (2001) further added that bully-victims may provoke bullies, but when victimized retaliate with aggression and hostility. Perry, Perry, and Kennedy (1992) view them as “ineffectual aggressors” because of their highly emotional nature. Bully-victims generally lose conflicts amid displays of anger, frustration, and poorly self-controlled emotional distress. They do not apply aggression in an organized or goal-oriented fashion, unlike bullies who use anger strategically to establish their leadership within a peer group. Bullies and bully-victims show similarities in that they have a high level of impulsivity in their character. Bullies are “effective aggressors” and are liked by other bullies, while “aggressive-victims” are usually not liked by their peers because of their reactive aggression.

Research findings document that bully-victims show high levels of aggression and low levels of prosocial behaviour, self-control, self-esteem, and self-acceptance (Veenstra et al. 2005). These characteristics get them into a variety of problems with their peers. In a Canadian study, Marini, Dane, Bosacki, and YLC-CURA (2006) reported that bully-victims displayed a wide range of maladjustments such as “anti-social acts, angry externalizing coping (e.g., angry outbursts, losing self-control, etc.), social anxiety,” and “internalizing problems, relative lack of friendships, greater acceptance of deviance” (p. 552). With a range of deficits, bully-victims display the worst characteristics of both bully and the victim groups and are therefore least liked by peers.

The victims

Although any child can be a victim of bullying, certain characteristics can be associated with victims of bullying. Based on the vast amount of research, a consistent profile of victims has been documented in the literature. Victims are not a homogeneous group: Olweus (1993) describes two types of victims, *passive victims* and *provocative victims or bully-victims* (as described above). To be consistent with the literature, I will use *victims* referring to *passive victims* as it has been used in the literature. The dominant view of victims as passive recipients of aggression uses a “language of effects” that categorizes them as helpless and unable to respond. This monolithic characterization of victims hides their responses—however small these may be—and describes them as passive recipients. However, later in this dissertation I will adopt a “language of responses” (Wade, 1997) to show the responsive side of victims that is mostly invisible in the bullying literature.

Bullies do not pick their victims randomly; they select their target strategically. Bullies select only those children who will not retaliate when attacked by other students. Bullies anticipate that the victim’s usual reaction will be to cry or withdraw from the situation (Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005). Typically, victims are described as more anxious, insecure, cautious, sensitive, and quieter than other children (Haynie et al., 2001; Ma, 2001; Macklem, 2003; Olweus, 1993). They tend to be physically smaller, isolated, have fewer friends, and have a negative view about themselves (Boulton & Underwood, 1992; Olweus, 1993; Slee, 1995).

Drawing from his in-depth interview studies in Finland with parents of victimized boys, Olweus (1993) concluded that these boys were cautious and sensitive from an early age. These children lack communication skills and their shy, sensitive natures and physical weakness make it difficult for them to assert themselves with bullies. It is likely that these characteristics make

them an easy target for bullying and contributes to their victimization. Olweus (1993) paints a very bleak picture of this type of victims; he says, “behaviour and attitude of passive victims is a signal that they are insecure and worthless individuals who will not retaliate if they are attacked or insulted . . . they often look upon themselves as failures and feel . . . ashamed, and unattractive” (p. 33). In his later studies, Olweus (2001) states that he does not “blame the victims” for their victimization, emphasizing that they are dealing with an aggressive and uncontrolled environment created by their classmates (as cited in Macklem, 2003, p. 64). Furthermore, repeated bullying, harassment, and frequent physical attacks by peers contribute to increased anxiety, insecurity, self-doubt, and poor self-concept in victims.

Poor self-concept contributes to poor peer relations and it may further lead to more victimization over time. Thus, victims with low self-esteem often have self-defeating thoughts about themselves, leading to more victimization. By the time these children reach middle school, their identity as victims is well established (Perry, Hodges, & Egan, 2001).

Consequences of Bullying

Bullying is a serious problem that can have major negative consequences for school children and for the overall climate in schools, creating an unsafe learning environment. It is problematic and traumatic for students, teachers, school officials, and parents alike (Hawker & Boulton, 2000; Hazler, Miller, Carney, & Green, 2001). Research studies report that bullying and victimization are associated with immediate negative effects as well as long-term consequences for all those involved in such activities (Farrington, 1993; Juvonen & Graham, 2001; Rigby, 2003). Bullies demonstrate increased incidences of alcohol and drug abuse, delinquent behaviour, dating aggression (McMaster, Connolly, Pepler, & Craig, 2002), and

criminal activities (e.g., vandalism, fraud, and family violence) as they become adults (Farrington, 1993; Olweus, 1993).

Bullying has also been shown to have negative consequences for the victims. Victimization in school is linked to absenteeism, low academic achievement, anxiety, low self-esteem, likelihood of health problems (e.g., fainting, hyperventilation, headaches, sleep problems, and stomach aches), and social withdrawal (Boulton & Smith, 1994; Perry, Hodges, & Egan, 2001). Victims of bullying are often reluctant to go to school. In a study of 128 persistent school absentees in South Wales, 14.8% absentees gave bullying as a reason for not coming to school while 18.8% gave bullying as a reason for continued absence (Reid, 1989, 2005). Researchers report that peer victimization among kindergarten children is significantly and uniquely associated with maladjustment and school avoidance.

Many victims live in constant fear for their safety and cannot function to their full potential. They often suffer serious physical and psychological problems such as depression, social maladjustment, and social anxiety (Katiala-Heino, Rimpela, Rantanen, & Rimpela, 2000; Olweus, 1995; Rigby, 2003). Victims often suffer in silence, fearful of new episodes of bullying and ridicule by their peers. In the most severe cases, victims have taken their own lives (Kumplainen et al., 1998; Olweus, 1993).

Experiences of Bullying

Despite the expansive scope of research on bullying (prevalence, characteristics of bullies and victims, consequences for victims, and prevention programs), there is scant qualitative literature to inform us about the subjective experiences of victims and their families and their means of coping with this serious problem. This is partly due to the prevalence of quantitative studies on bullying and victimization that aim to provide a summary description of a group of

individuals rather than focusing on the unique qualities of individual experiences. Quantitative inquiry guided by positivist epistemology is focused on establishing generalizations or law-like statements that apply to a larger population (Becker, 1996; Elliot, 2005). The result is that we are not left with a picture of the victimized individual as a unique and active agent.

Quantitative studies neglect the individual in several aspects. Firstly, research studies in quantitative tradition do not take the complexity and uniqueness of the individual into account. The categorical descriptions of individuals based on statistical correlations do not do justice to vibrant and unique individuals (Faran, 1990; Pugh 1990). In addition, the goal of quantitative analysis is to establish relationships between variables and not to study relationship between people. Bullying and victimization is all about peer relationship problems (Craig & Pepler, 2007). There are many studies in the current quantitative literature on the relationships between variables but qualitative studies—especially narrative studies of the relationships between bullies and victims—are few and far between. My objective is to understand the rich details of victims' lived experiences and responses. The narratives of the participants provide a venue to co-construct stories of their responses.

Furthermore, the emphasis in quantitative analysis is to study a group of individuals rather than individual cases. These studies do not account for the experiences of each individual in the study. And, when they are accounted for, these experiences are grouped with those of others with purportedly similar characteristics.

Secondly, throughout the literature on bullying, research studies have mainly focused on the passivity of victimized children and described them in term of “effects” of bullying and not in terms of their responses. This representation of children as “passive” does not provide an authentic representation of children who have been victimized. It conceals the fact that the

resistance is ubiquitous and no one is a passive recipient of aggression (Brown, 1991; Coats & Wade, 2004; Wade, 1997). Victimized children will take whatever action is possible, in their own ways, to lessen the effects of aggression (Denborough, 2008).

Further, the humanist notion of individuals with fixed, coherent, singular, and essential characteristics places them into a binary of bullies and victims (Burr, 2003; Monk; Winslade, & Sinclair, 2008). The categorization of individual identities in a hard-edged dichotomy of “bully” and “victim” leads us to portray those who are on the receiving end of aggression in terms of their inadequacies and deficits. Consequently, the current research literature presents the victim’s identity as unitary, static, and fixed, and neglects intentions and purposes of the individual in establishing and revising his or her own identity.

Poststructuralist View of Self and Identity

A poststructural view of identity draws our attention to the ways people actively respond, according to values, in the face of challenges in a manner obscured by the unitary, fixed, and essentialist view of identity associated with positivist depictions (cf. Matthews, Deary, & Whiteman, 2009; Mroczek & Little, 2006; Thomson, 1998). This view of a victim making active choices and responding in the face of aggression is foregrounded when we listen to victim experiences from a poststructural perspective of identity.

A structural view depicts relationships among groups or individuals on the basis of a hierarchy of power relations. Monk, Winslade, and Sinclair (2008) explain that structuralists’ explanations of power relations place people in binaries—either you have power or not, “you are either oppressed or oppressor” (p.161). This view does not accommodate the fluidity and interchangeability of relations and assumes that power is monolithic and owned by dominant groups. Gergen and Gergen (1988) posit that this representation of people as fixed categorical

entities assumes no changes, progress, and development over time (as cited in Ashmore & Jussim, 1997). It also ignores the resistance and social protest emanating from oppressed groups. The structuralists' categorical view of persons as relegated to either powerful or powerless groups obscures intentions, motives, and actions at the level of the individual actor (Monk, Winslade & Sinclair, 2008).

I am interested in aspects of identity obscured by the dominant representations of victimization. Aided by a poststructural perspective, I have collected narratives of the victims and their families that foreground expressions of values, preferences, and beliefs under the adverse circumstances of bullying. I have gathered these narratives to find the responses and the resistance—overt or covert—the adolescents have used to endure bullying.

Response-Based Approach

I have used a “response-based” approach to gather narratives of the responses of victimized adolescents and their families. This approach, developed by Allan Wade (1997, 2010, 2012), is informed by the tenet that whenever people are abused, they will resist (Goffman, 1961; Hodson, 1995; Lempert, 1996; Scott, 1985, 1990). The responses of victimized adolescents are not acknowledged in the media and literature, and they are mostly viewed or characterized only in terms of the “effects of aggression” upon them—as passive victims. This characterization is referred to as “language of effects” (Wade, 2007). A “language of effects” hides the victims' responses, blames the victims for the perpetrator's actions and responsibility, and conceals violence (Coates & Wade, 2007, 2010). The discursive practices associated with a language of effects represent victims as “deficient” and in need of help. Their own efforts to protect themselves are recast as a problem to be treated and in some case ignored altogether,

In some situations, responses can be unnoticeable and negligible – a range of thoughts and feelings, a gesture or mental escape (Yuen, 2007). Wade (1997) confirms, “when open defiance is impractical or too dangerous, resistance is expressed indirectly and on the micro-level of social interaction” (Wade, 2007, p. 64). Many small acts we use under adverse conditions to preserve our dignity are not recognized (Goffman, 1961).

When we listen to victim experiences only in terms of “effects of aggression”, we are likely to ignore their resistance and intentions. On the other hand, a “language of responses” opens up the possibility of foregrounding personal values (Yuen, 2009). In this study, I will engage with the participants of this study to explore their responses to victimization, painting a richer description of their identities.

Significance of the Study

The significance of research on bullying problems in schools cannot be overemphasized. As stated earlier in this chapter, the consequences of bullying on children, schools, and learning environment are quite serious. Research has shown that peer abuse in any form of bullying — physical, verbal, relational, or cyberbullying—adversely affects the psychological and physical well being of children (Rigby, 2002). The existing literature on this subject is extensive and includes practically all aspects of bullying, from understanding the phenomenon of bullying to prevention programs to stop bullying in schools. The subjective experiences of bullied children, their parents, and their responses to deal with this problem have been minimally researched. In recent years there have been some quantitative studies on this topic but investigation from a qualitative perspective needs more attention.

The study of victims’ experiences is significant for many reasons. First, it is important to understand the problem from the perspectives of those who have faced it. The severity of the

incidents and the prevention of them can be best understood when we try to understand them from the victims' lived experiences.

Second, children often do not tell adults that they have been bullied. Until they tell someone, the problem remains hidden to teachers and parents. If and when children decide to tell an adult, it is usually their parents. According to Rigby (2008), 56% of the children tell their mother about bullying. Parents are responsible for their children's welfare. The knowledge of their child being bullied is disturbing to most parents. How do they respond to the shocking knowledge of their child being victimized at school? Gaining an in depth account of parents' experiences of their children's victimization is therefore another critical piece in coming to a greater understanding of the phenomenon of bullying.

Third, the literature says little about the responses of victims and their parents. It is important that we consider the responses of parents and children when bullying situations are faced. Usually, they are known in terms of their passivity to adverse situations. Narratives of the children and their parents from a response-based approach show the responsive side of the victims.

Fourth, an expanded picture of the experience of bullying will be useful for school administrations and counsellors to take steps to prevent or eradicate the problem. Narratives of children will create a knowledge base to work with the problems associated with bullying and will provide an opportunity for school administrators and counsellors to work with parents collaboratively.

Positioning Myself

The question of children's victimization by their peers has always intrigued me. I have been puzzled by the behaviour of children who act maliciously toward their peers and

consciously hurt them. This question became even more important when I learned about the victimization of my friend's son who became mentally and physically ill after being continually harassed in high school. He had to drop out of school and was unable to finish high school and regain his health. This incident and many others in the media, notably Reena Virk's murder in Victoria, B.C. (Godfrey, 2006; Reena Virk's short life and lonely death, 1997) and more recently the suicides of Jason Hubley, a high-school student in Ottawa, and Tyler Clementi, a student at the Rutgers University, have moved me to explore victims' stories that are missing from the current literature. Jason Hubley and Tyler Clementi were both victims of cyberbullying.

My doctoral research goal is also influenced by the stories of many children who were victimized at school but managed to overcome this adversity and achieve academic success. Each story has added to my motivation to learn about the responses and strategies victimized children use to stay in school. I have included vignettes of victims' experiences from other sources in the dissertation.

Navigating the Dissertation

This dissertation is organized into seven chapters. In the first chapter, I presented a broad overview of all aspects of bullying. The purpose of presenting a lengthy introduction was to give a comprehensive picture of the bullying problem to the readers. This is not possible in the literature review because it focuses on the studies relevant to the research questions. The chapter ends with the significance of the problem and my position in relation to this research.

In the second chapter, I discuss research studies that are relevant to understanding the issue of experiences and responses of victims and their families. These selected quantitative and qualitative research studies in these two areas provide a context and relevant information to

situate my research. The chapter also confirms the gaps where more research is needed. This research aims to contribute some knowledge to this much-needed area of research.

In the third chapter, I present the conceptual framework that will help to understand the research question and goals of this research. I also provide the rationale for choosing a poststructural lens and a response-based approach as my conceptual framework to provide answers to my research questions.

In the fourth chapter, I present the methodology and methods employed in this research study. I provide justification of the methodology used for this study, and that is followed by discussion of narrative inquiry and the response-based approach. In the next section a full description of the road map to data collection, sampling, recruitment, interviews, and data analysis is presented. Further, the methods to enhance trustworthiness of the study are discussed.

In the fifth chapter, I present the narratives of the participants that illustrate their responses to bullying incidents. The families and their children tell the stories of their small acts of resistance.

The sixth chapter presents the findings that emerged from the narratives. The findings illustrate the stories of their responses, which are presented in a thematic way. The thematic findings also answer the research question.

Finally, in the seventh chapter I analyze the thematic findings using the conceptual framework presented in chapter three. A section of this chapter discusses the implications of this research. The chapter ends with the limitations and conclusions of this research.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

In order to best situate my study within the current literature, I will first address the experiences of victims as documented in the literature and then discuss the literature related to resistance and responses of victims. I will also explore underrepresentation in the literature regarding the experiences and responses of victims and their families.

In reviewing the literature on the experiences and responses of victims and their families, I begin with a dominant view of prevalent quantitative studies in the literature on victims and their families. This provides a broader view of the research studies available on bullying. I follow this description with the qualitative studies that are more closely related to my research topic. Furthermore, I focus on the studies that discuss coping strategies of the victims. The rationale for this progression also confirms what is currently available and what needs more attention from the researchers.

Quantitative analysis of aggregate data on victims of bullying, collected through surveys, observational, cross-sectional, and longitudinal studies, constitute much of the current literature on bullying and victimization. The complex and sophisticated knowledge base of children's subjective experiences has rarely been qualitatively tapped by investigators (Gamliel, Hoover, Daughtry, & Imbra, 2003). By subjective experiences, I refer to children's narratives of their own experiences of and responses to bullying. These narratives can provide stories of personal experiences as opposed to the information that is gathered through aggregate experiences, which is obtained through survey questionnaires or experimental studies. There are only a few narrative studies on the subjective experiences of victims; however, researchers are now beginning to explore the rich information that qualitative studies can offer to the knowledge base

regarding bullying and victimization. Many other forms of popular literature, such as memoirs, children's literature, and guidebooks for parents to deal with bullying problems, document the narratives of victims (Borba, 2005; Carmichael, 2006; Coloroso, 2002; Hall & Jones, 2011; Nielsen, 2012; Walls, 2006). In the same vein, an impressive documentary film was released in 2012, "Bully", which depicts the experiences of victims. Directed by award-winning filmmaker Lee Hirsch, "Bully" is a character-driven documentary that takes its audience into homes, classrooms, cafeterias, and principals' offices, and offers insight into the lives of bullied children in an often-cruel world. In the following section, I will discuss selected quantitative studies of the experiences of victims of bullying.

Experiences of Victims of Bullying

Quantitative studies of experiences of victims

The quantitative literature on victims of bullying focuses predominantly on discourses of victimhood and overlooks victims' active responses, as the following quotation highlights:

They were older than me, they took a dislike to me . . . they would take my cardigan and kick it around as a football, and they would kick me out . . . one boy pulled my hair so hard that some came out, he dropped it in front of me . . . I was shoved in the garbage can . . . I was pushed off the climbing frame . . . I had a concussion . . . I remember feeling alone—no one would help me—I dreaded going to school. I am quite insecure even now . . . I won't believe that people like me. (Smith & Sharp, 1994, p. 1)

Although some statements in current literature, such as the one above, are given by the victims, none of these statements describe the seriousness of the act, or the physical, social, and

psychological harm inflicted on victims.

First, I will review some quantitative studies, which describe victims' experiences. These studies offer the voices of researchers instead of victims, and can therefore be understood as a description of the effects of bullying. Most studies do not explicitly depict a fine-grained view of victims' experiences; those stories surface only when bullying incidents are extremely serious and reach a critical stage (Unnever & Cornell, 2004).

Research on victims' experiences of bullying can be divided into two major categories. The first mainly discusses the ways victims were bullied, while the second discusses the effects of victimization on them. These studies rely on a strong cross-section of methodology, including longitudinal studies, surveys, and experimental studies. Researching different forms of bullying behaviour, Wang, Iannotti, and Nansel (2009) conducted a large-scale study of school adolescents, obtaining data from the Health Behaviour in School-Children (2005) survey. This was a nationally representative sample of 7,182 adolescents in Grades 6 to 10. The revised Olweus Bully/Victims Questionnaire was used to measure physical, verbal, relational and cyberbullying. Multinomial logistic regression was performed to analyze data. The researchers' findings indicate that victims' experiences of bullying included physical aggression (for example, hitting, pushing, and kicking), verbal cruelty (name-calling, or repeated, hurtful teasing), relational bullying (social exclusion, spreading rumours), and cyberbullying (Wang, Iannotti, & Nansel, 2009). This study provided good insight into the varieties of bullying practices that victims face, but it did not elaborate on victims' personal experiences of bullying.

Numerous studies have reported the negative experiences of children who have been victims of bullying in school (Fekkes, Pijpers, & Verloove-Vanhorick, 2005; Juvonen, Nishina, & Graham, 2000; and Peligrini, Bartini, & Brooks, 1999). In their book, *The Nature of School*

Bullying, Smith et al. (1999) presented a global picture of bullying by including studies on the effects of victimization from twenty countries. To keep standards consistent, each study used similar survey methods and investigated the same questions. The researchers reported that continuous or severe bullying affects the psychological and physical health of victims. The reported effects included physical symptoms such as headaches, stomach aches, and sleeplessness, emotional symptoms such as depression, sadness, stress, and poor concentration in academic studies. In many cases, adolescents refused to go to school. The researchers added that victimization leads to self-blame, loss of self-esteem and problems in interpersonal relationships. Their findings have been confirmed by many studies that investigated victimization and its effects on adolescents. A discussion of these studies will follow.

In a five-year longitudinal study of 133 Grade 6 students, ages 11 to 13, Swearer, Song, Cary, Eagle, and Mickelson (2001) investigated depression and anxiety experienced by the victims of bullying, which they measured using the Multidimensional Anxiety Scale and the Children Depression Inventory. Multivariate analysis and exploratory discriminant function analysis was used for data analysis. Supporting the results of previous studies, Craig (1998) and Slee (1995) found that the victimized children are likely to feel lonely, unhappy, unattractive, anxious, depressed, and worthless. An anxious nature makes victims an easily identifiable target for bullying. They feel marginalized and traumatized and, in some cases, reward the bully with increased self-esteem and improved social status (Schwartz, Proctor, & Chien, 2001). In an earlier cross-sectional studies, Egan and Perry (1998) and Graham and Juvonen (1998) reported that victims' low self-worth is self-perpetuating: it leads to further victimization which in turn results in further reducing their self-esteem, leading to more bullying.

Graham and Juvonen's work on the effects of bullying is particularly useful for my

research, in that it provides insight into victims' experiences of self-worth and self-blame. Graham and Juvonen (1998, 2001) and Juvonen, Nishina and Graham (2000, 2001) have conducted several studies of the self-blame phenomenon and how it affects victims. Graham and Juvonen's first study (1998) was conducted on 418 Grade 6 and Grade 7 students. Victims were identified by peer nominations. In addition, they used the Attributional Questionnaire, Self-Worth Scale, Social Anxiety Scale, and Self-Perceived Victim Status to collect data. Factor analysis and multiple regressions were used to analyze data. The goal of this study was to learn whether identified victims possessed *characterological* self-blame. Results indicated that students who perceived themselves as victims were vulnerable to adjustment difficulties such as loneliness, social anxiety and low self-worth. Graham and Juvonen (1998) report, "Children who view themselves as socially incompetent behave in ways that promote abuse by others (the antecedent of low self-worth) and they feel worse about themselves as victimization escalates over the school year (the consequence function)" (p. 596). This cyclical process of victimization and low self-esteem continues into later years.

Research has found that victims' feelings of self-worth are also related to social adjustment problems. Hawker and Boulton (2000) conducted a meta-analysis of cross-sectional studies of victimization and social adjustment, which included all cross-sectional studies on victimization and social maladjustment published between 1978 and the end of June 1997. The study documented that children who are depressed due to stressful events, such as bullying, hold negative thoughts about themselves, the world, and the future. In another related experimental study of 123 children, ages 6 to 13 years, Marciano and Kazdin (1994) confirmed that loss of self-esteem at school-age and negative thoughts about the future that characterizes hopelessness will persist into adulthood, leading to poor social adjustment.

Hawker and Boulton (2000) further reported “self-reported depressed mood, loneliness, anxiety, and social and global self-esteem as predictors of contemporaneous peer victimization among school children aged between 8 and 12 years” (p. 452). However, it is not clear from the Hawker and Boulton study (2000) if peer victimization is a cause or consequence of psychological maladjustment. Some researchers postulated victimization as an agent of future adjustment problems (Hanish & Guerra, 2000). Hanish and Guerra (2002) conducted a longitudinal experimental study on a large sample of 2,064 elementary school children in an urban neighbourhood. They investigated whether aggression and withdrawal behaviours predict concurrent and subsequent victimization and whether these predictive relations are mediated or moderated by rejection. They gathered data twice: at Time 1 when the children were in Grades 1, 2 and 4, and at Time 2, when children were in Grades 3, 4 and 6. The second set of data was collected only from 1,469 children. The rest of the participants could not be located. Their results suggested that aggression is related to current victimization and contributed significantly to victimization two years later. This study contributed to the information on aggression and predictive victimization but did not shed light on the question of which came first: aggression or adjustment problems.

Reinjtjes, Kamphuis, Prinzei, and Telch (2010), in their meta-analytic review of cross-sectional studies, investigated whether psychological problems are antecedents or consequences of victimization by reviewing eighteen longitudinal studies. Their findings indicate that there is a significant association between victimization and psychological problems. The extent of victimization can determine the effects of bullying and, as a result, the effects of bullying can be cumulative and lead to further victimization. Although their results appear inconclusive on the main question they investigated, their results confirm that the problem of effects of bullying and

victimization could be reciprocal. The authors concluded, “these reciprocal influences suggest a vicious cycle that contributes to the high stability of peer victimization” (p. 244).

A research study by Hoof, Raaijmakers, Van Beck, Hale III, and Aleva (2008) added another dimension to experiences of victimization. This study presented a multi-mediation model on the relationships of bullying, victimization, identity, and family characteristics to adolescent depressive systems in 194 high school students. At the time of this study, the issue of victimization and its relationship to identity had not yet been investigated. Their sample consisted of 194 high school students, 12 to 18 years of age. Structural equation analysis was used for data analysis. The researchers presented three models that investigated the relationships between the four variables mentioned above. The second model, which is most relevant to my research, investigated personal identity’s mediating function between peer victimization and depressive symptoms.

Various scales were used to measure bullying behaviour and peer victimization. The Actor Scales (the bullies and victim scales) were used to measure bullying and victimization. The Children’s Depression Inventory was used to measure depression in the participants. Finally, the researchers used the Special Continuity of Identity Questionnaire to measure personal identity. Questions were context-specific. The adolescents were asked to describe their identity in school, family, and leisure time contexts. Each context-specific identity was measured with 20 items and evaluated on a seven-point scale. The writers studied four dimensions of identity: competence, inhibition, feeling, and interpersonal behaviour.

Their results indicated, “adolescents who are victimized by peers have more trouble integrating their school, home, and leisure time identities into one coherent profile. This, in turn, makes them vulnerable for developing depressive symptoms” (Hoof, Raaijmakers, Van Beck,

Hale III, & Aleva, (2008, p. 779). The study provided a new opportunity to study victims' identities in different contexts, but poses some questions. The results demonstrated a mediating function of identity for the relations between peer victimization and depression symptoms. Since the model included other factors such as family characteristics, the effect of identity was considered only partial. More research is needed to explore the issue of personal identity and victimization in schools.

With the technology boom, cyberbullying has provided another channel for bullies to victimize children in schools. I discussed cyberbullying in detail in Chapter One's introduction to bullying. Cyberbullying has also been found to relate to psychosomatic symptoms. A study conducted by the Australian government (2004) reported that cyberbullied children have trouble sleeping and suffer nightmares. They are depressed, fall behind in their homework, feel unwell, and experience mood swings. This study did not provide details on the size of the sample or the method of analysis. While cyberbullying has increased rapidly in the last decade, variations exist in the reporting of incidents (Smith & Slonje, 2010). The rate of reporting victimization by cyberbullying varied from 1% in the U.K. (Balding, 2005), to 62% in Belgium (Vandebosch & van Cleemput, 2009, as cited in Smith & Slonje, 2010). The methods of conducting research into cyberbullying are also less standardized than in other areas of bullying research, which could be the reason for variations in reporting victimization and frequencies of bullying (Smith & Slonje, 2010).

Quantitative literature primarily portrays victims as recipients of unprovoked aggression and mainly describes them in terms of their inability to defend themselves (Gottheil & Dubow, 2001). In their survey study of 180 elementary and middle school children, Gottheil and Dubow (2001) reported that victims are perceived as helpless and lacking in confidence. In contrast,

Besag (1989) and Tattum and Herbert (1993) in their earlier case studies of school children in the UK concluded that victims' negative attitudes towards aggression have been perceived as an inability to stand up to the bully's aggression. Much of the quantitative literature on bullying and victimization presents a one-dimensional and simplistic picture of the victims.

Most research published on victimization takes the form of group summaries of the effects of bullying on victims and their characteristics. Much of this research is in the form of survey results that report high correlation between victimization and negative self-evaluation and low correlation between victimization and positive self-evaluation (Geffner, Loring, & Young, 2001; Hazler, Carney, Green, Powell, & Jolly, 1997).

Comments on quantitative studies of experiences of victims

Most of the cross-sectional and survey studies have used a pre-designed questionnaire on large samples. The questions are designed to obtain information on victims' experiences of bullying. The predetermined response categories in many ways reflect the perspectives of the researchers. Participants are asked to check the boxes for their responses. Simply checking a box from a pre-determined list of responses does not provide an opportunity for participants to express their feelings and emotions (Geiger & Fischer, 2006). Although the questions and responses in survey studies, observational, and cross-sectional studies provide much needed and valuable information on bullying and victimization, in-depth knowledge about victims' lived experiences can best be obtained by listening to their stories. My narrative study will complement by contributing in-depth response-based accounts of the victims and their families to the literature on bullying and victimization.

Quantitative studies of victims' responses to bullying

Empirical studies of victims that use the questionnaire survey method are primarily

concerned with negative emotional effects of victimization (Hawker & Boulton, 2000; Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2004). However, some research studies have also documented positive coping responses (Hunter, Mora-Mecham, & Ortega, 2004; Kanetsuna, Smith, & Morita, 2006; Kristensen & Smith, 2003). A few studies have examined behavioural or self-protective responses to bullying (Kochenderfer-Ladd, & Skinner, 2002; Tannebaum, Varjas, Meyers, & Parris, 2011).

In a large sample survey study, Salmivalli, Karhunen, and Lagerspetz (1996) recruited 573 pupils (286 girls and 287 boys) from 11 Finnish schools as participants for a study on coping behaviours of bullying victims. Sixty-seven pupils (33 girls, 34 boys) were identified as victims of bullying. These pupils were already participating in a larger scale study on bullying in schools in Finland. The data were collected in the form of a questionnaire, which the participants were asked to complete during school hours. Children were provided with a definition of bullying, and were asked first to nominate victims bullied by others, second to evaluate victims' behaviours in response to bullying situations, and third to identify if these responses made others to stop or continue bullying. The participants identified three coping responses used most often by victims: counter-aggression, helplessness, and nonchalance. Counter-aggression included fighting back and speaking up to the bully. Helplessness included crying, doing nothing, reporting the bully to an adult, and missing school. Nonchalance meant remaining calm and ignoring the bully.

Their results showed significant and interesting findings, suggesting that first, "submission was not the only possible response to bullying" (Salmivalli et al., 1996, p. 108). Victims quite typically responded in a nonchalant manner or tried to look as if they didn't care about bullying. It is not necessarily true that they did not care or were not hurt, but they did not

want to show their true feelings. Although the researchers did not report how they arrived at this conclusion, Salmivalli et al. (1996) added that victims suffer greatly when they are attacked by peers, even when they respond to the bully's aggression with nonchalant or counter-aggressive coping responses.

Second, the finding showed that defending oneself, or even counter-attacking was not out of the question as a response. Counteraggressive responses were surprisingly common for boys. On the basis of these results, the researchers concluded that when bullies attack they do not always expect submission from their victims. They also confirmed that bullies did expect some kind of response such as "a powerless counter attack" or "crying." According to this research, a crying victim was not as rewarding for bullies as "one who could be provoked to ineffective, ridiculous counter aggression . . . that gave a good show to the whole peer group" (Salmivalli et al., 1996, p. 108).

Smith, Shu, and Madsen (2001) confirmed the same coping strategies used by the victims. They report that continued bullying is likely where "children fail to cope satisfactorily and that leads to a reinforcing cycle of poor coping, low self-esteem, lack of protective friendships, and vulnerability of more bullying" (p. 332). They surveyed 2,308 children from 19 schools across England. The sample consisted of 984 boys and 891 girls, ages 10 to 14. Questionnaires were used to collect data on coping strategies of victims. These coping responses were predefined and children were asked to check responses they had used to cope with bullying. Findings showed that coping strategies included ignoring the bullies, telling them to stop, asking an adult for help, fighting back, crying, asking friends for help, or running away. The researchers cross-examined these findings with the age and sex of the children. Since this study researches the question of coping responses, the findings are useful information for my research

study.

In another quantitative survey study, Kochenderfer-Ladd and Pelletier (2008) examined teachers' views and management strategies in relation to bullying and coping responses used by their students. Researchers used a multilevel design to test a model where teachers' attitude or beliefs about bullying influences their decision about whether or not to intervene in bullying and victimization episodes. It was hypothesized that teachers' attitude would influence the ways victims cope with bullying and also the frequency with which they report victimization. Data were collected on 34 teachers from 2nd and 4th grade, and 363 ethnically diverse students. The mean age of these students was 9 years and 2 months. The Student Social Behavior Questionnaire, Classroom Management Policies Questionnaire, and Self-report Coping Scale were used to gather data. Exploratory factor analysis combined with other statistical measures was used to analyze the data. Their findings reported that students' coping strategies include seeking support from an adult, distancing themselves from the bullies, passive coping, problem-solving, and also, in a few cases, revenge-seeking. These findings also suggest that teachers' perceptions and views about peer victimization influence how they manage bullying. Their attitudes also affect how children cope with bullying when those teachers are involved.

In some extreme cases, the victims carried weapons to protect themselves. In their analysis of data from American students in Grades 6 through 10, Nansel, Overpeck, Haynie, Ruan, and Scheidt (2003) found that some victims carried weapons for self-protection. Examples of such cases include the shooting at Columbine High School in 1999, and a shooting incident in a school in Scotland.

Gamliel, Daughtry, and Imbra (2003) in their mixed-method investigation of coping responses used interviews and Coping Strategy Card Tasks. Their sample size consisted of 6

adolescents ages 10 to 13. Their findings confirm that coping responses such as avoidance, humour, fighting back, calm confrontation, and making friends with bullies were used most often by victims. I will discuss this study in detail in the section on qualitative studies of victims' responses because the writers suggest that it is a qualitative study.

Kanetsuna, Smith, and Morita (2006) conducted a study about coping responses to bullying among school children. This study was a cross-national comparison of secondary school students' opinions about coping strategies, bystander intervention, and attitudes towards school-based interventions. I would describe this study as a mixed-method study because the researchers used one-to-one structured interviews to collect data, but used statistical procedures for analysis. The study was concurrently conducted in two countries, England and Japan.

The sample consisted of 61 Japanese students and 60 English students, aged 12 to 15 years, in six secondary schools. Kanetsuna, Smith, and Morita (2006) reported that the students' recommended coping strategies varied according to the type of bullying. Seeking help was the most recommended coping strategy in both countries. In their earlier bi-national study of 13 to 14 year-olds in England and Japan, Kanetsuna and Smith (2002) reported that the most recommended responses to physical bullying were: "tell someone you trust," "fight back," and "ask friends for help." For verbal bullying, students recommended responses such as "do the same things to the bullies" and "ignore it." For social bullying, students suggested that victims "make new friends" (cited in Kanetsuna, Smith, & Morita, 2006, p. 572). This study was limited to one school and the authors recommended that it should be replicated with other schools in different locations.

In their most recent study, Kanetsuna, Smith, and Morita (2006) reported that the coping strategies most recommended by children were "seeking help when victimized," "taking direct

action against bullies,” “avoidance,” “passive behaviour,” “ignoring,” “reflecting on yourself,” “trying to make new friends,” and “denying it” (p. 575).

Kanetsuna, Smith, and Morita’s (2006) study provided significant insights for my study. Although this study is similar to my research project in many ways, there are also major differences. As the writers of the study state, “these are general findings based on pupils self-report questionnaire examining their experiences when given a standard (research-based) definition” (Kanetsuna, Smith, & Morita, 2006, p. 571). The researchers further emphasize that it is important to “elicit information based on pupil’s own understanding of bullying/ijime, including comparisons of other aspects such as victims’ coping strategies” (p. 571). Since my research aims to provide understanding of bullying and responses from the victims’ own experiences and perspectives, it provides the needed information suggested in Kanetsuna, Smith, and Morita’s (2006) study, and also tries to fill an information gap existing in this area.

Qualitative studies of experiences and responses of victims

As the discussion in the previous section shows, the research in this area is primarily quantitative and provides a group perspective of the experiences and responses of victims. In this section, I will present qualitative studies conducted on the experiences and responses of victims. Although these studies are undertaken from the victims’ perspectives, the emphasis is on victimhood and effects of bullying. These studies do not focus on the active responses of the bullied children. I have grouped qualitative studies of experiences with those of victims’ responses because of the paucity of qualitative studies on both topics.

After reviewing the selected qualitative studies on bullying from the perspectives of victimized children, three themes emerged. First, victims, parents, and teachers find it difficult to identify bullying behaviour. Second, there is an emphasis on strategies for alleviating

bullying. Finally, the studies focus on victims' reactions to verbal aggression. Although the following two studies do not directly focus on victims' experiences and responses, they do discuss the contexts of responses and experiences.

Mishna (2004) conducted a pilot study of bullying from multiple perspectives using qualitative methods. She investigated bullying from the perspective of victimized children, their parents, and educators. A survey titled, "My Life in School Checklist," was administered to 61 Grade 4 and Grade 5 children to evaluate bullying in schools (Arora, 1994). Following this step, the researcher completed individual semi-structured interviews with selected children, a parent of each child, the children's teachers, and the principals. The participating children identified themselves as victims. Children were recruited on the assumption that they could reflect on their experiences of bullying. The findings revealed that defining bullying behaviour, and deciding whether an incident is perceived as bullying, could be complex. Often teachers, children, and parents did not agree on what constitutes a bullying behaviour. This lack of congruity made responding to bullying situations difficult for all involved parties.

Mishna (2004) in her study also confirmed that children do not report bullying incidents because reported victimization is underestimated and not given serious consideration by teachers. Research reports that 25 percent of teachers thought that ignoring the problem might help (Batsche & Knoff, 1994). Children were adamant that telling adults made things worse for them. This finding is consistent with similar findings in the literature (Gamliel, Hoover, Daughtry, & Imbra, 2003; Geiger & Fischer, 2006).

Another qualitative study by Mishna, Scarcello, Pepler, and Wiener (2005) examined teachers' understandings of bullying in their classrooms. This study was conducted in four urban public schools. Their sample of four urban schools was located in different neighbourhoods.

These neighbourhoods,“ differed in such factors as income, family composition, and percentage of recent immigrants” (cited in Mishna, Scarcello, Pepler, & Wiener, 2005, p. 721). A “Safe School Questionnaire” (Pepler, Connolly, & Craig, 1993, as cited in Mishna, Scarcello, Pepler, & Wiener, 2005) was administered to grades four and five in four public schools to identify students who reported being bullied in school. This was followed by individual interviews with the teachers. The study identified the factors that influenced teachers’ identification of and responses to bullying incidents involving children who self-identified as victims.

Their research findings reported that each teacher’s understanding of bullying was different, and was guided by individual experiences and perceptions of what constitutes bullying. Teachers who had personal experiences of bullying when they were children were more sensitive and aware of bullying incidents. At the same time, the element of subjectivity in defining bullying led to differences in how teachers characterized and responded to bullying incidents (Craig, Henderson, & Murphy, 2000). When teachers do not take children’s complaints seriously, it hurts students emotionally and, as a result, many incidents are never reported. In their study, Clarke and Kiselica (1997) reported, “When school adults ignore, trivialize, or tolerate bullying incidents the victims internalize the implied message that the adults have discounted their worth as individuals, and they carry this message forward into adulthood” (p. 316).

Both research studies conducted by Mishna (2004) and Mishna, Scarcello, Pepler, and Wiener (2005) add significant knowledge to teachers and parents’ understanding of bullying. The studies also explain why children do not report and respond to bullying incidents. My research involves an inquiry into children’s responses to bullying. Children’s likelihood to report victimization incidents is most influenced by teachers and parents’ understanding of

bullying. Therefore, it is important to know how teachers respond to victim's complaints. These studies also provide context information for responses by children, and therefore provide significant information for my research.

The third theme, coping strategies of children, investigated by Gamliel, Hoover, Daughtry, and Imbra (2003), directly relates to my study. I mentioned this research in a previous section as a mixed-method study, but the researchers consider their work to be a qualitative investigation. They selected six students, ages 10 to 13, enrolled in Grades 5 to 7, and interviewed them to determine their individual perceptions of whether they had suffered due to bullying, and to what degree. The interview protocol was based on an existing bullying prevention survey developed by Hoover and Oliver (1996). At the end of each session, students were given a card-sorting task, which consisted of nine different coping alternatives listed on index cards. Students were asked to rate strategies they would use if they were bullied. The strategies were rated from one to nine.

The authors reported that several themes emerged from this study. The preferred coping strategies included: avoidance or ignoring the bully, rational or calm confrontation, verbal retaliation and cathartic expression. This confirms that "talking through" the problem, displacement, humour, fighting back, and making friends with the bullies were the strategies most often used by the victims. Although the study contributes significant insights into the responses of the victims, it also raises some questions. The coping strategy card technique forces participants to choose responses provided by the researcher. Although these cards were designed after initial research in this field, this technique does not fully capture children's perspectives and the personal choices they would have made under the circumstances.

The last study I would like to discuss is by Geiger and Fischer (2006). They interviewed

145 Grade 6 students to investigate the responses of children when they were verbally and emotionally abused by their peers. In addition, they investigated teachers' responses to aggressive behaviour in their classrooms. This study used in-depth, semi-structured interviews for data collection.

This research concluded that verbal abuse was a daily occurrence in the classroom. Some students were more vulnerable to verbal aggression than others because of their physical characteristics. There were gender differences in the ways children responded to verbal aggression. Girls considered verbal aggression as an immature act by boys and did not want to lower themselves to the level of boys who acted immaturely (Geiger & Fischer, 2006). Verbal aggression often led to physical aggression. This study confirmed the findings of Mishna (2004) and Mishna, Scarcello, Pepler, and Wiener, (2005) studies about teachers' responses to verbal aggression in their classrooms. Usually, teachers showed lack of concern, were unfair, and provided no constructive solution to the situation. Mishna (2004) provided some reasons for the lack of concern from teachers.

The Geiger and Fischer study raises some questions. In this investigation, aggression is never described as bullying. Verbal attack is an aggressive act, but there are certain characteristics of this form of abuse that must occur before it can be classified as bullying. The researchers explain that seriousness of the verbal attack will depend on how it is interpreted. Anderson and Bushman (2002) argue that the escalation from verbal to physical attack is "a multistage process that involves cognitive, affective, and physiological components" (p. 353). The researchers confirm that verbal attacks that target permanent disability and inherent personal characteristics "will cause humiliation, pain, and frustration and prime aggression related feelings, anger, and loss of control" (p. 353, as cited in Geiger & Fischer, 2006). I have included

this research in my literature review because it is a qualitative study of responses to peer aggression, and it investigated teachers' responses to children's victimization, which often influences victims' responses to bullying. This research also contributes significant information for my study.

Bowles and Lesperance, (2004) conducted a phenomenological study of adolescent victims of bullying, noting a real lack of qualitative research on bullying. In this study, they explore what it means to be bullied for those who endure it. They used a phenomenological approach to gather information from three adolescent participants. Participants were recruited from Grade 6, 7, and 8 after being identified by school counsellors or nurses as having been bullied within the past year. The researchers interviewed each participant on four separate occasions. The researchers' central questions were "What is the experience of being bullied like for adolescent students?" and "What are the meanings that seventh and eighth grade adolescents ascribe to the experiences of being bullied" (p. 96)? The data obtained through interviews were analyzed using Collaizi's (1978) method of phenomenological interpretation. Researchers reported two major themes that emerged from their analysis: the importance of connections and ways of dealing with bullying.

The researchers reported that within the major theme of "importance of connections," several subthemes were identified. Connections with family, peers, self, school and learning were considered important. Within the second major theme, "ways of dealing with bullying," two subthemes were discussed: coping with bullies and fighting back. Maintaining strong ties with the family was a source of strength as well as a source of pain to the participants. Earlier studies (Baldry, 2003; Duncan, 2004; Stevens, Bourdeaudhuij, & Van Oost, 2002) have reported that family has a role in bullying and victimization issues. In reference to peer connections,

Bowles and Lesperance's (2004) findings confirmed earlier results that peers can have a positive role in minimizing the effects of victimization (Bukowaski, 2003). School and teachers also played an important role in minimizing the impact of bullying. On the other hand, teachers and school also made things worse for the victims. Sometimes teachers made things difficult for children by making assumptions about them, which made learning difficult. This prompted more bullying.

The researcher's findings related to self-connection are important contributions. The participants in this study blamed themselves for their victimization. They said that they have problems standing up for themselves and lost sight of themselves in teasing episodes. Victimization resulted in a "diminished sense of both self and personal power" (Bowles & Lesperance, 2004, p. 100).

Another theme identified by Bowles and Lesperance (2004) was related to coping with bullies. Coping strategies used were escape, holding feelings inside, lashing out, fighting back, pretending to be sick, and music. Most parents encouraged their children to fight back.

This research study provided an experiential insight into the school life of victims of bullying. The conclusions from this phenomenological study are useful for my study. In the following section I will describe information gathered from sources outside scientific literature.

Information from other sources

In her memoir, *The Glass Castle*, (2005), writer Jeannette Walls talks about her experiences of bullying. She writes that in Grade 6, she and her brother were bullied because they were so skinny. They called her "a spider legs, skeleton girl . . . bean pole and giraffe." At lunchtime, "I started hiding in the bathroom . . . to avoid girls" (p.173). She writes that her father always pushed children to be self-sufficient, and that the siblings later learned how to take

care of themselves.

Recently the news media have reported many stories about children who have endured bullying, but are now successful and working to fight bullying in schools. One such story appeared recently in *The Ottawa Citizen* (June, 25, 2012, p. A1-2) about Dustin Garron, a 17-year-old Ottawa student who tried to commit suicide seven times. He was bullied relentlessly when he was younger because of his sexual orientation. In Grade 5, classmates found out that he was gay, and made fun of him: “They would call me ugly, queer, gay; they would kick me, isolate me and often talk about me behind my back.” In Grade 9, he decided to “come out” to family and friends, who were very supportive. The bullying stopped after he stood up for himself.

Dustin advised other young people in the same situation to take care of themselves. “Persevere, set goals, be yourself . . . life is precious and life is hopeful.” He started a mental health project, a fledgling program with a goal to educate teens about the resources that exist to help them cope with depression subsequent to bullying. Most of all, he wants to see something positive emerge from his own story: “I survived, and so can you.”

The story of Megan Landry (*The Ottawa Citizen*, October, 22, 2012) who responded to bullying by writing a song “Stronger” is worth mentioning. The song was inspired by Landry’s experiences of bullying in Grades 8 and 9 at two Ottawa schools. She said that her bullying experiences were social (relational) bullying. She was socially excluded from her groups of friends. The bullies gossiped about her and called her derogatory names. She was an outcast. Her own group of friends “ditched” her. She posted her song “Stronger” on YouTube and it resonated with other adolescents who had endured bullying. Some victimized adolescents responded by posting that “this helped them so much, and realized that they have to stand up to a

bully because of this.” This response not only helped Megan to stop bullying, it motivated other adolescents to stand up as well. Megan’s vivid imagination allowed her to respond to bullying with her song. She said, “I just like to write, that’s how I am. I write stories.”

In the following section, I will discuss scant research documenting the experiences and responses of families of victims.

Qualitative Studies of Experiences and Responses of Families of Victims

Despite expansive scientific quantitative studies on bullying and victimization, little attention is paid in the academic literature to parents’ experiences and responses to the victimization of their children in schools. A few books in popular literature address parents’ experiences and attempt to help their victimized children (Borba, 2005; Coloroso, 2002; Roberts, 2007). Since parents play a pivotal role in responding to situations in which their child has been a victim of bullying at school, it is important to consider their experiences and responses to their children’s victimization (Hazler, Miller, Carney & Green, 2001; Mishna, 2004; Rigby, 2008). In their study, Benbenishty and Astor (2005) confirm, “We believe . . . that this neglected area of research can help us understand better how parents, a critical element of the school context, interact with the school on issues of violence” (p. 163). Agreeing with this statement, Waasdorp, Bradshaw, and Duong (2011) state that “there is a burgeoning literature on parents’ involvement with their child’s academic performance, we need to apply the same fervor toward understanding parents’ participation in school-based efforts to prevent bullying and other behavioural problems” (p. 333).

Parents and families of bullies and victims can play a prominent role in the bullying and victimization equation. Often parents are unaware of their children’s victimization at school. In

most cases, in the beginning, victims do not disclose the problem to their parents. Rigby (2008) and Smith and Shu (2000) explained the reason why children feel too inhibited to tell their parents. The reasons included self-blame, a bully's threat of retaliation, and guilt. The tendency not to disclose is not common for younger children, for whom the most common strategy used to cope with bullying is to talk with parents (Rigby, 2008; Smith & Shu, 2000).

Children's victimization at school affects the whole family, often to an excruciating degree. Pepler (2006) suggests that parents need to protect children when they disclose their victimization at school. Parents' experiences reflect how they respond to their child's victimization and the outcomes of the child's responses to bullying. Parents describe their emotional reactions as frustration, guilt, and anger. They report that there is virtually no effective support system in the school for parents (Rigby, 2008). They feel helpless. Reacting to an indifferent administration after repeated complaints, some parents take extreme measures (Ross, 2003). Ross describes the actions of two mothers of elementary school children in the Queens borough of New York City who took matters into their own hands. They went to the school, shouted at the principal, and confronted the bully, resulting in their own arrest and detention by the local police (McCarthy, 2001). Ross (2003) further adds that although the mothers' actions were commendable, this course of action actually aggravates the problem.

Often the problems of bullying are ignored and not addressed until the parents become angry or lash out (Rigby, 2008). Parents often move their children to another school because of the lack of support from school authorities. After moving her child from a school, one Ottawa mother decided to sue the Ottawa Board of Education for taking a *laissez faire* attitude toward the bullying of her child in Grade 4 (*The Ottawa Citizen*, February, 15, 2010).

In his latest book, *Children and bullying: How parents and educators can reduce*

bullying, Rigby (2008) cites excerpts from emails received from parents about their experiences of the victimization of their children. One angry parent describes the pain she felt when she became aware of what bullying was doing to her daughter. She writes:

She did not tell me that she was being bullied but asked me a question which will haunt me for the rest of my life. The question was: “Mom, how do parents know that when children kill themselves that they did it because of bullying?” I said that they leave a letter, not thinking that she was talking about herself. Two days later I got a phone call from my friend while I was at work to tell me that my daughter had just been battered and her head had been rammed into a wall by six girls; then it dawned on me that my daughter wanted to kill herself . . . I went home and checked her room where I found the letters to say she was sorry and that she loved us. Luckily I found out in time. I had to hide all tablets and medicines, can you imagine how that feels?

I talked to the school that did nothing. There is no help, no support for the parents. So I changed schools for her and I have since found out that the previous school was under investigation for bullying . . . I always advise parents to waste no time and get the bullying sorted out a.s.a.p. — because you never know what a child is thinking. (Rigby, 2008, p. 13)

In some cases, parents of victimized children have shown interest in helping one another by giving advice and sharing their experiences (Coloroso, 2002; Rigby, 2008). Parents have shared their observations through blogs and websites related to bullying problems. Their varied responses to the problem include urging the child to ignore the bully, minimizing the seriousness of the problem, complaining to the bully’s parents, character-building of their bullied children, and taking no action (Ross, 2003).

Parental indifference and the minimizing of a child's concerns can only escalate the problem. The child is likely to censor further information about bullying and may suffer in silence (Smith, 1991). Researchers agree that the parents should offer unqualified support to the child to cope with bullying.

In addition to current experiences of victimization, bullied victims and their families have sites of resistance and responses. Current literature rarely cites this aspect of the problem. Many stories have not been told because most literature has not been written from a poststructuralist perspective. It is this missing link, or less researched topic in the literature, that prompted my curiosity to investigate the resistance and responses of the victims and their families. Thus, a poststructuralist view will enable a better understanding of alternate stories, which highlight victims' expression of values and purposes.

Chapter 3: Conceptual Framework

There is no need for temples, no need for complicated philosophies. My brain and my heart are my temples; my philosophy is kindness.

The Dalai Lama (1990, p. 52)

Our prime purpose in this life is to help others. And if you can't help them, at least don't hurt them.

The Dalai Lama (1990, p. 87)

Moving away from unconditionally accepting a one-dimensional picture of victimized children, and to foreground their resistance, my research will employ a poststructural lens, drawing on Michael Foucault's (1982) concept of "power and resistance." I will also use the analytic framework of Allan Wade (1997, 2007), Coates and Wade (2004, 2007), and Todd and Wade (2004) as it is used in response-based practice. These approaches will provide a conceptual framework for understanding victims' and their families' resistance and responses to school bullying. The adoption of a poststructural view avoids characterization of victims' resistance as futile acts, and at the same time confirms the victims' life skills and knowledges. Also, I will address our growing understanding that much can be learned from a person's life skills and knowledges outside of deficit-laden presentations.

Poststructural Lens

Poststructuralism as an epistemology implies a broad variety of critical perspectives (Abrams, 1999). These critical perspectives are a reaction to structuralists' claims to scientific

objectivity and universality of a singular truth. Poststructuralists focus on concepts such as relativity, plurality, fragmentation, and antifoundationalism, which I will explain below. Meta-narratives and grand theories that offer general, global, uniform facts of human sciences are perceived with skepticism. Also, post-structuralists reject meta-narratives that define and place boundaries around certain forms of knowledge (Fawcett, 2010). They also question the all-encompassing claims of grand narratives such as Marxism and Liberalism.

Poststructuralism is not a systematic theory but rather a set of theoretical assumptions. These theoretical assumptions are not necessarily shared by all who call themselves poststructuralists. Peter and Burbules (2004) posit, “It is best referred to as a *school of thought*—a complex skein of thought embodying different forms of critical practice” (p. 18, emphasis in original). It could be a way of thinking, a shared critique by those who share similar skepticism of the structuralist’s claim to foundational facts about human existence. It is interdisciplinary with different but related strands of thoughts.

A central assumption of poststructuralist thought is the rejection of totalizing, essentialist, and foundationalist concepts. This rejection is based on the primary view that discourses and language play an important role in the construction of knowledge and ideas. An anti-essentialist concept suggests that there is no reality that exists independent of discourses and languages (Lye, 1997). The anti-essentialists state that no reality can be perceived or understood independent of language and ideology—the world as experienced is in effect a *text*. Language and discourses shape reality, identity, and self (Lye, 1997). We depend on the “linguistic categories to understand the intrinsic qualities or characteristics residing in people” (Gergen, 1999, p. 45). There can never be a universal human subject free from history, culture, and society.

Another concept, anti-foundationalism, rejects the idea of a stable, unproblematic, representation of the world. There is no absolute foundation outside of history and discourses that allow authoritative statements. Further, the anti-totalizing concept rejects the notion of a universal singular truth. Poststructuralists distrust grand explanatory narratives that cover diverse phenomena and represent themselves as a singular truth. “Poststructuralists,” Sarup (1993) explains, “are highly critical of the unity of the stable sign . . . the new movement implies a shift from the signified to the signifier: so there is a perpetual detour on the way to a truth that has lost any status or finality” (p. 3). Poststructuralists are critical of the concepts of causality, self and universal truth.

Both anti-essentialism and anti-foundationalism have significant implications for theorizing about self and identity and how victims are perceived in the positivist literature. The essentialist view of individuals assumes that social categories of people (e.g., aggressive, intelligent, borderline, depressed, bulimic, etc.) are naturally given and if we understand the “nature and essence of a given individual, we can predict how they might behave” (Burr, 2003, p. 30). The current literature, written from a positivist perspective, codifies and essentializes victims as helpless, weak, and defenseless and obscures their expression of values, responses, and knowledge. A major poststructuralist criticism of the current literature on bullying-victimization is that it is difficult to understand the complexities of interrelationships among people if we divide people into two hard categories of the oppressors and the oppressed (Monk, Winslade, & Sinclair, 2008).

Poststructural view of self and identity

Before I discuss the poststructural view of self and identity, it would be appropriate to give a general description of the controversy that surrounds the nebulous view of identity in the

literature. Identity and self are complex and multifaceted concepts. They are not easy to define and have been often used synonymously as in the following quotation. “Identity and self point to large, amorphous, and changing phenomena that defy hard and fast definitions” (Ashmore & Jussim, 1997, p. 5). It should also be noted that different theorists have different conceptualizations of identity and self. One group of thinkers recognize “the agency, authenticity, and creativity of the self, ” while others argue in favor of a “person’s determination by social structures” (Elliot, 2007, p. 13). There has always been a debate in social sciences on agency versus structure in the description of self. Consequently, the terms that describe self also vary considerably. Theorists describe this concept as identity, the subject, subjectivity, selfhood, and the self. To make matters more complex, identity and self overlap with other terms in some disciplines such as *personality* in Psychology, *role* in Sociology, and *personhood* in Anthropology. These terms have been used in many different ways. Sometimes different terms have been used to explain, “what appears to be the same phenomenon” (Ashmore & Jussim, 1997, p. 5). These differences in terminology, Elliot (2007) suggests, “are not always significant, primarily because these terms can all be said to denote a concern with the subjectivity of the individual—selfhood” (p. 14).

The debate is not restricted to the definition of identity but also involves other conceptual concerns. There are many approaches to understanding the concept of identity. The essentialist perspective and the non-essentialist position underpin the key debate on identity. The essentialists take for granted that a person has a “given identity” while, on the other hand, non-essentialists or the poststructuralist writers question the authenticity and the existence of the fixed human “subject,” or “self,” as posited by *humanism*. The humanist “essential’ view of self presupposes an *essence* at the heart of the individual which is unitary, unique, fixed, and

internally coherent, endowed with initiative, singular will, and purposefulness (Sarup, 1996; Weedon, 1997). However, this essentialist concept is no longer seen as tenable in a poststructuralist view of identity. According to poststructuralism, the notion that we can “lift the veil of the social and reveal the reality beneath” is a fallacy (Annandale & Clarke, 1996, p. 19).

A researcher with a poststructural perspective cannot understand individuals as having a fixed identity ontologically separate from their position in the social world. Sarup (1993) says that Lacan and Sartre emphasized that the individual is more than a set of fixed set of categories; people should not think of themselves as merely a set of characterizations. At the same time, Sarup adds, “we should not go to the other extreme and conceive ourselves as pure nothingness” (p. 19). Thus poststructuralists see identity as multiple, incoherent, contradictory, and *in process*, always influenced by social, relational forces, and constantly reconstituted in discursive experiences (Gergen, 1991; Sarup, 1996; Weedon, 1997). Identity cannot be viewed as unitary and fixed; it is relational, always changing in relation to social, political, and cultural contexts (Gergen & Gergen, 2006). Identity conceived in this way is an unstable representation in language, texts, and talk, “constructed within, not outside, discourse . . . [and] produced in specific historical and institutional sites within discursive formation and practices” (Hall, 1996, p. 4). According to poststructuralists, our understanding of our identities is constructed by drawing on the prevailing cultural and socially available discourses. It is not something that pre-exists; it is unfinished, fluid, arbitrary, fragmented, full of contradictions and ambiguity. Bhabha (1994) confirms, “identity is never *a priori*, nor a finished product, it is only ever the problematic *process of access* to an image of totality (p. 51). Thus identities are the product of meaning-making activities allowing people to construct identities in the narratives they tell to themselves and others, and in their relationships with others, by drawing on the available discourses.

Furthermore, as Monk, Winslade, and Sinclair (2008) confirm, “discourses set up patterns of relationship among people, but rarely on an equal basis . . . discourses that dominate always give some people entitlement to speak, to do things, and to be recognized in their social world,” (p. 123). Meanwhile people who do not have the dominant discourses available to them are always struggling to get their voices heard. Further, Monk, Winslade, and Sinclair (2008) add that these people struggle “to be recognized by others who matter, and even to feel justified in having an opinion in the first place” (p. 123). They are marginalized and live on the periphery of the dominant discourses.

The last point I would like to mention regarding identity has a special significance to the literature on bullying and victimization. It is related to identity and labeling. Sarup (1996) comments, “One element of identity-construction is the process of labeling. People attach certain labels to others, and the labels often (but not always) begin to have an effect” (p. 14). Both events, actions, and their consequences that happened in the past, can affect a person’s identity. Furthermore, the way the events are interpreted retroactively can also influence our identity (Sarup, 1996). It is obvious from the literature review that bullied children are labeled as victims with definite characteristics belonging to that category. It is also noteworthy that children who are labeled victims often blame themselves for their own victimization.

Thus, poststructuralism offers an alternative lens to view the identity of victims of bullying. Identity is often overlooked in situations of victimhood. In the following section, I will discuss how the victims’ acts of resistance are often (prudently) subtle as a result of risk to self, due to power differentials in the circumstances.

Theories of Power and Resistance

The works of James Scott (1985, 1990) and Michael Foucault (1980) provide a

framework to describe and analyze the resistance of children to bullying. Although Scott's work illustrates peasants' resistance to legalized authority, it has great implications for resistance in interpersonal settings. Foucault's work illustrates the contemporaneous nature of power and resistance. First I will discuss Foucault's views on power and resistance, and then I will address Scott's view on resistance.

Foucault: Power

A key theme in Foucault's (1980) analysis of power is its *location* and its *operation*. He says that power is everywhere; it is exercised continually in the everyday thoughts and behaviour of ordinary people. Foucault posits (1980), "power reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies, and is embedded in their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes, and everyday life" (p. 39). People often try to exercise power over others, but the question arises as to how they are able to do so.

Foucault's (1989) conception of power focuses on the *relations of power* because power is not something that is acquired, seized, or shared (Sarup, 1993). It is not an object that one could possess. Liberal humanists and structuralists assume that individuals and institutions can possess power. Foucault suggests that we should not look at who has power, but instead we should look for the *process* of power, how it is exercised and perpetuated. Emphasizing relations of power, Foucault (1989) argues that "power is relations; power is not a thing" (p. 198); it is "a more-or-less organized, hierarchical, coordinated cluster of relations" (Foucault, 1980, p. 410). Power is in the relations and a set of discourses that go along with it to justify the use of power.

This description of power emphasizes that power is not centralized but operates at the most micro-level of social relations in an organized and strategic fashion. It is omnipresent at every level of a social body. We all participate in relations of power at every moment of our

lives (Monk, Winslade, & Sinclair, 2008). Further, power, according to Foucault, “is employed and exercised through a net-like organization, and not only individuals circulate through its threads; they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power . . . In other words, individuals are the vehicle of power, not its points of application” (Foucault, 1980, p. 98). Since all of us exercise power, it would be wrong to say that some have power and others are powerless. In my research, I have adopted a view of power that enables us to look for the ways in which victims exercise power.

Power relations are diverse, multiple and contextual (Foucault, 1980). They can originate in unpredictable ways at certain times and places. As Sarup (1996) explains, Foucault’s concept of power is that:

It is not located in agencies such as individuals, economic forces, or the state . . . he focuses not on determining social structures but on micro-operations of power. Power is not attached to agents and interests but is incorporated in numerous practices. (p. 75)

It does not belong to the people at the top of the hierarchy but to all of us.

This concept of power raises some questions. The way things are in the society, it appears that power is concentrated with certain groups and, on the other hand, some people have difficulty exercising power. While Foucault does not deny that power is concentrated with some groups, he confirms that it is not the group that holds it. The power is within the *relations and a set of discourse practices* that are embedded in it. The unwritten rules of discourse normalize social practices and exercise of power by some groups. Foucault (1978) says, “It is in the discourses that transmit and produce power, reinforce it, but also undermine and expose it, render it fragile, and make it possible to thwart it” (as cited in Monk, Winslade, & Sinclair, p. 173, 2008). Viewing power in this way, we can say that discourses legitimize power, and people

who have entitlement to dominant discourses, exercise power. But discourses change depending on the contexts; consequently the relations of power also change with the contexts where the discourses are practiced.

Considering Foucault's conception of modern power in this way, it appears that the literature on bullying presents an inadequate characterization of bullies with more power, and victims with less power. This view also suggests that the current power as a commodity characterization in the bullying literature provides us with an inadequate understanding of complex power relations. Since we all exercise power to some degree, it does not make sense to portray some groups as powerless (Monk, Winslade, & Sinclair, 2008).

The current research on bullying and victimization reports that bullying is a relationship problem and it should be viewed in the context in which it occurs (Craig & Pepler, 2007). Applying Foucault's *relations of power* concept to the bully-victim relationship, we should expect the presence of power not only for the perpetrators of violence but also for victims as well. Given that power is not a commodity to own but something that resides in a net-like web of social relations, all individuals go through the web's threads and exercise power. This net-like perspective on power suggests that the victims who are portrayed as powerless individuals also exercise power in their relationships. However, much of the research literature on bullying has not been written from this point of view.

Ubiquity of resistance

For Foucault, where there is power there is resistance. He (Foucault, 1980) says that power and resistance are contemporaries, and he explains that as soon as power exists in a relationship there is resistance. He continues:

There are no relations of power without resistance; the latter are all the more real and

effective because they are formed right at the point where relations of power are exercised, resistance . . . exists all the more by being in the same place as power, hence, like power, resistance is multiple. (p. 142)

Foucault posits (1982) that resistance is the nexus of all power relations. It is not something that is outside the relations of power; it exists even *in* the most oppressive relationships. A description of an act of power to abuse or humiliate another will be incomplete if it does not present resistance to that act. Essentially, power and resistance are two sides of a constitutive equation and to understand this equation one has to understand both variables. They are contemporaries, existing simultaneously. Emphasizing the significance of resistance, Foucault says that examining resistance can help to analyze power relations. He explains, “to understand what power relations are all about, perhaps we should investigate the forms of resistance and attempts made to dissociate these relations” (Foucault, 1982, p. 211). Power always implies the possibility of resistance. Even though power is everywhere, people are not completely trapped in power relations:

Because every power relationship implies . . . a strategy of struggle, in which two forces are not superimposed, do not lose their specific nature, or do not finally become confused. Each constitute for the other a kind of permanent limit, a point of possible reversal . . . it would not be possible for power relations to exist without points of subordination that, by definition, are means of escape (Foucault, 1982, p. 794).

It is clear that neither power nor resistance is absolute. If power and violence increase beyond their limits, it will engender resistance to increase. There are two factors to consider: the contemporaneous nature of power and resistance and the permanent limits one poses for the other. Therefore, we should expect some actions from the victims of bullying in response to

humiliation, taunting, pushing, and shoving. Modern systems of power and control are never complete. Cracks exist, and hence, there are always places where resistance will take place.

Discussing Foucault's stand on resistance, Abu Lugodh (1990) adds another dimension. In her study of resistance by Bedouin women, she argues that "the resistance should be used as a diagnostic of power," to trace "the ways in which intersecting and often conflicting structures of power work together" (p. 42) to create the oppressing conditions that give rise to everyday resistance. She argues that we should say that, "where there is resistance, there is power" (p. 41). In her ethnographic study, she illustrates how the details of resistance uncovered the operations of social power in the community. Looking at resistance in this way, one sees the contribution of resistance to the complexity of power relations (Abu Lugodh, 1990).

Scott: The Arts of Resistance

Wade (2000) cites that scholars have given various names to resistance practices. They have referred to *tactics* (de Certeau, 1984), *small acts of living* (Goffman, 1961), and *weapons of the weak* (Scott, 1985). In his ethnographic study, Scott (1985) illustrates Malay villagers' everyday forms of resistance to their social and economic exploitation. To avoid direct confrontation with authorities, peasants' used individual acts of defiance. The villagers could not afford the open rebellion and remained passive in their public encounters. He explains, "ordinary weapons of relatively powerless groups were foot-dragging, dissimulation, desertion, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander" (Scott, 1985, p. 29). These activities represented a form of self-help for villagers who had superficially agreed to masters' demands. This form of resistance did not require coordination or planning. Scott makes the point that when open resistance is not safe for those rendered weak due to power differentials, people will use covert means of resistance.

In his book *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, Scott (1990) presents the idea of hidden and public transcripts. By *public transcript*, Scott means, “A way of describing the open interaction between subordinates and those who dominate . . . it is a *public performance* required by those subject to systematic forms of social subordination” (p. 2, emphasis added). Tilly (1991) depicts it as a show of domination and deference by the appropriate actors. But the public transcript does not tell the whole story about the power relations between the dominant and the subordinate groups. The point to note here is what Scott describes as public performance by the subordinate groups. Under the circumstances of unequal power relationships, the subordinate groups will provide convincing evidence of their subordination in the form of public performance, although defying the authority in other ways.

To understand the resistance by the subordinate groups, we have to look at what goes on offstage. He uses the term, “*the hidden transcript* to characterize the discourse that takes place offstage beyond direct observation by the power-holders” (Scott, 1990, p. 4, emphasis in original). The hidden transcript consists of those offstage gestures, speeches, sarcasm, and practices that confirm or contradict what goes on in the public transcript. It would be accurate to say that the hidden transcript tells the story of resistance by the subordinate group.

Scott emphasizes that onstage and offstage performances continue although the public transcript disappears offstage except as a means of ridicule when the subordinate group ridicules the dominant group. Scott posits:

Domination . . . produces an official transcript that provides convincing evidence of willing, often enthusiastic complicity. In ordinary circumstances subordinates have a vested interest in avoiding any explicit display of insubordination . . . They . . . also have a practical interest in resistance—in minimizing the exactions, labor, and humiliation to

which they are subject. The reconciliation of these two objects . . . is typically achieved by pursuing precisely those forms of resistance that avoid any open confrontation with the structures of authority being resisted. Thus the peasantry, in the name of safety and success, has historically preferred to disguise their resistance. (1990, p. 86)

Scott speaks about the resistance that is enacted when oppressed peasants lack the capacity to openly challenge authority. It takes place in a disguised form. Their disguised resistance keeps “the on-stage theater of power” (Scott, 1985, p. 37) and there are no public records of it. He says that what is missing from the periodic outbursts of peasants’ struggle is an “underlying vision of justice that informs them and their specific goals and targets, which are quite often rational indeed” (Scott, 1985, p. 37). The outburst of struggle only shows that the covert forms of resistance are not working.

Applying Scott’s framework to bully-victim situations, we can expect, at times, covert resistance from victims. Their acts of resistance have very minimal visibility in the literature. In much the way Scott describes the actions of peasants, depending on the circumstances, it may not be safe or in their interests of victims of bullying to put up overt resistance.

Wade’s Response-Based Analytic Framework

Wade’s (1997, 2007) response-based analytic framework is based on two theoretical foundations. First, he suggests that alongside the history of violence there exists a parallel history of resistance. People who are abused or mistreated often resist “in determined, prudent, and creative ways” (p. 23) yet their resistance often goes unnoticed. Secondly, he argues that while resistance is described as a natural and spontaneous response to any kind of mistreatment, it is absent from the literature on victims.

Language is used to conceal or reveal violence, or to blame and pathologize victims

(Coates, Todd, & Wade, 2000, as cited in Todd & Wade, 2003). The victims are mostly misrepresented as socially conditioned and passive recipients of abuse. Resistance is concealed, understated, or not acknowledged at all. The perpetrator's responsibility is obscured and mitigated (Campbell, Rose, Kub, & Nedd, 1998; Coates & Wade, 2007).

To understand personalized violence and resistance, the actions of perpetrators, victims, and language used to describe them, Wade (1997, 2010) proposes that we should look at "social interaction" and "language." In Wade's (1997, 2010) view, social interaction is a part of daily life, and individuals are always in a social exchange with others in social contexts. Personal beliefs, self-respect, and dignity are a part of social interaction. Violence and abuse in any form are an affront to dignity. I will discuss violence as a component of interaction. There are two key issues to consider here: violence is social, unilateral, and deliberate, and resistance is ubiquitous (Coates & Wade, 2007).

Violence is social and unilateral

Violence is social because it involves an interaction between at least two people. Coates and Wade (2007) argue, "contextual analysis also shows that while violence is social, it is unilateral rather than mutual" (Coates & Wade, 2007). It is mostly unilateral in that it is an act that is instigated by one individual against another (Wade, 2012). The perpetrator of violence takes action against the will of the other individual with the intention to hurt that individual. Violence can be better understood when we examine it in its context. The actions of perpetrators and victims need to be understood in order to fully comprehend the pattern of the interaction. Perpetrators anticipate that victims will try to respond in some way and will modify their violent or abusive actions to minimize the chances of that response occurring.

The concept of violence as *social and unilateral* is central to bully-victim situations.

Research studies have reported that bullying and victimization is a relationship problem, and it should be viewed in the context in which it occurs. First, it is mostly a unilateral action. The aggression is mostly at the bully's end. A bully usually anticipates the victim's response and makes sure the victim will not retaliate. Bullies often pick on children who appear to be weak and unable to defend themselves (Macklem, 2003; Rigby, 2002; Ross, 2003). They also threaten their victims, warning them that if they tell authorities about the aggression there will be consequences. Victims' acts of resistance are often met with further violence by bullies, and sometimes ignored by the authorities (Mishna, Scarcello, Pepler, & Wiener, 2005; Ross, 2003).

Violence is deliberate

The perpetrators' aggression is intentional and they plan their attacks strategically. They anticipate victims' responses and take action to suppress them before inflicting injuries on victims. The determined efforts made by perpetrators to hide their violent acts demonstrate the victims' strong resistance to the attacks (Wade, 1997). For example, bullies normally will not pick on a child who is strong and socially popular, nor will they harass someone they fear will tell the authorities. They pick their victims carefully (Bolton & Graeve, 2005; Olweus, 1995).

Resistance is ubiquitous

The analysis of perpetrators' and victims' actions shows that victims resist the attacks made on them. The type of resistance depends on the circumstance, particularly when and where the attack is made.

Resistance could be physical (direct retaliation), creative (acts of imagination), a mental escape (resourcefulness), social, and behavioural, or it could be some act in disguised form (Coates & Wade, 2007; Yuen, 2009). Wade (1997) states: "In extreme circumstances, the only possibility for resistance [that] victims could afford may be in the privacy afforded by the

mind”(p. 514). An example of resistance in a disguised form would be the acting out a fantasy, imagining a friend who would protect the victim in the face of aggression. Wade (1997) defines resistance in very broad terms:

Any mental or behavioural act through which a person attempts to expose, withstand, repel, stop, prevent, abstain from, strive against, impede, refuse to comply with, or oppose any form of violence or oppression (including any type of disrespect), or the conditions that make such acts possible may be understood as a form of resistance. (p. 25)

The Calgary Women’s Emergency Shelter in its report “Honouring resistance” (2007) further illustrates resistance:

Whenever people are abused, they do many things to oppose the abuse and to keep their dignity and their self-respect. This is called resistance. The resistance might include not doing what the perpetrators wants them to do, standing up against, and trying to stop or prevent violence, disrespect, or oppression.

Imagining a better life may also be a way that victims resist abuse. (p. 5)

These definitions illustrate that any small act by the victims to sustain values, beliefs, commitments, and respect for moral standards can be understood as resistance. Wade’s ideas are manifest on the front lines where acts of violence happen on a daily basis (1997, 2000, 2007)

Resistance is typically acknowledged when it is an open act of defiance or when it is successful in preventing an attack. While it could also be an overt act of defiance, resistance is more often spontaneous, subtle, determined, disguised, and sometimes difficult to discern (Wade, 1997; Yuen, 2009). Resistance may not bring about immediate success; imagining a better life without victimization in the future can also be understood as a way that victims resist abuse.

However not every act can be interpreted as an act of resistance.

Although resistance is ever-present, to be considered an act of resistance a response depends on the social context, perpetrator's actions, and the immediate settings (Wade, 2000). Resistance does not imply that victims are powerful; instead it entails an awareness of being less powerful in a relationship. Wade (2000) states, "It is often inspired by fear, desperation, and powerlessness . . . passivity and submission are often forms of resistance in themselves in that they deny the offender a pretext for further violence while they conceal a campaign of steadfast resistance *behind the scenes*" (p. 8, emphasis in original).

In some situations any kind of resistance risks the safety of victims; in such cases resistance can be afforded only in the safety of the mind. Lampert (1996) in her study redefines outward passivity as an active survival strategy used by abused women, to halt, stop, change, and cope with the violence. These abused women developed many life-saving strategies of resistance and strength, and passivity was one of the strategies. They use face-saving; or pretending to be invisible; and mental escape as their resistance to abusive relationships (Lampert, 1996). Goffman (1961) considers face-saving as a strategy for *impression management* used by the victims to affect another person's perception about the real situation. Victims use a variety of strategies to keep violence invisible and maintain their dignity.

Language of effects and responses

In addition to writing about the ubiquity of resistance, Coates and Wade (2007) discuss four discursive operations (linguistic representations) of interpersonal violence. Throughout the research studies, popular literature, media, and publications on interpersonal violence, the language has been strategically used to misrepresent victims in a variety of ways. Wade (2000) refers to misrepresentation of interpersonal violence as a "verbal deception" which serves the

purposes of the perpetrators.

The language of effects and language of resistance are diametrically opposed to each other. The significant issue to consider is that the language of effects “encodes many interpretive biases” (Todd & Wade, 2003, p. 151) that lead to misrepresentation of victims by concealing violence committed against them, and portraying them as weak and complacent. Concealing violence also serves another purpose in favour of perpetrators. The violent perpetrators are able to manipulate their public appearance, and not be considered responsible for their actions. Even when the violence is reported, the language takes on a different colour. Coates and Wade (2004) have described many ways the language is used to blame and make the victims responsible for their victimization. The stereotyping (“passive”, “asking for it”), and mutualizing (“it takes two to tango”) are some of the ways in which violence is depicted as social interaction.

Also, the stereotyping and mutualizing of violence does not leave much room to talk about victims’ resistance, and the efforts they took to protect themselves. Thus, this portrayal hides their resistance and renders them with many negative psychological labels such as depressed, unstable, disturbed, and finally, in need of psychiatric help. According to Wade and Coates, the language of effects blames victims for perpetrators’ actions and sometimes transforms responses and resistance into problems and problems into symptoms.

Accounts of resistance and violence are never objective or impartial; they always seem to favour the people in power. Todd and Wade (2003) comment, “the interpretive biases encoded in the language of effects become apparent when contrasted with an alternative, the language of responses” (p. 151). Whereas the *effects* tell only the final story, such as what happened, the responses imply hope and action. Todd and Wade (2003) illustrate:

A response is a volitional act that demonstrates judgment, imagination, and will; the

effect is the strictly determined outcome of a previous event/cause. A response is a social, communicative act that plays a part in on-going social interaction; and effect is an end-state, the last link in a causal chain. Resistance to violence is positive or constructive in that it signals the individual's desire to escape the violence and improve their circumstance; logically, a negative cause such as violence can produce only negative effects (Todd & Wade, 2003, p. 151).

It is evident from this passage that the language of effects changes the entire perspective on acts of resistance. There is no place for hope and agency in the language of effects. Listening to the language of effects, it is easy to see why "all behavioral and mental responses appear as non-volitional, asocial, and inherently negative end-states" (Coates & Wade, 2007; Todd & Wade, 2003, p. 151).

Applying this statement to the victims of bullying, it is noteworthy that victims' deficit-laden portrayal in the literature and their repeated victimization often leave them with a sense of hopelessness and despair. With no acknowledgment of their resistance, they have been led to view themselves as incapable of changing the circumstances they are in. It is possible that they may not acknowledge their own resistance to aggression. White (2006) suggests that it is of utmost importance that in our conversations with the victims we should "listen for signs of what the person has continued to give value to in life despite all that they have been through" (p. 28). These signs may describe the victims' responses to traumatic situations.

Writing about traumatic experiences in people's lives, White (2006) states, "no-one is a passive recipient of trauma; people always take steps to . . . prevent the trauma they are subject to, or try to modify its effects on their lives" (p. 28). These steps are the responses people take to hold on to what is precious to them and what sustains them during difficult times. The responses

people take to lessen the effects of abuse are shaped by the knowledge and skills they have acquired in their lives.

Despite the importance of the victims' responses to aggression and trauma, victims are rendered invisible through "diminishment and disqualification" (Todd & Wade, 2003; Wade, 1997; White, 2006). When their responses are diminished or ignored, their agency is considered insignificant.

A response-based approach provides a context that allows the participants to articulate their resistance. It provides a forum for providing rich descriptions of the skills and knowledge they have used to hold on to their values. Following on the description of resistance, I anticipate that I will learn that children in my study have used many "small acts of living" to protect their dignity and values (Wade, 1997). These small acts could be acts of caring, protecting others, and skills of living (Yuen, 2009). Although small, these acts can give victims a sense of accomplishment, thus foregrounding their skills, knowledge, and personal agency.

Research Goals

The goals of this research study were twofold. First, this research investigated bullying from the perspective of victims and their families. Currently, literature in this field presents a rather unbalanced picture of bullying and victimization. It is evident from the literature review that very little has been written from the victims' and their families' perspectives of bullying. Even less has been written about their responses. Their personal stories of resistance are not a part of the big picture on bullying.

Second, I have collected the narratives of the victims and their families to illuminate the victims' resistance and responses to instances of bullying. By using a poststructural lens, and a response-based analytical approach, I attempted to highlight their active responses, both overt

and covert, to bullying. I also attempted to counter the singular focus on victims as weak and helpless in bullying dynamics.

Research Question

To explore the resistance and responses of the participants of my study, my research was guided by the following question:

How do young adolescents and their families describe their responses to bullying within response-based interviews?

Chapter 4: Research Methodology and Methods

The wayfarer, perceiving the pathway to truth, was struck with astonishment. It was thickly grown with weeds. "Ha" he said, "I see that none has passed here in a long time." Later he saw that each weed was a singular knife . . . "Well," he mumbled at last, "doubtless there are other roads."

Stephen Crane, (1972, poem 31)

In this chapter I will describe the research methodology, rationale for using this research methodology, and the research methods. The research method—a road map to data collection—will include instruments for data collection such as sampling, a demographic questionnaire, and the interview protocol. This will be followed by a description of each step performed for data collection, such as ethics approval from the Research Ethics Board, recruitment and selection of participants, interviews, transcriptions, and the construction of narratives. Finally, I will discuss the trustworthiness of my research.

Research Methodology

Narrative inquiry

Research methodology provides conceptual instruments which, when used appropriately, will answer the research questions (Polkinghorne, 1983). I chose a narrative inquiry as my research methodology because it was the most suitable approach to obtain answers to my research question. What is a narrative inquiry? What are its distinct features that make it suitable for my research? With these questions in mind, I will explore the narrative inquiry and its features.

In the past several decades, the narrative inquiry has acquired a significant place in qualitative research. One among many strategies of qualitative methodology, narrative inquiry has its own distinct features. Most inquirers agree on its basic and foremost feature: it is a study of people's experiences. Narrative inquiry begins with experiences as they are expressed in "narratives," usually described as "lived and told stories." Clandinin and Connelly (2000), propose:

Narrative inquiry is a way of understanding experience. It is collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus. An inquirer enters this matrix in the midst and progresses in the same spirit, concluding the inquiry still in the midst of living and telling, reliving and retelling, the stories of the experiences that make up people's lives, both individual and social. Simply stated . . . narrative inquiry is stories lived and told. (p. 20)

This definition describes key features of the narrative inquiry and provides a framework for discussing this methodology. First, it is a collaborative study of experiences and events in a social context; second, the experiences are meaningful; third, there is a temporality and continuity of experiences. After a brief introduction to the narrative inquiry, I will describe these features in detail later in the chapter.

Narratives are a way of understanding one's own or another's actions, and "organizing events and objectives in a meaningful whole, and of connecting and seeing the consequences of actions and events over time" (Chase, 2005, p. 656; Gubrium & Holstein, 1997; Hinchman & Hinchman, 1997). When we tell stories of our experiences, we connect actions and events from the past to what is happening at present. Narratives are not simply the description of experiences in chronological order. A narrative will express why a particular event is worth telling. Only

those events that are considered important are selected, organized, and narrated, and this entails a meaningful pattern to the disconnected events and actions. A narrative is like a quilt with a theme or a pattern in which different small pieces of material, relevant to a pre-decided theme, are sewn together to make one big quilt. The wholeness of the quilt gives meaning to each piece.

Narratives are also an expression of a narrator's emotions, thoughts, and interpretations of events. Furthermore, as Polkinghorne (1988) states, "narrative is the primary form by which human experience is made meaningful . . . a narrative meaningfulness is created by organizing human experience into temporally meaningful episodes" (p. 1). It is the temporality and continuity of events that hold the events together and give them narrative meaning. Put simply, human experience is understood as a continuum of events, interconnecting past experiences to the present. This continuity of experiences informs us that narrative inquiry is not an investigation of a single event. It is, rather, a series of events generating new meanings that may become part of the future experience. A narrative understanding of human experience occurs when the past, present, and an implied future are contextually and temporally interconnected. My goal is to understand the past experiences of the participants, and the ways in which these experiences represent and contextualize their resistance and responses to aggression by bullies. A more detailed description of the key features of narrative inquiry follows.

Narrative and temporality

Van Manen (1997) posits, "the temporal dimensions of past, present, and future constitute the horizons of a person's temporal landscape" (p. 104). In narrative inquiry, we attempt to understand people's lived experiences and the events in a temporal transition. Our experiences are not static; they are always changing. It is important to understand people, events, and places as in process or always in transition. When narrators tell their stories, they

organize them temporally. “They look back on and recount lives that are located in particular times and places” (Laslett, 1999, p. 392). Furthermore, Franzosi (1998) adds that organizing and rearranging the events in a temporal fashion will involve changes in their meaning. The narrative process, storytelling, brings scattered events from the past and present together and changes them into a single meaningful whole. Polkinghorne (1) states, “narrative is a form of expressiveness through which life events are conjoined into coherent, meaningful, unified themes” (p. 126). The *theme* that organizes and gives significance to the individual events is normally referred to as a *plot* of the narrative (Polkinghorne, 1988; Riessman, 2008). A plot signifies, highlights, and selects scattered but important events and weaves them into a single story.

Narrative and coherence

The concept of narrative coherence is one of the defining features of narratives. Narrative coherence is considered to be pivotal to the integrity of the story. It refers to how well the events in a narrative combine to make it more than just “a sum of its parts” (Elliot, 2005, p. 48). The integration of different aspects of an experience into a narrative gives it a sense of unity and purpose (Baerger & McAdams, 1999).

Ricoeur’s (1980) approach to temporality and coherence in narratives involves two dimensions: an *episodic* dimension, including the scattered events that happened in the past; and a *configurational* dimension, the process that integrates random events scattered through time in a unified plot, and creates meaning. The configurational process renders coherence, and meaning to unrelated events by integrating them in a narrative or a story. Our lived experiences are unorganized, disrupted, and desultory. A single event or a group of events can lack coherence. Their meaning is limited to “categorical identification” (Polkinghorne, 1988). The

construction of narrative brings the events together and weaves them into a story, but the process of constructing a coherent narrative does not happen spontaneously. As stated earlier it is the process of narrative “configuration” that provides a meaningful constellation and integration of unrelated events into a plot (Polkinghorne, 1988). Narrative configuration occurs through the process of *emplotment*. It is the way we arrange events and actions that give a sense of wholeness to a story. “Emplotment (narrative intelligence),” Ricoeur explained, “has the ability to take discordant events and heterogeneous episodes of human action and tie them together into a coherent plot, thus creating a concordance to our experience” (as cited in Muldoon, 1992, p. 39). The construction of a plot changes events into episodes. Episodes then become part of a story. To sum up, we can say that *emplotment* reorganizes our scattered experiences and incorporates them into a coherent story.

Understanding lived experiences

A narrative inquiry is well suited to understanding the complexities and subtleties of people’s lived experiences. People make sense of their experiences by narrating them or creating a story about them, and, therefore, narrative or a story is an appropriate mode to understand experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). We are essentially raconteurs who experience the world and interact with others through stories. Both personal and social experiences can be the subject of a narrative inquiry. According to Dewey, it is important to note that our experiences are related to social context. Our experiences do not occur in a vacuum and events are always a part of a broader social context (as cited in Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Investigating an event without social context will give an incomplete picture of the event. Furthermore, different social contexts can give a different meaning to the same event.

Another important feature of experience is its continuity. One experience grows out of another experience and so on; there is a continuum of events resulting in a continuity of experience. In Clandinin and Connelly's words, "wherever one positions oneself in that continuum—the imagined now, some imagined past, or some imagined future—each point has a past experiential base and leads to an experiential future" (2000, p. 2). We never live only in the present. The human mind is always moving back and forth between past, present, and the future.

Collaboration between researcher and participants

One of the foremost features of narrative inquiry is the collaboration between the researcher and the participants. In narrative inquiry, the researcher and the researched are in a relationship where both parties will learn and change during the course of research. The inquirer is more than an information seeker or a detached listener, but seeks to understand meaning and interpret the narratives of the participants. There is a dialogical relationship between the researcher and the researched; they both actively participate in the interviews and co-construct the narratives (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, 2007; Pinnagar & Dayenes, 2007). Commenting on the dialogical relationship of the participant and the researcher, Salmon and Riessman (2008) posit:

All narratives are, in a fundamental sense, co-constructed. The audience whether physically present or not, exerts a crucial influence on what can and cannot be said, how things should be expressed, what can be taken for granted, what needs to be explained, and so on. We now recognize that the personal account, in research interviews, which has traditionally been seen as the experiences of a single subjectivity, is in fact always a co-construction. (p. 80)

We note that narratives are constructed relationally, and collaboratively, between researcher and the participant in a social context. The ongoing collaboration changes the shape of construction of narratives, and could also lead to a new interpretative stance and new meanings.

Narrative is living, telling, retelling, and reliving

As stated earlier, narrative inquiry is a collaborative process of story telling and retelling as the research proceeds. The researcher gives an account of experiences that is temporal, continuous, and context bound. As the research proceeds, the experiences grow and bring changes in the life story. Life moves on and brings new experiences reflecting changes in the story. Retelling of stories is complicated and a challenge to the researcher, but it allows for further changes and growth in a story. Life changes, so does our story, and it is imperative that story must be retold to incorporate the new experiences. Thus, the process of mutual narrative construction involves a cycle of living, telling, reliving, and retelling, all at the same time. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) aptly put it, “We imagine, therefore, in the construction of narrative of experiences, there is a reflective relationship between living a life story, telling a life story, and reliving a life story, and retelling a life story” (p. 71). In narrative inquiry, both researchers and the participants are collaborators in the ongoing process of construction and reconstruction of narratives.

Narratives

Narratives and children

Since the research participants are parents and adolescents, it is relevant to address a few issues related to adolescents and their narrative rendering. I interviewed adolescents directly

about their experiences and responses to bullying to encourage them to give voice to their own interpretation of their experiences rather than relying on their parents.

Children's stories provide us with their understanding of the world, their own and others' experiences, thoughts, feeling, and actions (Quinn, 2005). They share their stories about the things that happen in their daily lives. When they create their own narratives—stories explaining their behaviour or interpreting others' behaviour—they position the self and the other actors in interpersonal social situations. Given sufficient prompting, they are able to construct a narrative about events that happened, past events that may be related to the current event, time frame, context, people, objects, and activities. These stories, therefore, allow them to organize and attach meanings to events in their lives (Bamburg, 2004; Bruner, 1990; Hill, 2005).

Narratives and adults

The adult participants' narratives feature their experiences, intentions, purpose, and values, and situate them as agents in their own life stories. White (2001) emphasizes that our stories are not just stories. They are active. They constitute us. The response-based narratives co-constructed—between the participants and me—centers them as active agents of their own lives (as cited in Brown & Augusta-Scott, 2007).

However, I recognized that the participants' narratives might also focus on the effects of their victimization and hardships. It is likely that they might be overwhelmed with a sense of helplessness, see themselves as “passive and without agency,” or not strong enough mentally or physically to respond to the bullies' aggression (Todd & Wade, 2003). It is important that I acknowledge stories of their abuse, but my goal will be to provide an opportunity for them to identify their responses to the hardships they have gone through (White, 2006).

Narrative Analysis

Narratives are interpretive hence require interpretation (Riessman, 1993). Narrative analysis presents multiple methods for understanding and interpreting people's experiences, presented in the form of a story. At the end of the data-gathering phase, most qualitative researchers have assembled voluminous narrative material in the form of audiotapes, transcripts of life stories, field notes, and researcher's journals. How to make some sense of this raw data, and come to some conclusions is the question researchers grapple with at this time. What makes diverse texts into a good narrative? In a good narrative, events are selected, organized in a sequential order, connected, and evaluated as meaningful for a selected audience (Hinchman & Hinchman, 1997).

In the past few years, many approaches have been employed for narrative analysis. So far no single approach gives a clear definition of a narrative analysis. Among others, the three approaches most widely used are: thematic analysis, structural analysis, and dialogical-performance analysis (Braun & Clark, 2005; Cortazzi, 2001; Elliot, 2005; Mishler, 1995; Riessman, 1993, 2008). Although each approach focuses on different aspect of narratives, the approaches are not mutually exclusive and can be combined (Riessman, 2008).

Discussing thematic analysis, Braun and Clark (2005) state that thematic analysis is the most widely used method of analysis in qualitative research, adding that it should be considered as a "foundational method for qualitative analysis" (p. 76). It is flexible and can be used with different theoretical perspectives and epistemologies. From the three approaches discussed by Riessman (2008), I chose the thematic approach for my data analysis because I was not looking for a linguistic structure in the narratives. Language in the narratives is important but was not the focus of my research.

Dialogical-performance analysis focuses on conversation. My research was more than a dialogical performance. I listened more to the participants to obtain the story. It was not easy but I gave them the freedom to continue to tell their stories in order to obtain rich narratives. I will give a brief description of the three approaches followed by a discussion of the thematic approach and its application for my research.

Structural analysis

A structural approach to narrative analysis emphasizes *how* a story is told. The language plays an important part in the structural analysis of the text. The content of the text is important but emphasis is on the formal and structural means of analysis, for example how the story is developed, organized and how it ends. Labov and Waletzky (1967) argue that narratives have formal properties and each has a function. A fully formed narrative should have six elements: abstract (a short summary of the narrative); orientation (the time, place, situation, and participants); complicated action (the sequence of events); evaluation (the significance and meaning of the action, and the attitude of the narrator); the result or resolution of what finally happened; and coda (the return of the perspective to the present). A narrator creates his or her story of experiences, weaving all of these elements or some of them together (Riessman, 2008).

Dialogic-performance analysis

Dialogical-performance analysis of narratives emphasizes dialogical process between narrator and listener. The focus is on a narrator's speech or "who, why, and when" in a conversation. Both teller and listener join together in a conversation to create a story. It is a co-construction when a teller and a listener create meaning collaboratively in a particular setting (Riessman, 2008).

Thematic analysis

Most commonly used in narrative analysis and phenomenology, the thematic analysis focuses on the content and the local context of the interviews. Thematic analysis is flexible, diverse, and complex (Braun & Clark, 2006; Holloway & Todres, 2003). Its flexibility makes it suitable for a variety of disciplines and modes of analysis, such as health research, grounded theory, discourse analysis, and narrative analysis. In this method of narrative analysis, the researcher organizes the data by themes and then interprets them in light of thematic development. The themes are influenced by prior and emergent theory, the ultimate purpose of the investigation (Riessman, 2008). The emphasis here is *what* is said, and not *how* it is said. The thematic analysis is useful for theorizing across a number of cases. The investigator finds common thematic elements across research participants' interviews, thus creating a typology for supporting a theory or developing a theory.

Response-Based Methodology

I used response-based methodology (Wade, 1997) for developing themes of resistance and responses. The premise of response-based methodology is that people resist when they are badly treated. Resistance may not be in the form of retaliatory response. It could be a small act of resistance that individuals employ to preserve their dignity and values. It could be a very subtle or a micro-level response (Wade, 1997). People's responses are spontaneous but prudent and suitable to the situation. The responses show victims' determination to stand up for themselves against mistreatment and social injustice.

In this methodology, the presupposition of resistance as a natural, spontaneous, response to aggression is used to frame response-based questions, and to engage victims in the conversation about how they responded to a specific act of aggression. The interviewer does not

engage in the *language of effects*, which tends to perpetuate the feeling of helplessness, guilt, and shame. The language of effects also hides responses and examples of resistance and renders victims as submissive.

The objective in asking response-based questions is to illuminate the possibility of acknowledging personal agency of victims and encourage them to realize their own intelligence, and strength. Resistance may be subtle and disguised; it may not stop the aggression but it is a step to access self-knowledge and strength. It may be also a step towards pushing away the experiences of aggression from their lives.

Roadmap to Data Collection

Research methods

After selecting narrative inquiry and a response-based framework as my methodology, the next step was to choose appropriate methods to conduct the research project. The methods would include sampling, selection of participants, instruments of data collection, and data analysis. I employed three instruments for data collection: a short demographic background questionnaire, semi-structured response-based interviews, and I used my field notes and reflexive journal as a data source (Creswell, 1998). A short questionnaire was used to obtain demographic information from the families as well as their views on bullying in schools. Semi-structured interviews were the major source of data collection. In the following section I will describe the entire research process step by step.

Ethics and access to participants

After the Faculty of Education had approved my proposal, I applied to the Research Ethics Board (REB) of the university for approval of my research project. I could not begin any activity related to research until I had full approval from the Research Ethics Board. I received

ethics approval within a short period of time. I proceeded to the next step of recruitment of the participants. According to my plan, as stated in the research proposal, I approached PREVNet, an organization with a mandate to bring researchers and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) together to address issues related to bullying. There are approximately fifty NGO-PREVNet partners. I contacted the director of PREVNet via e-mail (Appendix A). I sent her a letter including an abstract of my proposal and a letter for possible organizations for recruitment of the participants (Appendix B). My purpose in contacting the director was to gain access to the relevant NGOs, so that I could meet families that might have faced bullying situations. Possible organizations relevant to the study were: Family Service Canada, Boys and Girls Club of Canada, and Scouts Canada. This plan did not come to fruition because PREVNet's director suggested that I should approach school boards in order to recruit the participants.

I had learned from my colleagues' experiences with various school boards that it would be a lengthy and complicated process to get approval from the local school board. The research proposal has to be approved by several committees of the school board. My only alternative was to place an advertisement in local community newspapers and put up notices on the community centre's notice boards to recruit participants. I had not anticipated this situation, and now had to take another route for recruiting the participants.

I applied for modifications to my original ethics application. The changes would include a new recruitment strategy. I prepared an advertisement for recruitment of the families (Appendix J). In consultation with the REB, I included the information that a small amount of money would be offered to each participant family as a token of appreciation for their participation. The Research Ethics Board approved these modifications, and I placed my

advertisement in community newspapers, on billboards in community centres, and on the university's community notice boards. Then I waited for the telephone to ring.

My decision to offer money as a token of appreciation to the participants was taken after much consideration. Discussing the challenges of different dimensions of narrative inquiry, Polkinghorne (2007) gives his views on this issue:

It's their story, they own it, and we are taking their time. I think we need to honor the people who are willing to become involved with us in terms of our research and not just in our respect but within our society paying or giving a gift or something like that . . . or letting them know that what we want is their stuff . . . I think the researcher gets all the glory . . . they are the ones who benefit from this research. And so that's, anyway that's what we do now. We always pay. (p. 648)

Furthermore, it is increasingly accepted in social science research that, in most cases, use of incentive to recruit and retain participants for a research project is innocuous. However, there are exceptions when it is not acceptable, especially when a dependency relationship exists between the participant and the researcher. There was no dependency relationship within my data collection with the participants.

Recruiting and selecting participants

I used purposeful sampling (Yin, 2011) for the recruitment of the participants. The purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that researchers want to obtain rich information in order to understand and gain insight about the people or events they are studying. The goal is, as Ewick and Silby (2003) say, “to interpret the meanings and functions of stories embedded in interviews” (as cited in Riessman, 2008, p. 60). Therefore, the participants, setting, and activities are selected deliberately to provide rich information, which cannot be obtained from

other sampling procedures (Le Compte & Preissle, 1993; Maxwell, 2005). The logic behind selecting information-rich cases is that they can provide the information needed to answer research questions. Le Compte and Preissle (1993) prefer the term criterion-based sampling than *purposeful* because the sampling is based on some pre-selected criteria. The selected criteria reflect the purpose of the study, and guide in locating the participants.

Discussing the question of sample size, Patton (2002) says, “there are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry” (p. 244). Purposeful sampling should be guided by the purpose, and the rationale of the study. When choosing a sample, Patton argues, “there is a trade-off between breadth and depth” (p. 244). In-depth information from a small number of participants can be valuable; on the other hand, a smaller sample may not serve the purpose when the aim is to make generalizations about a population. He further recommends, “A qualitative study should specify a minimum number of samples based on expected reasonable coverage of the phenomenon given the purpose of the study” (p. 246). Following Patton’s recommendations, I decided to proceed with a sample of four to six families. I expected that this size of sample would give me variations in the sample without compromising in-depth information. Thus, I proceeded to select a minimum of four and maximum of six adolescents and their parents for the participants.

During the recruitment phase, I received eight telephone calls and one email from families that wanted to participate in my study. I asked questions to screen them for eligibility based on the criteria explained below and provided in Appendix I; to learn their reasons for wanting to participate, and their willingness to do so; and to understand their commitment to the topic of bullying and victimization in school. I selected four families from the eight that showed interest in the project. The other four families were not selected for the following reasons. These families were looking for some help to deal with the issue of bullying of their child and they were angry

and upset. They expressed that they needed help desperately. They needed counselling. I gave them some suggestions and name of resources where they can get help. At the same time I reiterated the purpose of my study. The families appeared to be satisfied with my explanations. I informed the selected families that in our first brief meeting of about thirty minutes I would explain the research project and procedure we would follow, answer any questions or concerns they may have, ask them to sign the consent forms, and request that they complete a short background information questionnaire. I considered this meeting would also be an icebreaker. The prospective participants were screened and selected according to the following selection criteria.

The selection criteria (Appendix I) for the participants included four components. First, the adolescents should be enrolled in Grade 6, 7, or 8 in an English-language public school or have just finished Grade 8. They should be between the ages of 11 and 15 years. The rationale for selecting children/adolescents from Grade six, seven, and eight was that by the age of eleven, they have developed a concept of bullying and victimization, and they can describe their experiences very well (Begotti & Bonino, 2003; Lo Feudo, Palermitti, & Costible, 2003). In the fourteen countries that Smith, Cowie, Olafson, and Liefoghe (2002) sampled, it was concluded that 12 to 14 year old adolescents had a better understanding of bullying/victimization than eight year-olds.

Second, the adolescents should be the victims of ongoing bullying. They could self-identify as victims or could be identified by their parents. Third, the parents should have demonstrated their concerns by talking with the principal about the bullying. Finally, the adolescents should be willing to participate in the research project.

Profile of participants

There were four families in the sample. It included one single-parent family. This family had three adolescents: one 12-year-old son and 10-year-old twins. The adolescents were living with their mother. Two other families had two adolescents each and the fourth family had three adolescents. The age range for adolescents was from 11 to 15 years; all of the families would describe themselves as middle-class families.

Data gathering: First meeting

I collected all data from adolescents who were attending English public school in Eastern Canada. The data collection phase lasted from August 2010 to March 2011. All of the participants preferred to meet at their homes for our first meeting, and for subsequent interviews. In our first meeting, I explained the purpose of “informed consent for parents” (Appendix C) and “assent forms” (Appendix E). Whereas, the informed consent form is required to be signed by the adults before the interviews begin, the assent form is required to be signed by the adolescents. An “assent” form is used when an individual who is willing to participate in the research process is too young to give informed consent. An assent form signed by an adolescent is not sufficient in itself; it must accompany a “consent form for parents for children’s participation” (Appendix D) signed by the parents or guardians.

Informed consent forms described the participant’s voluntary participation, freedom to withdraw, and an assurance of anonymity and confidentiality of their participation in the research. I assured them that real names would not be used in the narratives or dissertation. I asked them to choose pseudonyms for themselves, which would be used in the interview transcripts as well as in the dissertation. Further, they could withdraw from the interviews or from the research, if the interviews were emotionally disturbing. The consent forms also

included a provision for a counsellor, in case participants felt uncomfortable narrating their experiences. I also informed them that an interview could be stopped at any point if they found it difficult to continue. Although my object was to obtain rich in-depth information about their experiences, I was also cognizant that talking about one's own victimization could be difficult at times.

After the consent forms had been signed, I asked the parents to complete the background demographic questionnaire (Appendix H). I explained that there would be three interviews, lasting approximately one hour each, at one-week intervals. Interviews would be recorded digitally. When the formalities were completed, we arranged to meet in the following week for the first interviews. At this time, I opened a file for each participant in which I would record information as well as my reflections regarding interviews or any other information related to data collection.

Questionnaire

As a first step in data collection, the demographic questionnaire helped to get background information from the parents such as a socio-economic profile of the family, neighborhood, and some specific responses, such as views and suggestions about bullying and victimization at school. The questionnaire included twelve questions: one open-ended, and eleven closed-ended questions. The purpose of my questionnaire was to prepare a socio-economic profile of each participant family, and locate the respondents in relation to other families.

Qualitative semi-structured interviews

The qualitative interview is seen as a conversation with a purpose and a structure (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). I used a qualitative semi-structured, in-depth interview protocol to gather

narratives based on victims' lived experiences of bullying and their responses. Qualitative interviewing is non-directive, non-standardized, and open-ended interviewing method of data collection (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998). These interviews share three pivotal characteristics. First, they are more interested in the understanding, knowledge, and insights of the interviewees than categorizing people and events. Secondly, these interviews are modifications and extensions of ordinary conversations and the contents. Finally, the flow and choice of topic changes according to the interviewed person's knowledge and experiences (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Although I allowed flexibility, the interviews were focused on the participants' experiences of the bullying incidents and their responses to them.

In-depth interviewing is usually referred to as repeat face-to-face encounters between researchers and informants about a thematic dialogue. These interviews are modeled after informal dialogue. The assumption is that knowledge is contextual and "knowledge and social meanings are constructed during the interview process" (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998, p. 8). Some questions emerge from the contexts and may not have been predetermined.

Qualitative interviews are flexible, iterative, and continuous. My interview schedule was designed with flexibility to adapt to changing contexts. It is said metaphorically that designing a qualitative interview is like going on vacation. You have an overall idea of what you want to see, but you are not locked into a fixed itinerary (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

Response-based interviews

Congruent with narrative inquiry, I was guided by response-based method developed by Wade (1997) to construct semi-structured interview questions. The questions were focused to foreground response, active agency, skills, and knowledges of adolescents and parents that they

have used to sustain through difficult times. The questions were based on the following assumptions.

First, those subjected to abuse are not passive recipients of their experiences. As Wade (1997, 2007), White (2007), and Yuen (2009) have argued, individuals respond to abuse with whatever knowledge or skills they have to lessen the effects of aggression on themselves or others.

Secondly, the people who have been abused or mistreated have the pre-existing ability to respond and protect their values and dignity (Wade, 1997).

Thirdly, responses could be mental or behavioural, and often are not acknowledged by the victims themselves. Following Wade's (1997) response-based approach, questions such as "how did you *respond* to the bully's aggression" (response-based question) and not "how were you *affected* by the bully's aggression" were asked. If the response to the question "what did you do to protect yourself" was "I did not do anything . . . just ran away," then the prompt was "Would it be fair to say that you took steps to protect yourself by running away?" My goal was to understand their stories, their acts of resistance, and present that side of a victim's identity that is obscured in the existing literature.

Three interviews sequence

"The interviewers," Seidman (2006) says, "who propose to explore their topic by arranging a one-shot meeting with an 'interviewee' whom they have never met, tread on thin contextual ice" (p. 17). Seidman (2006) makes a strong case for conducting a series of three interviews with each participant. Each interview is conducted with a purpose. Following Seidman's (2006) approach of qualitative interviewing, I conducted three interviews with each participant—parent and adolescent—in their own home. The rationale for three interviews was

that the first interview would begin with conversation to become acquainted, to gather background information, and build rapport with the participants. The objective was to make them comfortable and create a trusting relationship with me—a stranger, so that they could talk about their experiences. I would say that my efforts were not in vain. The first interview also established the context for the narratives of their experiences, which followed in the second and third interviews. The second interview concentrated on the details of actual events and stories in context. The third interview was reflective and interpretive as we revisited the stories (Miller & Crabtree, 1999; Schutt, 2006; Seidman, 2006). In this interview we also talked about their present experiences and how do they connect to the past experiences. Seidman (2006) argues that the three interviews structure also establishes internal validity of the findings. It provides a built-in check for the consistency of the stories. I found that their stories were consistent across three separate interviews.

Both parents and the adolescent were present in the same room during the interviews. However, my questions were addressed individually; the parents and the adolescent were not interviewed simultaneously. I had informed them that I would interview them in turns. In this way, they each had a chance to tell their story in their own words without being interrupted by the other members. Most of the time I was able to interview this way but there were a few interjections by the other members of the family. In each family, the adolescents preferred to be interviewed before their parents. Thirteen response-based questions were designed for the first interview with the adolescents. Fifteen response-based questions were prepared for the 2nd. and 3rd. interviews (Appendix F). Though these questions were predesigned and the same questions were asked from each participant, the sequence of questions changed sometimes for elaboration and better understanding of the stories. New questions emerged as the participants told their

stories. The interview began with a question, “Tell me a little about your school. How do you like your school?” After a few introductory questions, I asked response-based questions.

Twenty response-based questions (Appendix G) were developed for the first interview with the parents. The starter question in the interview was, “How did you find out about bullying incidents?” “When was the first time you found out about these events?” By asking a “how” question, I had hoped that it would lead parents to think about the past events and their context. Seidman (2006) argues that a “how” question often leads to reconstruct and narrate a range of constitutive events in the past.

The second interview concentrated on the details of the actual events and stories. Sometimes, the participants revisited what they had said in the first interview. There were visits and revisits of the past events. In this interview, I also asked questions about the current situation at school, their friends, teachers and anything else they wanted to tell me about the school.

The third interview was interpretive and reflexive of their own stories. I asked the participants what they thought about their past experiences and how they felt about themselves now. Most of them reflected positively on their experiences. There were phrases such as “*should have*”; “*shouldn’t have*”; “*looking back*”; “*made some good decisions or bad decisions*”; “*I feel good about what I did*” etc. (quotes taken from the transcripts of the interviews). Whereas in the first interview the participants said that they did not respond to the bully and just “stood there”, in the third interview they talked about their responses. During the process of telling their stories, a change, a shift in focus had occurred. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) state that telling the stories of the past and of the present opens the “possible plotlines for the future” (p. 60).

The parents' also reflected on their responses to bullying of their children, teachers' reactions to the complaints in the third interview. They commented, "*we try, we try this, I think everyone can do that, you run the gamble, but where the value comes in is what we are talking about tonight is having communication with kids, spending time, talking to them.*" Even though in the third interview there were reflections on the meaning they gave to their experiences, meaning making activity was going on in all three interviews. Seidman (2006) confirms that meaning making activity goes on as soon as we put our experiences in language.

The interviews were digitally recorded. The range of all interviews was between 45 to 70 minutes. The first interviews helped to build a relationship of trust from which response-based questions could be asked. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) suggest that an interviewer should be an active listener, adding, "they should learn to listen to what is said and how it is said" (p. 134). I listened to the participants acutely. I was aware of changes in their tone of voice, in their expressions, and in what they said. An audio recorder does not record the nuances of a person's conversation. After each interview, I wrote my reflections and nuances of the interview in the file I had created for each family since the first meeting.

A few times I realized the interview changed slightly from the charted course, but except for posing questions for explanations, I listened silently, nodded, gave minimal prompts such as ah-mm, and let the stories unfold. It is argued that in an effort to stay close to the interview questions, sometimes the interviewers interrupt the story. The researchers get impatient and are thrown off by their participants' lengthy stories in response to a simple straightforward question, but later realize their mistake (Chase, 2003, 2005; Riessman, 2008). Czarniawska (1997) illustrates her experience with a recollection: "Most people would break through my structure by offering stories about the background of current circumstance . . . this used to bring me to the

verge of panic—‘How to bring them to the point?’—whereas now I have at least learned that this *is* the point” (p. 27). The context and background information is as relevant to the story as the story itself. Consequently, the interviewer should understand that the interviewees are not just informers but “are narrators with stories to tell with voices of their own” (Chase, 2005, p. 660).

Data Management

Data preparation

Data analysis is iterative and reflective, and it involves fine and sensitive tuning to understand the meaning of experiences. The data preparation process started with transcriptions of the digitally recorded interviews. I personally transcribed the interviews for several reasons. Patton (2002) says, “transcribing offers another point of transition between data collection and analysis as a part of data management and preparation” (p. 244). Transcribing gave me an opportunity to go back to the recorded interviews and immerse myself in listening to them several times. Listening to the interviews gave me a feeling for cumulative data as a whole. Digitally recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim. After several readings of the transcribed interviews, and checking for spelling and grammar, the interview transcripts were sent to each participant via e-mail for authentication and verification. This gave participants the opportunity to verify and comment on the accuracy of the transcriptions. Three of the four families replied indicating that they were happy with the way interviews were transcribed; only one participant wanted to add an explanation to what had been said earlier in the interviews. The explanations made by the participant were mostly editorial, and they were corrected. These editorial corrections had no impact on the meaning of the text. The families were satisfied with the transcriptions because they did not find discrepancy between the transcripts and what they

had said. After receiving all transcripts back from the participants, I proceeded to the next step of data analysis.

Data Analysis

I chose narrative analysis (Polkinghorne, 1988) and analysis of narratives (thematic analysis, Riessman, 1993, 2008), for analysis of the data I collected from the interviews, questionnaire, field-notes, and reflexive journal. I described the narratives in Chapter five, and wrote thematic analysis of my findings in Chapter Six.

After receiving back the transcripts from the participants, the first step was to create narratives of the participants before thematic analysis. I had read the transcripts a number of times before sending them to the participants and creating the narratives was the next level of representation of the participants' stories. First, I will describe the steps I performed to create the narratives before talking about the thematic analysis.

The first phase in the data analysis was to *familiarize myself with the data* (Reissman,1993). I had prior knowledge of what my data contained yet I immersed myself in the data again to understand and identify the significant episodes related to participants' experiences of bullying, resistance, and responses in the interviews. I gained familiarity with the depth and width of the contents of the data after repeated reading of the transcripts. This step was taken for the entire data set. Some researchers suggest that it is the most crucial step in data analysis within interpretive methodology such as narrative inquiry (Bird, 2005). While reading the transcripts, I began to see some patterns associated with responses by the participants to transgressions against them. I began highlighting important episodes, and made margin notes and comments on the transcripts. I also organized the passages in a chronological order by using numerical codes. My reading and highlighting the important episodes were guided by the

meaning participants gave to their experiences, purpose of the research, research question, and the knowledge of the literature related to the research question. The same process was repeated with each interview transcript. I should add that at this time my objective was not to look for specific themes but to look for *patterns of resistance, responses, and meanings participants gave to their experiences*. I was interested in a broader picture of the story of responses.

At this time I reread my field notes and my reflexive journal to remind me of the reflections and nuances of the interviews I had written in my journal. This was an important step since interview transcripts do not capture nuances of the spoken words. After reading the field notes, reflexive journal, and highlighted transcripts with margin notes, I looked for the narrative configurations related to responses. In creating the narratives, I was cognizant of the continuity of the experience, people, temporality, context, coherence, and the plot lines (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). I explained these terms in the beginning of this chapter. The purpose of writing narratives was to present the participants' stories in their holistic form with their own interpretations of the events. I did not want to fragment narratives and wanted to get a full picture of their experiences.

Since I am the narrator of the stories, my understanding and interpretations of the events were a part of the co-construction of narratives. I struggled with decisions of how to represent the voices of the participants in the narratives. The next section explains the dilemma of representation I faced.

Why I chose narratives

I chose narratives because of the unique way they render experiences. In each narrative, one's life story is told in a unique way. Telling one's life story is an exercise in framing the events, reflecting on them, and making some sense of the experiences. The person to whom the

story is related is a part of this as well: knowledge is generated through the co-construction of the narratives. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) confirm:

The research interview is a production site of knowledge. Interview knowledge is socially constructed in the interaction of interviewer and interviewee through questions and answers, and the product is co-authored by interviewer and interviewee. The knowledge is not merely found, mined, or given, but is actively created through questions and answers, and the product is co-authored by interviewer and interviewee. (p. 54)

So, the story telling is not just *telling stories* but a process of change for both the teller and the audience.

After creating the narratives I moved to the next step of *thematic analysis*. I went back to the narratives and read the narratives many times. I worked with one narrative at a time. After several readings of the narrative I started to highlight the passages in the narratives that represented *potential themes of responses*. I went back to the transcript to re-confirm the highlighted passages and to determine if they supported the themes identified in the narratives. This process was repeated for each transcript of the interview.

The next step was to *review these clusters of passages, which to this point did not have theme titles*. Patton (1990) suggests two criteria for judging themes—*internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity*. Braune and Clarke (2006) suggest that “data within the themes should cohere together meaningfully, while there should be clear and identifiable distinctions between themes” (p. 97). It was also important to check that each theme was an accurate representation of the theoretical and analytical approach I had selected. This provided another check if the findings were supported by the analytical framework. Now I could see how the themes were fitting together with the data and the overall story they told about the data.

In the next step, I identified underlying assumptions in each theme and named them. The themes were named as overt responses, covert responses, emotional and relational responses. I also named sub themes within these themes.

Having established and entitled themes, the next step was to write the chapter on findings. Chapter six on acts of resistance names and describes the themes. I used direct quotations from the narratives and transcripts to represent the participants' voices in support of each theme. Each theme and its analysis are linked directly to the research question. Finally, I compared the cases for shared patterns and variations among them. I also looked for the similarities and differences in the meanings and interpretations each family gave to their responses. In the next chapter seven, I present the analysis of findings. I use theoretical framework on power and resistance and response-based approach to analyze my findings.

Representation

The final task of writing text was a time filled with tension. I struggled with the question of whose voice should be presented in the narratives. Should participants be identified as "I" or "we" in the texts because that is the way they told me their stories. Alternatively, should it be my voice telling their stories and referring to them as "Cole, Melissa, he, she, and they?" After much struggle, I decided to write the stories in the participant's voice. This meant narrating in the first person voice "I"—though actual verbatims are italicized and incorporated into my first person account. The rationale for writing the stories in this form was that it privileged the participant's voice and minimized my presence. The stories were written exactly the way I heard them. It is impossible to avoid my presence completely in the presentation, but I have tried to minimize it by not using the participants' voices for my own sentiments and values. I have tried to be aware of my own values.

After completing the analysis, the stories were written in a narrative form. Denborough (2008) suggests that to capture the full meaning of the participants' stories, it is important to be attentive to the sentiments and rhythm in the narrator's language, and to include "the particular phrases, words, and vernacular so that those who have contributed to it will recognize it" (p. 31).

My document was written with the participants in mind; it resonated with those who had contributed to it (Connelly & Clandenin, 2006; Denborough, 2008). For this purpose, the narratives had an "individual voice" as stories were told (Chase, 2005; Denborough, 2008).

I checked and rechecked the narratives of each participant before I sent them to each family. This gave them an opportunity to change or add anything that was missed. It gave them an opportunity to add their voices to the interpretations of their stories and a sense of authorship. It also avoided the possibility of their victimization in the representation.

Enhancing Trustworthiness

Qualitative research presents unique opportunities to explore and interpret the inner meaning of lived experiences of people. It provides rich, holistic data gathered in natural settings, which has a great potential for revealing complexities of life (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Qualitative data gathered in natural settings can often be questioned for a lack of validity and reliability in the research process. Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner, and Steinmetz (1991) argue that applying quantitative terminology to judge qualitative research tends to be "a defensive measure that muddies the waters and that the language of positivist research is not congruent with or adequate to qualitative work" (as cited in Creswell, 1998, p. 197).

Researchers such as Creswell (1998, 2007, 2009); Merriam (2002); Padgett, (1998), and Yin (2011) support the usefulness of establishing criteria that increases the rigor in qualitative

research. In order to increase robustness in their research, qualitative researchers should be clear about how and why they have chosen the particular criteria (Tobin & Begley, 2004).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed “trustworthiness” to achieve rigor in qualitative research. They have proposed four concepts to establish trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability in research. I employed measures to establish “trustworthiness” in my research as recommended by Lincoln and Guba (1985).

Credibility

To ensure credibility, the researcher must prove that research findings represent a “credible conceptual interpretation of the data drawn from the participants’ original data” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 296). To achieve credibility Lincoln and Guba suggested several measures: peer debriefing, member checks, prolonged engagement, persistent observation, and triangulation.

To establish credibility, I used three measures: peer debriefing, member checks, prolonged engagement, and triangulation. Peer debriefing minimizes reactivity and researcher’s bias and enhances the accuracy of the account (Li, 2004; Maxwell, 2005; Padget, 1998). It involved consulting with colleagues outside of my research who had experience with the topic, population, and methods. Peer debriefing was completed regularly during the data-gathering phase with colleagues who had finished their research. Usually, peers are good at playing devil’s advocate. They posed critical questions throughout the process. Pseudonyms for the participants were used during our sessions to maintain participants’ anonymity. In addition, the location of the interviews was not disclosed to maintain complete confidentiality. I kept a written account of our debriefing sessions.

Member-checks

Member-checking also known as “respondent validation,” allows participants to review findings for their accuracy (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Sandelowski, 1993). This technique is considered by Lincoln and Guba (1985) to be “the most critical techniques for establishing credibility” (p. 314). It gives an opportunity to the participants to check for errors in the transcripts of the interviews. Member-checking was performed by soliciting feedback on the transcripts and narratives from the participants. After transcribing all the interviews, I sent a copy of the transcripts of their own interviews to each participant family. Later, a copy of the finished product, the narratives, was sent to the participants for their comments. I received responses from three participants on the transcripts. There were some editorial changes to be done, which did not change the meanings of what they had said earlier. Member-checking rules out the possibility of misinterpretation of the participants’ narratives. It is also important to find out what participants think of our work; their responses could be a source of theoretical insight (Riessman, 1993). Besides, the participants have the right to know what I have written about them and their experiences.

Prolonged engagement

Prolong engagement is another method of increasing credibility of an inquiry. It involves “adequate time spent to collect data such that data becomes saturated” (Merriam, 1988, p. 31). Creswell (1998) suggests the researcher should spend adequate time to build trust with the participants. I spent eight months for data collection. During this period I met each participant personally four times. Each meeting lasted for 45 minutes to one hour. The contacts were also maintained by telephone and email. I was able to build rapport and gain their trust to hear their lived experiences. At the same time prolonged engagement allowed me to check for

misinformation, which could have occurred due to “distortion” introduced by the participants and me in the first or second meetings (Creswell, 1998, p. 201).

Transferability

Transferability refers to the extent to which the findings of the research can be applied to other contexts. Quantitative researchers view applicability of the research findings in terms of generalizations; qualitative studies maintain that no true generalizations are possible because all findings should be considered in terms of the contexts in which they occur.

To ensure transferability, I provided rich, thick descriptions of the settings, the participants, and their interviews. In the narratives I have retained the original linguistic descriptions by the participants because this privileged their voices in grounding their experiences. Excerpts from the interviews were interspersed liberally in the narratives.

Dependability and confirmability

I used triangulation in order to ensure dependability and confirmability by corroborating findings from different sources and methods. Different sources in data collection included children and parents, and different methods included in-depth interviews, peer debriefing or peer review, member-checks, and reflexive journaling (Maxwell, 2005; Padgett, 1998).

Confirmability is the degree to which the findings are the product of the focus of inquiry and not of the biases of the researcher. An audit trail is an important part of establishing rigor in qualitative work as it keeps a record of the research procedures and allows for critical thinking during the research processes (Johnson & Waterfield, 2004; Padgett, 1998). It enables the auditor to check whether the conclusions and interpretations are congruent with the sources of data. I kept an audit trail throughout the data gathering and data analysis process that described each step taken in the research process and the self-reflection within each step. The audio

recordings, verbatim transcripts of the interviews, and self-reflexive journaling were kept to maintain good quality of the audit trail.

Half a century ago, Oscar Lewis, author of the classic study, “The Children of Sanchez,” (1961) wrote about validity, reliability, and researcher’s bias in his study. The study was based entirely on the voices of the people studied. His views are still relevant to qualitative studies.

He wrote:

I offer the reader a deeper look into the lives of one of these families by the use of a new technique whereby each member of the family tells his own life story in his own words. This approach gives us a cumulative, multifaceted, panoramic view of each individual, of the family as a whole . . . The independent version of the same incidents given by the various family members provide a built-in check upon the reliability and validity of much of the data and thereby partially offset the subjectivity inherent in a single autography.

(p. xi)

I interviewed two participant members in each family three times, at one week’s interval.

Though they were interviewed individually, their independent stories confirmed each other’s version of events and responses to the events, and thus provided a built-in check. Lewis further suggested, “this method of multiple autobiographies also tends to reduce the element of investigator’s bias because the accounts are not put through the sieve of a middle-class North American bias but are given in the words of the subjects [sic] themselves” (p. xi). Data for my study were the narratives rendered by the participants in their own words.

Reflexive journal

I kept a reflexive journal in my research from the beginning to the end. Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe this as a kind of diary in which “the investigator on a daily basis, or as

needed records information about self . . . and method” (p. 325). Regular writing in a reflexive journal encouraged me to reflect on my role in the research process, and helped me bring my own ideas and biases to a more conscious level (Maxwell, 2005).

As a researcher, I was the primary instrument for the data collection and data analysis. I should explain how I dealt with researcher bias, my values, and expectations (Creswell, 1998; Maxwell, 2005). Since it was impossible to eliminate all biases and validity threats from my intellectual and practical goals, my mantra was to be aware of my subjectivity, and keep self-monitoring a priority, so as Peshkin (1991) says, “I may avoid the trap of perceiving just what my own untamed sentiments have sought out and served up as data” (pp. 293-294). I was transparent with the interviewees and more aware of my values.

Ethical Considerations

Participants’ confidentiality and anonymity was maintained by the use of pseudonyms throughout the study. Omitting all details that could identify them in the dissertation and other documents protected the participants’ identities. I was open and transparent about my research goals. The participants had full freedom to withdraw at anytime if they desired to do so. Since my study is a response-based narrative inquiry, it acknowledged and focused on providing rich descriptions of victims’ responses and foregrounding their values, skills, and knowledge. The “response versus effects” based approach diminished the chances of re-victimization through the interviews.

Despite these considerations, I realized that narrating experiences could still be stressful for some of the participants, thus I had mentioned to them that sharing their stories could help them to get a clear perspective on their own strengths and give them a stronger self-image, and hope. It could have valuable benefits for others in similar circumstances (Atkinson, 2007, p.

235). Being a professional counsellor myself, I was sensitive to the nonverbal cues of stress, anger, sadness in the participants, while narrating their stories. If the situation became stressful for the participants to continue with the narratives, we were ready to stop temporarily. In addition, there was a professional counsellor, who is experienced in bullying and victimization issues, was available to the participants at all times. This service was complimentary to the participants throughout the data collection period. This research study followed the guidelines provided by the University of Ottawa, Research Ethics Board.

Chapter 5: Narratives of Four Families

Life as led is unseparable from a life as told . . . life is not 'how it was' but how it is interpreted and reinterpreted, told and retold.

Bruner, 1994, (cited in Dyson & Beneshi, 1994, p. 36)

This chapter tells the stories of four families' experiences with bullying and their associated responses. There are five narratives from the adolescent participants and four from their parents. The narratives feature participants' direct quotes from interview transcripts represented by italicized text. I felt it was important, when possible, to write the participants' accounts exactly in their own words and let them speak for themselves. I also wanted readers to hear the participants' voices and exact words (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). The verbatim text was used to bring forward their emotions. I supplemented these verbatim excerpts with my own distilled summaries of their accounts for the purpose of brevity and readability. These narratives describe how they were able to preserve their dignity, values, and personal beliefs in the face of the bullies' aggression. Their determination and courage shine through their testimonies.

The research participants include one or two selected adolescents and their parents from each family, but in my data collection I referred to them as a "family". The narratives are organized in the following manner: Each family's narrative begins with the family's portrait. The adolescent's profile and their story are presented after the family's portrait. This is followed by the parents' profile and their story. Pseudonyms were used in all narratives for all persons. In my first meeting with the participants, I had asked them to choose pseudonyms for themselves.

The Robinson Family

In this section, I will briefly introduce the Robinson family and describe my first meeting with them. Participant narratives will follow this introduction.

Family's portrait

The Robinsons live in a detached home on a quiet street in the middle-class neighborhood where they have lived for 19 years. They have two children, Zachary, 11 years old, and Jessica, 15 years old. Both children are well-mannered, sociable, and friendly. They also have a dog named Sydney. My first impression was of a warm, social, and close-knit family. They welcomed me into their home and were very interested in finding out more about my research.

Although I arrived fifteen minutes ahead of the scheduled time for the meeting, when I apologized for my early arrival they welcomed me with smiles, assuring me that “*Our door is always open, so you could come any time.*” After introducing ourselves, we went to the dining room, where they cleared the centerpiece from the table so we could see everyone without any obstruction. I noticed portraits of elderly family members and other relatives on the walls.

There were four individuals at the first meeting: Mona (mother), Jack (father), Zachary (son), and myself. The parents and the son were selected as the participants in the research project. I had not initially selected Jessica (daughter) as a participant in my research because she had finished grade 8, therefore, she did not join the first meeting. Initially my criterion of selection was to include adolescents who were in Grade 8 but I modified my selection criteria for recruitment to include who had just finished Grade 8. Therefore, Jessica was selected as one of the participants at that time.

Mona offered me a cappuccino. I explained that the purpose of this meeting was to explain the research project, sign the consent and assent forms, review interview schedules, and answer any questions that they might have. Once they were completely satisfied with the research process and their roles, we would sign the consent forms.

In my first meeting with the Robinsons, I had the impression that the parents were active stakeholders in the study. They were keen to participate actively in the interviews. We discussed bullying in schools, prevention programs, and the focus of my research. Both parents were interested in talking about bullying incidents and their responses to them. Jack often repeated the questions that were directed at Zachary, especially when Zachary did not understand. Zachary seemed nervous in the first meeting, but was quite comfortable in subsequent interviews and interested in talking about bullying incidents at school. Following our conversation about my research, the interview procedures, and the timeline for the writing of the narratives, we signed the consent forms. We decided that our next meeting would take place in one week at the same time. This first meeting lasted for 45 minutes.

The following section begins with Jessica's story. My brief introduction to Jessica will be followed by her narrative.

Jessica

They [bullies] keep at you every single day, they will not leave you alone; it's not only at school, they will stalk you, and they will get you at your home too.

Jessica Robinson

Jessica's profile

Jessica Robinson is 15 years old and attends Grade 9. Jessica is outgoing; she takes part in school activities, and likes to take the role of a mediator in peer conflict situations. Whenever

there are issues to be resolved among peers, she is there, saying, *I am like a resident psychiatrist*. She narrated her experiences of being bullied at school, telling me that she has been bullied since Grade 3, but has managed to stand up for herself. Jessica stated, now *I am in high school. I was bullied in Grades 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7, but again I stood up for myself*. Jessica's story follows in her own words. Direct quotations are in italics, and were taken verbatim from the interview transcripts (October 6, 2010; November 10, 2010).

Jessica's story

In Grade 3, Lauren and I were very good friends. We had our own group of friends. We were not among the most popular crowd in the class but we hung out together and did not care if we were members of the group of girls who were considered the most popular in class. We had our own group, which we thought was a popular group. I was a popular girl, a leader of my own group. All of us were good friends. One day, my friend Lauren suddenly decided to change groups and join the so-called *most popular group*. I was left alone. I felt betrayed and shocked. Lauren stabbed me in the back. I was sad that my best friend would do such a thing to me. But this was not the end of it. The girls from the popular group and Lauren, my best friend, started to do nasty things to me. I started to receive prank calls. *They would call me and say stupid things, and hang up. They would say stupid things such as starfish, ha, ha, ha, and hang up. At school, they would call me fat behind my back. This really got to me.*

Finally, I told my parents about what was going on at school. At first my parents, who are quite involved in my brother's and in my school life, did not take it seriously. We have a family tradition of always discussing at dinnertime what had happened during the day to each of us. I told them that I had been bullied at school and their response was that it was not a big deal because these things happen. Usually my parents are very supportive and listen to us, but at this

time they did not think that there was bullying in my school. They thought that I was being too sensitive over what was going on at the school. I was not sure how to convince them.

I kept on telling them this was exactly how it happened. Listen to me. Finally they believed me, but did not think that it required intervention on their part. My parents always thought that I could stand up for myself and [that] I could deal with most social situations.

After repeated episodes of bullying, my mother phoned Lauren's parents to confront them, but Lauren's parents denied Lauren making prank calls. They did not realize that their phone number was displayed on our phone every time she phoned me.

The harassing phone calls continued. At the same time, the leader of the popular group continued to bother my close friend Sheila and me at school. I had been enduring the popular group leader's insults and harassment for some time. Finally, *I decided that I did not care if I was popular or not, [because] I did not have to belong to any group. I always made my own group. I had to respond to her insults. I decided to take some action on my own. I wanted to stand up for myself. One day, in response to her name-calling and usual aggressive behavior, I told the popular girl to back off, and leave us alone. I would not tolerate her insulting behavior. After this incident, the leader of the popular group became my friend and she had some respect for me.*

Things were quiet for a while, *but bullies never leave you alone. They keep at you every single day, and they would get you at home too. In some cases, they would follow you, and they would stalk you.* The bullying continued in Grade 5. I changed schools in Grade 5 because I wanted to join a French immersion program. At my new school, I made a new friend, Olivia, not knowing that she had been a victim of bullying. Now being associated with her made me a target of bullying as well.

There was a kind of “pyjama day” at school. I was standing in the hallway with Maddy and Olivia. Maddy had been bullying Olivia. I said to Maddy, you have been harsh on Olivia, take it easy on her [because] she has not done anything wrong. Suddenly, Maddy took out her slipper and slapped me across the face. I was stunned, I did not do anything, I didn’t think of hitting her back, [but] I just walked away. This was so stupid. After this incident, I didn’t talk to her. My new friend Olivia, who I was protecting from the bully, introduced me to her friends, and as a result of this incident, I had a new set of friends. Maddy, the bully, was left out and became a loner.

There were many things that I did to stop the bullies. I told them to back off, and to leave my friends and me alone. I walked away from them, I ignored them, and I told my parents about bullying at school so they would take some action. All of the things I did to stop bullying worked, but only for a short while. The bullies would return with something new to bother us about. I should tell you that for some girls and boys at school, bullying was a cool thing to do. Sometimes it would be very subtle bullying. *In Grade 6 they kept on calling my family and me a fat family behind my back. They were gossiping about me. Especially boys calling me fat really got to me. I am a sort of traditionalist. I think that guys should not be mean to a girl. You do not call a girl fat. It is not cool. I was angry and sad at the same time. Throughout Grade 6 and 7, I was very depressed. I went on an extreme diet. I would eat only trail-mix. I was starving myself because I didn’t want to be called fat. I wanted to be skinny. I had two skinny friends, and all of us thought that the only way to look beautiful was to be skinny. Although I was depressed and very unhappy with myself, I didn’t go to the extreme of making cuts on my arms. Somehow it did not seem like a right thing to do. Unlike other girls, I didn’t think it was right to harm myself. But I knew one girl who was also bullied for being fat, and she would cut herself*

on a regular basis. You could see a long line cut down her arm. She would come to school wearing a shirt with long sleeves so other girls would not see the cuts and ask questions.

Another girl I knew had tape down her arm because she made a cut like a ‘t’ down her arm. *She did that because she wanted to kill herself, so this [cutting] happens to the people I know.*

At the end of Grade 6, during the summer, I became a good friend with the leader and other girls in the popular group. After I became friends with the leader, I started to receive threatening phone calls and e-mails. I was being accused of stealing the leader and her friends. I was called *stupid, slob, and fat . . .* The threatening messages said things like *we will come after you and kill you*. The messages were very graphic as to how I would be killed. It was a sort of running commentary of the whole process. It was absolutely horrible. I was not sure what to do so I told my parents. We are a very close-knit family. We discuss things at suppertime. If we miss our family discussions, our parents make sure to talk to us before we go to bed. I told my parents everything. We discussed the incidents and this time there was evidence that I was being harassed and bullied. I showed my parents those emails and they were horrified. They phoned the parents of the girl who wrote the emails. They were shocked to find out and asked their daughter to send a letter of apology to me as well as five dollars. I received an apology but never received the money. I am not sure if the five dollars was offered as a good will gesture or to keep me quiet and convince me not to report the incident to the principal.

As I said before, bullies would never leave me alone. They would come back. They would follow me home. In Grade 7, I found out that my first boyfriend and his friends were calling my family and me fat, saying, *oh! It is a whole fat family*. I was angry and wanted to punch him, but I didn’t do that. Instead I went and talked to him. After I talked to him, he stopped calling me fat. But I was unhappy. I had been called *fat* every year since Grade 3. The

bullying would stop when I confronted the bullies but then it would start again. I was sad, angry, and unhappy with myself. I went on a crazy diet to become thin and try to be friends with the popular group of thin girls.

Even though I was dieting, at the same time I started to question myself. Was I really, truly desperate to be friends with the popular group of thin girls? I said to myself, *I don't have to belong to any group; I can have any friend I want. I started to be friends with the girls who were not crazy to look like a Vogue model. They were normal girls. I felt I had been shallow and that was not really me. People like it or leave it. I don't do things just for show business. I am an individual. I have curly hair and I hated it, but now I embrace it. I had always felt grown up, mentally and emotionally.*

I am not sure if it was our family's conversations at the dinner table about our school life or the guidance counsellor at school that made me realize that if my responses to the bullying that I encountered in each grade stopped it temporarily, then I could definitely put an end to it. My parents believed that I would know what to do to defend myself. They always listened to the problems I had at school. They gave us good advice. It might not have always worked, but it gave us some direction about how to deal with issues at school. They prepared us to do the right thing. *I always felt that my parents are my best friends. My parents are the kind of guys to talk to . . . that is so comforting. I [do] not know what I would have done if my parents were not available to talk to . . . it is important to establish this relationship with parents early in life . . . like way earlier . . . like when you are a kid and not into your teens when the trouble starts.*

I realized that a large part of the bullying that happened to me, I let it happen, because I had low self-esteem. I let it happen and that's why I turned to eating . . . My friend Amanda said

that if she was not popular she was worthless . . . I want to be an individual, and so I stood out different [ly] from everybody else. I don't have a problem now, but I get into trouble for helping others. I am always a peacemaker.

I have a different approach to life now. *If someone says something mean to me, I will [talk to] them and also rant in my diary. People say that they don't care, but they do care. It is just that they do not want to accept it. They do not want to face things. Now my approach is that if you are scared of bullying, don't be afraid. Face it and confront it. You have the right to be what you are. Do not think what others think about you. Do what you want to be.*

Zachary

I want to forget about this and then it comes up again . . . nowhere is safe from bullies. It is safe where there are no electronics, no mailboxes, and no one around.

Zachary Robinson

Zachary's profile

Zachary (Zach) is 11 years old. He is in Grade 7. He finished Grades 3, 4, 5, and 6 at his neighbourhood school, and changed schools in Grade 7. Zach loves sports and music, and plays rugby and the trumpet. He likes to make new friends. He told me that he was bullied from the very first day of Grade 3, and it did not stop until he changed schools this year. He said that he has always tried to stand up for himself against the bullies. A few times when bullies challenged him to fight, he told them, *Yes! Yes! I want to stand up for myself.* Although he stood up for himself each time he was bullied, the bullies never left him alone. Zach narrated his story of bullying to me. Quotations in italics have been directly taken from the interview transcripts (September 15, 22, 2010; October 6, 2010).

Zachary's story

The bullying started in Grade 3. I was looking forward to going to a new school in Grade 3. I hoped *I would make new friends. But the first day at school turned out to be completely different.* It was the beginning of the constant bullying which would last throughout the year. This was something I hadn't experienced before. It was a nightmare. *It was the first week at school; we were standing in the school playground trying to make friends with each other. Some of the kids knew each other from Grade 2. I was a new kid, hoping to make good friends.*

I was standing there, smiling, and suddenly, even before I said 'hey' to the boy beside me, I was hit by a basketball in the back of my head. It hurt really badly, I screamed in pain, looked back, and saw the boy who had hit me with the ball. I had never met him before. I didn't know him and I didn't know why he was hitting me with a basketball. I asked 'Why are you doing this to me,' and he said that he didn't know. I was sad and physically hurt. I was going to cry but I held back my tears. This was the first week at school. I said to myself, 'Great introduction!' I went to the teacher and told her about it. Miss Wagon came and talked to both of us. After this incident, the bully stopped for a while, but the problem did not resolve. It was just the beginning of a series of bullying events. The bully and his friends would make fun of me by calling me fat. I was very sad. This was not what I expected from my new school.

I started to get headaches. Every day I would return home from school with a headache. My parents were worried about my headaches. In the beginning, I didn't tell them about the bullying in school. I thought the teacher would take care of the bullying, [since] they saw what was going on in the schoolyard, or I could take care of it myself. I was hoping that the bullying would stop, but it continued and became worse. The bully would vandalize my stuff. He would

take my pen and throw it across the room. I would tell him to stop it but no one listened to me. A few times I went to the teacher and told her what was going on. She would come and talk to the boys but it didn't stop. After a few times [when] I had called the teacher to help me, they started to call me a "tattletale, tattletale."

I was thinking how I should tell someone; I didn't want to be called a tattletale. I don't think that I am a tattletale. I just wanted to tell the truth, there should be some consequences [for the] bullies' actions. If I didn't tell anyone it would keep on happening, it would continue. I was so unhappy that I didn't want to go to school. When my parents drove me to school, I would just sit in the car. I didn't want to get out of the car when we reached school. My parents kept on asking if there was something wrong at school. I would just say that I had a headache or my stomach hurt. Finally, one day at our family's dinnertime conversation, I told them the whole story. I told them [about] the boy who had been bullying me. My parents went to school the next day and talked to the principal and things were better for some time. The bully was even nice to me for a short while. But it didn't take long for bullies to start again.

It appeared that what had happened in Grades 3 and 4 was just setting the stage for more serious bullying to come in Grades 5 and 6. In Grade 5, I had my own group of friends. We got along very well. One day Roberta, who was in my class but was not a member of this group, told me that I couldn't play with my own group of friends. I didn't listen to her and continued to play with them. She became aggressive and told me that I couldn't hang out with them at all. I had no intention of listening to her but suddenly my whole group of friends started to avoid me. I was excluded from the group. It appeared that Roberta had turned my group of friends against me. *They wouldn't talk to me at all. On the playground, they wouldn't let me move. I was sad.* I was sure that Roberta had convinced everybody in the group not to play with me anymore. She

had turned my group of friends against me. They were my good friends, but everything changed so suddenly.

I was very sad. All I wanted was to hang out with them. Instead Roberta took my place and I was left alone. I came home and told my parents that they had excluded me from the group. My friends wouldn't talk or play with me anymore. I was in tears. My parents were angry and wanted to phone Roberta's parents to tell what was going on in school. I wouldn't let my parents tell Roberta's parents about the situation because that would make me a tattletale. My parents and I discussed the whole incident. I told them I wanted to stand up for myself. Their advice was to tell the teacher and if that does not work, *do what you have to do to protect yourself, but do not start a fight. I wanted to get the teacher's attention, but she would not pay any attention until I went and told her.* Things at school started to get progressively worse.

After I was excluded from my old group of friends, *I started to hang around with other group of guys. I made new friends. I was deeply hurt to be excluded from the group, but it gave me a chance to meet and play with other kids in the class . . . Time passed very quickly with my new friends. Actually, it was pretty good for me because you don't want to have only one group of friends; you want to have lots of friends. In a way, this is what they did for me, but getting excluded still hurts.* For a while, I was happy with my new friends but this happiness was short-lived. Bullies were looking for other opportunities to harass me.

This incident happened in the classroom when I was sitting at my desk. The guy sitting next to me said "hey" and I said "hey." He took his pen and scribbled on my desk, and then I did the same thing back to him. He got really mad at that and jabbed his pen into my hand. I screamed and the teacher came and I told him what had happened. He looked at the blood on my hand and got really mad at the other guy. This was the only time I had seen a teacher react to

bullying. When I went home, I told my parents about the whole incident. They saw what the bully had done to my hand. They were really very angry and decided to talk to the teacher. *They met the teacher the next day and told him everything, and wanted some action to be taken. Nothing was done in response to my complaints. It didn't help resolve what was going on in school.*

In the schoolyard, the bullies would not let me play; they would control the game. They told me I could never be a quarterback. This was what happened at lunchtime with Edward, one of the bullies in my class. I heard them talking about me and heard that they called me fat. I turned around and said "don't call me fat." Then he mimicked me, "don't call me fat . . . I didn't," and then I said 'yes, you did' and then I pushed him, and he slapped me across the face two times and pushed me hard. I fell down. I stood up and he said, "You want to go? You want to go?" I said, 'yes, I want to stand up for myself.' Then he kicked me and it turned into a fistfight, and he punched me across the face and I got a black eye. I knew that if he instigated the fight it would be called self-defense for me. I wouldn't get into trouble, and I wanted to stand up for myself. Then Sam said, "Let's carry this fight to the washroom" and Walter said the same thing. This was the end of the fight; they were suspended for one day, which was pretty much a treat.

Although I got a black eye in this fight, I felt good because I stood up for myself. I had been constantly picked on by this group of guys in my class. I had endured a lot; I had been sad, angry, and frustrated for some time. I just about had it; I wanted the bullying and name-calling to stop. I am a nice guy and I believe that two wrongs don't make it right. My parents always told me, "Do not start a fight, but do what you have to do to defend yourself." Still, I wasn't sure how I was going to show my face to my parents. What would they say about the black eye?

How would I explain this? *I was thinking, “here is the thing, my sister knows it, I know it, I have told my parents before, when I tell my teachers they don’t do anything. They don’t respond to it. What am I supposed to do?”*

When I came home, my parents were shocked to see my black eye. I told them the whole story about Edward punching my face twice. They didn’t scold me. They said, “You did what you had to do.” They were angry that the school authorities were unable to control bullying in school. It could have been a serious physical injury. *They were worried about my safety at school. The next day they approached the principal to talk about the whole incident and safety of children.* The principal assured us that strict measures would be taken to assure the children’s safety.

This was not the first time I had been hit. I was hit by a basketball, I was jabbed by a ballpoint pen, and now I had been punched in the face twice. Besides that, I was called a “fat kid,” I was excluded from my own group, and my knapsack was vandalized almost on a daily basis. I was facing constant abuse and I didn’t want to go to school. I couldn’t concentrate on my studies. *I was afraid that I would fail my courses, and I returned home from school with a headache every day. We had a family discussion on how to handle the situation. Be calm, talk to the guy who is bullying you, and tell it to the teacher, but nothing worked. The only thing that worked was when I stood up for myself.*

I am a big, strong person. I could have used power when I was being pushed around but I didn’t. I don’t want to take revenge. Even when I play rugby, I don’t use my full potential. I am always careful not to hurt anybody. But the bullying was getting out of hand; it seemed there was no end to it. Nobody did anything to stop it. *I was very angry, frustrated, and many times I was ready to lash out but my parents kept on telling me not to do this.*

Because I am a nice guy, I know that getting into a fight is not a solution. I am happy that I stood up for myself. I put up with a lot and I was pushed to the limit. Because I stood up for myself, I gained respect from my friends. They said that it was good what I did; I won the fight. It might even have changed kids' attitude and behavior toward me. In many ways, it made me stronger. Now I want to forget what happened as a bad dream, but it comes up again. I made a few bad decisions, but I made good decisions also.

I think others might not be in the same situation, but if they were, it would help.

Mona and Jack

We took different actions for different things, sent notes, met the principal, teachers, sent e-mails, made numerous telephone calls, and talked with the parents, but we never got what we were looking for; different actions for different problems.

Jack Robinson

Mona and Jack's profile

Mona and Jack Robinson are in their forties. They are university graduates and both work for the federal government. Their household income falls into the higher income category. They appeared to be family-oriented, and like to participate in leisure activities together. Both Jack and Mona are actively involved in their children's education and school activities. They regularly attend "Meet the Teacher Night" and socialize with other parents whose children are in the same grade as their own.

The family conversation at dinnertime is a tradition in the Robinson family. Jack says this was passed on to him from his parents. He remembers that they always talked about what happened with each person during the day at the dinner table. Children always had a voice in his

parents' home, as they do in his own. Mona said, *We always try to hear their side first; we try to listen their side of the story.* Jack added, *We try to train the kids, give them tools, help them, tutor them . . . we keep the line of communications open.* Mona echoed the sentiment: *We give them strength to do the right things, think of things in a different way, give them perspectives, we try to play devil's advocate, try to see both side of the things that drive them nuts sometimes.* In response to my comment about the excessive involvement of parents in children's lives, Mona said, *to get a happy medium, we give our children a framework but give them freedom to make decisions.* Jessica complimented her parents by saying *that this tactic prepares [she and her brother] for all sort of situations.*

Our conversations before and during the interviews regarding family values demonstrated Mona and Jack's commitment to the family. They were anxious to take part in the research and to tell their stories. Following is the story of their responses to their children being bullied at school, as they narrated it to me. Jack was the principal narrator and Mona occasionally contributed as well. Direct quotations were taken from transcripts of interviews that took place on September 15, 22, and October 6, 2010.

Mona and Jack's story

The bullying problems started when Zach was in Grade 3. *He started not feeling well and would have tummy aches all the time.* He would complain about headaches and often we had to push him to go to school. We had to drive him to school and when we arrived at school, he would complain that he was feeling too sick to go to school. We asked him if he was having problems at school but he would not say anything. We were not able to find out what was wrong that was making him sick. He was usually quiet at dinnertime. It was not easy for Zach to open

up. He internalized a lot and kept a lot of hurt to himself. We kept prying to find out what was bothering him.

Family dinners, with all the members of the family, have been a tradition in our house since [Jack's] parents' time. This is the time when we sit around the table and ask everybody how their day was, and then children will talk about their problems, fights, new friends, jokes, and what happened in different classes. There is always a lot to talk about in the beginning of the school year. I guess a lot of information about the school we get from the children. They describe their experiences based on their observations.

It was September. One evening we were talking at the dinner table, [and] suddenly Zach said, "Somebody hit me with a basketball." We all were shocked and speechless but Mona said, "You said what?" We couldn't believe [it] when Zach told the whole story. It was beyond our imagination that this kind of bullying could happen in the school.

We wanted to know the details of the incident. Who was there when it happened? Did anyone else see this happening? Where was the teacher? We always give people the benefit of the doubt. Could it have been an accident? *After finding out all the details, we asked Zach if he had talked to the teacher. He told us that he had talked to the teacher but the same kid had also been calling him "fat." We realized that the bullying had been going on for a while. This incident explained why Zach was having headaches and tummy aches. All pieces of the puzzle fit together; our son had been a target of bullying. We tend to make decisions as a family as to what kind of action would be appropriate. We talked it over, and all of us agreed that we should approach the principal.*

The next day we made an appointment to meet the principal. We met the principal the following day and told her what was going on in our son's class, what [bullying, harassing, and

physically hurting Zach] was happening and happening again. We told the principal about our concerns for the safety of our son. After that, they started to monitor the schoolyard more closely. They watched the playground before taking action. They saw what was going on in the schoolyard and that's when they pulled Zach and the bully in and talked to them.

This was one serious event that was resolved temporarily. In response to our meeting, the principal talked to the boys and it helped to reduce the incidents of bullying. Zach informed us that the bullies left him alone for some time. But it was not long before the bullying and name-calling started again. I remember Zach told us about one of the student in his class, Roberta, who had been bullying him. He had been ignoring her. She tried to exclude Zach from playing with his own group of friends. She told him that he was excluded from the group and constantly bullied him both physically and verbally. When Zach told us about Roberta, we wanted to talk to her parents. We just wanted them to know what was going on at school. Sometimes one word from the parents to the child can solve the problem. The parents could tell their child that what she was doing was hurting Zach and ask her why she was excluding him from the group. But Zach would not let us talk to her parents. He thought that the bullies would make fun of him and he would be called a tattletale again.

The only option we had was to talk to Zach and we did a lot of talking about this. We gave him some advice as to how to deal with this issue. We tried many approaches. We told him to shrug it off, do the same thing to [the bully] so he would understand how it felt, embarrass him by shouting loudly "stop" in the class. He could hang with another set of friends and not be too sensitive. He had to accept a little horsing around. Zach made some new friends. Things were quiet for a short while, but [the] bullying never stopped. Zach tried to ignore the bullies, but they would come after him. The situation at school was getting worse. Zach was getting

frustrated. He was ready to lash out, but we kept on telling him not to do this. We had a meeting with the teacher. We suggested that they should separate these kids. They should not be sitting next to each other. We were surprised with the response of the teacher to our suggestions. She was not in favour of separating the kid who was bullying Zach. She said that “[The bully] would feel alienated.” She said she did not want to make “an example of the kid who did that, make him feel bad.” I could not believe what the teacher said; this was a perfect example of not taking action to stop bullying. I said to the teacher, “You’ve got to be kidding me. Who are you protecting, the bully or victim?” This was a typical example of authorities not taking action on problems related to bullying. We were frustrated, but determined that Zach would not have to go through this experience for the rest of the school year.

Zach was getting worried that he would fail his grade. He could not concentrate on his writing tasks. We were exasperated by the teacher’s attitude. We talked to the principal, but the principal sent us back to the teacher. *We were busy wondering what would be the best strategy to stop bullying when another serious incident happened.* The same kid who had been bullying Zach jabbed a pen into his hand. Zach told us about the incident when he came home. He also told us that the teacher was angry with the kid who did it. *We went to see the teacher the next day. We told her we would not tolerate any sort of bullying in the classroom or the schoolyard, [and that] if we heard about this happening again, we would take serious measures. We would go above her head. We would go to the [school] Board. We would give them another chance to put measures in place.* The teacher took some action. She moved the kid’s desk to a different location so he was not close to Zach. But Zach told us that the teacher let the bully choose the place where he would like to sit. At the same time, Zach told us that the bully kept saying, “Come and sit with me.” It was quiet for a while again, but it was not the end of the bullying.

Each new incident that occurred was worse than the one before, more intense and more vicious. It was obvious that the measures taken by school authorities were not working. I felt as if they were not making serious efforts to stop the bullying. The school authorities were not taking these incidents seriously. *Our son was constantly facing verbal and physical abuse, and constantly dealing with bullying in the classroom and on the school grounds, very calmly and using the techniques we and everyone else had told him to use. He tried all these techniques, but nothing worked and then he stood up for himself. I think this showed a lot of character and maturity on his part.* This happened when he was punched in the face twice and had a black eye. When he came home, we were shocked to see what had happened. He told us the whole story, what he said to the bully when he was dared to come to the washroom for a fight, *“I had just about had it, I wanted to respond . . . I wanted to stand up for myself.” We assured him that he did what he had to do. He had every right to defend himself.*

While I think that it might not have solved the problem as formally [in a systemic way], as we wanted, it gave Zach self-respect and self-confidence and that was great. It also changed others’ attitudes about him. I think Zach gained respect from his peers by responding to the situation. Our daughter also endured a lot of bullying, but finally she decided to stand up for herself and fight for herself. *I would say defending themselves and gaining self-confidence and self-respect was the main thing that came out of bullying incidents.*

We continued our efforts to stop bullying of our son at school. We went to see the teacher again and told her that the school was supposed to [be] a safe environment for children. We were upset that our son had to suffer so much due to bullying in school. There was a lack of discipline in the school. Kids were getting away with a lot because there was no punishment. There seemed not to be enough teeth in the school’s responses in the early stages of bullying.

Actually the children were laughing at the system. If nothing were done in the initial stages they would definitely push the limits. There should be effective measures in place that are recognized by the child as a punishment. In my opinion, zero tolerance is not realistic and not attainable, but there should be some measures that can be taken in the early stages of bullying situations to prevent it from getting worse and becoming life-threatening.

In our family, we take time to talk to children. Our approach to raise kids is to go to your family values as things come up. The way we were brought up, we talk about many things. It is hard sometimes, it is late at night, we are tired, but we will still sit down with them and talk about their days at school. If we notice something unusual or they seem to be worried about something, we will try to find out what is going on. We will not wait until the problem gets worse. We are interested in our children's lives. I think there were times when we talked to them from 10 p.m. to midnight or 1 a.m. or 2 a.m. If there is not enough time to discuss something with them at dinnertime, we talk with them later in the evening. We keep the line of communication open and it is up to them how much they want to talk to us. It has been pretty good . . . it has been an open dialogue. It is [all about] having communication with kids, spending time talking to them, and through this talk you help them manage what is going on. It is emotional management. You can bring your own experiences into this dialogue, the things that happened with you, and how you felt.

Personally, I think the way we approached the problem was a good way. I firmly believe, and Mona agrees with me too, that we went through the whole process of trying different things that were non-aggressive and although there were many good techniques, nothing was really . . . [He didn't finish this sentence]. It also depends on the person [principal, teachers] you are

dealing with. *But I didn't find that it was responded to, at all. I don't know how effectively it was carried out, whether a person felt comfortable doing it or carrying it out.*

The Martinez Family

Family's portrait

The Martinez family lives in a townhouse in a suburb of the city. Amelia (mother) grew up in this neighborhood and now has her own home close to her parent's home. Amelia is a single mother of three children. Her son Josh is 12 years old. Amelia also has twin daughters, Mila and Nita, who are 10 years old. At the time of our first meeting, the Martinez family was living with Amelia's parents. Amelia later told me that they were staying with her parents because their own house was being renovated. They hoped to return home before Josh's birthday in November. They are a warm, social, and loving family. Josh and Amelia were eager to find out about the research and tell their stories.

Although I am quite familiar with the city, I had difficulty finding their home. I drove up and down the block to find the right house. It was 7 p.m., and dark, and I could not find the place, when suddenly I heard someone calling me. I walked toward the voice and found Josh waiting for me. He said *we were waiting for you and thought that you would have difficulty finding the house; I was looking out the window for you.* I felt good that they were waiting for me and that they were eager to participate in the study.

We entered the house together and were greeted by Amelia and the twins. After introductions, we moved to a nicely decorated living room.

Amelia's parents have a busy household. There was activity going on in the kitchen, and the twins were busy with their homework. They were curious to find out why I was there, and

wanted to stay in the living room, but Josh asked them to go to the dining room and work there. We sat around the coffee table. Josh asked me if I would like coffee or water. I thanked him and asked for some water. I explained that the purpose of this meeting was to explain the research project in more detail, answer any questions they might have related to the project, decide the interview schedule, and sign the consent forms. Once Amelia and Josh were completely satisfied with their role and the commitment it would entail, we would sign the consent forms.

Amelia and Josh both wanted to tell their story. Josh appeared a little nervous and said a few times, *I will tell you everything*. I asked them to choose the names that would be used as their pseudonyms in the narratives. We signed the consent and assent forms. This meeting lasted forty minutes, and we decided to meet for the first interview one week later at the same time.

The following section begins with Josh's story. First, I will give a brief introduction to Josh; his narrative will follow the introduction. Amelia's narrative follows Josh's narrative.

Josh

I completely froze, I got locked up, [and] and I thought that I will get seriously hurt and I will be in the hospital, or I will die. He has a knife and he is putting it to my face. Even before the knife touched me, I started to cry.

Josh Martinez

Josh's profile

Josh Martinez is 12 years old and attends Grade 7 at his neighborhood middle school. He is tall for his age and bigger than the other children in his class. For this reason, teachers frequently mistake him for a tough guy or troublemaker. He gets into trouble with teachers because of the role he often takes on as a mediator in other children's conflicts. His mother says *that he is a peacemaker* and that gets him into *hot water*. He affirms and adds, *if I see someone is being bullied or beaten, I think it will be a right thing to protect them, stand up for them*. He cannot stand to see children getting hurt. He had been bullied since Grade 4, but knows how to deal with it. He said, *I have many strategies to deal with it*. This is his second year at his current school and he likes it very much. He has many hobbies: he likes to read, play sports, play guitar, and go for walks. Following is his story the way he narrated it to me. Direct quotations are in italics, and were directly taken from transcripts of interviews conducted on October 12, 27, and November 8, 2011.

Josh's story

I was bullied because I am big, dark. This happened 24-7 and nobody helped. If that happened every day, you were bullied every day, you told the teacher every day, and nothing happened, then obviously you would get mad because nobody was helping you. You might regret [it] later . . . I had more tolerance when I was little kid. I would be hurt when children called me fat, "N" kid. It made me sad . . . and I used to cry because children made fun of my colour and size. I would tell this to my mom and she told me that I shouldn't be ashamed of my colour because chocolate is brown and everybody loves chocolate. And, there you go. I believed her.

Things have changed. It was okay to be teased or bullied once or twice, but bullying had been going on for most of my school life. *I didn't pay much attention . . . but it added up.* I complained to the teachers, but they would look at me and say that I used my size to bother the other kids. Almost everyone is smaller than me in my class. I must have done something to provoke the kid. I must have bullied them. This happened all the time. The teachers were not very observant. They would see a big kid and a bunch of small kids and they didn't think that the big guy could be bullied or hurt. *Every time I did something I got into trouble but [if] someone did something to me the teachers didn't see it.* Either they did it on purpose or they were not very observant. Even if someone shot me the teachers would say it is ok, but it does not matter how big you are you can still get hurt.

Most of the time teachers didn't believe me, and *now I have stopped going to the teachers. I use my own ways of dealing with bullying. If someone were bothering me, I would start [giving them] my lecture: I like people to understand . . . even the kids I have lectured, they understand.* It worked with smaller children, but the bullies always had their own group and it is *harder to lecture a group of bullies. I am usually alone and they are in a group. If a group was bullying me and I respond, go yelling, and cursing, or do something, then the teacher would come and pay attention to what was going on.* I would be blamed for the whole thing.

There was only one time when the teachers were sympathetic towards me. This happened last year. *This kid, his name is Calvin, he was in my class last year. I had known him and he had been bullying me here and there. He would say something, just hinting. I didn't pay much attention but it was progressive, it stacked up. One day when we were coming for a presentation, there were no teachers in the classroom or in the hallway, it was weird . . . and when we got there, I saw Calvin and my friend Rudy were in a fight. I asked what was going on.*

Calvin said, "Rudy had been bothering Turner and me." I said to Calvin, "Don't go so mad," and Calvin got angry with me and said, "What are you going to do about it?" I said, "Nothing." "Oh yeah?" Calvin said, and then he took out something from his pocket. Taylor said to Calvin, "Don't do that, don't do that." And, Calvin said, "Do what? This?" Then I saw it was a knife. He just took it out and put it against my nose. I started to cry. I was scared, I screamed, "Ahhh." I saw some blood coming from my nose. Calvin said, "You are such a wimp, it is not so bad." . . . A few seconds later, the teacher came and I told her everything. The teacher asked if I wanted to report this incident to the principal, but I said no. I did not want to be called a wimp or a tattletale.

That was the end of the day. I went to the car where my mom was waiting to give me a ride home. I was scared, *there were all sort of emotions going on. I was sad and mad, and I was crying. Mom asked me if I was in a fight. I said, "How did you know that?"* Then I told her the whole story. She was so mad that after picking up my sisters from the school, she raced back to the principal's office. She was so angry that she couldn't talk, and I had to tell the whole story. The principal was angry and concerned about my safety.

The next day the school police were involved, and Calvin was suspended for a few days, *but I can bet if I had done something like this, I would be expelled from the school. After that incident . . . until then everybody thought I [was] a tough guy and nothing could touch me, but now they [knew] . . . I got more teased and bullied.* I realized that it was not a good idea to get involved in a fight, but I had to get involved because I wanted to protect my friend from Calvin who had been bullying me for a long time. I had been ignoring him, but that day I could not ignore what was going on. *It all added up, from saying things from before. If I had ignored the fight between my friend and Calvin, I would be a bystander who didn't do anything. It was the*

right thing to do to help my friend when he was in trouble. If I saw anyone was being bullied or beaten, it would be right thing to protect them. Stand up for them . . . if you saw someone being hurt, who was helpless, wouldn't you want to help them? . . . Bullying is bad. Just because you don't like a person, [bullying] is not acceptable.

Another incident happened when I was in Grade 4. Javier and I had been friends. One day on the bus he called me the “N” word. *I was mad and sad that my friend is calling me that word.* I threw my knapsack at him. I got into trouble for throwing a knapsack. The bus driver was angry with me for throwing a temper tantrum. I told the whole story to my mom when I reached home. Mom was very angry and she phoned Javier's mother. His mother was very sorry for the incident and later on Javier wrote a letter of apology to me. He was sorry for saying that word and now we are friends. This was not the first time I had been called an “N.” I had a friend named Georgina in Grade 4. We hung out together; we were close friends. One day she told me that she could not play with me anymore because I am an “N.” I was very sad and upset. I told my mom what Georgina had called me. My mom was upset and she called Georgina's mother. She apologized but we never became friends again.

I think that a lot of bullying happened to me *for being me!* I am big. I get into trouble for being active. I have been judged as a troublemaker. It didn't matter if my actions were to protect myself or someone else who was in trouble. It was almost useless to tell the teachers because it was their attitude toward me that encouraged other kids to bully and make fun of me. I didn't want my mom to do anything; I just wanted her advice. *I have learned how to protect myself. I have learned that if you agree with a person [and] what he [is] saying [about you] then they would stop. Like they teased me that you are so fat, how does it feel to be so fat? Then I would say that it felt pretty good, cool, try it sometimes.*

Now I deal with it [bullying] by making jokes and agreeing with them when they [make] jokes about me. During the recess, they were making jokes about me being fat. I went to them and said, go ahead and make jokes about me being fat because I really liked them [jokes]. They stopped; this was not the reaction they were expecting. They were expecting that I would get angry and hit them and I would get into trouble. This joke helped me to deal with bullying.

I just do not listen to people. When Cole bothered me I told him to stop, and he said that I was overreacting. I told him that I was not overreacting, you [do] this every day, and you would do the same thing if I did this to you. But if you keep on doing this, I [will] have to report to the teacher.

Sometimes I lecture small children about not bullying others. Kids are not bullied for any particular reason. They are bullied because they are different and they do not fit with others. *It's just like judging the book by the cover; it is not fair to judge the person by the colour, race, and religion.*

It is very important to have support of family, and my family is great. *If you know that your family will support you, I know that my family will back me up, and somebody [is] behind you, and somebody believes in you, and when you are down they will not kick you, they will help you to get back up on your feet, then nothing can break me up. My family is awesome; my mom is like a shadow, she is always there.*

Amelia

I have learned from my parents to speak up. It is very important to stand up for your rights, if you have any right it is the right to speak about your beliefs. I will not allow things to

be unfair for my children. They should know that as long [as] they are telling the truth I will back up my kids. Your children should know that parents are there for them.

Amelia Martinez

Amelia's profile

Amelia is in her early thirties. She is a single mother and has three children. She is a university graduate and works as a lab technician. She comes from a family of thirteen children. They are a close-knit extended family. Amelia says that *we always help each other if one sibling needs help the whole family gets involved. Even if you are not paying them, they will help.*

Amelia says, *"I am a single mom and I look younger than I am. I dress up in jeans and go to university, but I am very protective of my kids. I will not allow things to be unfair to my children . . . It's important [that] they know that I am raising them to be the best person they can be . . . I am always there for them."* When I asked her if she had received these values from her parents, she said, *"Absolutely! Not only the things they did for us, but also things that they didn't do."* She is very much involved in the schooling of her children, and attends all parent-teacher meetings.

Following is Amelia's story the way she narrated it to me. Direct quotations are in italics, and have been taken directly from the transcripts of the interviews conducted on October 12, 27, and November 8, 2010.

Amelia's story

Josh's bullying problem started in Grade 4. Children picked on him because of his size and colour. When the problem started he would not tell me what was going on in school, but I would know from his mood that something was bothering him. *In Grade 4, he was called an*

“N” by his friend. He was very sad. I called his friend’s parents and told them how sad he was with his friend’s behaviour, how hurtful it was for him that his friend had called him this ugly word. Josh’s friend wrote a letter of apology to him and the problem was resolved.

I was furious when I found out about the knife incident. When I picked up Josh after school that day, he was angry and sad, and he had blood on his nose. I asked him if he was in a fight. He started to cry and told me the whole story. After picking up the girls from school, I raced back to Josh’s school. I was furious. I wanted to find this kid who would put a knife to my son’s face. Josh did not want me to do anything because he was scared he would be called a wimp, a tattletale, and I didn’t want kids to gang up on him.

We reached the school and I stormed into the principal’s office. I demanded to see the principal and the receptionist said *the principal was busy but I could talk to the VP*. I told her *“this kid in my son’s class pulled a knife on my son’s face,”* and right away she said the principal might be available. We were ushered into the principal’s office. I was so angry that I could hardly say a word. Josh told the whole story and the principal assured us that a disciplinary action would be taken. She was very unhappy and concerned about Josh’s safety.

Josh has a very kind heart. He did not want Calvin to be suspended but I told him what would happen if the problem became worse. It was important that we inform the principal. I was terrified and could not sleep for a few nights. I would wake up in the night. I am a very anxious person. Josh didn’t want to go to school the next day because he would be called a wimp and be teased. He was worried there might be another fight. But he went to school anyway. When he came home he told me that all kids were very nice to him and said *how sorry they were for what happened to him*. And, they added that they had no idea how scary the incident had been.

Another incident occurred when Josh was trying to break up the fight between two boys from his class. He was suspended for four days for bullying. I was upset, but confident that my son could never be a bully. *The teachers had their pre-formed idea about him* and they did not investigate the incident. I was not going to accept that my son was suspended for something that he did not do. I called the principal and told her that she was calling my son a bully without checking the facts. She should reinvestigate the event, because Josh would never lie to me and he was not a bully. The principal re-investigated the incident and phoned me the next day to report that she was not getting a consistent story of the incident and so Josh could come back to school.

After attending many parent-teacher meetings, I realized that some teachers had a very negative opinion about Josh. They labeled him as a troublemaker and they treated him like one. I was determined to fight this labeling of my son as a troublemaker. I told the principal that if she labeled him a bully, he would behave like a bully. The principal agreed and assured me that she would investigate. The teacher who was exceptionally mean to Josh was also mean to some other children. Some other parents had also complained about the way she treated children in her class.

I am not afraid of the teachers or the principal. I don't have a problem doing something that is right. Standing up for my children and letting the teachers know that I am not rude, I am not successful, but I would fight for what is right.

On the other hand, *I told Josh to stay quiet and do his work and not get involved in other children's fights. This teacher had labeled you and whatever you would do or don't do, you [will] be blamed. Sometimes it is not easy to change people's minds. So learn what you have to*

learn and stay out of trouble. He said that he was working hard on it. He was not talking in the class and trying to please the teacher as best as he could.

The White Family

Family's portrait

The White family lives in a detached home in a suburb of the city. They have been living in this neighbourhood for 11 years. They have two children, Noah, 11 years old, and Melissa, 8 years old. Noah and Melissa both attend the neighbourhood elementary school. Noah attends Grade 6 and Melissa is in Grade 2. They both seem to be quiet and shy children. Their mother informed me that it is not easy for her children to talk to strangers, but once they knew me it would be easier to interview Noah, who was the research participant.

Both parents are professionals and their household income falls into the upper income bracket. They are a middle-class family living in a middle-class neighbourhood. The neighbourhood appears to be a new and growing community in the city with a mix of families of different ethnicities.

Laura (mother) contacted me via email to volunteer for the study. During a brief telephone interview to establish eligibility, I asked her a few specific questions about bullying, victimization, and her family's interest in taking part in the study. I did not talk to Noah at this time, but Laura assured me that he had consented to be interviewed. After I was satisfied that they would be suitable candidates, I explained the purpose of the research and their role as participants. I informed them that the purpose of our first meeting would be to get to know each other and to sign consent and assent forms. The interviews would begin after we had finished all the preliminary requirements. There would be three one-hour interviews at one-week intervals.

Our first meeting was very short. I explained the procedure, we signed the consent, and assent forms and decided to meet in a few days. They had no questions related to the research. When I arrived at their house for the first interview, I was introduced to Scott, Melissa, and Noah. Laura, Noah, and I went to the study. Laura explained that the room would be quiet and suitable for the interview. We sat around the coffee table to talk. Noah wanted his mother to be present when I interviewed him.

The following section begins with Noah's story. First I give a brief introduction to Noah, followed by his narrative. His mother's narrative follows immediately thereafter.

Noah

If you persevere . . . however hopeless it may seem . . . if you do your part, you will come out on top. [The] bully may get some fun by taunting at the kid, but if the kid does not care, then the bully would [see] what is happening and they may back off for awhile . . . If you don't give them anything, they are kind of disappointed and they will stop. Yeah! They are looking for a trap.

Noah White

Noah's profile

Noah is 11 years old and attends Grade 6 at his neighbourhood elementary school. He is slim and average height for his age. He has been bullied since Grade 1. In the beginning he didn't think of it as *bullying*, and he ignored it. But in Grades 2 and 3 the bully kept bothering him and he realized that he had to do something with the situation.

Like many other Canadian boys, Noah is very busy with hockey practice. He informed me that he does well in school, and he attends classes designed for IEP students (Individual

Education Plan). The Individual Education Plan is designed for the students who are considered above average or below average students.

Noah believes that anti-bullying programs in school do not provide much support to victims, but does think that bullying could be stopped if there were some venue for victims to report incidents. The following is his story as he narrated it to me. Direct quotations are in italics and have been taken directly from the transcripts of interviews held on December 20 and 27, 2010, and January 8, 2011.

Noah's story

The bullying started in Grade 1, and continued until Grade 5. After Grade 5 the bully left school and the bullying stopped. *In Grades 1 and 2 it was physical bullying, then it became verbal bullying.* This girl named Daisy would often push me when she walked by. I couldn't understand why she was doing this to me. *The first few times I ignored it. I thought it could have happened by accident and she really didn't mean it or it could be a joke. But her actions continued. I asked her why she was pushing me.* She gave an answer that seemed like an excuse and then she walked away. *Each time I asked her about pushing me she would stop for a day or two and then start again. When she could not push me she would call [me] names. I felt that calling insulting names was a kind of desperate attempt of bullying. She would say, "Get out of my way stupid," or something worse than this.* I was not the only victim of Daisy's bullying. She was doing this to many other kids, but it was the worst for me.

The name-calling and pushing would continue in the gym and in the schoolyard where teachers could not see us. A few times, I didn't want to go to school when it was really bad. I talked to the bully many times, but she didn't stop her actions. Her actions were hurtful. Then I told my mom. In the beginning my parents didn't believe that there was any bullying at my

school. *I told my parents [a] second and third time and then my parents talked to the teacher, vice-principal, and the principal. The bullying stopped for a while and started again. I will say that if all . . . 100% [of] kids who were bullied told the teacher . . . then it [would] stop. It could be prevented because it is only one bully to four or five kids, and not [the same] bully for each kid. I think if everyone told that I have been bullied today, if they actually [found a] way to tell the teachers and the parents to prevent it, [teachers would] try to find the way to prevent it or stop it right away. Once the teachers and the parents were aware of it, and they found someone bullying, that person would be in huge trouble. When my parents talked to the teachers they did listen to us. The bullying would stop for a short while, but the bully would continue her actions where teachers couldn't see us.*

All the kids in my class who had been bullied decided to use another strategy to deal with the bully. *It was kind of half strategy [and] half it just happened. When we were bullied in Grade 1, 2, and 3, we didn't tell anybody in the class. We just tried to deal with it in our own ways. We walked alone and that gave a chance to the bully to bother us. First, I started to walk away from the bully as far as possible. I tried to avoid the bully, and then gradually we started to talk to each other about the bullying. By Grade 5, all the kids were kind of tightly bonded and started to walk in a group. Half of this was [because of] the bullying and the other half [was] to play together. We never walked alone.*

We helped each other in many ways. *If something was [were] happening to one kid, the other friend would get the teacher right away so the bully would be caught red-handed. This was one of the strategies to deal with the bully. Our strategies only worked temporarily though, because the bully would return with a new plan. I thought the bully had a short attention span. We had to come back with new strategies.*

Probably the best strategy from my experience would be to keep away from the person, because they cannot taunt you or bully you from a distance, or go to the other side of the court or across the schoolyard. Or when you play you should stay close to the teacher. You don't have to walk with the teacher, but stay close to the teacher so she would notice what was going on, or the bully would not even do it.

She [the bully] didn't change, but we got better. We knew what is coming, and the physical bullying had completely stopped in the middle of Grade 3. By Grade 5 it was more verbal and she was not very imaginative in terms of thinking of new things to say so they were roughly the same insults and nobody was bothered by it, eventually.

It is important to tell your parents, friends, and your teachers. I am so glad that I told my parents. If you didn't tell anybody, you would be bottled up inside and later in the day somebody finds you crying. It's the same emotions the bully expects, but you are doing it later in the day. If nothing happens during the whole day, then the bully might be really surprised. But if you gave them something like crying or something, or you ran off to the teachers, or if you gave a big thing to display, then the bullying would continue. If it happened once in the first recess, then they would try to push more in the second recess.

I know many kids who didn't tell anybody about being bullied and therefore their whole year was wasted. Telling my parents helped me in other ways also. They told me some of the strategies to deal with the bully. Now, if it starts again, I would not wait to tell my parents. I would like to go to them right away. I would not [use a] "wait and see approach" because things get aggravated if you wait too long.

My sister is being bullied and I have helped her to think of a few plans. She should keep a group of friends with her all the time because they will never do anything when you are with a

group or stay where the teachers are, or know where the teachers are, go to the teacher as soon as you can after the incident before the bully can make a situation and develop it.

I was disappointed by the teachers because they did not do anything. They never did anything. Sometimes I was frustrated. I knew that they were trying their best but they can't do anything in some situations. It was not stopping. There were anti-bullying presentations in front of the school, but there should be different presentation for different grades because there are different kinds of bullying in different grades.

I think like [other] people I feel better that I stood up and I did something. I [felt] much better that I stood up and after I stood up . . . my friends also stood up.

Laura

We try to teach children the process and not the formula. If the problem is to be solved, this is one of the ways. You should always try to analyze the situation and learn from it; there could be a different strategy for one to one bullying, and for the group it may be different. This is what we suggest to our children.

Laura White

Laura's profile

Laura is in her late thirties. She has a post-graduate degree and her household income falls into the upper income group category. Scott, her husband, also has a university degree. Both are quite involved with children's school activities and with Noah's hockey.

When Noah told his parents about the bullying, Laura wanted to take a rational approach. She wanted to analyze the situation before taking any action. She said that it is only fair to find out both sides of the story before taking action.

Laura and her husband are both involved in their children's schooling and attend parent-teacher meetings regularly. Laura also helps as a volunteer Teacher's Aide at her children's school. Her story follows as she narrated it to me. Direct quotations are in italics and were taken directly from transcripts of interviews held on December 20 and December 27, 2010, and January 8, 2011.

Laura's story

I volunteer at Noah's school as a Teacher's Aide, so I am quite familiar with the school environment. I also know many students and teachers in Noah's class. In Grade 1 and 2 when the bullying started, Noah wouldn't tell us anything. He was quiet and appeared unhappy. I asked him many times if there was any problem at school, but the answer was always negative. Finally he told that he was being bullied by a girl in his class. He told me who this girl was. I knew the girl well because of my volunteer work, but I hadn't noticed anything unusual in her behavior. *Therefore, my first reaction to what he told me was shock and disbelief. Their principal was also very strict on bullying issues.*

My advice to Noah was to analyze the situation. He should look back [to consider] if he had done anything to annoy her. We encouraged Noah to problem-solve the situation and just see what was happening, and how he was feeling, and what he could do. I wanted to give this problem more time and not take any hasty action. At that time, I did not realize how serious the impact was going to be on him. Sometimes you get hit and then you get it over with, kids kind of learn from that. That's why I was surprised by how it kept going and how it impacted him.

When [Noah] has a problem, he comes to us and talks to us, one or the other. Sometimes he will come to one parent or the other and he will talk separately, then we can talk together. We often did that, eh? But when he named the individual, I was not surprised because it was the

same kid who got kicked out of the day-care, right Noah? We decided to talk to the principal. All three of us met the principal, and she assured me that they were aware of the problems with that student and would take action to rectify the situation.

The problem continued, and we noticed changes in Noah's behaviour. Although we were assured that some action would be taken, we did not see any change in the situation. Noah would tell us what was going on at school. *He was unhappy with what was going on in the school. As a first step, all you can do is to teach children to go to the principal, but as a parent we see that the principal was working on it, but it was not working. Nothing was happening. I think as a parent it is fair to say that there should be some sense of fairness and justice. If someone has done something wrong, the person should be punished or things should change, but that was not happening. I realized that something had to change here. We had given them a chance, but the process wasn't managed properly. I felt that teachers weren't trained properly to deal with the bullying issue. They didn't seem to have enough knowledge to fix the problems related to bullying. We were discouraged.*

We talked a little bit with other parents, like if there was some incident in their child's class, how would they deal with it? Had they noticed anything? What were they doing about it? *We try to take a constructive approach . . . try to understand it, diagnose the situation first. [We] like to be fair, reasonable, and objective like the thing first happened.*

In the meantime, I kept watching Noah's reactions. He is normally levelheaded and does not like conflicts, but he brought up this situation a number of times. *We decided to solve the situation as a family. We tried to brainstorm different situations and what Noah should do in those specific situations. We tried to teach him different strategies for different situations. I was*

not sure if brainstorming alone could solve the situation but it did give him some confidence to face the situation.

I think that all parents should be given information to deal with bullying in school. *In my son's case, I waited too long to take action. There should be a collaborative discussion between parents. Now, my daughter was being bullied and I took an immediate action. I talked to the teachers and the principal and demanded that some action should be taken immediately. I didn't want them to take as long as they took to do something when Noah was bullied.*

I would like to say that at first I pursued open communication and let it go through the cycle, but now *I will tend to scream louder in the beginning to get their attention. Not that they were not doing anything at the school, but just get people to realize that it is big . . . They will react to the level [of] your reaction to the situation.* I would still be open-minded and would have compassion for the other child, but the school is responsible for that child's behavior. [Noah added here, *like I said bullies have emotions too.*] *I think schools should have a collaborative approach with parents and teachers, and both sides should acknowledge their shortcomings and try to address the issues in a timely fashion. I think things can be a slippery slope.*

The Fox Family

Family's portrait

The Fox family lives in a townhouse in the inner city. They have been living in this neighborhood for two years. They have three children, Jade (participant) who is 11 years old, Jian, 9 years old, and Evan, 4 years old. They fall into the category of an average-income household. Jennifer is a very busy mother, working in the home. Due to his work, Jeremiah, the father, is often out of town. Jennifer manages the household and looks after the children's

schooling. Jade and her younger brother both attend a nearby elementary school. Jade attends Grade 5 and Jian attends Grade 3.

Jennifer contacted me by phone to volunteer for the study. During a brief interview over the phone to establish eligibility, I asked Jennifer a few questions about bullying, victimization, and their interest in taking part in the study. After I was satisfied that they would be suitable candidates, I explained the purpose of the study and their role as participants. I informed them that the purpose of our first meeting would be to get to know each other and sign the consent and assent forms. The interviews would begin after we finished all the preliminary requirements. There would be three one-hour interviews at one-week intervals. We agreed to meet at their home one week later.

Jennifer's and Jeremiah's home is a busy household. When I arrived for our first meeting, children were running around the house. After introductions, Jeremiah took the boys upstairs so that we could start our meeting. We sat around the dining table. I explained the purpose of the consent and assent forms. After my explanation, Jennifer and Jade signed the forms. Jade was very excited to take part in the interview and wanted to know when she could talk about her experiences of bullying. She was a little disappointed that I was not starting the interview right away. This meeting lasted 40 minutes. We decided to meet in a week's time at their home. The following section begins with Jade's story. First I will give a brief introduction to Jade, followed by her narrative. Her mother's narrative follows immediately thereafter.

Jade

I don't know how it started, but she used to bother me, tease me, and beat me. She made me do mean things and do bad gestures meaning that my hands are bigger than my head. Like I have low intelligence. I don't know what those gestures mean. We had to go to a counsellor. Katrina is very mean!

Jade Fox

Jade's profile

Jade is 11 years old. She is in Grade 5 and goes to an elementary school close to her home. She attends a different school for part of the day because she has some challenges with writing. She loves to talk and asks a lot of questions. She asked me about my research project and what I would be doing with the recorded interviews. I explained the purpose of recording the interviews. She was excited about the recording aspect of the interview. Jade likes to write and hopes to have her own computer soon. The following is her story as she narrated it to me. Direct quotations are in italics, and were taken directly from the transcripts of interviews held on October 7, 14, and 23, 2010.

Jade's story

I was new in this school and was eager to make new friends. In the beginning, Katrina and I sat together in the class. She was nice, but then she started to bother me. I am not sure why she changed her behaviour towards me. Maybe, because I was a new kid in the school. I wanted to be her friend. She started to taunt me and do mean things, she would push me or sometimes even hit me when nobody was watching. She liked me to do mean things to others. *I would get away from her, but she [would] follow me and hurt me.*

In the beginning, I didn't complain to the teacher because I didn't want [Katrina] to be in trouble. I just wanted her to leave me alone. I think other kids didn't have much to do with it. She would bully me when there were not many kids around. She would bully when there were only three or four people . . . around, and she would make sure that teachers were not there. There [would] be only a few people. She would make sure that nobody was watching it or her friends were there. The people who were there just watched and ignored what was going on. Katrina's friends usually laughed and didn't do anything.

When the bullying continued, I complained to the teacher. The teachers tried as best as they could. Katrina was often sent to the detention room and punished, but she continued to bully me. Finally I told my mother and she talked to the teacher and phoned Katrina's mother as well. The teachers told my mother that they were aware of the problems with Katrina and would take action to make her stop. Katrina's mother told the teacher that I annoyed Katrina and that was the reason for her bullying Jade.

I was not annoying Katrina. I wanted to be friends with her. She was not bullying anyone else, she chose me. *One time she followed me to the bathroom and would bother me there. The kids who were there, just ignored or laughed. Sometimes she will bring some kids along and they will just watch or laugh, won't do anything. I told this to the teacher. Usually [teachers] gave a little more attention and that's it. They don't talk to the parents and that's what they should do, but they don't.*

During the year, I kept on trying to avoid her. *I told her many times to leave me alone and stop bothering me. When this didn't work I complained to the teacher again. Then she would call me tattletales. I was trying to defend myself. Whenever she bothered me I asked her to stop and she called me rat. I stayed away from her as much as possible but she would follow*

me. I think I walked away from her . . . I didn't freeze up. The situation improved temporarily after my mother complained to the principal that something should be done right away to stop the bullying. I should feel safe at school and not be threatened by Katrina.

The principal and the teachers tried to help me but Katrina would only stop temporarily and then start again. *I was not scared of her, but I didn't want to be around her. I continued to avoid her as much as possible and it worked sometimes. I told her many times to stop, and when that did not work I went to the teacher. The bullying stopped at the end of the year. She left me alone in the last few months of the school year. I am not sure why Katrina stopped bullying me at the end of the year. In the following school year she found another kid to bully and I was spared of her bullying.*

I think teachers should talk to the parents, *because parents are in charge of the kids, and kids are difficult, and they are hurting the kids. If my mom called Katrina's parents, they are not going to believe her . . . if teachers didn't call [Katrina's] parents, then [Katrina's] mother will not believe my mom and she will believe only Katrina. She will not care. But if teacher called, she [would] have to believe her. [The] teacher [would] be able to stop this. But now Katrina . . . has moved to the other school.*

Jennifer

Bullies have friends who will say that no, they never did anything and she has not been bullied. [The victim] is doing everything; she is making fun of me. Also, the person who is bullied has not so many friends and if they have to leave the school they have to make new friends [at a] new school. On the other hand, if it is the bully [who] is forced to leave the

school, and then he may not be in such a stronger position in a new school. Then they might have a taste of their own medicine.

Jennifer Fox

Jennifer's profile

Jennifer is in her late thirties. She is a high school graduate. Jennifer is very much involved in her children's education, and attends parent-teacher meetings regularly. She is also very busy with her children's extra-curricular activities. She believes that the problem of bullying in schools is severe and should be taken seriously. Children should feel safe at school. Both of her children were bullied, but the principal in her children's school was good at dealing with these problems. I found Jennifer to be friendly, talkative, and easygoing. Both Angelo and Jennifer welcomed me and appeared to be eager to take part in the interview. During the interviews, Angelo made brief appearances but did not actively participate in the interviews. He was busy taking care of the children.

Jennifer was bullied as a child, so she knew how her children felt when they were victimized. In the first interview she did not talk much about her own experiences with bullying, but as she became more comfortable she spoke about her experiences. Following is her story as she narrated to me. Direct quotations are in italics and were taken from transcripts of interviews held on October 7, October 14, and October 23, 2010.

Jennifer's story

I know all about bullying, I was bullied growing up, at school, and in the neighborhood. I remember being called names. They threw grass on my face and said, "you are a cow, eat

grass” [They] threw me in the garbage, but the worst was name-calling . . . I think it has gotten worse with this generation, because there [are] so many ways to be able to do this: internet, Facebook, email, and sending messages that way. At that time it was only “stupid, ugly,” but they are calling horrible names now, and there are so many ways to do it. You can do it anonymously; they do not have to do person to person.

Because of my own experiences with bullying, I like to address these issues as they come up. When Jade told me that Katrina was bullying her, I asked her to stay away from her and tell the teacher about Katrina. This measure worked only temporarily. My next response was to write a letter to the teacher. I wanted to know what was going on, and to tell the school that they should put a stop to bullying. The teachers were cooperative and told me that they were aware of the problems. Katrina was known for bullying. She had been suspended from school a few times, but that didn't stop her from bullying other kids. She would pick on one child every year and she picked Jade that year. Some days, Jade would not want to go to school because Katrina bullied her on the bus too.

[The bullying occurred in] spurts. It will stop, then it will start again, and it was not consistent. I went to meet the principal. Actually, when I sent [an] email to the classroom teacher, I had cc'd it to the principal. In response to my email, she had called me and we had a meeting about [the] bullying problem. I told her that this should stop. There was no excuse for this to go on. She told me that [they] were dealing with this issue. I was sure that the principal would take some action to stop bullying, but bullying would stop temporarily and start again. It ended only at the end of the year.

My son is also being bullied. He is very upset, crying. *I told him to talk to the teacher, because if I go to the teacher, he would say that he did not know about it. My son complained to*

the teacher but he says teachers don't do anything. Finally I talked to the vice-principal and he told me, "it is not really bullying because he is not afraid of him [the bully], he is not afraid to go to school." I didn't have this problem with Jade's teacher, but in my son's case if the principal won't do anything I will go to the school board.

I might have mentioned it that there was a whole different attitude when I was a kid. I finally stood up in Grade 8 and basically threatened the bullies and that's what stopped it. Now you can't fight without getting into trouble. Because of the zero tolerance policy, you can't fight back. It was different then, you could go and beat up the kid who was bothering you, and there [would] be no repercussions. On the other hand, if it really got bad there was no help, because teachers and parents would say that this is what kids do and it was not taken seriously enough.

Now the teachers don't want confrontation, they want mediation. You should talk face-to-face that you hurt my feelings, how would you feel if it happens to you? This does not work. Some kind of restorative justice! Or mediation. Bullies live on power. They are not afraid of getting into trouble or reprimanded. It does not scare them, actually they like it, and it makes them feel cool. Mediation never works because it is not the school only. You live in the neighborhood, and you see the same kids in the neighborhood. So they are afraid to go outside because they are being bullied.

In some cases the parents do not want to speak up and try to deal with it themselves or ignore it, thinking it will go away by itself. Or they go to school, [thinking] that school will do something, but it all depends on the actions of the school. Because you can take it so far, and if they can't do anything then you go to the school board, and if they do not do anything then you go to school district. You have to keep on going until it stops, and as I said last week, it shouldn't be the child who is being bullied [who] should have to leave school. Unfortunately

they are the ones who have no friends, and they have no one to back them up to say that they have been bullied. Bullies have friends who would say, “No, they didn’t do anything; [the victim] had not been bullied. [The victim] was doing everything; she was making fun of me.” And the friends and the bystanders also do not want to speak up because they are afraid, and nothing is done. People don’t want to get involved. Teachers should have to investigate if a person is nice and friendly in the classroom and mean on the playground. It would be harder for teachers to believe the victims without investigating properly.

I would say that [parents] should keep on going and do not stop. The best thing that helped us was being believed and having them understanding us, rather than saying, “here comes Jade, again, complaining about bullying, okay, we will take care of it,” you know!

Chapter 6: Findings: Acts of Resistance

People will forget what you said

People will forget what you did

But people will never forget how you made them feel.

Maya Angelou (2003, p. 263)

Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is one of the most widely used methods of analysis in narrative inquiry. I refer to Riessman (2008), Braun and Clarke (2006), and Polkinghorne (1995) in my discussion of the thematic approach I used to analyze the narratives of my research participants. As discussed previously, Riessman (2008) establishes three approaches to narrative analysis: structural analysis; dialogical-performance analysis; and finally thematic analysis, which is the most applicable to my research. My research objective was to identify acts of resistance by participants who had been bullied. What were the different ways that they protected themselves? How did they hold on to their values and beliefs and maintain their dignity? At the same time, my objective was to find out how different families resisted the bullying of their children. How did parents find out about the bullying of their children, and what were their responses? Were the families different in their responses or did they share common threads?

Narrative inquiry, Mishler (2007) and Polkinghorne (2007) (in transcribed conversations with Clandinin and Murphy, 2007) posit, should be viewed differently from other methodologies in qualitative research because a narrative involves a different kind of knowledge. Polkinghorne (2007) argues that since narrative inquiry deals with people's lives, it loses its unique quality of

temporal development when researchers use it for data analysis. Polkinghorne (2007) distinguishes:

between *analysis of narratives* as a qualitative approach, where you have stories and you analyze them by coming up with common themes, and *narrative analysis* where you are looking at an individual's life or a portion of the life from different sources and you come up with a story . . . You end up with a *description* of the life movements of a particular person (p. 634; emphasis added).

In my dissertation I have relied on both forms of analysis: I first provided narratives of my research participants' experiences and responses to bullying, I then analyzed these narratives using the thematic approach of narrative analysis, suggested by Riessman (2008); Braun and Clarke (2006), and Polkinghorne (1995).

Braun and Clarke (2006) define thematic analysis as "a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organizes and describes your data set in (rich) detail" (p. 79). Boyatzis (1998) says that thematic analysis is a way of seeing patterns, of recognizing an important moment that may not be obvious to others. It is also a process for encoding information. He describes three aspects of thematic analysis: a way of seeing, a way of making sense of seemingly unrelated material, and a way of analyzing qualitative information. According to Boyatzis (1998), themes should capture information that is relevant to the overall research question and should contribute to final interpretations.

Context of findings and discussion

All participants in this study, both the children and their parents, responded to bullying in diverse and creative ways in order to resist aggression. Contrary to the deficit-laden

description of victims that exists in the bullying literature, my research shows that participants were successful in resisting bullying in many different ways.

Allan Wade (1997) states, “whenever persons are treated badly, they resist; alongside each history of violence and oppression, there runs a parallel history of prudent, creative, and determined resistance” (p. 23). These responses can be very subtle, overt, or covert and exist at “micro-level aspects of mental and social tactics woven into the fabric of daily life” (Wade, 2007, p. 63). Victims’ responses are aptly described as “small acts of living” by Goffman (1961) and Wade, (1997). These “small acts of living” may not achieve the desired results for the victims of bullying immediately, but they show their determination to stand up for themselves against mistreatment, to protect their dignity, and to pursue social justice.

In discussing the responses and effects of trauma in a person’s life, Michael White (2006) states, “No one is a passive recipient of trauma; people always take steps in endeavoring to prevent trauma they are subject to, and, when preventing this trauma is clearly impossible, they take steps to try to modify it in some ways or to modify its effects on their lives” (p. 28). These steps—responses—are shaped by an individual’s knowledge and skills, and represent personal values and beliefs.

In my analysis of interviews with research participants, I tried to look for the ways in which they responded to the aggression of bullies. While reading the interview transcripts, I found that the participants responded in a variety of ways. After several readings, I identified patterns in terms of themes of responses among different participants. The following section will describe and discuss the findings of a thematic analysis of data collected from four sets of parents and five adolescents.

I identified four overarching themes from the analysis of the transcribed interviews. These themes are: (a) overt responses; (b) covert responses; (c) emotional responses; (d) relational responses. These themes were evident throughout the narratives of the participants, both adolescents and parents. There were several sub themes within these four overarching themes.

Responses of the Adolescents

Overt responses

An overt response is a behavioural response to aggression that is visible and easily recognizable by both victim and bully (Hollander & Einwohner, 2004). These responses can be physical or verbal, and are carried out in a variety of ways. For example, participants in my study responded to physical attacks by pushing the bully, walking away, or simply standing there in disbelief, pondering how to respond. In some cases physical attacks were met by overt emotional responses, such as the participant who cried when he was attacked physically with a knife. Sometimes verbal bullying was met by an overt verbal response.

Physical responses

Physical responses are a subset of overt responses. Used less frequently than other responses, depending on the contexts, victims physically respond to a bully's actions. Victims will not typically risk their own safety by retaliating physically to the aggression, but sometimes victims do respond physically by pushing the bully or not doing what the bully wants them to do. Physical responses are *spontaneous*, *opportunistic*, and require a lot of courage from the victims (Scott, 1985, 1990; Wade, 1997). Victims usually respond in a manner that will not increase the risk of further victimization. Three of my participants responded physically to a bully's attacks.

For example, when Zach was called names he complained to the bully, and when the bully pushed him, he pushed back.

Overt action is what we gauge character by; when Zach retaliates, we see character in action. First, the action demonstrates his choice to respond to the attacks. Second, he was aware that he should not instigate a confrontation and that it was important to determine when it was dangerous to pursue a physical fight. Third, he acted in a “prudent” manner (Wade, 1997) by not continuing the fight in the washroom where he might have risked his own safety. Fourth, he showed determination despite his frustration with name-calling, and stood up for himself. Fifth, he protected his dignity by responding and expressing his values.

Jessica demonstrated another form of overt physical response by walking away from the scene. When she was defending her friend Olivia against Maddy’s bullying behaviour, *Maddy took out her slipper and slapped me across the face. I was stunned. I didn’t do anything, I didn’t think of hitting her back, I just walked away . . . this was so stupid, but after this incident, I didn’t talk to her.* Jessica demonstrated her indignation with Maddy’s behaviour by walking away from the scene. Her response preserved her dignity and safety.

Walking away was the response used most frequently by victims. One participant explained his strategies of avoiding bullies. Noah said: *I was always with my friends and never alone. I never play alone.* Later on he suggested, *Stay where the teachers are, or know where the teachers are, go to the teacher as soon as you can after the incident before the bully can make a situation and develop it.* Further, he said that he had several strategies to avoid the bully, but they might not have worked all the time: *When you are being bullied, you are under pressure. You are not thinking logically or rationally.*

Even though responses may not bring immediate success, these small acts demonstrate the participants' determination to stand up for themselves (Hollander, 2002; Wade, 1997). Usually, physical responses are spontaneous and may not come to mind when we think of "responses" for this reason. Participants displayed a variety of overt responses that were tailored to the contexts at hand.

Verbal responses

In several cases, victimized children used overt verbal responses, telling the bully to stop bothering them or asking why they were being bullied. For instance, Noah asked the bully, *why are you doing this? Is this a joke or something?* Although Noah first experienced physical bullying, when he asked the bully the reason for her actions, the bullying not only continued but also changed from physical to verbal. He said he was confused and shocked, and found it hard to believe that he was being bullied, but the repeated incidents of physical and verbal attacks convinced him that it was not an accident. For most of the participants, the realization that they were the targets of bullying proved embarrassing and disturbing. They hoped it would go away on its own or that it would stop when they responded verbally.

Zach's verbal response to name-calling was instantaneous, but resulted in a physical fight. While resistance does not always achieve the desired results in terms of the cessation of bullying behaviour, it can nevertheless contribute to the victim's sense of self-satisfaction and self-dignity. These are the achievements of resistance. The sense of personal empowerment associated with standing up to his bully was of great significance and value to Zach. His verbal responses and the bullying that ensued also attracted the attention of a teacher, which led to a one-day suspension of the bullies.

Another participant, Josh, narrated several verbal strategies for responding to bullying. He is taller and bigger than the other children in his class. He has a rich tenor voice and is often accused of yelling because of the pitch of his voice. Children bully him because of his size, voice, and colour. Josh verbally responded to being bullied in a very unique way. He said: *When somebody is bothering me I start my lecture. I like people to understand, I make them understand. Even the kids I have lectured, they understand. According to Josh, Now, I deal [with] it by making jokes and agreeing with them when they make jokes about me.*

Josh discovered that the strategy of agreeing with bullies worked. When people are bothering him and teasing him, he surprises them with his reply. *Like they tease me that you are so fat, how does it feel to be so fat, then I would say that it feels pretty good, cool, try it sometime. That usually works.* Josh said that they realize that this guy cannot be bothered. *They are waiting for my reaction that I will hit them and I will get into trouble.* While some participants chose not to respond physically, all responded verbally when they encountered bullying. Usually these responses were precursors to secondary responses such as going to the teacher to report the incident, or moving to a safer territory. Participants indicated they expected to be protected by teachers after they reported bullying incidents.

Covert responses

Covert responses are made intentionally by victims but are not noticed by bullies (Hollander & Einwohner, 2004). These responses include cognitive responses in the form of self-talk, as well as talking with peers. After encountering bullying, victims must cognitively process the event. The child is shocked and wants to take action so that the bullying does not continue in the future. I noticed a very conscious effort by participants to ponder ways of putting

a stop to the bullying in order to end their humiliation before their friends, parents, teachers, and others found out about it. Each participant used a lot of *self-talk* for that purpose.

Cognitive responses

Defining cognitive responses has allowed me to identify those responses in which children consciously brainstormed strategies to protect themselves. The participants told me that when faced with a bullying incident sometimes they did not actually do anything, but instead thought about what they should do in the future to resist or avoid bullying. They questioned in their mind that why was it happening to them? There were spontaneous responses, but also some strategic responses. As Noah said, *plans came after. If the bully pursues when I am walking away because I am under pressure, you are not thinking logically or rationally.* He suggested that victims should have a couple of plans, in case they encounter a bully when nobody else is around. He added that he followed some of his parents' advice after he told them about the bullying incidents. They advised him to assess the situation before responding to it because, for example, facing a group of bullies requires a different response than facing a single person. He agreed that his parents' advice was good, but said that it did not always work because they did not know the whole situation.

Zach said that the first time he was bullied, there were many things going through his mind as he stood there. He was not sure how to respond because he had never faced bullying before. He considered going to the teacher to report what had happened. Later he said that since he was a big guy, he could have used his power when he was pushed to the limit, but he knew that two wrongs do not make a right. Throughout his experiences with bullying, it appears that Zach was considering and rationalizing steps he could take to respond to bullying. He did not

respond instantly because he knew that it would not be safe to do so, but he did respond later to protect himself in different ways.

Emotional responses

Only a few quantitative studies have documented the coping behaviour of adolescents who were bullied at school, and even less has been said about their responses on a qualitative level. Victims' emotional states and their responses are mostly viewed as "effects" of victimization, and as indications that they are power-deficient (Wade, 1997; White, 2006; Yuen, 2007). Emotional responses are often documented as effects of bullying in the literature in this field.

I consider feelings of anger, sadness, frustration, powerlessness, and confusion, as well as tears, dieting, and refusing to go to school, to be emotional responses because they are peoples' expressions of value. The participants in my research responded emotionally in many different ways, and the expression of their emotional responses depended on the context.

Overt emotional responses

Emotional responses were both covert and overt. I have differentiated overt emotional responses from other type of overt responses. Josh narrated his experience when a bully put a knife to his nose. He told me that Calvin had been bullying him here and there. He would say something, just hinting and [taunting], but said, *I didn't pay much attention, [but] it is progressive, it adds up*. One day there was a fight going on between Rudy (Josh's friend) and Calvin (the bully). Josh tried to protect Rudy by asking the bully to stop and was attacked with a knife. He started to cry. This was an emotional, but prudent response to a critical situation. The attack could have been severe and it was not safe to respond in any other way.

Further Josh said that on that day everybody was calling him a “wimp”, but later everything was fine and nobody bothered him anymore. The children in his class apologized. Josh’s emotional responses—crying, screaming—were acts of resistance because they impeded the progression of the bullying of his friend, and his own victimization (Wade, 1997).

Josh stated what was going through his mind. He did not want to go to school the day after he was bullied because he was afraid that he would be called a baby, but he said to himself:

I want to be able to face my fears, because these are the things you have to deal with in life, and if you don’t face them now then you have to face them later. It is better to face them sooner than later.

Overt action is probably a more obvious candidate for being named as a response than covert action because of its visibility; however as Scott (1985, 1990) and Wade (1997) document in detail, there are many creative ways to resist transgressions covertly as well.

Covert emotional responses

Some emotional responses of participants were covert and not visible to the bullies. Emotional responses such as getting angry, clenching your teeth, choking back, holding back tears, turning your face away to cry so that a bully may not see you crying do not fit the category of overt responses.

Concealing emotions can be a powerful means of denying the perpetrator a certain “payoff” (Wade, 2007). Noah, for instance, did not want to express his emotions overtly. He argued that if the bully knows that you *are nervous, it wouldn’t help you at all*. In fact, Noah said that the bully expects to see emotions. *If [the] bully sees that nothing is happening the whole day, then he may be really surprised [by] what is happening and [he] may back off for a while*. He was very positive about concealing his emotional responses. He believed that the

bully should not have known what his emotions were. Noah's responses showed that he was protesting against bullying very strategically. By not displaying his emotions, he ensured that the bully would not see the results of his aggression. Even though Noah was unhappy about the bullying, he did not want the bully to have the satisfaction of achieving his goal. With regard to school attendance, he said that while he sometimes thought about not going to school, he did not in fact miss school due to bullying.

Zach's emotional responses provided a different picture, but shared with Noah the desire to conceal the bullying. When he was physically attacked, he was sad, physically hurt, and unsure about what was happening: *I wanted to cry but I held back my tears, and I didn't know why this boy hit me with a basketball.* Following this incident, he was socially excluded from his group of friends. He was confused and frustrated. Zach said that he started to come home from school with a headache. He did not want to go to school, and told his parents that he had a stomach ache. When his parents gave him a ride to school, he did not want to get out of the car. At the same time, he didn't want his parents to know that he was being bullied. He did not want his parents to talk to the teacher or to the bully's parents. Later on, Zach said, *I told my parents that I want to stand up for myself.*

Zach had responded to the bully's physical attacks before, and was successful in gaining the teacher's attention, but was not sure how to respond to social exclusion. He felt helpless, but not being able to play with his previous group of friends gave him an opportunity to hang around with another group of boys. Zach said that he made new friends, and time passed quickly. It is better to have lots of friends. *In a way, this was what they did for me, but getting excluded still hurts.*

Zach's emotional responses, determination to stand up for himself, and efforts to find new friends demonstrate much strength in his character. He thought of himself as powerless and frustrated, but his responses proved otherwise. His emotional responses were not only a sign of protest against injustice but also of a determination to stand up for himself and survive in an aggressive environment (Wade, 1997; White, 2006). He turned around a negative situation and made it into a positive one. In addition, he acknowledged that he made new friends and felt good about himself.

Relational responses

I define *relational responses* to underscore those responses where adolescents informed their parents, teachers, peers, or whoever else they could relate to about their bullying problems. Relational responses were a recurring feature of all the responses made by adolescents and their parents. However, when the bullying started, none of the participants wanted to tell or seek assistance from their parents, teachers, or friends (Naylor, Cowie, & Rosario del Rey, 2001; Whitney & Smith, 1993). All of the participants perceived bullying as an anomalous occurrence and hoped that it would go away. None of them believed, or were willing to admit to themselves, that it was actually bullying; they were not willing to perceive themselves as victims of bullying. This was particularly true when children were socially excluded from their group of friends (O'Connell et al., 1999). Zach and Jessica both had this experience and, in the beginning, neither one of them wanted to tell parents about their social exclusion. For some time, they did not know they had been excluded from their own groups of friends. Most of the participants responded to this type of bullying with shock and disbelief and by making new friends.

As stated earlier, the participants believed that a simple verbal response such as, *leave me alone*, or *don't do it*, or *why are you doing this* would stop bullying. When verbal responses were not effective and the bullying continued, the children responded in three different relational ways: they talked to the teacher; they talked to their parents; or they talked to their friends.

When adolescents are harassed or bullied by their peers, they typically approach their classroom teacher, hoping that the problem will be resolved in a fair manner. However, adolescents' experiences do not tell the same story. For instance, Jade who had a minor learning challenge, was teased by Sabrina in the classroom. She asked Sabrina to stop bullying her, and when she would not stop, Jade went to the teacher and told her everything. Jade said that the teacher tried a number of times to discipline Sabrina, but Sabrina would not stop and continued the practice for the whole year. Sabrina was punished, but this did not change her behaviour.

When the teacher was not successful in stopping Sabrina, Jade informed her mother. However, I found most participants were not comfortable telling their parents about their victimization. Usually, the parents were not the first to find out that their children are being bullied. In most cases, it was the parents who noticed significant changes in their child's behaviour, and this prompted them to ask if there was a problem at school.

When Jade told her mother about the bullying, her mother was angry and then proceeded to talk to the teacher. At the same time she also talked to the bully's mother. Her actions stopped the bullying for a short period and then it resumed again.

Zach presented an entirely different picture. After responding to bullying attacks several times, Zach went to the teacher. He said, *teachers would not pay any attention until I went and told him, but nothing worked. The only thing [that] worked [was] when I stood up for myself.* Zach said that he suffered a lot; he was angry, frustrated, and ready to lash out but he restrained

himself. *The trouble is that everybody knows it, but nobody does anything. I did not want revenge; I wanted justice.* When he stood up for himself, he realized his own strength.

Zach, like other children, did not initially tell his parents about the bullying. Although they continued to ask about school and his friends, he would not disclose anything. They finally found out about the bullying when he received a black eye. The parents met with the teacher. As I will write later in this chapter, they were very disappointed and frustrated with the system for failing to do anything to stop bullying in school.

Josh did not have a good experience when he told the teacher about bullying. Whenever he complained to a teacher, the teacher instead labeled him a bully. Because of his size, the teachers assumed that he could not be bullied. The only time that the teacher paid attention was when another adolescent physically attacked him in the classroom.

Like other participants, Josh did not want to tell his mother about the bullying, but the knife incident was apparent because of a nick and a little blood on his nose. Therefore, he had to tell his mother about the whole incident. The mother was angry and talked to the principal. Although in this case the school principal and other staff responded to the complaint and took measures to reprimand the bully, he added that some teachers always perceived him as a bully.

Noah expressed his frustration with the teachers' responses to his complaints. He said, *they never, never did anything. Sometimes I was frustrated. I knew they are trying their best but they can't do anything in some situations. I was frustrated that it did not stop automatically, but it was not stopping.* He added that the bullies would not do anything when a teacher was around and that teachers could not see what went on behind their backs. He suggested that despite these problems, all children should tell their teachers about bullying.

Each participant's story confirmed that, in the beginning, the children did not want their parents to know about the bullying. Usually, they wanted to solve the problem themselves, and if this did not work they would approach the teacher or their parents.

It was striking that the participants had little to say about reporting the bullying to peers. Noah told me that although he did not discuss anything specific with his friends, they started to walk together to avoid the bully's attacks. This worked because the bully would not bother anyone when there was more than one person present. Generally, the participants did not talk to their peers about their victimization.

Frustration with the administration and talking with the parents

In almost all the cases, the participants approached the teachers when they realized that they had been a target of bullying. When the acts of bullying were repeated, they typically complained to the teacher. Bringing their concerns forward to a teacher is not an easy task for a bullied adolescent for two reasons. Firstly, the action of informing could incite additional bullying, and secondly, there is the risk that the teacher would ignore or even disbelieve the complainant.

Despite these considerations, the participants typically approached the teachers to report on the bullying. The teachers in some cases assured them that they would look into it, but often did nothing. As Noah said that *they never did anything*. Other participants had the same experience. Zach echoed the same sentiments; *teachers do not pay any attention*. Josh was labeled as a bully as a response to his complaint. After a few attempts, the participants gave up going to the teachers and talked to their parents. Only Jade had a good experience with the teachers. She said that the teachers in her case were aware of the bully's behaviour from previous episodes. Jade mentioned that the *teachers punished Sabrina but she would not stop*.

When the participants realized that their teachers were not listening, they decided to talk to the parents. Research also confirms that students do not believe that teachers would stop bullying (Banks, 1997). After hearing about the bullying incidents, the parents' first reaction was to advise the children to approach the teachers. The adolescents told their parents they had already approached the teachers and the bullying had not stopped. The parents nevertheless waited for some action from the administration. The adolescents continued their efforts to convince their parents that they had been bullied and needed their intervention. The parents were their last hope to put an end to bullying. Finally, most of the parents responded by complaining to the teacher, principal, parents of the bully, and sometimes talking to the bully.

Concluding thoughts on adolescents' responses

Coates and Wade (2007) argue that language is often used to blame and pathologize victims. Alternatively, language can also be used to expose violence and honor resistance. It is clear from the participants' narratives that most often school authorities did not believe the victims; instead, they labeled the victim as a troublemaker, and downplayed the gravity of the situation. The following excerpts from their narratives demonstrate this tendency.

Josh: Teacher will always look at my size. I will get into trouble. They will say that you use your size for bothering them.

You tell the teacher every day, and nothing happens then you will get mad because nobody is helping you, you may regret later.

Zach: Here is the thing, my sister knows it, I told my parents, when I tell the teachers, they don't do anything.

The evidence indicates that the adolescents often made wise choices in accordance with their beliefs and values. It was not easy, but they had self-confidence to follow what they

believed to be the correct course of action. Most of them wanted to stand up for themselves, and did not want to disappoint their families. As long as they had their families' support they could deal with the bullies.

These findings indicate that the participants were not simply helpless victims. Each response tells the story of their resistance to aggression. It is true that these small acts of resistance do not constitute organized resistance and they may appear to be futile in terms of accomplishing anything tangible. Yet they protect the dignity of the participants who are facing aggression and insults from the bullies and can "provide a foundation for more effective action" (Wade, 1997, p. 33), such as stopping bullying.

Responses of the Parents

While reading the transcribed interviews of the parents in my study, I identified several themes. Interviews with the parents uncovered few covert responses, although there were several subthemes among their overt responses. This is likely because my conversations with parents were more explicitly focused on what they "did" in response to their children's bullying, whereas I sought a fuller picture of the experiences from the adolescents. I have organized the parents' responses into the following themes: emotional, relational, and covert responses.

Cognitive responses appeared as a subtheme of covert responses.

Unlike their children, who were confronted directly by a bully, the parents learned of the bullying retroactively. They therefore responded upon discovery of the events. I would like to explore this contextual variations prior to presenting the themes related to the parents' responses.

Parents are often not aware of the problems their children are facing at school, and disturbed when their children appear sad and confused, or refuse to go to school.

Parents often don't learn directly about their children's victimization. Research on this subject documents that only 50% of boys and 35% of girls inform their parents that they have been bullied (Rigby, 2008). Bullying continues for a number of days or even for weeks or months before the parents find out about it. In some cases, parents notice a change in the child's behaviour and suspect that something is wrong at school. Unless the child takes the initiative to report his or her situation, it is sometimes evidence of physical injuries that lead to uncovering verbal bullying.

Parents usually notice that their children, for unexplained reasons, do not want to go to school or that they have unexplained pains; they usually complain about stomach pain or a headache. They will, in many cases, appear upset, quiet, withdrawn, and depressed. When parents notice some of these signs they suspect that something is wrong, but usually bullying is not on their radar. For example, Laura said, *my first reaction was shock and disbelief, because the school was very good*. Noah added to his mother's statement that *it was kind of half not believing and half kind of shock that it was happening.*"

Zach's parents noticed a change in his behaviour, but it took a while before he told his parents what was going on. Mona, his mother, told me what happened.

He started not feeling well and [complained about a] tummy-ache all the time, and a lot of anxiety. We could not get him to go to school, we have to drive him in the morning; you [Zach] wouldn't get out of the car. You said that you were sick, and you were not feeling well.

Zach's parents could not understand what was going on. Although they continued to ask him what was wrong at school, he would not say anything even though he continued his efforts to resist the bully's aggression and insults at school.

It was typical for parents of the children in this study to spend some time in the dark regarding bullying that had already started. When they did learn, their initial response tended to be emotional.

Emotional responses

Shock and disbelief were the first emotional responses for the parents of the bullied child in this study. The knowledge that their child is a victim of bullying affects the whole family. After learning that Zach was hit by a basketball at school, Mona and Jack were shocked. They could not believe that this could have happened to their son. Mona said *I was upset*. Holding back her tears, she stopped for a minute and then said that *Zach will come home with a headache and we were wondering why he has a headache everyday*. Zach's father Jack commented in exasperation that he felt powerless.

The first reaction of Laura, Noah's mother, to her son's bullying was, *shock and disbelief because the school was very good*. Laura explained:

We had faith in the school . . . they have pretty well-behaved kids . . .and also his reactions became more apparent over the days. First it was like that it has happened, and then it became a bigger deal, and I was shocked and surprised. And, we wanted to talk to the teacher, and we tried to encourage him to [do some] problem solving. And just see what is happening, how you are feeling, and what you can do. And when he named the individual we were not very surprised.

After hearing about repeated incidents, Noah's parents realized that they had waited long enough, and that they should approach the principal immediately.

Relational Responses

Relational response was one of the significant themes identified in the responses of the parents and their children. I defined relational responses as those responses where the parents talked with their children, school authorities, or whosoever they could relate to in response to the issues of bullying. They gave advice to their children, helped them emotionally, talked with the school authorities and finally expressed their exasperation with the situation.

Talking to the child

In each case, before the parents met with school authorities, they talked to their children in the hope that the problem could be discreetly and easily resolved. Noah's parents said they hoped the problem might resolve itself without involving the school. Laura said that she and her husband had tried to teach their children to go to the principal, but that was not working.

Moreover, she said: *We try to teach him process and not the formula; if the problem is to be solved this is one of the ways. You should always try to analyze the situation and learn from it.*

Laura was very confident about Noah's analytical skills. As Noah's parents discerned that the situation was not being resolved, they recognized that they would have to speak with the principal.

Zach's parents narrated similar experiences. Jack said that, *we discuss things together and tend to make decisions internally as a family. We talked to Zach; we did a lot of talking with Zach. [And we] advised him to talk to the teacher, and let's see what do they do to stop the bullying.*

One participant parent—Josh's mother Amelia— did not wait, but saw the principal immediately. This happened for two reasons. First, Josh didn't did tell his mother about the

bullying until the knife incident. Secondly, Josh had been threatened with a knife. Josh's mother was angry at the school administration for failing to take action.

Talking to the school administrators and teachers

Most parents were upset about the lack of action from the school when they approached the principal. Mona and Jack expressed the same sentiment: they were angry that nothing had been done to protect their child. They wanted some sense of fairness and justice; if someone had done something wrong, the person should be punished or the behaviour should change. Parents felt discouraged that nothing was happening. They suggested various strategies to the teacher, such as separating bully and victim. Mona said that the principal was always cooperative in their encounters but she added that no action was taken.

In some cases, that lack of action continued for a year or more. After a number of complaints, several of the parents became frustrated. The bullying sometimes stopped and then resumed again. Jack was frustrated with the inaction, but reassured Zach not to worry and decided to talk to the teacher again:

We told her that we would not tolerate any sort of bullying in the classroom. If we hear this happen again we will take serious measures—serious measures will be taken by us. We will go above your head, to the board, whatever, because we had talked to the principal and he was aware that he had asked us to go back to the teacher and talk to him. And we said that we will give them another chance, we will give them benefit of the doubt.

In response to Jack's ultimatum, the situation improved, at least for the remainder of the school year. The parents' responses revealed their frustrations. They had demanded fairness and justice, and believed that school should be a safe place for their children to learn, not to be hurt

or intimidated. All of the parents in my study met with the school administration several times during the school year. In some cases, their anger, frustration, and demands for justice brought some results. When it did not, some parents decided to take some action themselves, and spoke to the bully's parents directly.

Response to labeling her son a bully

One parent was quite upset because his teacher had labeled her son as a bully. She met the principal and wanted an explanation for labeling him as a bully. Her concern was that the way teachers speak about students could affect the way adolescents think about themselves and how they are perceived by the teachers and their classmates. In her response to the principal, she challenged the stereotype, categorical image of a bully and a victim. A bully is not always a big, strong person and similarly a victim is not always small or weak. Her concern was that the teacher's responses to adolescents' complaint of bullying could have been guided by the dichotomous images they had of a bully and a victim.

Talking to the bully's parents

Frustrated and disappointed with the schools' frequent lack of action, some parents decided to take matters into their own hands. The school environment was becoming worse, their children were unhappy, and some of them were refusing to go to school. Jessica's parents phoned the bully's parents and received an apology. It is significant to note that the bully's parents said they had no knowledge of what their daughter was doing. Usually, the parents of a bully are unaware of their child's behaviour at school. Sometimes it is a shock for them to learn that their child is engaging in bullying activities. There is very little research on this subject in the bullying literature, and it needs more investigation.

Laura spoke to the child who was bullying Noah and tried to convince the aggressor that bullying is not a good idea. Similarly Josh's mother phoned the parents of the boy who had called Josh insulting names. She received an apology from the bully and the bully's mother. Although talking to the bully's parents did not always bring positive results, the parents felt some satisfaction in responding to the situation. Some of the bullies' parents denied their child's involvement in bullying activities. In some cases, they blamed the victimized child for annoying the bully. When Jade's mother phoned Sabrina's parents to inform them about Sabrina's behaviour, Sabrina's mother accused Jade of annoying her daughter. Parents had a variety of experiences in speaking with the parents of the bully.

Covert responses

Parents' covert responses were identified in the form of cognitive responses. These were expressed mostly as a reflection of their thoughts. They reflected on their strategies and actions to stop bullying.

Cognitive responses

Cognitive responses are defined as thoughts generated in response to persuasive communication that triggers an attitude change (Petty & Cacioppo, 1982). I include the parents' reflections on their responses in this category, because these were expressions of their thoughts. After many meetings, they concluded that the schools either had no system to stop bullying or that the existing system was not working.

Laura concluded that the principal and vice principal were very helpful, and that they were doing whatever they could. She found that there was a response process in place, but that it was not sufficient to solve the problem. Laura's impression was that she should have responded

to the bullying sooner. She took time to understand the situation, and later said that she should not have waited as long to demand action. As Laura explained:

I have open communication, and in the future I will be less patient and not be diplomatic and let it go through the cycle, and I will tend to scream louder in the beginning to get their attention, not that they were not doing anything at the school . . . but just get people to realize that it is big, but they will react to the level of your reaction, and I will still be open minded, and will have compassion for the other child but they are responsible for that child's behaviour.

Jack found that it was necessary to see the principal several times. He *reflected* on his relational responses, saying:

We took different actions for different things, sent notes, met principal, teachers, e-mails, and telephone calls, but never got what we were looking for, different actions for different problems. It was not that the problem was consistent; it was different kids too. It was one incident after another, but you couldn't trace it. And that's the tough part: when to step in and when not to step in and how much, letting them solve their own problem.

The themes described above demonstrate a range of persistent acts of resistance by both victims and their families in the wake of bullying. Their responses both shared some features and displayed a number of creative variations. In the next chapter, I will discuss these thematically organized responses and their implications for research.

Chapter 7: Discussion and Implications

When Bob Marley sings, “We refuse to be what you want us to be, we are what we are, and that’s the way it’s going to be,” that space of refusal, where one can say no to the colonizer, no to the downpressor, is located in the margins. And one can only say no, speak to the voice of resistance, because there is a counter language.

bell hooks (1990, pp. 341-342)

My investigation was guided by the following research question:

How do young adolescents and their families describe their responses to bullying within response-based interviews?

In the previous chapter, I described the themes that were identified after several readings of the narratives of the participants. There were four overarching themes in the adolescents’ narratives:

(a) overt responses; (b) covert responses; (c) emotional responses; (d) relational responses.

There were three subthemes within these four overarching themes: (a) physical responses; (b) verbal responses; (c) cognitive responses. The parents’ responses were: (a) emotional; (b) relational; (c) cognitive.

In this chapter, I will discuss the thematic empirical findings presented in Chapter 6 through the lenses of Foucault’s theory of power and resistance and the response-based approach developed by Wade (1997, 2007) as laid out in the conceptual framework in Chapter 3.

Defining Resistance

My first question addressed the ways adolescents and their parents resist bullying. The thematic findings discussed in the previous chapter revealed that children and their parents

resisted bullying in many different ways. To discuss their resistance, I will first give a brief introduction to resistance. In recent decades, resistance has become a popular topic in the social sciences. According to Hollander and Einwohner (2004), “Scholars have used the term *resistance* to describe a wide variety of actions and behaviours at all levels of human social life (individual, collective, and institutional), and in a number of different settings, including political systems, entertainment and literature, and the workplace” (p. 534). It is hard to find consensus on the definition of resistance but one point of agreement among all scholars is that resistance refers to a response carried out in the face of a power imbalance, in opposition to a particular action or situation. Even though I have given a fairly broad definition of resistance in addressing the conceptual framework in Chapter 3, it is appropriate to reiterate the way in which I have used resistance in my research.

For this study, I characterize resistance as an individual and personal act; it is not an organized protest or a mass movement. Drawing from Wade’s (1997) work, I describe resistance as *any mental or behavioural act through which a person attempts to disrupt, counter, or defy a bully’s aggression and power*. This definition of resistance includes multiple and fragmented ways in which victims protect themselves, and refuse to comply with a bully’s demands. Okely (1991) illustrates the fragmented nature of resistance. It is in “the forms in which it may be fragmented and therefore less visible; namely the moments where resistance crystallizes in isolated individuals acts or gestures in the context of on-going power relations” (as cited in Trethewey, 1997, p. 283).

To understand victims’ resistance to bullying, one has to pay attention to the particularities of the context, because responses are typically instantaneous, multiform, and in some cases subtle acts. Depending on the context, the resistance could be just a thought, a

mental escape from aggression, or some physical action. It is important to note that these responses contradict the passive and submissive representation of victims. Not only do the findings of my research uncover the victims' resistance but they also suggest that their individual responses created disruptions in the bully's power and influence.

I will begin with Foucault to discuss the responses of the victims in this study because exploring resistance provides insight into the processes of power. According to Foucault (1978), "Where there is power there is resistance" (p. 95). Therefore, the exercise of power also presents the possibilities of resistance (Ewick & Silbey, 2003). Abu-Logodh (1990) suggests the adoption of a slight shift in the study of power and resistance relationships. She says that we should look at resistance as a "diagnostic of power" (p. 41), and at the same time notes that local and everyday resistance changes the relations of power.

Foucault and resistance

I will discuss Foucault's concept of power and resistance in relation to victims and their responses, from the following four angles: first, relations of power and powerlessness; second, the contemporaneous nature of power and resistance; third, immediate responses and responses made at a later time; and fourth, determined resistance.

Before I discuss how Foucault's view of power and resistance applies to bully-victim problems and my findings, I will briefly describe how power is used in bully-victim relationships. The literature on bullying reports that bullying is a relationship problem, and identifies two key elements to understanding the complexities of these relationships (Craig & Pepler, 2007). First, bullying is a type of aggressive behaviour imposed on another person from a position of power (Olweus, 1999). Craig and Pepler (2007) argue that, "Children who bully

always have more power than the children they victimize” and that there is an imbalance of power (p. 86). Second, the bullying behaviour is repeated over time.

The view of victimized children as helpless and defenseless individuals prevails in most of the literature on bullying, which depicts the bully/victim relationship in terms of power/powerlessness. This dominant view is captured by Craig and Pepler (2007) who say that “Children who bully are learning to use power and aggression to control and distress others, and children who are victims increasingly become powerless to defend themselves” (p. 86).

Only a small number of published qualitative studies discuss the coping strategies used by the victimized children. Yet even in these studies a view of victimized children as capable of resisting bullies’ attacks and defending themselves is conspicuously absent. Acts of resistance—covert and overt—are interpreted in terms of internalizing problems such as hopelessness, worthlessness, sadness, anger, and anxiety (Swearer, Grills, Haye, & Cary, 2004). This view is echoed by a range of other authors in the literature on bullying (Craig, 1998; Kumpulainen et al., 1998; Olweus, 1993; Schwartz, 2000). Some children who overtly respond to bullying are labeled as aggressive victims. Aggressive victims are characterized by hyperactivity, emotional distress, peer rejection, restlessness, and hostile behaviour (Schwartz, 2000; Veenstra, Lindenberg, Oldehinkel, Winter, & Verhulst, 2005). Their resistance is seen as constituting reactive aggressive behaviour.

Relations of power and responses

The description of bully and victims outlined above presents an incomplete and one-sided picture of *relations of power* emphasizing two main elements: the bully has power while the victim is powerless; and there is no place for resistance. Following Foucault’s argument that power is not an object that one can own but is something that resides in the numerous webs of

social relationships into which individuals enter to exercise power, it follows that another look at the bully-victim relationship and at the responses made by the victims would be warranted.

Power is not a finite resource that can be owned only by some individuals, thereby automatically leaving less for others. In light of this view of power, power is exercised by both bullies and victims. But how do victims actually exercise power? Conceptualizing power as *relational* helps to clarify how this is possible. Sawicki (1991) argues that, in the meeting of aggressor and victim, a reverse relationship must be possible, whereby power originates from the victims. This is identified as the possibility of resistance.

According to Foucault (1983), resistance is so central to power that it constitutes a possible starting point for power. Foucault (1983) argued that power and resistance are contemporaneous, mutually constitutive, and coextensive. Resistance is not an escape from power; it exists in the same place where the power relations are exercised. As Foucault (1983) states, "Every power relationship implies, at least *in potentia*, a strategy of struggle, in which the two forces are not superimposed, do not lose their specific nature, or do not finally become confused" (p. 225, emphasis in original). Both are separate entities coexisting in the same place and at the same time. Therefore, the statement that the bullies have the power and the victims have none does not present an accurate picture. This view does not preclude the existence of a power imbalance, but the phenomenon of powerful/powerless does not give an accurate picture.

Foucault's theory of power helps us to understand the responses of the participants. When the participants were confronted with the bully's aggression they would question the behaviour. As an example, when Noah questioned the bully when he was physically bullied, he asked, among other queries: "*Why are you doing this to me and my friends?*" and "*Is this a joke or something?*" In other instances, the participants would stand their ground and face the bully.

After finding out that the bully was calling her and her family a fat family, Jessica angrily approached the perpetrator. “*I wanted to punch him in the face but I didn’t,*” she recalled later. “*I went and I talked to him.*” In some cases the response was more blatant as when the victims pushed the bully to avoid further attacks. Zach did this when his tormentor continued to call Zach fat. Each of these responses shows the exercise of power in the context of a power imbalance. The participants were not simply powerless individuals, or targets of aggression, as they have often been portrayed.

Furthermore when they were not able to stop the bullying, the participants typically increased their resistance. Foucault (1983) gives additional insight into what happens when the use of power increases beyond its limits. Power and resistance each constitute “. . . for the other a kind of permanent limit, a point of possible reversal . . . every intensification, every extension of power relations to make the subordinate submit can only result in the limits of power” (Foucault, 1983, p. 225). What Foucault is suggesting is that the exercise of power between two parties is dependent on the subordination of one of the parties. Since power is “intrinsicly linked to the possibility of resistance” and insubordination, extreme demands of subordination will only result in increased resistance, and consequently in the limits of power (Ewick & Silbey, 2003, p. 6). Foucault (1983) explains, “between a relationship of power and a strategy of struggle there is a reciprocal appeal, a perpetual linking and a perpetual reversal” (p. 226).

The concept of *permanent limit* explains why bullies increased their attacks despite resistance from victims. The bullies in this study devised new ways to dominate their targets. They would verbally attack their victims, insulting them with derogatory names. In response to a new attack, children would increase their resistance. They would go to the teacher and tell their

parents. In many cases, the bullying would stop, temporarily, in response to strict measures taken by the parents and school authorities. The bullying might not stop at first, but each micro-response adds to the participants' strength and represents a step towards social justice. Therefore, when considering bullies and victims, it would be inaccurate to describe their relationships as merely characterized by unequal relations of power, without also acknowledging points of resistance with increasing measures.

As mentioned earlier, while there is a power differential between the bully and the victim, it must be acknowledged that many points of resistance are available to victims. Foucault (1980) believes that points of resistance, like power, are ubiquitous, multiple, fluid, and “exist all the more by being in the same places as power” (p. 142). In my study, resistance in bully-victim episodes, appeared in the form of micro-practices such as refusing to give in to the bully's demands, contesting, and counter-acting bullying and aggression. Narrating one of the incidents, Zach said that *he is vandalizing my stuff, he took my pen, and he went through my stuff. I say stop it, and then I go to the teacher then I become a tattletale*. This quote shows that Zach continued his responses despite being called a tattletale.

Contemporaneous existence of power and resistance

I found that all participants in my study resisted bullies' attacks. Even in their first encounter with a bully, the victims were shocked but they responded nevertheless. In the beginning, when their responses did not stop the bullying, the victimized participants responded in a variety of additional ways. They would walk together, avoid being alone, make new friends, or stand where a teacher could see them. Their immediate responses showed their prudence, resourcefulness, and presence of mind. As an example, Zach said that when he was excluded from his group of friends he was sad. However, he added: *It was pretty good for me because you*

don't want to have only one group of friends, but actually that's what they did for me. But it hurts. Noah responded in a similar way. He said, *I was always with my friends and never alone. I never played alone. Most of the time she [the bully] would not follow . . . that helped.* These quotes highlight children's presence of mind and resourcefulness.

Determined resistance

Emphasizing the promise of resistance, Foucault (1982) talks about “a strategy of struggle” (p. 225). Resistance not only implies a large-scale revolution or organized resistance but also opens the possibility of small acts of resistance. What he means is that “resistance consists of micro-practices that counter and contest operations of power at each and every point” (Wade, 2000, p. 197). He is referring to the small steps that people take to be safe and to protect their dignity. The covert and overt responses of bullied children in this study showed their determined struggle to resist bullies' actions. Some participants told me that when the bullying did not stop they were thinking about what should be the next step to resist the aggressive behaviour. In addition, when it was not safe or it was dangerous to respond instantly, and they walked away from the scene, they were engaged in mental processing at the same time. They were thinking: *What should I do? How do I stop bullying? If I don't do anything, bullying will continue.* They were planning ways to protect themselves from further attacks. They considered when they might be safe to respond and when it would be better to walk away although walking away is also a prudent response. It was not always possible to respond instantly because they were afraid of retaliation, but in many cases they were planning to respond in their minds. This also confirms that victims responded to the bullying after assessing the situation, and reviewing the resources available to them at the time.

Spontaneous responses versus later responses

Although acts of resistance carried out at the time of aggression, or after the incident, are equally significant, Foucault differentiates between immediate resistance and the resistance that comes later (Wade, 2000). When Foucault (1980) argues that, “resistances . . . are all the more real and effective because they are formed right at the point where relations of power are exercised,” (p. 142) he is referring to the responses that occur right at that moment and at the same place where power is exercised. But why does Foucault suggest that in order to be *real and effective* the responses need to be made immediately? Wade (2000) explains the nature of the response:

It is *real* in the sense that it is a direct, spontaneous, and immediate response that of necessity takes into account the complex social circumstances of each situation . . . it is more *effective* not because it stops the injustice (though it sometime does) but because, in immediately counteracting that injustice, it forces some modifications in the strategies comprising the operations of power. (p. 200, emphasis added)

The idea of responses made at the site of the struggle does not diminish the importance of responses made later. Immediate responses only confirm that the victims have certain abilities and life skills such as sound judgment, wisdom, and presence of mind. All children in my study responded to bullying instantly as well as later when the bullying continued. As an immediate response, Noah decided to look confident, Josh injected humour into a tense situation, and Zach pushed the bully away. Their first responses showed presence of mind and strength of character; they were not afraid of the bully. When the bullies changed their bullying strategies, the children altered their acts of resistance accordingly. In most cases, the bullying continued after a temporary pause. At the same time, the children in my study continued their actions of

resistance.

The mutual existence of power and resistance helps us to understand the dynamics of the power relationship between the bullies and the victims, and also to see the victims' responses from a different perspective. While not understating the victims' abuse, or overstating the resistance, according to Foucault every person has the capacity to disrupt, change, and have a destabilizing impact on the relations of power even if it is at a miniscule level. In the following section, I will describe Wade's (1997) response-based approach and the relations of oppression and resistance, and I will explain how this approach elucidates my findings.

Response-Based Approach: Findings

Wade (1997, 2007) developed the response-based approach through his work with victims of violence. His work is applicable to situations in which people have been subjected to abuse, mistreatment, violence, aggression, discrimination, racism, bullying, and many other analogous phenomena. The focus of his approach is two-fold: it does not characterize persons through a language of effects; and it "engages persons (victims) in a conversation concerning the details and implications of their own resistance" (Wade, 1997, p. 24). During the process of a response-based conversation they—the victimized—begin to recognize their own strengths, insights, and increased capability to respond to the difficult situations that they encounter (Todd & Wade, 2003; Wade, 2010, 2012).

I had hoped to learn more about the participants' resourcefulness and strengths when I talked to them not in the *language of effects* but in the *language of responses*. Generally people who have suffered aggression and mistreatment are asked about the negative fallout of the aggression and then described in terms of their deficits. This negative view of people is

monolithic, and clouds our ability to see the resourcefulness of the victims. My own findings highlight the ways in which participants were active and resourceful in the face of abusive behaviour.

Earlier we learned from Foucault that power and resistance exist simultaneously and that one constitutes the other, but how does resistance function in this relationship? Wade (1997, 2000) explains this relationship between oppression and resistance.

Relationship Between Oppression and Resistance

Characteristics of individual acts of resistance

Before I discuss the relationship between oppression and resistance, I would like to add that resistance in this study refers to everyday individual acts of living. Certain characteristics set these everyday acts apart from other kinds of resistance. First, they are *spontaneous and opportunistic* (Wade, 1997). Victims respond at the time they are attacked, a natural response to protect themselves. Participants in my study immediately responded to the bullies' attacks through verbal, physical, and emotional means. The verbal responses included questions to the bully as Noah and Zach demonstrated in their first encounters with their tormentors. Noah asked, *Why you are doing this to me and my friends?* Zach asked the perpetrator to stop bullying him. Jade, another participant, said, *I went to the teacher, I couldn't think of anything else.* Most children responded emotionally with anger and annoyance. Zach said that he was sad and *it hurts.* Jessica was so angry, hurt, and "stunned" with the behaviour that she walked away. These children were angry because they had been attacked and humiliated, and they protested the bullies' behaviour. Anger can also serve as a fuel that energizes self-protection and most children wanted to protect themselves from further attacks (A. Wade, personal communication,

August 10, 2012).

Prudence

The responses showed prudence. The victims responded in accordance with the particularities of the situations they were in (Wade, 1997). As an example, Noah said, *control your emotions and don't say no, no*. He added: *If you don't give them anything, they are kind of disappointed, and they will stop. They are looking for a trap*. Victims were concerned about their own safety and would not put themselves in danger. When personal safety was a concern, adolescents were prudent not to show their true emotions to the perpetrators. Overt responses were made only when it was safe to do so. The adolescents responded verbally, but only when other adolescents were nearby in the playground. Responses made in other adolescents' presence provided victims with some assurance that their verbal response would not trigger a retaliation and hence an escalation of the bullying. Noah confirmed: *Keep a group of friends with you all the time, because they [the bullies] will never, never do anything when you are with a group, or stay where the teachers are*. The adolescents looked to their peers for support during the bullying incidents, but the support was usually not there. Jade expressed her frustration with this lack of peer support. She said, *I think other kids have not much to do with it*. Of other children, she said, *they just watched and ignored*.

Determined efforts

Everyday acts of resistance show the determined efforts of victims to stop abuse and protect their dignity (Wade, 1997). The adolescents in my study tried strenuously to end the bullying. When their immediate responses did not stop bullying, they responded relationally by talking to parents or the teacher. Narrating his determined efforts, Noah said, *first time I ignored*

it because I thought it might have happened by accident, and they didn't mean it. Second and third time I told my mom and they talked to the teacher, the vice principal, and the principal.

Zach did not tell his parents about bullying in the beginning because he wanted to take care of it himself, and he then told the teacher what had happened. After one physical bullying incident, he said, *When I came home I didn't know how to show my face to my parents, how to explain the black eye.* He decided what to do next. *I explained to my parents who was the student . . . I told my parents [and] they talked to the principal. He got into trouble, after that he has been nice to me.*

Pervasive

Finally, resistance is pervasive. It continues until an aggressive behaviour ends (Wade, 1997). In my study the adolescents used a variety of ways to resist humiliation and harassment. They continued their efforts in many ways. They avoided the bully, and they maintained a safe distance to avoid the perpetrator. They would not walk alone on the playground. Most children and their parents approached the teachers and the principal. The parents of Jade, Zach, and Noah appealed to the school authorities several times before the bullying stopped. Zach's father told the school authorities that he would continue his efforts to stop bullying of his son. He said, *serious measures will be taken by us, we will go above your head, to the board.*

Laura said that *in the future she would not be diplomatic about it and let it go through the cycle. She would scream louder in the beginning to get their attention.* Most parents were persistent in their efforts to stop bullying.

The significance of individual acts of resistance does not reside in major single achievements against oppression but instead in the reality that the small acts of resistance helped

the individuals to preserve their dignity and made conditions more tolerable to endure. Thus, the appropriate phrase *small acts of living* from Goffman (1961) and Wade (1997) confirms that the smallest mental challenges to bullying, as well as the overt acts, should be considered as acts of resistance.

The question arises, if relations of power and resistance are continuously in process, enabling each other in this cyclical performance, how do we identify whether a response is indeed an act of resistance? The answer lies in the nature and form of resistance, which will depend on the unique combinations of opportunities and resources available to victims in the oppressive circumstances (Campbell, Rose, Kub, & Nedd, 1998; Coates & Wade, 2007; Goffman, 1961; Trethewey, 1997; Wade, 1997). But to find out the opportunities and resources a person can summon under the conditions of oppression, we should look at the relationship between the oppressor and resistance.

Concealing Violence and Resistance

People who engage in violence and oppression typically conceal their aggression. They will make every effort to suppress or hide their aggressive behaviour, not wanting to be caught or to allow others to know about their aggressive behaviour. Sometimes *both* oppressors and victims would like to conceal their actions; in the case of the victims, they may do this because they are afraid of retaliation and more abuse. Scott's (1990) public and hidden transcripts provide an explanation for this phenomenon. He argued that the public transcript means "public performance (by the subordinates) required of those subjects [sic] to elaborate on systematic forms of social domination" (p. 2). It is the interaction that is seen in the daily performances between subordinate and dominant. It is a performance expected of them. Whereas hidden transcript represents, ". . . discourses—gestures, speech, practices—that are ordinarily excluded

from the public transcript of subordinates by the exercise of power” (p. 27). Scott argues that hidden transcript represents anger and frustration “acting out in fantasy” of the abused people. It is something subordinated persons would like to do, “an insult with an insult, a whipping with a whipping, a humiliation with a humiliation” (p. 38). What Scott means is that hidden transcript tells what subordinates would like to do to their masters but that action is not available to the subordinates. Therefore, Scott is suggesting that victims’ acts of resistance depend on their relationship with the oppressor. Victims will resist overtly if it does not entail punishment and offers the opportunity for further resistance. Consequently, overt resistance by the victims is the least common form of resistance.

My findings confirm that when the adolescents failed in their overt responses, such as confronting the bully by pushing him away, they hesitated to tell the teacher because they were afraid to be called “tattletales.” They also feared the bullies would become angrier and the attacks would become meaner. So what did they do in such circumstances? The interviews revealed many covert responses in resistance to bullying. Most of the emotional responses were covert responses, for instance, becoming angry, sad, or frustrated with the bully’s aggression.

Another form of resistance concealed by the participants occurred in their own thought processes—for instance in their planning how to stop the bully. If they did not put an end to this behaviour, they feared it would continue for the whole year. This form of “resistance may be in the privacy afforded by the mind” (Wade, 1997, p. 30). In their thoughts, they nurtured expressions of anger, crying, self-talk, and imaginary conversations about bullies being punished for their behaviour, all ultimately leading to freedom from the bully’s aggression and an end to name-calling. Victims aching to be free of bullies often respond with imaginary conversations about perpetrators punished for their action. As an example Zach said that bullies should face

the consequences of their actions.

Generally victims' resistance is recognized when it is overt and successful in stopping the attack. But we must not forget that covert resistance is sometimes the only type of resistance available to the victims. While Wade (1997) argues that we should not "romanticize this type of resistance," we should acknowledge that the "person has continued to resist, prudently, creatively, and with astonishing determination" (p. 31), even in the face of aggression. Agreeing with Wade's point of view, Campbell, Rose, Cub, and Ned (1998) state that such actions "normally would be defined as passive in most theoretical schemas," but where there is a potential danger for the victims themselves, such actions do not constitute passivity but clearly are "intelligent, courageous, and healthy" (p. 758). It is also significant that each act of resistance—overt or covert—may look inconsequential but will add to the foundation of a solid resistance. This means that every act, every thought, every emotion to resist bullying, will help to stop bullying as a phenomenon.

As illustrated throughout this chapter, the adolescents responded to bullying with many small acts to protect themselves. Sometime they would try to hide their hurt and anger because any display of emotion would give the bully a sense of power and achievement. The adolescents did not want the bully to know that they were nervous or afraid because that would lead to more aggression. Therefore, their small responses depended on the situation they found themselves in at the time.

Discussion on Findings

In this study, the adolescents displayed some direct overt responses but the majority of responses were covert, relational, resourceful, emotional, and creative. Their responses were

also guided by two critical factors: first, the nature and range of the opportunities available to them and, second, the danger various possible responses entailed for the victims. They responded to the bullies when their peers and the teachers were nearby. They felt protected in the presence of others. I will discuss their resourcefulness and creativity in their responses.

Resourcefulness

The adolescents' responses displayed considerable resourcefulness. Most of the participants wanted to take care of the problem themselves. They would go to the parents only when the problems continued and nothing was working. They had a strong determination to stand up for themselves. In my interviews, most of the participants expressed this desire verbally. It appeared they believed it was a matter of self-respect to take care of their own problems. In their study, Walton, Harris, and Davidson (2009) stated that boys and girls spoke of their willingness to fight as necessary, to protect themselves from bullying. In the same study, one of the adolescent participant, a Grade 5 boy, said the following about being bullied, "I seel [feel that I] am not afraid of Them [them —bullies]. It doesn't make me a wee boy, it makes me a man From [from] the beaten [beating] I tock [took]" (p. 386). This sentence shows the determination of the bullied boy to protect and preserve dignity. This sentiment was echoed in most of the participants' narratives in my study. Josh, for example, said that he did not want his mother to do anything; he just wanted her to believe in him.

The resourcefulness of the participants was manifested in many other ways. The participants said that they did not need a bully's approval to be popular or to be somebody important. According to Jessica, *people like it or leave it, I don't do things just for show business. I am an individual . . . this is the way I am. I always felt grown up mentally and emotionally.* On another occasion, Jessica said that she gave up extreme dieting and starving

herself that she had indulged in order to fit in with popular girls who believed in looking like Vogue models. Jessica realized that she was not a model and that she did not have to take extreme action to look like one. These excerpts from the narratives show that the adolescents protected their own values and beliefs and those of their families. The adolescents would always stand up for their values and beliefs.

Creativity

The findings showed creativity in many responses. “Creativity is defined as the tendency to generate or recognize ideas, alternatives or possibility that may be useful in solving problems” (Franken, 2006, p. 396). The adolescents thought of creative ways to avoid bullying. Josh explained that when children bullied him, he gave them a lecture: *They would listen to me*. He said that he would listen to loud music, play guitar, or take a long walk. He would make jokes with the bully to minimize the seriousness of bullying. This gave him time to think and to let go of his anger with the bullies. He suggested that the best response was to ignore bullying as much as possible.

Jessica had another creative way to deal with bullies. She said that she would go to them and have a frank talk, and in most cases they would stop. In addition to this, she would *rant in [her] diary*. Writing in her diary was her creative way to respond to the bullies. All of these creative responses are in some ways self-preservation strategies.

Though these responses rarely stopped the bullying, they gave the participants a sense of satisfaction that they had responded to the mistreatment. From a victim’s point of view, resistance strategies are important because they empower individuals and set the stage for more significant action. Besides, these small acts also give hope to the suffering individuals as they

try to imagine a future without aggression and humiliation.

Resistance and empowerment

Engaging in different forms of resistance also empowered the adolescents. Individual acts of resistance provided a context in which participants were not viewed in terms of personal deficits or as pathological victims. Instead they were viewed in terms of their self-sufficiency, however small this might be. Empowerment refers to our ability to change situations. It can be defined as “one’s perceived and actual ability to determine one’s life and community. It involves concomitantly one’s individual sense of potency as well as one’s demonstrated power to influence, in conjunction with others, the conditions and contexts of daily existence. Empowerment, in short, is a series of attacks on subordination of every description” (Simon, 1990, p. 28). The participants’ narratives describe their determination to change bullying conditions. Individual acts of resistance—including emotional responses, asking the bully to stop, and imagining school life without bullying—empowered the participants.

This section discussed the adolescents’ unilateral responses, but their thoughts and actions were always also intertwined with their parents’ reactions and responses to the incidents. In all cases, the adolescents talked to their parents when they decided they were not able to solve the bullying problem. At the elementary and secondary level, parents play a major role in schooling of their children. The parents are considered responsible for their children’s emotional and physical well being and academic success. Once a child informs parents about bullying incidents, they know the story of the actual events and their child’s responses. Parents play a major role in responding to the bullying of their children. The following section discusses the responses of the parents.

Parents' Responses: Discussion

The parents' responses to the bullying moved through different phases. The parents did not face the bullies every day so they responded when children complained or when visibly cued e.g., black eye. In almost all cases, the parents notice changes in their children's behaviour. They often complain of unexplained aches and pains. When they discovered that their child was being bullied their first response was shock and disbelief and then they proceeded to give advice to the child. As evident in their narratives, most of the parents talked to their children to understand and confirm the complete picture. They did not want to take any hasty action. At that time they had full confidence that the school administration would deal with the problem. On the other hand, they were concerned about their child's emotional and physical well being. Parents were hurt because their child was unhappy in school.

When children tell their parents about bullying incidents, they have some expectations about the parental response. If children think that the parents' action will make the situations worse, they will probably not tell the parents. Since all the participants told their parents only after bullying had been continuing for sometime, it is important to understand how the parents responded to this information. I would like to discuss how the parents reacted to this shocking discovery, according to Rigby's (2008) approach to parents' responses. He suggests that parents respond in four ways as follows:

The tough, uncompromising approach

This approach suggests that parents want their children to solve their own problems. They will say, for instance, "Stand up for yourself. Be a man. What are you? A wimp? Give it back to them" (Rigby, 2008, p. 132). With this tough approach the children feel rejection in both

places, at school and at home. This attitude makes children fearful of their parents and it is unlikely that they will ever tell them about bullying again. In my sample, the parents did not follow this pattern of response. Most parents did in fact listen to their children, but they did not approach school authorities right away. They wanted to be sure that it was not an isolated incident. They wanted to know details about the incidents, so they included bullying as part of their dinnertime conversations.

The ultra-sympathetic approach

In this approach the parents may say the following: “This is awful. You must have nothing to do with those dreadful people. But don’t worry, I will fix it. You don’t have to put up with them. You can stay home with me!” (Rigby, 2008, p. 133). Although this approach is protective, Rigby (2008) suggests that it is demoralizing to the child. The children start to feel helpless and unable to cope with problems. The parents in my study did not respond in this manner. They encouraged their children to talk to the teacher in case the bullying continued.

The avenging angel approach

This response shows extreme anger and a determination to obtain justice for their child’s undue suffering. Their response to the child might be, “Never mind son, somebody will pay for this. There is no way they are going to get away with this” (Rigby, 2008, p.133). This approach, although understandable, leads to more aggression and animosity between the bully’s parents and the victim’s parents. In my study, none of the parents tried this approach in the beginning. When the bullying continued and their complaints did not yield any results, two parents became angry and frustrated, demanding immediate action, but they did not seek to avenge the bullying by attacking the perpetrators.

The collaborative approach

In this approach, the parents work together to solve the problem. The parents might say, “I can see you are worried about this. Let’s think about it together and work out what can be done” (Rigby, 2008, p. 133). Rigby suggests that this as an ideal approach because, in this case, parents and the child are working together to find a solution. The parents give the child the message that even though there is a problem, it can be solved. The parents are helping but not taking over, leaving space for the child to own the solution (Rigby, 2008). Most parents in my study followed the collaborative approach to problem solving and their responses fit within this category. They talked with their children about various response strategies.

After discussing the incident or incidents with their children, the next step was to talk to the school authorities. The parents took this step when the bullying had continued for some time, and when the children were visibly distraught and did not want to go to school. The parents felt it was imperative to approach the authorities. The parents’ reception typically prompted an experience of anger and frustration. In most cases, teachers and administrators did not take appropriate action. Although they did not dismiss the complaints, they typically did not act on them either. In some cases, the principal directed them to the classroom teacher, or said that they were “working on it”. In some cases they blamed the victim for having this problem. When parents approached the principal a number of times, they received the impression that the victim was the underlying cause of the bullying incidents. This response came as a complete shock to the parents.

When no action was taken to address the problem, parents indicated that they were wasting their time with the authorities. All parents in my findings said that they had wasted time waiting for action to be taken. They concluded that they should have been more demanding of

the school authorities, that they should have asked for a plan of action from the beginning, and that they should not have waited so long to address the problem.

Concluding thoughts on the parents' responses.

The findings show that parents always responded but that their responses were not given due attention. Their responses ought to have been acknowledged and concerns should have been addressed. They generally wanted a clear bully-prevention policy. One parent complained that there was an official process but that it was not implemented. Most of the parents were not satisfied with the way the schools had handled the issue.

Another significant finding that emerged from the parents' narratives was the evidence of cohesiveness and open communication within the participants' families. The members of the families I interviewed were accustomed to open communication with each other. They discussed their problems and shared concerns. The parents were actively concerned in their children's academic and social lives, and in nurturing their overall state of health and wellbeing. The parents reiterated that they talked with their children everyday despite their busy lives. They gave suggestions to their children regarding various ways and means to deal with the school bullying and any other problem they might have. Their adolescents confirmed their parents' concern and participation in their lives. As Rigby (2008) has suggested these parents took a collaborative approach to solving problems. They gave space to their adolescents to independently seek solutions to their problems while they supported them.

While the families in this study exhibited striking cohesiveness and high levels of communication between parents and children, we cannot assume that they are representative of all families confronted by bullying. It is also impossible to conclude from these findings whether

families who are less cohesive and communicative with their children would exhibit different levels of resistance to bullying. The study does raise this question, however; it would be useful to investigate further patterns of resistance in families confronted by bullying, and to compare the profiles of these families featuring, among other things, family cohesiveness and communication.

Implications of the Research

The main aim of my research was to determine what acts of resistance by victims and their families become visible when orienting to their responses to bullying, and to identify the knowledges, skills of living, and qualities of character associated with these responses. The dissertation presented a view of children and their families rarely seen amid discourses of passive victimization that predominate in discussions of bullying. The study should be of vital interest to every child confronting a bully; to every family suffering the impact of bullying; to every teacher, principals and school board hoping to stop the bullying; and to researchers who want to investigate and comprehend this puzzling social phenomenon. It will be equally helpful to counsellors and social workers when they work with children and families who face bullying. The dissertation presents a number of implications for further research in the area of bullying, resistance, methodology, and practice.

Research about bullying

This research has many implications in the area of redefining victims of bullying and their relationships with the bullies. Bullying has been defined as a relationship problem between the powerful and the powerless (Craig & Pepler, 2007). This categorical representation of the relationship excludes all possibilities of looking at the victims in terms of their active responses. The findings of this study show that the choices victims make and the actions they take need to

be recognized and given support. Adolescents are not simply helpless targets of abuse. The current deficit-laden characterization of victims requires more research informed by a more dynamic view than the currently prevailing perspective of power and powerlessness. The deficit-laden portrayal of victims in the bullying literature, much like the description of other marginalized people in society, has stigmatized them. This has a negative effect on their physical and mental health. There exists a plethora of quantitative, effects-focused research on bullying and on the relationships between bullies and their victims. What is needed is further qualitative research on bullying that foregrounds victims' resistance and responses to aggression.

Implications for resistance

My research presented a broader view of the bullying phenomenon by highlighting the resistance by the victims. Generally speaking, resistance has been understood in the past as collective, organized, physical acts of opposition intended to bring a change in an organization or in society at large. This view excludes individual acts of everyday resistance; micro-level acts of resistance; the resistance afforded in the privacy of the mind; and any action taken to protect one's dignity and self-respect from abuse (Goffman, 1961; Scott, 1990; Trethewey, 1997; Wade, 1997, 2010, 2012). In my research, I have taken a broader view of resistance and have tried to foreground victims' responses to adverse situations. The narratives of the families testify to their strengths and responses. Further research with this focus will be helpful for the children and families that have suffered this form of humiliation by orienting school administrators, teachers, and other service providers to an overlooked dimension of their experience.

Implications for methodology

This research study makes a methodological contribution by foregrounding the resistance

and agency of the participants who have been identified by their victimhood. The response-based methodology used in this research has implications for any study of people who are facing marginalization, violence, and racism.

Much of the knowledge base on bullying is based on survey questionnaires and psychometric inventories or checklists. Though the current knowledge base provides a rich foundation of information on bullying, it misses the rich personal experiences of the people who have endured this phenomenon. I observed a transformation in the course of my three interviews with the participants. In the first interview, the participants could see themselves only in terms of their victimhood. They were expecting that I would ask questions about their experiences of suffering the effects of bullying. They were used to seeing themselves only as others had characterized them.

However, this hesitation and doubt soon disappeared when I used the language of responses in my interviews. In the beginning, my questions were not focused on what “happened to them” but on what *they did* when the bullying happened. In this way, I was able to hear the stories of their resistance. If I had been completing only one interview using the language of effects, I would have missed the changes in the narrators’ voices, mood, and confidence, as well as the full, descriptive story of the experience. Interview process and narrative construction were a collaborative process of knowledge construction between the participants and myself. Most of the participants in the study thanked me and told me that this process had helped them, adding that I had made it easy for them to talk about their emotional experiences.

Implications for theory

This research has theoretical implications for the literature on bullying. From the narratives of the participants, I concluded that the literature does not provide a critical analysis of relations of power between bullies and victims. Based on my data and drawing from Foucault's and Scott's views of power and from the response-based framework articulated by Wade (1997, 2010, 2012), I suggest the adoption of a more analytical perspective on power relations in the bullying literature. Hopefully, this study will shed more light on the bully-victim relationships, and provide insights for initiating a change.

The theme of resistance and responses is almost non-existent in the current literature. Based on my data and other studies on personal resistance cited throughout this chapter, I suggest that further research on this subject include the theme of resistance, a key component of all power relationships.

Implications for practice: Counselling and schools

This study suggests that the culture of silence around telling about victimization needs to be broken. As discussed in the dissertation, in adolescents' groups it is not considered acceptable to tell about victimization, and any boy or girl who appeals for help is labeled as a tattletale. It is well documented that adolescents do not talk about their victimization for many reasons. Some are embarrassed because they feel that they are incompetent, unable to handle the bullying themselves. These feelings of embarrassment and incompetence are combined with a tendency to self-blame, reinforcing the belief that telling others will only make matters worse. Peers can exacerbate the feelings of the bullied adolescent by laughing with the bully or by being unconcerned about the bullying episodes. Sometimes the victimized adolescents don't want to

tell their parents because they do not want to upset them (Banks, 1997; Bernstein & Watson, 1997; Ross, 1996). Victims typically live in silence and as a result the bullying continues.

The importance of breaking the silence cannot be overemphasized. Delgado (1989) made this point very clear. In his article on story telling, he explained how people's stories respond to macrosocial form of oppression in three significant ways: First, silence is an essential part of macrosocial oppression. Silence about oppression, violence and other social injustices create insularity for the oppressors. The narrative of the victimized people can disrupt the insularity. It has the capacity to transform the oppressors.

Second, Delgado argues, "stories about oppression, about victimization, about one's own brutalization —far from deepening the despair of the oppressed, lead to healing, liberation, mental health" (p. 2437). Third, listening to other's stories renders the listeners with the ability to see the world through other's eyes. It is important to note that people's narratives about oppression break the silence and that could address the issues of violence and aggression.

The findings of my study suggest that schools should provide venues where adolescents are safe to express their concerns without risk of further stigmatization and escalation of bullying. Most of the participants expressed this concern that at present there is no place for adolescents to report their experiences and feel safe.

School counsellors, teachers, and administrators need to take the reports of bullying seriously, and to stop blaming the victims when the stories come foreword. In addition, the parents of bullied adolescents should be encouraged to report to the school authorities. My research showed that there were great concerns from the parents and the adolescents about schools' inability to take the necessary actions against bullying. Adolescents and their parents

need some assurance that their concerns will be addressed and that a process of effective bullying prevention will be in place.

Engaging victims around their responses opens an entirely new perspective on their experience. It helps the targets of bullying to move away from perceiving themselves as passive victims and to realize that they have the strengths to make a difference in their own lives. Some of the participants told me that telling their story to me had helped them realize that someone other than their parents believed them. The parents expressed the similar sentiments that telling their story had helped them.

My study contributes to developing guidelines for listening and responding to bullied adolescents in a manner that both assure them that they have been heard and believed. When we are curious about their responses, we can discover a lot about their strengths. It also empowers them by highlighting their responses.

Limitations and Conclusion

Limitations of the study

Like other research studies, this research project also has some limitations. According to Bronfenbrenner's Social-ecological model (1979) individuals do not exist in isolation. Several interacting and changing environmental contexts influence each individual. There is in fact a continuous, reciprocal interplay between the individual, family, peers, school, community, and the society. Bronfenbrenner (1979) introduced his social-ecological model in which the individual is at the centre of his or her socio-ecological system. "The ecological model," Bronfenbrenner said, "is conceived as a set of nested structures, each inside the other like a set of Russian dolls" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 3). The individual involved in bullying or

victimization is influenced by all four interrelated systems: micro system, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem. I have investigated the problem with a micro perspective, which is a limitation of the study. I have explored one aspect of the problem, but my research has provided a richer and deeper understanding of the participants whom I studied.

Conclusion

Through this research study, I aimed to make visible a key and under-reported dimension of the experience of adolescents who have been bullied. In a modest way this research project has attempted to amplify the largely ignored voices of adolescents who have been marginalized. The adolescents and their parents I interviewed were neither powerless nor helpless; rather they were resourceful and creative in their responses to bullying. But their responses were not acknowledged. If bullying in the schools is to be addressed effectively, there needs to be more proactive measures to highlight the knowledges, skills, and abilities of the people who have endured aggression and are well equipped to provide constructive input regarding this serious problem.

This study, enriched with the narratives of resistance and responses of the adolescents and their parents, shed light on *the perspectives of the participants*, which is often not acknowledged. The participants' narratives are evidence that we should revisit the characterization of the targets of bullying. They not only responded to aggression in various ways to protect themselves and maintain their values and dignity, they also made efforts to protect others who were in the same situation. In light of their resistance, this thesis suggests that we should look for an appropriate term to denote persons who have faced bullying.

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Appendix A

Request for research participants (Director, PREVNet)

Date

Director,
PREVNet Administrative Centre
Queen's University
Kingston, ON

Dear Director:

I am a Doctoral candidate in the Faculty of Education at the University of Ottawa, my thesis project entitled “Resisting Bullying: Narratives of Victims and their Families” has been approved by the Research Ethics Board, University of Ottawa. I am asking for your help in introducing me to the relevant PREVNet partner organizations for recruitment of participants for my research project.

I have been a member of PREVNet since 2005, and have contributed to the organization by writing research summary and working with NGO’s. As discussed earlier with, the Project Assistant, you have agreed to introduce me to the directors of relevant partner organizations’ for recruiting participants for my thesis research. These organizations are:

Family Services of Canada,
Boys and Girls Club of Canada
Scout Canada

I am attaching a page summary of my research project to explain the focus of my research. I thank you for your help and look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Savitri Khanna,

Appendix B

Request for research participants (administrator of NGO's)

Date:

Administrator
Operational Manager
Family Services Canada
Ottawa,

Dear Ms. Administrator,

My name is Savitri Khanna , I am a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Ottawa, my thesis project entitled “ Resisting Bullying: Narratives of Victims and Their Families” has been approved by the Research Ethics Board, University of Ottawa. I am working under the supervision of Dr. David Paré, Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa. I am currently looking for five families who would be interested in participating in my study. I am looking for the families whose children have faced the problem of bullying during the school year. The purpose of this research is to explore their responses and experiences in the bullying situations. I would be interested in talking with the child as well as with the parents.

I have discussed my project with the Director, PREVNet and s/he has suggested that I should contact you for selecting my participants. I would very much appreciate your help in recruitment of my participants.

Participation in this study has many benefits. Narratives of the parents and children will elucidate families and children responses in the face of bullying. My research aims at acknowledging their strengths and foregrounding their agency. Knowledge of their responses will help other children in the same situations. There are benefits for the counsellors and schools as well; school can design and focus their anti -bullying program appropriately.

The data will be gathered through face-to-face interviews with the parents and children. There will be 3 interviews of one hour each at one week interval. These interviews will be audio-taped. The parents and children will have the opportunity to review, edit, and approve the transcripts of the interview before it is finalized for writing and inclusion in the thesis. Confidentiality of the participants will be maintained through the use of pseudonyms at each steps of the study.

I am attaching one page summary of my research project. Further details of the study will be illustrated in our meeting.

I thank you for your help and look forward to meeting with you,

Sincerely,

Savitri Khanna
Faculty of Education
University of Ottawa,
Ottawa.

Appendix: C

Consent Form for Parents

Name of Researcher: Savitri Khanna
Thesis Supervisor: Dr. David Paré
Institution/Department: University of Ottawa, Faculty of Education
Research Topic: Resisting Bullying: Narratives of Victims and Their Families

Invitation to Participate: I am invited to participate in the above mentioned research study conducted by Savitri Khanna, a doctoral candidate at the Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa.

Purpose of the Study: I understand that the study aims to explore the responses, and experiences of children, who have been bullied at school, and their families.

Participation: My participation in this study will involve, two short meetings of 15 minutes, and 3 interviews of one hour each, at one week interval. The interview(s) would take place at a mutually decided time and place. In the interviews, I will be asked about my family's experiences and responses to cope with bullying at school. The interviews will be audiotaped. I understand that audio-tapings will be completely confidential and it will be kept in a locked place at the university office at all times. I understand that the contents of the interview(s) will be used for the purpose of preparing a thesis for a Ph.D. (Education) at the University of Ottawa. I also understand that the research findings may be used for future research publications in journals and conference papers.

Benefits: The researcher hopes that my participation through my narratives will illuminate my family's strengths, in coping with the bullying situations. It will also illustrate my experiences with bullying situations faced by children and their families. I understand that Savitri Khanna plans to write one collective narrative document containing the parent's narratives of their responses to bullying of their children. I will have opportunity to review and edit the document before it is ready for final writing. I will get a copy of this document to keep. Further, the researcher hopes that knowledge of my responses will help other families facing similar issues.

If I want, I can e-mail Savitri Khanna at the above e-mail address to receive a summary of the research results.

Risks: I understand that my answers in this study may cause some emotional discomfort. I have received assurances that every effort will be made to minimize this risk of emotional discomfort. The interview can be stopped temporarily or I can refuse to answer any sensitive questions that are causing emotional discomfort. A professional counsellor who is an expert in bullying and victimization issues will be available to me and my family at all times, at no cost to me.

Confidentiality and anonymity: I have received assurance from the researcher that the information that I will share will remain strictly confidential and carefully stored, and my identity will not be identified in the dissertation or in any publication related to the research. My name will not be used and a pseudonym will be assigned to my family and me. My responses to the interviews questions are strictly confidential. Pseudonym will be used through out the study to protect anonymity. All data collected and the tape recoding of the interviews will be stored in a locked office at the Faculty of Education for a period 5 years after publication of results. I understand that the Research Ethics Board of the University of Ottawa may review the research records from this study to verify that this research has been conducted in accordance with the university's regulations.

Voluntary Participation and Acceptance: I understand the purpose of the study, and what is required of me and I agree to participate. I understand that information in this research may cause some emotional discomfort, and therefore I am free to withdraw from the study any time. I understand that by accepting to participate in this study I do not waive the right to withdraw from this study any time I wish. I may refuse to answer any questions that I feel are too sensitive and inappropriate without any negative consequences for my family and me. My participation in this study is completely voluntary.

I will have the opportunity to review, offer corrections, and approve the interviews' transcripts before it is ready for inclusion in the thesis and any other documents.

I am aware that any concern about the ethical conduct of this project may be addressed to the Protocol Officer of the Ethics in Research, 550 Cumberland Street, Room 159, (613) 562-5841 or ethics@uottawa.ca

There are two copies of this consent form, one of which I may keep for my records. If I have any questions about the research project, I may contact the researcher or her supervisor.

I would like to participate in the study by face-to face interviews.

Participant's signature _____ Date

Participant's name and contact information (e-mail address and/or phone number):

Researcher's signature _____ Date

Appendix D

Consent Form for Parents for Children's Participation

Dear Parents:

Your child is invited to participate in a research study that I am conducting under the supervision of Dr. David Paré, Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa. The purpose of this research is to explore the resistance, responses, and experiences of children, who are bullied at school, and their families. Findings from this research will be used to prepare a Ph. D. thesis in Education, and a short collective narrative document containing children's responses to bullying. We feel that illuminating children's responses foregrounds their agency and acknowledges their efforts. We hope that this may help in reducing bullying at school.

Participation in this study is strictly voluntary. A separate assent form is given to your child. Your child's participation involves taking part in 3 one half-hour interviews. The interviews will be conducted at one-week interval and will be audiotaped. The interviews will be conducted at a mutually decided time and place. You will be present in all the 3 interviews. Your child's identity and responses will be kept completely anonymous and confidential. He/she will be given a pseudonym from the beginning of the research. Your child is free to withdraw from the study anytime if he/she wishes to do so, without any negative consequences to him/her or the family. I realize that narrating experiences may cause some emotional discomfort to the child and therefore, he/she can stop, withdraw or refuse to answer any questions. A professional counsellor who is an expert in bullying and victimization issues will be available to my child at all times, at no cost to me.

The information collected from the interviews or any other method will be stored in a locked office at the University of Ottawa for a period of 5 years after publication of results. Any concerns about the ethical conduct of this project may be addressed to the Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research, 550 Cumberland Street, Room 159, (613) 562- 5541 or ethics@ottawa.ca.

You will have the opportunity to review, edit, and approve the interview transcripts before it is ready for inclusion in the thesis and other documents.

Please sign below if you permit your child to take part in our research study and if he/she chooses to participate. If you have any questions and concerns about this research study please feel free to contact Savitri Khanna, Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa or her supervisor Dr. David Paré, Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa. There are two copies of the consent form, one of which you may keep for your records.

If you wish to receive a summary of the findings of this research, please contact Savitri khanna at Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa

I _____, give permission to my child
_____ to participate in the research study entitled “ Resisting
Bullying: Narratives of Victims and their families”. The participation consists of 3 half-hour
interviews.

Parent’s signature _____ Date

Researcher’s signature _____ Date

Appendix E

Assent Form for Children

I agree to participate in the research conducted by Savitri Khanna and Dr. David Paré of the Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa. The purpose of this research is to learn how I responded to bullying at school. My stories about my responses will help other children who also face bullying. It will also help the researcher to better understand how to reduce bullying in schools.

I understand that Savitri Khanna is also preparing a document that will have stories from children about how they respond to bullying. I will be given my own copy of this document to keep.

My participation will include answering questions to the researcher. I understand that when the researcher is asking me about my responses, my mom and dad will be with me. If I want to talk alone with Savitri Khanna that can be arranged too. My answers will be taped but no one except the researcher will be able to know how I answered the questions. I will be given a different name of my choice for this research purpose. My name will not appear in her thesis or the documents she will write about children's responses so no one can recognize me in her thesis or the documents. Even if I say yes at first and then decide that I don't like answering questions I don't have to continue if I don't want to. Nothing bad will happen to me if I do not answer any questions.

By participating in this research study, I will be helping the researcher with her thesis and other children who have problems with the bullies and I will also contribute to the document which will have the stories from me and other children.

If I have any questions about the research, I can ask Savitri Khanna, Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa, or Dr. D. Paré at the Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa.

I would like to participate in this study by taking part in the interviews.

Child's signature: _____ Date:

Researcher's signature: _____ Date:

Appendix F

Interview Questions for children**Interview Questions related to 1st. Research Question.**

My first interview will be a warm up, establishing a rapport with the child. The interview will start with informal conversation with the child such as “tell me about your school ...what do you like about school ...tell me about your friends, teachers... and so on. I will say to the child, “ I am so keen to find out about how you responded to the bully ...ahm.. you were so clever to act that way...we would talk about your responses in that incident... other children can get some ideas from the way you acted”. The purpose of this informal conversation is to create a context for the stories to come, and create an environment of trust. When the child feels confident to talk about bullying, the questions would be about the responses and not about effects. I hope the questions about responses would lead to the actual incidents.

- When you were approached by a bully how did you respond? What did you do? (overt resistance to bullying).
- Would you like to share your story about what you did?
- How did you keep yourself safe?
- Did you go somewhere to protect yourself?
- What happened then? What else did you do?
- Did you tell yourself anything to make yourself feel better, or safer, or stronger? (covert resistance)
- How did you comfort yourself?
- Sharing your stories is not easy; it is not an easy thing to talk about ... what does it say about you that you agreed to do it and you are doing it now?
- Who would be least surprised to know that you have decided to tell me your story about your resistance to bullies?
- What do they know about you that would mean that they wouldn't be surprised with your responses and sharing your story with me?
- Would you say that knowledge of how you resisted to bullies would help other children?
If they say yes, I will ask,

- How would it help? Tell me more, or if they say no,
- Why do you say so?

Interview Questions related to 2nd. and 3rd. interview.

- How did you oppose the bully?
- Did you have “imagining” skills? Were you thinking about something when you were bothered by the bully?
- Was there a place you went to be safe and comfortable?
- Was there a skill or idea that you used to help you with this incident?
- Where did you learn that skill?
- What name would you give to that skill?
- How do you feel about yourself knowing about the skills and knowledges you have?
- Why was that skill important to you? (making connections with skills and other values)
- Can you tell me a story about that skill and knowledge? Did this skill help you in the past?
- How did you learn that skill? Who did you learn it from?
- Who wouldn't be surprised that you value ___ skill? What would they say to appreciate you and your value for this ____?
- Is there a family story related to that skill?

In the third interview I will like to get a broader picture of the incidents, during the incidents, between the incidents and after the incidents; their experiences, resistance, and responses.

This will give the children an opportunity to revisit and reflex of the story of their responses in the positive focus we have taken in the last two interviews. This interview reinforces their resistance and acknowledges their agency.

- Is there anything you are doing now that helps you to get through this incident?
- What do you think about yourself as a younger boy/girl and all the things you have done in response to the bullying?
- Is there anything else you like to tell me that we haven't already talked about? Would you like to add anything else to your story?

Interview questions adapted in part from:

Denborough, D. (2006), (Ed). *Trauma: Narrative responses to traumatic experience*.

Adelaide Australia: Dulwich Publications

Yuen, A. (2007). Discovering children's responses to trauma: a response-based narrative practice. *The International Journal of Narrative Therapy and Community Work*, 4, 3-16.

Wade, A. (2007). Despair, resistance, hope: Response-based therapy with victims of violence. In C. Flascas, I. McCarthy, & J. Sheehan (Eds.). *Hope and despair in Narrative therapy: Adversity, forgiveness, and reconciliation* (pp. 63-86). New York, NY: Routledge.

Appendix G

Interview questions for parents

My first interview will start with warm-up questions. The question will be: tell me about your family; how long you have been living in this neighbourhood; how do you like your children's school; contacts with other parents from your child's class; do you accompany children to school outings, and so on..

- How did you find out about these incidents?
- Can you tell me more about the incidents?
- Tell me what is happening with your child at school?
- Could you share with me some information of this incident?
- What did you do when you found out?
- What were you thinking when you found out about bullying of your child? (covert response)?
- What did you say to your child?
- How did you help your child?
- Were you thinking about how to stop bullying?
- Did you do something to stop bullying of your child (overt response)?
- Is there any skill that helped you at this time?
- Did the knowledge of this skill help you in the past?
- How did you know about this skill?
- How did you learn this skill?
- Is there any family story related to this skill? Would you like to share this story?
- Would you say that knowledge of your responses could help other families with bullying problem?
- Is there any thing else you would like to tell me that we haven't talked about?
- Would you like to add any thing else to your story?

Appendix I
Recruitment Text

Hello,

My name is Savitri Khanna and I am a Ph.D. candidate in the Faculty of Education at the University of Ottawa. My Ph.D. thesis is entitled “Resisting Bullying: Narratives of Victims and their Families.” The purpose of my research project is to understand how children and their families respond when they are faced with bullying at school. We know that bullying is a big problem in schools. Most of the schools now have anti-bullying programmes to stop bullying but despite these efforts, bullying of children continues to be of increasing concern. We also know that children and their families always respond to bullying in some ways—which could include what they do, or how they think or feel when they face bullying. Often this part of the story of children and families is left out of research on bullying.

For my research, I would like to learn the stories of children and their families’ responses to bullying. It could be a very small or a big response but the purpose of my research is to find out what were their responses to bullying.

I am looking for participants who would be interested in taking part in my research study. Following are the criteria to participate in my study:

1. Families with children who have faced bullying at school during the school year.
2. Children who are currently enrolled in English language public school. They must be in Grade Six or have just finished Grade Six.
3. Parents have shown concerns about the bullying of their child and have approached school authorities.
4. As my study involves both children and their parents, both the child and their parents should be interested in telling their stories.

Your participation will consist of:

1. One half-hour meeting to establish eligibility, filling out a short questionnaire, signing informed consent and assent forms.
2. Three one-hour face-to-face interviews at one-week intervals. Both child and the parents will be interviewed at the same time (if they wish). The interview will be audio-taped.

Participation in this study has many benefits. This study aims at telling the story of how children and families have actively responded to bullying—things they have done, thoughts they have had, emotions they have felt, etc. Knowledge of their responses can help others who are facing bullying. It will be helpful for counsellors and school authorities.

Confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained by using pseudonyms and codes and altering address and other identifying details. The contents of their responses are strictly for research purposes.

You are free to withdraw from the project at any time before or during the interview. You are also free to refuse to participate and refuse to answer particular questions. The information you share will remain strictly confidential.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please contact me directly at the following phone number or e-mail.

Thank you for your consideration,

Savitri Khanna,
Faculty of Education
University of Ottawa

Appendix J

Advertisement placed in the community newspaper and posted on the community and university notice boards

The image was not included in the dissertation due to confidentiality issues.