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Teachers Creating Safe School Environments: Prevention of Elementary Student-to-Student Bullying

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Teachers Creating Safe School Environments:
Prevention of Elementary Student-to-Student Bullying

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

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Signature Sheet

This thesis, written under the direction of the candidate's thesis advisor and approved by the coordinator of the master's program, has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science. The content and research methodologies presented in this work represent the work of the candidate alone.

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Table of Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Title Page | 1 |
| Signature Sheet..... | 2 |
| Acknowledgments | 4 |
| Table of Contents | 5 |
| Abstract..... | 7 |
| Chapter 1 Introduction | 8 |
| Theoretical Rationale | 10 |
| Assumptions..... | 10 |
| Background and Need..... | 11 |
| Summary | 14 |
| Chapter 2 Review of the Literature | 15 |
| Introduction..... | 15 |
| Historical Context | 15 |
| Review of Academic Research | 16 |
| Analyzing Educators..... | 16 |
| Understanding Students | 25 |
| Prevention Strategies | 36 |
| Summary..... | 53 |
| Chapter 3 Method..... | 55 |
| Research Approach..... | 55 |

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Ethical Standards..... | 55 |
| Sample and Site | 56 |
| Access and Permissions | 56 |
| Data Gathering Strategies..... | 57 |
| Data Analysis Approach..... | 58 |
| Chapter 4 Findings | 59 |
| Description of Site, Individuals, Data | 59 |
| Themes | 62 |
| Chapter 5 Discussion /Analysis..... | 82 |
| Summary of Major Findings..... | 82 |
| Comparison of Findings to the Literature..... | 84 |
| Limitations/Gaps in the Research | 89 |
| Implications for Future Research..... | 94 |
| Overall Significance of the Study | 94 |
| About the Author | 95 |
| References | 96 |

Abstract

Student-to-student bullying is still a current issue within elementary schools nationwide. Educators are often unaware, improperly trained and/or unwilling to help in student bullying incidences. Without training or willingness, teachers often are driven into silence and inaction, effectively putting the wellbeing of students at risk. The present study examines this topic through previous literature, gathers data to raise further awareness and better understanding of this issue, and provides proactive bullying prevention strategies for teachers. The present study collects data quantitatively and qualitatively with the conduction of surveys and personal interviews of pre-service and veteran educators respectively. Findings reveal increasing efforts to address student bullying, and evidence suggests pre-service and veteran teachers are still underprepared to handle student bullying. There remains ongoing need for further research to provide best methods of bullying prevention for all students involved in order to bring about positive and lasting change.

Chapter 1 Introduction

A Friday Afternoon After School and A Monday Morning Before Another School Day Begins

By Megan Davies

What game was this? I silently asked myself out of mild curiosity as I approached the cluster of fifth graders. At first glance it was obvious there were no fewer than five boys. They were all squished as if in an invisible can, like sardines. All boys were squeezed together, their backs acting as a curved wall. It looked as though they were in a mosh pit. They could have been on a lively dance floor, except for the fact that they were outside in broad daylight. Not only this, but their “invisible can” seemed to squish them further still against a nearby ball wall. What a very odd game.

My intentions at this moment were to smile as I navigated around the boys on my way to the restroom. What my curious eyes witnessed, however, stopped me cold. As five boys faced a ball wall in a semi-circle, not like a can as I had first thought, one boy’s back was against the wall. His peers were in his face, too close for comfort. Their bodies clearly encroached upon the personal space of the boy who had no outlet by which to escape. When my eyes gazed into his, his silent eyes were pleading.

The following Monday morning I was “urged” to visit the principal’s office. I had never been “sent to the principal’s office” in all my years of elementary, middle, or high school years. I felt I had done something wrong, yet what, I knew not. “Megan, from what you relayed to me of the events from last Friday, it sounds like what you saw wasn’t so much ‘bullying behavior,’ as perhaps boys who may have ‘intimidated’ a peer.”

“How dare you belittle what happened on Friday!” was what I desperately wanted to say, but I lacked the courage. He was my principal. Who was I to question him? In my hesitation to

contradict, I simply nodded in agreement and, in the same moment, became a traitor to the child I protected that afternoon and myself in the process.

“We try not to throw the ‘bullying’ word around in light of recent lawsuits concerning this issue throughout the country,” he continued.

Well, at least he admitted the existence of bullying. I supposed one had to start somewhere. I left the principal’s office at least two inches shorter than when I had walked in. The only thing I knew was that I, at least, had done the right thing to stop those boys, and to call it to the attention of their after-school “supervisor.” The rest was not up to me. For the rest of that school year, however, I could not help but keep a watchful eye on the boy, whose expression will always be in my memory, pleading for help.

As Megan’s story reveals, elementary students’ academic careers, as well as their emotional and physical wellbeing, are at risk. Educational professionals are often unwilling, or lack the training to help and protect those who have experienced bullying. The purpose of this thesis is to bring further awareness to the issue of bullying within elementary schools. In addition the purpose of this paper is to hopefully ascertain methods of involvement from other professionals within the field of education, which will bring about both positive and lasting change. The question posed and addressed by this thesis is “How Can Teachers Create Safe School Environments That Will Lead to the Prevention of Elementary Student-to-Student Bullying?”

Theoretical Rationale

"Learning would be exceedingly laborious, not to mention hazardous, if people had to rely solely on the effects of their own actions to inform them what to do. Fortunately, most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling: from observing others one forms an idea of how new behaviors are performed, and on later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action."

-Albert Bandura, Social Learning Theory, 1977

Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory is tertiary in its foundation. Bandura's theory is rooted in its conception by the assumption that "people can learn new information and behaviors by watching other people" (Cherry, 2013, para. 3). This idea is otherwise identified as "observational learning," and it is Bandura's theory, which aims to explain a "wide variety of behaviors" in people on the individual and communal level (Cherry, 2013, para. 3). The second aspect in Bandura's theory regarding social learning describes an essential idea that a person's mental state, in correlation to observation learning, greatly affects the outcome of behavior actualized. Finally, Bandura's Social Learning Theory acknowledges that just because something has been learned, it does not mean that it will "result in a change in behavior" (Cherry, 2013, para. 4).

Assumptions

The assumptions include the following: acts of student-to-student bullying are going unidentified, unreported, and unresolved by teachers and schools in which educators are employed. Bullying is still a reality in elementary schools, influenced in part by the lack of

teacher education and training in best methods and programs that would alleviate bullying in elementary schools. Generally, bullying prevention programs are rare in schools. Finally, student-to-student bullying in elementary schools is a significant issue that has not been adequately addressed.

Background and Need

Bullying has been acknowledged as a significant social issue within schools for centuries. However, this perception of bullying has vastly changed over the past several decades. “Looking back to the 18th century, peer-on-peer harassment was just as commonly seen as it is today” (Tamietti, 2012, para. 1). The difference that has been evidenced by the common perception of bullying from centuries past—in comparison to current times—has revealed that in the past, bullying was not seen as an “issue” so much as mischievous behavior carried out by school children; behavior that was deemed an “innocent ‘misadventure’ or ‘misbehavior’ among schoolboys” (Koo as cited by Tamietti, 2012, para. 2). Back then bullying was considered a “normal part of childhood” (Tamietti, 2012, para. 2).

Much as the perception concerning bullying changed over time, so did the terminology used to express this social phenomenon. “In the 18th and 19th centuries bullying was mainly viewed as physical or verbal harassment” (Koo as cited by Tamietti, 2012, para. 2). The term ‘bullying’ was not “publicly recognized” (Tamietti, 2012, para. 3) until a newspaper published an article regarding bullying behavior. In 1862, *The Times* wrote their first story on bullying when it reported a soldier died due to bullying. “*The Times* were the first to voice the critical issues of bullying and the major consequences that can follow” (Koo as cited by Tamietti, 2012, para. 3).

Up until that time, bullying was not associated to behavior, which would, in turn, lead to a person's death. "In that time bullying was accepted by many as normal behavior" (Tamietti, 2012, para. 3). However, with the increase in the prevalence of this phenomenon, more researchers aimed to learn more about this issue and the potential devastating consequences (Tamietti, 2012, p.1).

"Historically, the most significant turning point for bullying took place in the mid 1970s" (Koo as cited by Tamietti, 2012, para. 4). Dan Olweus, a research professor of psychology, was the first to study this social issue that is bullying. Using his own methods of research, Olweus introduced the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP). As an outcome of Olweus' work, school-bullying reduction resulted. Olweus' efforts had a significant impact on the fight against bullying. From his research, a greater awareness surfaced and it was Olweus' work that inspired others to follow in the continuous study on this topic of bullying. In addition it was Olweus who "vastly expanded the meaning of bullying" (Koo as cited by Tamietti, 2012, para. 4). "Olweus' efforts have made a great impact on school violence and have helped to bring safety back into schools" (Tamietti, 2012, para. 4).

Despite significant progress that occurred because of Olweus and the many other researchers who followed him, bullying is still a serious unresolved issue within schools. "[C]onsequences of bullying reached its peak" (Tamietti, 2012, para. 5) when two teen boys were found guilty of shooting and killing classmates after allegedly being victims of bullying. In 1999, Columbine High School "experienced one of the worst high school shootings in history. This event caused worldwide devastation due to the situation itself, and because it uncovered the raw truth behind bullying" (Tamietti, 2012, para. 5).

Roughly during the same time as the Columbine shooting, access to the Internet improved and as a result, bullying behavior became prevalent online. With easy access to the Internet, many teens started using cyber space as a “play ground for bullying” (Tamietti, 2012, para. 5). Screen-to-screen bullying widened and negatively cast the net further still, especially in the usage of cell phones and social networks like “MySpace,” “Facebook,” and “Twitter,” among others (Tamietti, 2012, p. 2).

Reportedly, cyber bullying was considered to be on the rise due to social networks such as Facebook and Twitter where “information can travel in seconds to a countless number of people” (Tamietti, 2012, para. 5). As a result of the increased awareness that surrounds bullying, the federal government created a law to address bullying nationwide. No Child Left Behind, a law enacted under the Bush administration in 2001, was primarily a response to standards-based reform for academically struggling schools. It also was created with the secondary intention to “crack down on these [bullying] behaviors” (Edmondson & Zeman as cited by Tamietti, 2012, para. 6).

Furthermore, the federal government worked in an effort to ensure safety within schools. This was done by linking school funding to “school safety laws,” giving schools “no option but to implement these laws in order to receive funding” (Edmondson & Zeman as cited by Tamietti, 2012, para. 6). In addition, government policies were created to reduce the prevalence of school violence to “hold bullies accountable and support victims” (Edmondson & Zeman as cited by Tamietti, 2012, para. 6).

Current opinion and understanding concerning the issue of bullying is significantly different than the view of bullying in the 1800’s. The term “bullying” is initially slow to

circulate amongst the masses, and the subsequent understanding of its effects on victims is delayed even more in terms of societal recognition. The upside to this issue involves the researchers, like Dan Olweus, who are invested in the improvement of conditions within schools. Also critical is the ongoing effort in research to determine the best methods of approach in achieving the goal of bullying prevention (Tamietti, 2012, p. 2).

“Due to researchers like Dan Olweus, gaining true understanding of bullying is now possible” (Tamietti, 2012, para. 7). Because of Olweus, the goal to reduce student bullying is attainable. On the same point, however, further research and understanding of the topic of student bullying must be conducted before our ultimate goal—of actualizing the prevention of school bullying—can be realized (Tamietti, 2012, p. 2).

Summary

Prior research on the topic of student bullying within schools reveals much progress has occurred. Still research clearly states that the continuance in efforts to resolve this social issue is a necessity. The implication of prior research reflects the need to understand teacher likelihood and strategies in becoming involved in the identification, intervention, and prevention of student bullying. Additionally, prior research intimates the need to better educate and train both novice and veteran teachers. Furthermore, prior research implies the need for a greater understanding of bullying through the perspective of students. It is also necessary to ascertain the validity of prevention programs to better understand best practices in student-to-student bullying identification, intervention, and prevention in elementary schools.

Chapter 2 Review of the Literature

Introduction

This section served as an examination of the research literature on student-to-student bullying. More specifically, reviewed literature focused on three components of this social issue. First, literature was synthesized to reflect the awareness and involvement of educators concerning this matter. Second, literature provided insight into student bullying from a student-centered perspective. Finally, teacher-directed strategies were proposed in an effort to facilitate the identification, intervention and prevention of student-to-student bullying within elementary schools. This last component of the literature review was directed toward pre-service and veteran educators. Information was gathered from academic library searches using online resources. Research information was organized in the following categories: Historical Context, Review of the Academic Research, and Summary.

Historical Context

Student bullying was acknowledged as a part of life in youth culture for centuries. However, perception of this phenomenon indicated an attitude of indifference among the general public as well as in school environments until the 1970s. With this statement, a plethora of recent studies indicated a shift in societal and educational mentality. Concerning student-to-student bullying, evidence of applied efforts to make up for lost time was well documented. Studies showed a commitment in the identification, intervention, and prevention of student-to-student bullying (Koo, 2007).

Review of Academic Research

Analyzing Educators

In the first set of reviewed literature, the author of the present study analyzed this issue from the perspective of educators. The focus of this research had the intention to gain an understanding of what pre-service teachers know about student-based bullying as well as to learn what trends exist regarding pre-service teacher's perceptions of student bullying. The identified problem discussed within this reviewed study was two-fold. First, this study acknowledged statistics which reveal how "young people are the primary perpetrators, victims, and witnesses of interpersonal violence . . . within the school environment . . ." (Craig, Bell & Leschied, 2011, p. 22). In addition this study suggested that training with regard to bullying prevention and intervention among pre-service educators "is lacking" (Craig et al., 2011, p. 22). As mentioned above, the purpose of this study was to gain knowledge in how pre-service teachers understand and perceive this issue of student bullying. The research question pertaining to this study asked what are the "knowledge and attitudes regarding school-based bullying" (Craig et al., 2011, p. 21).

Participants were students enrolled in an educational psychology course in a Faculty of Education at a "major Ontario University that provides pre-service teacher education" (Craig et al., 2011, p. 24). A total of 160 participants consented: females n=60, males n=100. The majority of students "were pursuing teacher training . . ." (Craig et al., 2011, p. 24). Two "standardized instruments" (Craig et al., 2011, p. 24) were used in this study to "evaluate teacher knowledge with respect to school violence" (Craig et al., 2011, p. 24). These implemented "instruments" were two surveys. The first survey was the Teachers' Attitudes about Bullying Questionnaire (TAABQ) and the second survey was the Trainee Teachers' Bullying Attitudes

Questionnaire (TTBAQ). The first survey was a 22-item questionnaire with a 5-point response scale, and the second survey was a 16-item questionnaire, again with a 5-point response scale. Data collection was facilitated by the distribution of surveys to pre-service teachers “early within the academic year” (Craig et al., 2011, p. 25). Participants were informed that information provided by participants would be anonymous. Participants were not informed about the specific focus of the study. Replies to the surveys were voluntary as well as anonymous, and upon completion, the surveys were collected “in a designated ‘return box’ in the school’s Pre-service Education Office which was “secured within the faculty” (Craig et al., 2011, p. 25).

Data was obtained quantitatively and illustrated through tables. Questionnaires indicated that all participants validated bullying as a real issue. The results revealed “there were considerable differences regarding what was defined as bullying, with variability related to the potential of intervening to end the violence” (Craig et al., 2011, p. 21). The study indicated evidence of the need to provide pre-service teachers with training “regarding anti-violence strategies” (Craig et al., 2011, p. 21). Both the aim of this literature review and this thesis was to gain understanding in how teachers can aid in the prevention and intervention of bullying (Craig et al., 2011).

The focus, and purpose of the second study reviewed, was to evaluate pre-service teachers and how they both handled and responded to student-to-student bullying. As identified by the researchers of this study, the problem acknowledged the ongoing prevalence and issue of bullying. Within this study, there were several hypotheses proposed. The first prediction made by this study was that pre-service teachers would consider overt aggression, or acts of one or more students physically hurting, or threatening to physically hurt a peer, as a bigger issue in need of more attention and intervention when compared to relational aggression, or acts of one or

more students “damaging or manipulating” relationships via ignoring or spreading rumors about another peer (Kahn, Jones & Wieland, 2012, p. 785). A second hypothesis predicted pre-service teachers would tie a gender to the two types of aggression. A third hypothesis reflected the prediction of pre-service teachers relying on gender to determine the seriousness of a bullying incident. The fourth and final hypothesis discussed the predicted outcome that pre-service teachers who coped with bullying instances among their students through “adaptive” strategies—action-based and problem-solving—versus “maladaptive” strategies, or distancing-based, would be more likely to view bullying as a problem and more likely to take necessary steps toward bullying intervention (Kahn et al., 2012, p. 786).

The sample of this study included 97 participants, $n=77$ women, and $n=20$ men, who were students of an educational psychology course for pre-service educators at a Midwestern University. Participants completed a survey that determined how participants coped with stressors. The authors of this study chose not to make a specific reference to bullying when asking participants to provide their coping strategies. Of those strategies, participants either used adaptive, problem-solving or maladaptive, distancing coping strategies (Kahn et al., 2012).

Surveys were gathered, results were revealed and discussed by means of numerical notation, and findings were analyzed statistically. Results revealed overt aggression to be viewed by pre-service teachers as a bigger issue when compared to relational aggression, and pre-service teachers reported being more likely to intervene in response to overt aggression. There were no significant links made between gender and type of aggression. However pre-service teachers did use gender to gauge the seriousness of an event of student-to-student bullying. The final hypothesis was supported, showing that pre-service teachers who used active, or “adaptive” coping strategies were more prone to take acts of bullying more seriously and to

take steps toward bullying prevention when compared to pre-service teachers who respond to bullying through “maladaptive” coping strategies (Kahn et al., 2012).

The authors of this study suggested pre-service teachers were more likely to aid in the intervention of bullying acts if said pre-service teachers, themselves, experienced bullying as either a victim or a bully in their youth. This study also suggested pre-service teachers needed more training, particularly in identifying signs of relational aggression toward boys. This was reportedly a form of bullying that is rare, and opinions as to the necessity to address relational aggression in general, were minimal. The authors of this study additionally suggested formalized programs to train pre-service teachers to become more aware of their coping strategies and to create programs that educated and encouraged pre-service teachers to learn and apply coping strategies. If the aforementioned suggestions were actualized, efforts made might serve to effectively aid in the identification and intervention of student-to-student bullying. This study reflected the intention of the present study to ascertain the experiences and responses of pre-service teachers to student-to-student bullying (Kahn et al., 2012).

The authors of *For Children Only? Effects of the KiVa Antibullying Program on Teachers* discussed the perceptions of student-to-student bullying in first through third grade teachers about an anti-bullying program. The purpose and research question of this study was to understand what teachers gained from this anti-bullying program. Specially, it pertained to teachers’ self-perceived competence to deal with bullying and their understanding of bullying, as well as teacher confidence in this program (Ahtola, Haataja, Karna, Poskiparta & Salmivalli, 2012).

Through web-based questionnaires, teachers answered research questions previously mentioned in this present study. Data was collected and presented quantitatively through

numerical tables and statistical analysis. Results revealed that overall, teachers' self-evaluated competence and confidence in the effectiveness of the KiVa anti-bullying program, and teachers' understanding of bullying was at "quite a high level" (Ahtola et al., 2012, p. 855). This study validated the present study and the researcher's efforts to identify prevention strategies for the purpose of providing educators with effective methods to combat this social issue of student-to-student bullying (Ahtola et al., 2012).

The focus of the next literature review concerned how teachers viewed the various types of bullying and method(s) used to aid in bullying prevention. Despite the increased awareness concerning this nationwide social issue of bullying, the problem addressed within this study was that there still has been no satisfactory measurement in the prevention of bullying. The purpose of this study assessed the attitudes of teachers toward bullying interventions in efforts to "determine how helpful [were] perceived interventions" (Roberts, 2011, p. 75). The implied research question concerning this study discussed "what are the perceptions of teachers regarding types of bullying and the method(s) used in the prevention and intervention of bullying" (Roberts, 2011, p. 75).

Participants consisted of 78 educators—females $n=55$, males $n=19$, and participants who gave insufficient data $n=4$ —teaching in various levels of schooling, which included infant care, primary and secondary education. "Career lengths" ranged from one to 40 years and consent of participation was gained from all participants. Four of the 78 educators "gave insufficient data" (Roberts, 2011, p. 81). Data collection was gained using a 26-item questionnaire, which analyzed "teachers' attitudes toward four 'global interventions'" (Roberts, 2011, p. 81). These "global interventions" were: 1) teacher implemented, 2) student implemented, and 3) non-teaching staff implemented (Roberts, 2011, p. 81) via "Student Watch Programmes,"

“Counseling,” “Support Groups for Victims and Peer Mediation Programs,” “Accurate Information and Training for Students and School Staff,” and other unspecified “specific” interventions (Roberts, 2011, p. 88). All participants of this study were informed they could withdraw at any point in this study. Participants were made aware that their “responses would remain anonymous” (Roberts, 2011, p. 81). The author of this study collected information by gathering test scores from his questionnaires and the data was organized through the format of tables (Roberts, 2011).

Through the questionnaire, quantitative data were identified. Key findings revealed that teachers believed “non-teaching staff implemented” intervention to be most helpful in the prevention of bullying. It was “[n]on-teaching staff” that was additionally found to be most effective in preventing “physical bullying, verbal bullying, intimidation, social alienation, and social exclusion.” Overall there was a consistency in patterns within this study that could “be analyzed . . . and would benefit schools . . . in preventing bullying” (Roberts, 2011, p. 75). The comparisons that could be made between this literature review and this paper were that both studies aimed to understand what approaches in bullying prevention work best in schools and that the goal of both studies attempted to ascertain how best to stop bullying behavior between students (Roberts, 2011).

The focus of the following literature review discussed the likelihood that a teacher will get involved when acts of bullying occur. “Approximately 30% of school-aged youth were frequently involved in bullying, and many more witness bullying” (Duong & Bradshaw, 2013, p. 422). National attention was paid to the issue of bullying in light of numerous occurrences of suicides as a result of children victimization (Duong & Bradshaw, 2013).

Where does bullying frequently occur? Bullying mostly occurs in schools. These were the problems reflected in this study conducted by Duong and Bradshaw. “These events highlighted how teachers play a crucial role in creating safe climates for students, especially through preventing and intervening in bullying situations” (Duong & Bradshaw, 2013, p. 422). According to the purpose of this literature review was to learn “how teachers’ perceptions of bullying are associated with their likelihood of intervening in bullying situations” (Duong & Bradshaw, 2013, p. 422). This study additionally examined “whether these relationships may differ based on teachers’ characteristics” (Duong & Bradshaw, 2013, p. 422).

The hypotheses of this study were threefold. The first hypothesis predicted, “perceived threat and perceived efficacy were expected to be positively associated with teachers’ likelihood of intervening” (Duong & Bradshaw, 2013, p. 423). The second hypothesis stated, “[p]erceived threat would be more strongly associated with likelihood of intervening among secondary school teachers compared to elementary school teachers” (Duong & Bradshaw, 2013, p. 423). The last hypothesis revealed the belief that “perceived threat would be more strongly associated with likelihood of intervening among less experienced teachers compared to more experienced teachers” (Duong & Bradshaw, 2013, p. 423).

Participants in this study included 1062 educators teaching in grades K-12 who completed an “anonymous Web-based survey” (Duong & Bradshaw, 2013, p. 422). This survey concerned individuals within the field of education, and the goal of this survey was to understand teacher attitudes and their response to bullying. The authors of this study collected data from their surveys and organized numerical results in tables and other visual representations of data (Duong & Bradshaw, 2013).

The authors of this study relied on quantitative data. Concerning the three proposed hypotheses, the first hypothesis was confirmed while the second and third hypotheses were refuted. These findings reflected that the more a teacher felt confident in skills of intervening in situations of bullying, the more they were likely to take action to stop bullying behavior. Additionally, results showed that when comparing secondary and elementary school teachers' likelihood to identify and resolve bully-like behavior, there were no findings that suggested secondary teachers were more likely to respond over elementary school teachers, or vice versa. Lastly, the assumption that less experienced teachers would be more likely to intervene in bullying behavior was refuted (Duong & Bradshaw, 2013).

Experienced teacher were more likely to interrupt bullying behavior. Both the authors of this study and the researcher of this thesis paper agreed that, "teachers play a crucial role in creating safe climates for students" (Duong & Bradshaw, 2013, p. 422). Both this study and the researcher's thesis paper aimed to understand the role in which teachers do and can play in student-to-student bullying prevention (Duong & Bradshaw, 2013).

The following study discussed various views on the environment of bullying within schools amongst students, school staff, and the parents of several schools. The problem identified by the researchers highlighted the concern that "few studies have examined perceptual differences regarding peer victimization and the broader bullying climate among students, staff, and parents" (Waasdorp, Pas, O'Brennan & Bradshaw, 2011, p. 115). The purpose of this study was to compare perceptions of climate of bullying in attempts to more effectively prevent bully-like behavior. The question of this study asked if there were "discrepancies among students, school staff, and parents" (Waasdorp et al., 2011, p. 115).

Within the aforementioned study (Waasdorp et al., 2011), “multi-leveled data was utilized” (p. 115) from 11,674 students, 1,027 school staff, and 960 parents at 44 schools. This study examined the “association between school-level indicators of disorder, norms regarding bullying and bullies, and students, staff, and parent perceptions of safety, belonging, and witnessing bullying” (p. 115). Data collection was ascertained by way of an anonymous survey which was administered online via the school district “over a three-week period . . . [in] 2008” (p. 115). In a “group format” students completed the web-based survey. Teachers administered the survey and the guidance counselor or school psychologist proctored the survey during school hours. Parents and school staff completed the anonymous survey when “provided a Web link and password . . .” (p. 115). Only one parent per household was permitted to complete the survey. “Limited demographic information was collected on participants to ensure their anonymity” (p. 121). Data was obtained from the district and was “approved for the analysis by the researchers’ Institutional Review Board” (Waasdorp et al., 2011, p. 121).

The researchers of this study (Waasdorp et al., 2011) created several tables to illustrate their findings quantitatively. Results indicated important differences with regard to “perceptions of safety, belonging, and witnessing bullying” (p. 115) among students, school staff, and parents. In general, results showed that “across all the individual covariates explored (i.e. teacher vs. student, victim, retaliation) they were significantly associated with three outcomes:” 1) Individual and School-Level Influences on Safety, 2) Individual and School-Level Influences on Belonging, and 3) Individual and School-Level Influences on witnessing bullying (p. 127). In addition researchers of this study found that “aspects of school bullying climate (e.g. rate of indirect victimization, perceptions of bullies as disliked) were associated with individual perceptions of safety, belonging, and reports of witnessing bullying” (p. 127). Both this study

and this thesis aimed at ascertaining information that would aid in the prevention of bullying within schools (Waasdorp et al., 2011).

The following research study evaluated teacher and school compliance and attitude toward an implemented school-based violence prevention program. As suggested by the authors of this study, schools and teachers were pressured to aid in the prevention and intervention of student-to-student bullying. In response, many schools adopted school-based violence prevention programs (Biggs, Dill, Fonagy, Twemlow & Vernberg, 2008).

The issue that surfaced within this study suggested that even though efforts are made to implement anti-bullying programs in schools, the use and the effectiveness of programs intended to aid in this social issue are inconsistent at best. The aim in this study was to address the flaws of this practice by assessing teacher adherence and attitudes to a specific violence prevention program [Creating a Safe Learning Environment Program (CAPSLE)]. Through a survey, this study provided evidence to suggest there was considerable variability in the use of the CAPSLE program. Some teachers reported using this violence prevention program every day, while other teachers “openly reported zero adherence” (Biggs et al., 2008, p. 541). This finding explained the discrepancy in teacher and student attitude toward responses to bullying. This study provided support and purpose to the present study in its efforts to aid in the shift of understanding and attitude toward this issue of student-to-student bullying to ultimately aid in its prevention and intervention (Biggs et al., 2008).

Understanding Students

The following articles addressed the perspectives of students with regard to student-to-student bullying. The first student-centered article discussed in this study was not a formal

research study. The author of this paper, Gourneau (2012), focused on the literature of bullying as well as the typical characteristics of middle school aged bullies. The author of the present research study acknowledged that middle school students might differ in their perspective, or their ability to articulate their perspective on bullying when compared to elementary students, but the hope of including this article in this present research study would be to provide insight that could aid in the prevention and intervention of elementary student bullying.

In the opening paragraph, Gourneau (2012) began with a quote from a sixteen-year-old girl named Cassidy: “My time has come, and so I’m gone. To a better place, far beyond. I love you all as you can see. But it’s better now because I’m free” (p. 117). With this quote, Gourneau argued the need to address this social issue of student-to-student bullying (Gourneau, 2012).

The author of this paper (Gourneau, 2012) addressed some effects bullying can have on victimized students, such as feelings of fear, anxiety, embarrassment, anger, belittlement, low self-esteem, impaired concentration, truancy, depression, stress and suicidal thoughts. In a book entitled *The Bully* and authored by Barbara Coloroso, it was reported that 86% of children between the ages of 12 and 15 reported that they get teased or bullied at school (Coloroso as cited by Gourneau, 2012, p. 118). Additionally Coloroso was quoted that “bullying [is] more prevalent than smoking, alcohol, drugs, or sex among the same age group” (p. 117), and “every two seconds of every school day a child is physically attacked in school” (p. 118). It was the implication made by these and other findings that Gourneau used to provide evidence for the need to address this issue of student-to-student bullying (Gourneau, 2012).

One thing described by Gourneau (2012) as important to note, was that bullies do not come in one size. Some bullies were confident, tough, and have demonstrated positive self-

worth. Perpetrators could be large or small, intelligent and not so intelligent, attractive and not so attractive, popular or unpopular, an ethnic minority or not, and a boy or a girl with various cultural backgrounds and “different reasons to engage in such antagonistic behaviors” (p. 118). The many faces of bullies were one of many factors that contribute to the ongoing challenges in handling this social issue. One thing known for sure, however, is that bullies have learned their behaviors from experiences provided by their home lives—interactions with peers and parents, particularly abusive or authoritarian parents—school environment, and their community or culture (Gourneau, 2012).

Interestingly, “[k]ids who bully have an air of superiority that is often a mask to cover up deep hurt and a feeling of inadequacy. They rationalize that their supposed superiority entitles them to hurt someone they hold in contempt, when in reality it is an excuse to put someone down so they can feel ‘up’” (Coloroso as cited by Gourneau, 2012, p. 118). This feeling of hurt and inadequacy often stems from being bullied by others such as family members. With a sense of hurt and inadequacy, a sense of loss in control occurs. In this event, bullying students often try to regain some of that control by lording it over others who cannot or will not defend themselves. With these findings, an obvious cyclical pattern of bullying prevails (Gourneau, 2012).

Another interesting finding is that bullying is usually a behavior not only learned from their families, but from their first teachers. Because student-to-student bullying can be learned behavior, it is crucial that this issue be addressed in “their earliest stages, when they can be unlearned” (Coloroso as cited by Gourneau, 2012, p. 118). With this statement, the present study is validated in its attempt to aid educators in preventing and intervening in bullying situations between students at the elementary school level (Gourneau, 2012).

Gourneau (2012) provided common behaviors shared among bullies to aid in the prevention, identification, and intervention of student-to-student bullying. Such behaviors listed included a bully's tendency to: 1) dominate others, 2) use others to get what they want, 3) have a difficult time putting themselves "in other people's shoes," 4) be concerned only with their own wants and pleasure and not the needs, rights, or feelings of others, 5) hurt others when aware that adult supervision is not present, 6) view weaker siblings or peers as prey, 7) project their own inadequacies onto their targets, 8) refuse to take responsibility for their own actions, 9) cannot anticipate potential consequences that may arise as response to their actions, and 10) crave attention. To further aid in the prevention, identification, and intervention of student-to-student bullying, Gourneau provided additional elements of bullying: 1) an imbalance of power, whether through physical prowess, social status, or ethnicity, 2) the intent to harm others and physical cues of a bully being satisfied with harming others, 3) evidence of threat or further aggression from a bully over a period of time, and 4) evidentiary events of a bully terrorizing its victim(s) (Gourneau, 2012).

Gourneau (2012) followed this line of thinking by providing traits in victims one should look for in attempts to prevent, identify, and intervene in bully-like behavior between children. Such traits in victims include: 1) physical weakness, 2) small structure, 3) shyness, 4) low self-esteem/lack of confidence, 5) lack of family communication and support, 6) unwillingness to respond to bullies with reciprocally aggressive behavior, 7) responses to bullying with anxiety and fear, 8) poor self-control or lack of social skills, and 9) possession of material items that a bully might desire. Whether children who are involved in acts of bullying act as a perpetrator, victim, or a witness "[children] will develop an altered, damaged perception of the world and how to treat people" (Gourneau, 2012, p. 120).

When it comes to witnesses, Gournau revealed that they respond in one of four ways. Most of the time (85%) witnesses watch bullying, 81% were reported to encourage bullies, 48% of witnesses join in bullying others, and a mere 13% of witnesses were reported to intervene in bullying situations. Gournau continued to explain the reactions of witnesses as a response to: 1) witnesses' own responses of concern in being the perpetrator's next victim, 2) concern that the perpetrator will get his/her friends to retaliate against the witness if he/she intervenes, 3) concern that intervening would worsen the bully-like situation, or 4) concern of being unknowledgeable as to how best to help in bullying instance (Gournau, 2012).

The final section of this paper described Gournau's development of an Anti-bullying Program for a middle school. Her first step was to develop and implement a survey that asked ten multiple-choice questions of the middle school-aged students: 1) "What is bullying?" 2) "Where does bullying occur at school?" 3) "What is cyber bullying?" 4) "Why do you think some students bully other students?" 5) "Why do you think some students who witness bullying do nothing about it?" 6) "If you have ever been bullied in school, how did it make you feel?" 7) "Have you ever bullied someone? How did it feel when you thought about it later?" 8) "Who can you talk to if you are ever bullied or if you see other students being bullied?" 9) "What can you or your friends do to help stop bullying?" and 10) "How would you like to be treated by the people in your life?" (Gournau, 2012, p. 122-123).

After the survey was created, implemented, and analyzed, students were asked to write their answers to two other questions on a colored strip of paper. On one side of the strip they were asked to share their definition of bullying, and on the other side of the strip, they were to describe how they liked to be treated by the people in their lives. The strips were collected and made into a long chain that was hung up during a whole-school assembly. During the assembly,

a motivational speaker gave students short messages that they could easily remember for the future such as “bullying leaves are like tattoos.” The term “pro-respect” (Gourneau, 2012, p. 124) was emphasized in this assembly. To conclude the assembly, college-student led debriefing and small-group activities were carried out (Gourneau, 2012).

The final thoughts of Gourneau’s paper discussed how to minimize bullying. Gourneau (2012) described how adults can learn to teach students to: 1) take a hard look at themselves, 2) take a close look at others, 3) develop skills to empower other individuals, 4) develop empathy, and 5) learn social skills such as how to “step in the shoes” of others, how to problem-solve, how to advocate for others, how to respect themselves and others, and how to internalize why it is important to learn these aforementioned social skills. Gourneau’s last thought concerned the theme of her anti-bullying program: “Change begins with You: Stop Bullying!” and mentioned how her theme could have easily been “Respect Begins with You: Stop Bullying” (Gourneau, 2012, p. 124).

No less than five individuals authored the second article, which provided insight into bullying through the student perspective. In this study peer relations of bullies, bully-victims, and (pure) victims were evaluated within second grade classrooms. Results showed bullies frequently were members of peer groups that contained few victims, and most bullies were in groups in which the majority of group members (50%) were not involved in bullying. Conversely, bully-victims, or students who were initially victimized then shifted in their role from victim to, oftentimes, retaliatory bullies, were found mostly to be members of groups that were composed primarily of bullies—such as bullies and bully-victims—and victims, who are individuals who are also characterized as victims and bully-victims (Farmer, Petrin, Robertson, Fraser, Hal, Day & Dadisman, 2010).

Bullies were revealed to be students who are both liked and disliked by peers, while bully-victims tended to be more often disliked by peers. Gender also was a determining factor when considering relations between both bully and bully-victim peer groups. Suggestions made by the authors of this study implied the importance of teachers being able to correctly identify and address bully and bully-victim peer groups (Farmer et al., 2010).

Farmer et al. (2010) stated that teachers should understand that some “socially prominent children may use their influence in ways that victimize peers” (p. 388). Teachers were additionally advised to be aware of these peer groups, and to understand which of their students are “prominent members of the various peer clusters” (p. 388) and which students act favorably to aforementioned students. The authors of this study anticipated that with this information it could “act as a guide” (p. 388) in providing grouping strategies and classroom management activities. Then that could, in turn, be used to support positive interaction among all students, despite the pre-established peer group clusters. With the suggestions of this study having been directed to aid teachers, this study validated the purpose of this present study (Farmer et al., 2010).

In the following reviewed literature, the transition that occurs when victims become bullies themselves was discussed. According to Notar and Padgett (2013)—again not a formal research study—the following research question was presented: “How frequently do those who have been bullied become bullies” (p. 79)? According to a source (the “Third Way” cited by Notar & Padgett, 2013) the authors of this paper revealed that up to 75% of American children have been victims of bullying. In addition, according to the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (Harvard Medical School Health as cited by Notar & Padgett, 2013)

three out of ten American children, grades 6 through 10, were reported to be involved in bullying, whether in the role of bully, victim, or both (Notar & Padgett, 2013).

Through Notar and Padgett's (2013) study, the results of several other studies were discussed. These studies looked to answer the question as to which of the following classifications of student involvement in bullying resulted in the highest frequency: 1) uninvolved student, 2) the bully, 3) the victim, or 4) the bully-victim. The Notar and Padgett (2013) study reported that the included studies "var[ied] widely" (p. 80) in their results. One idea stressed as being a certainty was that bully-victims "represent the smallest and the most vulnerable group of children" (p. 80). Bully-victims were described as being more aggressive, in reaction to bullying, but not more effective in their efforts to retaliate. Bully-victims were highly rejected by peers, and females were more likely to be bully-victims. It was also noted within this paper that bully-victims were the "most troubled" and had the greatest difficulty in school adjustment (Notar & Padgett, 2013, p. 80).

Parents were discussed as being an important influence in affecting this issue of student-to-student bullying. Parents who had a high level of conflict—which could include violent tendencies, lacking warmth, affection, and general parental involvement—lent to an association between parental traits and their children who were often revealed to bully others for the purposes of gaining the control that children feel they lack in their home lives. The authors of this study revealed students at the primary school level, who were categorized as "bully-victims, constituted 30-50% of the total bully group" (Notar & Padgett, 2013, p. 79).

Some characteristics of bully-victims indicated by this study (Notar & Padgett, 2013) revealed that they were less intellectualized, they were often quick-tempered, inclined to fight back but were often ineffectual in doing so, and they frequently alienated their peers and teachers

(p. 80). Bully-victims were restless, hyperactive, and impulsive. They created tension, were clumsy, immature, and sometimes disliked by adults including teachers. They felt unsafe, disconnected from others, had low self-esteem, were more temperamental, socially isolated, more depressed, more anxious, more stressed, and had poor mental health and extreme violent behavior. They also had emotional and behavioral problems, poor peer interaction, and they “exhibit irritating habits” (p. 81). More than one peer often bullied these students, and they preyed on individuals at the bottom of the social “ladder” (Notar & Padgett, 2013, p. 81).

To continue, bully-victims were reported as being often younger, weaker, and sicker. They were found to be more submissive, as having fewer leadership skills, were more withdrawn, more aggressive, more isolated, less cooperative, less sociable, and often lacked friends. Bully-victims were loners and “different”—i.e. sometimes, gay, lesbian, bisexual, or less physically attractive peers. Race and whether a student was a special education student were also revealed by this study to be what separates these students from their peers so as to be included in this bully-victim category (p. 80). On this note of special education, bully-victims were more likely than passive victims to be referred to special education services. This practice was reported to “exacerbate the bullying” (Notar & Padgett, 2013, p. 81).

This paper was concluded with the reiteration that there are a “large percentage of victims that become bullies” (Notar & Padgett, 2013, p. 81). Another finding revealed in this study indicated that “bullying in primary school created an increase as high as four times a greater risk for continual rejection in secondary schools for victims” (p. 81). This finding validated the present study on student-to-student bullying within elementary schools, evidencing the importance of early intervention with the aid of trained educators. Furthermore, this study

researched by Notar and Padgett (2013) indicated the best way to help victims and bullying-victims is to “stop the initial bullying” (Notar & Padgett, 2013, p. 81).

In the next article, peer victimization was discussed as being linked to children’s long-term mental health. The study examined whether early—2nd grade—and increasing—2nd to 5th grades—victimization predicted 5th grade depressive symptoms and aggressive behavior. Participants—girls n=238, boys n=195, total n=433—reported on victimization and depressive symptoms; and teachers, gender and number of educators not included, reported on victimization and aggressive behavior. This study revealed that early and increasing victimization “made unique contributions to depressive symptoms and aggressive behavior” (Rudolph, Troop-Gordon, Hessel & Schmidt, 2011, p. 111).

Relational aggression—acts of one or more students “damaging or manipulating” relationships via ignoring or spreading rumors about another peer (Kahn, Jones & Wieland, 2012, p. 785)—was more likely to follow victimization in girls. This study revealed that victimization does, indeed, affect to mental health over an extended period of time and “elucidates the role of early versus increasing victimization” (Rudolph, Troop-Gordon, Hessel & Schmidt, 2011, p. 111). A suggestion made by the authors of this study indicated a need for programs to prevent the “pernicious mental health consequences of victimization” (p. 111). The results of this study validated the present study on student-to-student bullying at the elementary level. The study additionally indicated the necessity to address this social issue of bullying to aid in the preservation of mental health in children (Rudolph et al., 2011).

In the final article pertaining to bullying through the perspective of students, Pollastri, Cardemil, and O’Donnell (2010) discussed a longitudinal analysis of self-esteem in pure bullies—bullies that have never been victimized—and bully-victims, or bullies who were once

victims of bullying. As indicated by Pollastri et al. (2010), inconsistencies were hypothesized and revealed regarding results on the self-esteem of bullies. Moreover these found inconsistencies occurred for a very specific reason. Reportedly, previous studies failed to separate findings of self-esteem in bullies from bully-victims.

The Pollastri et al. (2010) study compared levels of self-esteem between groups of pure bullies, pure victims—children who never bullied others in response to being bullied—bully-victims, and non-involved students, or a student who never participated in bullying acts. Interesting findings resulted. In a sample of 307 middle school students, results revealed gender differences as well as discrepancies in reported self-esteem among the four peer groups. Girls in the pure bully and bully-victim groups revealed “significant increases in self-esteem over time” (p. 1489). This concept reflected the events of a popular motion picture entitled *Mean Girls* starring actress Lindsay Lohan, in that there was a “social advantage for bullying [and this concept appears] to be related to an increase in . . . girls’ sense of global self-worth” (p. 1497). Girls in the pure bully peer group reported the greatest increase of self-esteem over time (Pollastri et al., 2010, p. 1497).

Boys in the aforementioned peer groups did not report significant changes in self-esteem over time (Pollastri et al., 2010). Overall, however, boys reported higher levels of self-esteem when compared to girls. Regarding peer groups’ reported levels of self-esteem—in order from greatest to least—results indicated non-involved participants reported the highest level of self-esteem followed by pure bullies, and victims. Bully-victims reported the lowest levels of self-esteem (Polastri et al., 2010).

Suggestions provided by this study indicated a need for further research and gender-specific programs to prevent bullying. The present study regarding student-to-student bullying

within elementary schools was validated by this study on self-esteem. As reported by this study, the “not-involved” peer group reported the highest level in self-esteem. This finding indicated that efforts in the prevention of bullying in early grades could provide higher overall levels of self-esteem for children across the board as they develop and mature into adolescence, and later into adults (Pollastri et al., 2010). With the inclusion of this article, the present study sought both to provide and to evaluate articles, which discussed strategies in the prevention of student-to-student bullying.

Prevention Strategies

In the final set of literature reviews, the present study referred to prevention strategies as it pertained to student-to-student bullying within elementary schools in an effort to aid pre-service and veteran educators develop confidence and skill to prevent, identify, and intervene in acts of bullying.

The present study examined the validity of two surveys. The first “widely adopted” survey (Bully/Victimization Questionnaire; BVQ) used a definitional method to measure bullying (Green, Felix, Sharkey, Furlong & Kras, 2013, p. 651). In other words, the BVQ began with a question that included a detailed description of what is meant by the term “bullying” and then asked participants to determine whether they have been bullied. The purpose of the BVQ was to distinguish between acts of bullying in comparison to other forms of peer victimization such as one-time aggression, or a dispute between friends. Even though the BVQ was widely used, “questions remain about the validity of using a definitional method to measure bullying . . . and whether this method is optimal when used . . . for identifying victims of bullying” (Lee & Cornell as cited by Green et al., 2013, p. 651).

The second survey reviewed by the author of the present study was called the California Bully Victimization Scale (CBVS). This survey was used as a “self-report measure that does not use the word ‘bully’” (Green et al., 2013, p. 652) but was specifically designed to measure all aspects of the bullying definition commonly used by researchers. The results of this study indicated the BVQ to be a valid measure of repeated victimization and a broad range of victimization experiences, but “may not be able to detect the more subtle and complex power imbalances that distinguish bullying from other forms of peer victimization” (Green et al, 2013, p. 651).

Previous to this study, prior studies indicated that by providing a definition and using the term “bullying,” researchers and educators “may also intentionally [elicit] socially desirable responses” (Green et al, 2013, p. 652). More specifically, youth may “underreport bullying because of the stigma associated with either victimization or perpetration” (Felix, Furlong, Green, Tanigawa & Sharkey as cited by Green et al., 2013, p. 652). This study implied the need for future researchers of this social issue to be cognizant of the limitations of surveys. This was important in an effort to understand this topic in an unbiased manner for the purposes of gaining strategies to prevent future occurrences of student-to-student bullying (Green et al., 2013).

The following article provided a written version of a question-answer conversation between an unspecified bullying prevention researcher and Dr. Dorothy Espelage, an expert in conducting research on bullying, especially in regards to prevention and intervention programming. The first question asked Dr. Espelage to reflect on the best practices in student-to-student bullying prevention. Dr. Espelage indicated that the administration of surveys to students, teachers, staff, and parents as being one of the best practices in addressing bullying prevention (Espelage & Horne as cited by Espelage, 2012, p. 17). Following this statement, Dr.

Espelage stated the need for staff and teachers to discuss school and school district policies on bullying. Students and parents were also mentioned as needing to understand how they can report instances of bullying (Espelage, 2012).

The second inquiry presented to Dr. Espelage asked her to divulge insight pertaining to the role of environmental influences such as peer or school culture, and how these factors can be altered to prevent bullying. Dr. Espelage reported that schools are likely to see acts of bullying where bullying is perceived as cool in and among students and where students engage in bullying in order to maintain social status (Espelage, Holt & Henkel as cited by Espelage, 2012, p. 17). Bystanders, also known as witnesses, additionally played a crucial role in the prevalence of bullying within schools (Pepler & Craig as cited by Espelage, 2012, p. 17). An important strategy in preventing bullying was reportedly reliant on programs that target bystander intervention (Polanin, Espelage & Pigott as cited by Espelage, 2012, p. 17). Schools that had a “culture of bullying” could also serve as a “catalyst to allow bullies to behave aggressively without fear [of consequences] . . . [Also] students are less likely to seek help from teachers and staff than in schools where bullying is minimal” (Bandyopadhyay, Cornell & Konold as cited by Espelage, 2012, p. 17). Dr. Espelage indicated prevention programs and student-led clubs like the Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) as effective strategies to combat environmental influences in student-to-student bullying. Physical layout of a school was also indicated as an important role in how bullying is carried out in schools. School administrators were instructed by Dr. Espelage to find out where the bullying is happening, to offer ongoing professional developmental opportunities, and to have a long-term plan for managing a positive school environment (Bradshaw et al. as cited by Espelage, 2012, p. 18).

A commonly understood concept was that not all bullying prevention programs are equal in effectiveness and perceived validity. This line of thinking prompted the research questioner to ask the third question pertaining to how schools can avoid ineffective or counter-productive prevention programs. Dr. Espelage advised schools to “do their homework” by researching and evaluating various programs offered, even if programs advertise they are proven to be effective. Second, Dr. Espelage advised school districts to visit a specifically provided website (<http://www.nrepp.samhsa.gov>) to review over 200 interventions supporting mental health promotion, substance abuse prevention, and treatment programs for mental health and substance abuse, topics that have been proven to be associated in student bullying. Third, Dr. Espelage (2012) recommended a tried and true program called “The Steps to Respect Program” (Espelage, 2012, p. 18).

This program, as indicated by Dr. Espelage, was shown to “produce large reductions in bullying among elementary school students” (Brown, Low, Smith & Haggerty as cited by Espelage, 2012, p. 18). Using this same program in middle schools additionally showed positive results in efforts toward bullying prevention. “The Second Step program found that 6th graders in 18 intervention schools compared to those in control schools were 30% less likely to report physical fights after one year of 15 social-emotional learning lessons” (Espelage, Low, Polanin & Brown, as cited by Espelage, 2012, p. 18). In addition, schools needed to have a clear implementation plan in which schools and their teachers will be committed. In doing this, Dr. Espelage indicated programs would be less likely found as “unproductive or counterproductive” and less likely to lead to “unintentional, negative effects” (Espelage, 2012, p. 18).

The next point of inquiry addressed other approaches that may aid in bullying prevention. Dr. Espelage responded by saying that the developing of student-to-staff relationships within

schools is another way to address the issue of bullying prevention. Dr. Espelage continued to reference the need to implement a “social emotional learning” (SEL) approach (Elias & Low as cited by Espelage, 2012, p. 18) which was explained to aid in providing skills of resiliency, as well as social and emotional competencies in children and adolescents. In addition, the SEL advocates used this approach as a framework to develop skills of behavior, discipline, safety, and academics. Such skills helped students to become more self-aware, more able to control emotions, to build social skills such as empathy, perspective taking, and respect for diversity, to ascertain skills of friendship-building, and how to make positive decisions (Zins, Weissberg, Wang & Walberg as cited by Espelage, 2012, p. 18).

In the second to last question, Dr. Espelage (2012) was asked to discuss the differences in perception of bullying between teachers and students. Her response revealed how teachers are generally unaware of the severity of bullying that occurs at their schools and that teachers are “often ineffective in being able to identify bullying incidents” (p. 19). This lack in awareness was indicated by a study conducted by Bradshaw, et al. (as cited in Espelage, 2012) to be “most pronounced in elementary school, where less than 1% of elementary school staff reported bullying rates similar to that reported by students” (p. 19). As discussed by Dr. Espelage, teachers very rarely reported that they would ignore instances of bullying and that they would make attempts to aid victims of bullying (Espelage, 2012).

With this said, however, Dr. Espelage pointed out that “[d]espite good intentions of school officials, many students [reported feeling] that teachers and staff are not doing enough to prevent bullying” (Bradshaw et al. as cited by Espelage, 2012, p. 19). These findings provided explanations for why students do not report to teachers when bullying acts arise. Students felt they would not receive the help needed and they would make matters worse by “tattling.” The

perceptions of students about teachers with regard to bullying may also have provided an explanation as to why teachers “perceive a lower prevalence of bullying” (Espelage, 2012, p. 19).

Another component that determined the level at which bullying prevention occurs, depended on the “coping strategies” of teachers to deal with this issue (Kahn, Jones & Wieland, 2012, p. 784). “The action or inaction, of teachers and staff also influenced whether bullying perpetration [would] continue” (Espelage, 2012, p. 19). Teachers with “passive attitudes” (Espelage, 2012, p. 19) or “maladaptive” coping strategies (Kahn et al., 2012, p. 786) effectively served “to reinforce bullying behaviors . . .” (Espelage, 2012, p. 19).

To aid with this component regarding the continued prevalence of student bullying in schools, Dr. Espelage (2012) advised teachers to create classrooms that are “more democratic and the social power is more evenly distributed, [and] a less hostile environment for students is created” (p. 19). This question answered by Dr. Espelage, in particular, validated the present study as it attempts to provide teachers with the understanding and prevention of student-to-student bullying of elementary students (Ahn, Garandean & Rodkin as cited by Espelage, 2012, p. 19).

The final question asked by Dr. Espelage was to address the difference between “harassment” and “bullying.” Bullying was identified as being a form of harassment. More specifically the term “bullying” was described as including harassment that can be “verbal, written, or cyber name-calling; can be physically threatening or humiliating; and ‘does not necessarily have to include the intent to harm, be directed at a specific target, or involve repeated incidents’” (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights as cited by Espelage, 2012, p. 19).

If teachers can identify both desires and not just behaviors in bullies, it is the belief of the author of the present study that additionally provided information on desires and behaviors of bullying would aid in the prevention and intervention of student-to-student bullying within elementary schools. In the following literature reviewed, the author Ken Rigby examines both of these aforementioned qualities in bullies. He places a greater emphasis on the desires or reasons to bully.

In a table presented by the author Ken Rigby (2012) several reasons were provided to participants to choose from in indicating their intentions for bullying. More specifically seven options were provided to participants. Participants could have responded by either giving the following reasons: 1) “they annoy you,” 2) “to get even,” 3) “for fun,” 4) “others were doing it,” 5) “they were wimps,” 6) to show how tough the bullying individual was, and 7) to “get things” or money (Rigby, 2012, p. 342).

Of those choices, boys most likely explained their actions of bullying others to be attributed to the fact that they were either annoyed, [boys ages 8-12 (69.5%) and boys 13-18 (77.1%)], wanted to get even, [boys ages 8-12 (66.7%) and boys 13-18 (73.2%)] or were having malicious fun with those they victimized [boys ages 8-12 (19.0%) and boys 13-18 (30.9%)] respectively. Girls most likely explained their compulsion to bully others when annoyed, [girls ages 8-12 (62.2%) and girls 13-18 (70.9%)], to get even with individuals they victimized, [girls ages 8-12 (53.7%) and girls 13-18 (66.0%)], because others were bullying, [girls ages 8-12 (16%)], or for fun [girls ages 13-18 (20.3%)] respectively. Both genders reportedly were least likely to bully others to get “things or money” from their victims [boys ages 8-12 (7.0%) and boys 13-18 (9.5%); girls ages 8-12 (5.2%) and girls 13-18 (5.0%)] (Rigby, 2012, p. 342).

The author acknowledged the controversial comparison of terms “reason” and “desire” being synonymous. But for the purposes of this study, the author argued for “reason” being the best term to reflect desires of participants. More specifically the author went on to say that “when people desire something *they* invariably have a reason or reasons to satisfy that desire” (Marusic as cited by Rigby, 2012, p. 343).

Rigby (2012) provided five main factors to explain the reasons—or desires—behind a perpetrator’s inclination to victimize others. First an aggressor could feel justified in victimizing others. Next an aggressor could experience a feeling of entertainment when bullying a peer. Third, an aggressor could believe bullying would lead to the gaining or retaining of group acceptance. In addition, an aggressor could believe bullying would allow him or her to acquire something. Finally an aggressor’s desire could be “sadistic” (Rigby, 2012, p. 344).

The author of this study implied that schools often address this issue of student bullying with one of three types of bullying programs. More specifically, Rigby (2012) claimed schools either provide proactive, preventive, or reactive programs. In lieu of these school approaches, the author of this study suggested an approach that was directed toward “changing the desires . . . children may have and accordingly focus upon social and emotional education for *all* students in a school to reduce the likelihood of bullying” or “focus upon changing the relevant desires of those who have been identified as engaging in bullying” (Rigby, 2012, p. 344-345).

The author concluded his study (Rigby, 2012) with the articulation of evidence to suggest that a zero-tolerance approach to dealing with student-to-student bullying was ineffective. In lieu of these programs, Rigby suggested establishing more positive relations between members of a school community and using more “non-punitive intervention strategies,” (p. 349) which would thereby provide “a more effective and humane approach” (p. 349). It was the insinuation

made by this author that a more effective and humane approach would additionally “involve the identification of desires that . . . may lead students to bully their peers” (p. 348). Rigby’s study validated the present study as it aims to address the best practices to aid in the prevention, identification, and intervention of student-to-student bullying at the elementary school level (Rigby, 2012).

In the next article, an implemented bullying prevention program entitled *Steps to Respect* (Brown, Low, Smith & Haggerty, 2011) was evaluated within several California elementary schools (n=33). The analysis indicated “significant positive effects of the program on a range of outcomes with improved student climate, lower levels of physical bullying perpetration, and less school bullying-related problems” (p. 1). This rigorously employed experiment indicated the “Steps to Respect” bullying prevention program to be a viable option for schools. This study validated the present study’s efforts to ascertain effective strategies that address, prevent, identify, and intervene in bullying situations among elementary school students (Brown et al., 2011, p. 1).

The focus and purpose of this next study was to provide methods of bullying prevention for classroom teachers. The problem established by the authors of this study stated that “[b]ullying is a ‘chronic institutional problem leading to psychological impairment, depression and suicide’” (Olson as cited in McCarra & Forrester, 2012, p. 46). The research question pertaining to this study inquired how teachers could respond to bullying in the efforts of bullying prevention (McCarra & Forrester, 2012).

No experiment was conducted and therefore no participants were needed in this study. By studying experts in this growing problem of student-to-student bullying, added research was obtained. Information gained by experts in bullying prevention and intervention were reviewed

by the authors of this study and gathered, synthesized and presented by the author's study (McCarra & Forrester, 2012).

Information was presented in the manner of a research paper instead of a researched study (McCarra & Forrester, 2012). Information within this paper was represented quantitatively. Within this the authors provided seven recommendations to prevent bullying “and for intervention if bullying occurs . . .” (p. 46). Recommendations were as follows: teachers should “know the forms of bullying and recognize the effects” (p. 46); teachers should “promote a positive classroom environment” (p.47); within this recommendation, teachers were encouraged to teach bullies “anger control strategies” (p. 47); teachers were encouraged to teach their students what behaviors constitute “bullying behavior” otherwise students may merely think they are simply being “funny or cool, especially if they receive positive reactions from peers and/or adults—i.e. laughter” (p. 47); teachers should “teach a variety of conflict resolution strategies” (McCarra & Forrester, 2012, p. 47).

Whether students were witnesses or victims of bullying behavior, “students need strategies for preventing and stopping bullying” (McCarra & Forrester, 2012, p. 47). Authors of this study promoted the use of “DEFUSE” principles organized by one of the author's sources (“DEFUSE” strategy provided by Savage & Savage as cited in McCarra & Forrester, 2012, p. 47). By the principles of “DEFUSE,” students were encouraged to “depersonalize and [to not] lose [their] cool” (p. 47). Bystanders were “encourage[d] [to let] students vent” (p. 47) and show empathy. The last four components of the “DEFUSE” strategy to aid in the prevention and intervention of bullying were to “find out the facts, understand feelings, suspend ego, and end on a positive note” (McCarra & Forrester, 2012, p. 47).

Teachers should “use ‘bibliotherapy’” (McCarra & Forrester, 2012, p. 47).

Bibliotherapy is the practice of using books to bring attention to an issue such as bullying, and to learn how to work through the problem in a positive manner, as do the characters within the book read to or by students. McCarra & Forrester (2012) list books, organized by grade level, which deal with this specific issue of bullying. This list of books is under the section entitled “appendix” within McCarra and Forrester’s (2012) study.

The fifth of the seven recommended strategies provided the suggestion to “respond to incidents of bullying” (McCarra & Forrester, 2012, p. 48). Teachers should “help students develop new roles,” such as the “resister,” defender,” and “witness” (Coloroso as cited by McCarra & Forrester, 2012, p. 48). Last, teachers should “provide positive role modeling” (p. 48). A commonality existed between both this study and the present study in that the aim was to provide strategies to teachers in the effort of bullying prevention and intervention.

In the following reviewed literature, Seaman (2012) identified the need to foster empathy and compassion in students. This article focused on older middle-school students but the author’s message is easily applicable to students, and people in general, of all ages. Michael Seaman began by presenting to the reader his experiences as a middle school student. He described himself as “gawky, had pimples, had a hard time maintaining elementary school friendships . . . [he] participated in gymnastics, chorus, theater,” (p. 24) but was too pre-occupied with his passions to realize that being who he was “went against social mores for teenage boys” (p. 24). He shared with the reader his experience of being a victim of bullying (Seaman, 2012).

Over time, Seaman (2012) grew up and became a middle school teacher. Before “pitching” his method for combating student-to student bullying within schools, he stressed the reality that any implemented program is “only as effective as the commitment made to it by

administration and staff” (p. 25). He mentioned negative consequences that often result from badgering students to follow rules, discussing, that in doing this, “[students] become desensitized to [this] message” (p. 25). In saying this, Seaman (2012) introduced his approach to address student bullying in schools.

“The real goal should be to undermine bullying by fostering compassion in classrooms where no student wears a label on his back or her forehead” (Seaman, 2012, p. 25). In suggesting an approach to implement empathy and compassion in students, Seaman reflected on his teaching practices, which allowed empathy and compassion to be embedded in curriculum. Seaman (2012) found that teaching about the Holocaust, for instance, offered an “opportunity to address intolerance in a historical context while raising students’ emotional intelligence” (Seaman, 2012, p. 25).

As discussed by Seaman (2012), the strategy of embedding skills of empathy and compassion into curriculum included situations in which students could practice putting “themselves in the victim’s shoes” (p. 26). Embedding opportunities allowed for “real-life connections [to be made] that resonate in their actions toward others” (p. 26). This approach could “provide a safe environment where students can . . . feel compassion for victims . . . and their morals will strengthen” (Seaman, 2012, p. 27).

The author of this study concluded his paper by revealing ideas of how to instill skills of empathy and compassion in school subjects. For the subject language arts, Seaman suggested teachers reinforce similarities between fictional characters and students, provide opportunities for journal writing as it provides a “springboard for student’s imagination,” and introduce the activities of having a classroom debate as it serves as a “vehicle for discussing topics that revolve around human interaction and character traits” (Seaman, 2012, p. 27).

Seaman (2012) suggested teachers explore the “human condition using historical events as their guide” (p. 27). In continuation of using social studies to address the development in skills of compassion and empathy, Seaman also suggested teachers ask “how places such as America show empathy toward other countries . . .” (p. 28). Furthermore, Seaman suggested educators should explore societal reactions to gender, sexuality, and religion in ancient civilizations, and compare these reactions to the present day (Seaman, 2012).

Students and teachers were encouraged by Seaman (2012) to “explore stereotypes that Americans have of people from different cultures and countries” (p. 28). Art teachers could have students create images, in any medium, of people in their school community who engage in acts of kindness. Those images could be displayed in the school during a proposed week of kindness and respect. For music, students could compose songs dealing with empathy and understanding. For science “genetics is a wonderful way to introduce children to gender and racial differences” (p. 28). Teachers could introduce the concept of stereotypes as well. Science teachers could “infuse empathy” in lessons on planets by having students develop their idea of the “‘perfect’” universe, and even create their own “‘perfect’ planet” (p. 28). In the subject of math, students could create word problems that incorporate themes of empathy and understanding. Charts could be created to track acts of kindness witnessed in classrooms (Seaman, 2012).

Grade, gender, and student subcategories could further break down references to these acts of kindness. These charts could also aid in teaching lessons on fractions, percentages, and ratios. Moreover, lingering economic effects of slavery, segregation, and other “forms of institutionalized bias” could be studied by students (p.28). This study validated the present study, as its aim is to provide effective strategies in addressing student-to-student bullying (Seaman, 2012).

The following article discussed potential benefits for teachers in viewing bullying as a behavior management issue. Eight suggestions were provided in this article to address childhood bullying problems. It was expressed that teachers could add to their “toolkit” of behavior management strategies. The eight suggestions included the following: 1) assessment, 2) guidance approaches, 3) classroom management techniques, 4) cooperative learning activities, 5) assertiveness, self-esteem, and social skills training for victims of bullying, 6) constructive conversations with victims of bullying, 7) constructive conversations with students who frequently bully, and 8) parent-teacher collaboration (Crothers & Kolbert, 2008).

Looking at the assessment approach, the authors of this study described how teachers could evaluate and categorize students into three groups: 1) bullies, 2) victims, and 3) bystanders, and from results, provide group-specific intervention efforts. One thing to be wary of was evaluating a student subjectively and with bias. Despite this disclaimer provided by the authors of this study, it was their belief that through extensive student observation, “teachers can minimize problems” (Crothers & Kolbert, 2008, p. 133).

The implications of the guidance approach indicated behavior management as it relates to bullying could be addressed with guidance lessons such as drama, reading books, and watching movies that discuss bullying. The authors of this study provided books for children entitled *Nobody Knew What to Do: A Story About Bullying* and *Bullies to Buddies: How to Turn Your Enemies Into Friends!* Also, movies were recommended such as *Bullies Are a Pain in the Brain* and for older children grades 7 through 12, a movie called *End the Silence: Stop the Bullying* (Crothers & Kolbert, 2008).

The third approach to handling difficult behavior in students was to implement classroom management techniques such as: 1) provide curriculum that encourages students to question their

own assumptions, 2) engage students to use critical thinking skills, 3) keep students busy with overlapping activities, 4) address bullying by establishing prohibitive classroom rules, 5) established whole-class incentive systems that encourage students to control behavior, 6) be aware of student conduct and activities “because bullying often occurs in the classroom without the teacher’s knowledge,” 7) make transitions engaging for students, and 8) be aware of the signs of bullying behavior (Crothers & Kolbert, 2008, p. 134). Of the suggestions provided through classroom management techniques, the author of the present study has suggested that techniques 1, 2, 6, 7, and 8 be observed to minimize the use of bullying prevention techniques that might be viewed—by students—as punitive, and might therefore render such techniques less effective (Crothers & Kolbert, 2008).

Concerning cooperative learning activities, Crothers and Kolbert (2008) suggested teachers offer group rewards to facilitate “improved social integration” (p. 134), to balance competitive activities that help to emphasize group achievement, and to pair older children with younger students in group projects that encourage friendship and “a sense of protectiveness” which, in turn, elicit feelings of compassion in children and may help to reduce victimization (p. 134-135). As described by the authors of this study, teachers should also consider organizing groups of students that account for a balance in students “power status” (Crothers & Kolbert, 2008, p. 135).

Regarding assertiveness, self-esteem, and social skills that help victims of bullies, teachers are urged to do the following. First, educators are encouraged to: 1) help victims identify their personal strengths that might attract peers as potential friends, and 2) instruct students to replace negative statements about themselves with more positive or realistic statements. Moreover, educators are encouraged to: 1) help students develop friendships which

help students focus on their efforts and performance to make friends and not the results of whether friends are acquired, and 2) help students develop skills of social intelligence—or in other words—teach victims which students might be more receptive to new friendships such as less popular students, as “popular students have many friends [and therefore] may not have enough time for another relationship” (Crothers & Kolbert, 2008, p. 135).

When it comes to the approach of constructive conversations with victims, teachers were encouraged to do several things. More specifically, educators were urged to: 1) provide victims with short and long-term intervention, 2) alleviate anxiety in victims when bullying incident is investigated, 3) verbalize anything revealed by the victim is confidential, and simultaneously validate any and all potential emotions students may be experiencing, and 4) instill hope in victims. In addition, teachers were encouraged to: 1) explain that the bullying incident was not brought on by the victim, 2) explain to the victim what will be done with provided information, 3) inquire about peers who may have acted as bystanders, and 4) share with the victim that they are welcome to bring forth any future incidences of being bullied (Crothers & Kolbert, 2008).

The approach that discussed conversations with students who frequently bully encouraged teachers to: 1) start with a serious tone when addressing a bully, 2) explain nature of conversation with bully, 3) verbalize what they know of bullying incident, 4) verbalize who else will be informed of this event (i.e. other teachers), 5) change to a caring tone of voice, 6) affirm strength and popularity status of bully, 7) build on-going relationship with bully to build rapport and trust, and 8) discuss the importance of learning how to put a bully “in the shoes” of their victim(s). The final approach addressed by the authors of this paper, for managing behavior issues in students, was a discussion of the self-explanatory need for teachers and parents to collaborate. This paper validated the present study as it attempts to dispense helpful strategies to

teachers in the prevention, identification, and intervention in student-to-student bullying (Crothers & Kolbert, 2008).

In the final piece of literature reviewed, Aviva Twersky Glasner discussed the seriousness of bullying in American schools. It was the intention of Glasner's study to examine how teachers recognize and intervene in bullying acts. In addition, Glasner examined whether teachers need additional training in recognizing and intervening in those aforementioned bullying acts (Glasner, 2010).

Glasner (2010) showed through surveys and their results that teachers frequently "rel[ie]d upon reports from others" such as parents or other teachers and did not report there being "any 'signs' or other objective evidence of bullying" (p. 535). A slight majority—or 83%—of teachers recognized bullying as verbal abuse, but almost as frequently—at 81%—teachers believed bullying to be physical abuse. Teachers also frequently recognized bullying to come in the form of excluding or isolating others (Glasner, 2010).

Only 1% of teachers did not recognize "online bullying" as a form of bullying of which participants were aware (p. 537). Nearly all teachers recognized effects of bullying on victims to include several possible survey options. First, students can be profoundly affected by online bullying. Second, online bullying can spill over into the school. Third, acts of bullying can be very traumatic for victims. Last, teachers acknowledged bullying could cause problems for students with their peers. Percentages consisted of 99%, 99%, 97%, and 99% respectively (Glasner, 2010).

Concerning teacher intervention in student-to-student bullying, teachers reported that attempts were made on their end as it occurred. What followed this statement, however, were comments that efforts on the part of teachers were reportedly undermined when "victims

den[ied] that they were being bullied” (Glasner, 2010, p. 537). Educators reported these occurrences as having happened on more than one occasion. However, in those cases, teachers frequently tried to directly intervene by involving both parties, bully and victim, which could explain for the victim’s actions (Glasner, 2010).

Glasner (2010) went on to report that teachers believed that there were “not enough institutional policies or training in place to intervene in bullying” (p. 538). Interestingly, some teachers reported bullying to be “victim precipitated” (p. 538). Generally speaking, however, when policies are in place to help in the prevention of bullying, teachers believed policies to be helpful. Regarding the people who implement intervention policies, a large percentage stated that in addition to policies being implemented to address this social issue, parent involvement should be incorporated. Moreover a suggestion was made through this study to provide better support for students “through help hotlines” (p. 538). Glasner (2010) concluded with the indication of a need to continue training our teachers on how to recognize and intervene in student-to-student bullying. This article validated the present study as it aims to educate teachers about bullying and prevention methods.

Summary

The literature reviewed was presented through three themes: 1) analysis of educators, 2) understanding students, and 3) prevention strategies regarding the topic of student-to-student bullying within elementary schools. Literature revealed student bullying as an ongoing current issue within schools. Additionally, the literature reflected a need for the increased awareness and involvement regarding this issue of student bullying among students, parents, “non-teaching staff,” as well as educators both pre-service and veteran. An increase in training of novice and

veteran educators was also deemed as necessary, concerning student bullying identification, intervention, and prevention.

Furthermore literature reviewed also implied that studying student perceptions, behaviors, and desires regarding this topic was a key component in an effort to address this issue effectively. To continue, literature revealed an abundance of methods—of varied levels of validity and teacher fidelity—available to schools and teachers to bring about the resolution of student-to-student bullying. Yet the overall implication consistently provided by the literature indicated the need for further research on this serious social issue of student-to-student bullying within elementary schools.

Chapter 3 Method

Research Approach

Research was conducted both quantitatively and qualitatively on the topic of student-to-student bullying within elementary schools. Pre-service teachers (n=13 females, n=2 males, and n=15 participants in total) from a graduate class at a university located in the greater North Bay area—voluntarily completed a survey. The survey concerned the participants': 1) understanding of bullying, 2) their self-perceived responsibility to prevent and resolve occurrences of bullying within schools, 3) their experiences with bullying as a student, and 4) their experiences of bullying as a pre-service teacher. The researcher retrieved completed surveys—approximately twenty minutes after surveys were distributed to participants—when the professor teaching the participants voluntarily brought the box of completed surveys to the researcher of the present study.

In addition, five—n=3 females, n=2 males, and n=5 participants in total—veteran educators with at least two and a half or more years teaching experience and located in the greater North Bay area, participated in personal interviews conducted by the researcher of this thesis. The nature of the interviews involved questioning participants about their: 1) understanding of bullying, 2) their self-perceived responsibility to prevent and resolve occurrences of bullying within schools, 3) their experiences with bullying as a student, as well as 4) a veteran teacher. Data was collected at the time of the personal interviews via written notes.

Ethical Standards

This study adhered to the standards published by the American Psychological Association (2010) on the ethical treatment of human subjects in research. Additionally, the researcher submitted an application to the Dominican University Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS) and received approval, and assigned number 10176.

Sample and Site

Pre-service teachers were surveyed from a small liberal arts university located in the greater North Bay Area. In addition, the author interviewed veteran teachers, with two and a half or more years of teaching experience. All pre-service teachers were enrolled in the same education preparation class held at the same university. All participants were 18 or over in age, and were non-patient volunteers. Surveys were completed anonymously within the classroom in which pre-service teachers were being taught, and all identities of interview participants were kept confidential with the exception of the thesis advisor and author of the present study. Participants who were interviewed carried out the interviews at locations mutually convenient for the author of the present study and each interviewee involved.

Access and Permissions

To be allowed access to pre-service teachers—for the purposes of completing a survey of student-to-student bullying at the elementary school level—the author of the present study acquired written consent from the pre-service teacher's instructor in order to conduct the survey in first minutes of one class. Permission both requested by the researcher of the present study

and granted by the professor of the pre-service participants was extended via electronic mail. Access to veteran teachers and permission to interview these teachers was received either through electronic email or verbal consent, followed by written consent on the day of each veteran teacher participant's interview.

Data Gathering Strategies

For pre-service teachers, data gathering strategies included the following steps. The author of the present study verbally—and in person—introduced the thesis topic and informed participants that they were being asked to voluntarily participate in a survey regarding this thesis topic of student bullying. After participants were informed of their rights, in that they were under no obligation to start or complete this survey, the researcher of the present study left the classroom occupied by the pre-service teachers. This allowed participants to complete the surveys anonymously, as promised. When participants completed the provided survey, they were instructed, in writing, to place their survey and provided pen within a given manila envelope, provided upon distribution of surveys. After doing this, participants were instructed to place their envelopes in a cardboard box previously placed at the head of the classroom by the researcher of the present study. Approximately twenty minutes after surveys were distributed to participants, the researcher of the present study retrieved the cardboard box containing all surveys for the purpose of analyzing and incorporating current quantitative data with insight concerning the topic of the present study.

For interviewed veteran teachers, data gathering strategies included the following steps. The researcher first contacted each interviewee individually—either: 1) verbally and in person, and/or 2) via electronic mail—to schedule a time and place to conduct each interview. Upon the

day of each interview, the researcher of the present study: 1) provided each participant with a written list of participants' rights regarding the interview, 2) two consent forms, one to be signed and returned to the researcher, and the other copy to be kept by the interviewee, 3) asked pre-determined questions and 4) made written notes of participants' responses. Responses of all interviewees were collected, synthesized and analyzed to provide and incorporate qualitative data into the present study.

Data Analysis Approach

The researcher of the present study looked for the commonalities in findings as it pertained to both results of the pre-service teacher surveys and the veteran teacher-directed interviews.

Chapter 4 Findings

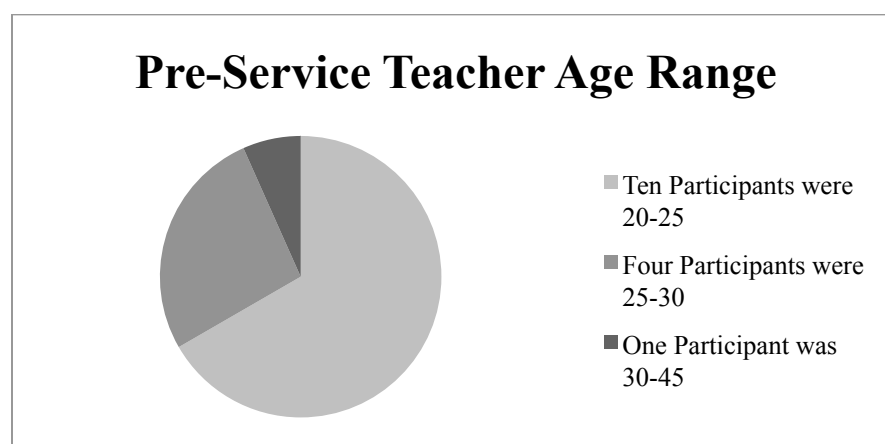
Description of Site, Individuals, Data

Pre-Service Teachers

Surveys were completed in the classroom of a small liberal arts university located in the greater Bay Area. Participants' primary reason for attendance was to fulfill a requirement as credential candidates in education for elementary school educators. The data from the surveys reflected the following.

All participants (n=13 females, n=2 males, n=15 total number of participants) identified themselves as pre-service teachers—"a graduate student in pursuit of a teacher's credential"—at the elementary, or Kindergarten through fifth grade school level, and as ethnically Caucasian (i.e. "Caucasian" or "white"). Participants additionally identified themselves in one of the following age ranges: 1) n=10 participants 20-25 years, 2) n=3 participants 25-30 years, 3) n=1 participant specified being exactly 25 years, 4) n=1 participant 40-45 years of age (see Chart 1).

Chart 1



On average, participants reported having been in the education program for approximately six months, having three months remaining to complete the program's requirements. Findings showed that all participants were currently working in a school setting where they observed

and/or interacted with school staff and students.

Veteran Educators

All interviews were completed in a classroom located in the greater Bay Area. The researcher of the present study met with one participant at their location of employment. This room was the participant's personal classroom, and it was the participant's choice to keep the door open throughout the interview. Before, during, and after that interview, colleagues and students visited the participant. When no visitors were in the room, the researcher of the present study and the participant spoke in an empty classroom.

The remaining four participants were also interviewed in an empty classroom, though at a small liberal arts university located in the greater Bay Area. In an effort to maintain privacy and confidentiality of participants, the remaining four participants were interviewed in a classroom with a closed door and a sign outside the classroom, which read, "Please do not disturb. Thank you!" Despite efforts to maintain privacy, one student at the university intruded during the interview of the second participant. Regardless, the researcher of the present study felt confident that the outcome of the interview was not compromised as the participant showed no signs of distress, no change in demeanor, and no change in the manner in which the participant responded to interview questions.

All interviewed participants (n=3 females, n=2 males, n=5 total number of participants) expressed having taught for at least two years and therefore were classified as veteran teachers. The range of years participants reportedly taught was 2.5 to 27 years with an average of 15.9 years of teaching experience amongst all veteran teacher participants. Table 1 demonstrates

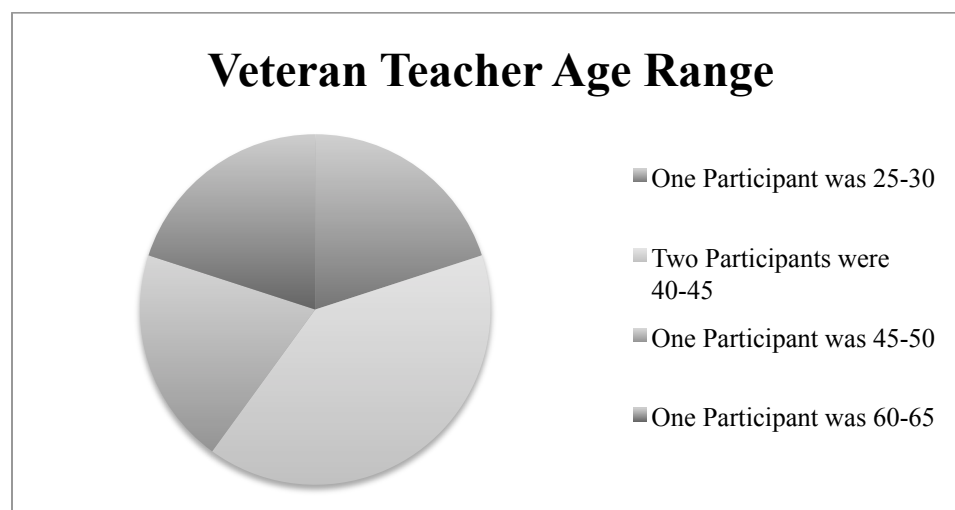
what subjects and grades each veteran teacher participant (“A” through “E”) has taught and is currently teaching.

Table 1

| Participant | Has Taught | Currently Teaching |
|-------------|---|---|
| A | Technology for Teachers (College) Art History (College) Photography (College) | Computer-Science and Media (grades K-8) |
| B | Social Studies/English Language Arts / Math Subjects Taught Together (26 years with grades 6-8 Junior High and up to grade 9 “Always with mix ability”) | Small Group Reading Intervention (grades 2 and 3) |
| C | Visual Arts Performing Arts (Grades 4 and 5) | Multiple-Subjects except Social Studies (grade 5) |
| D | English (Adults, 6-8, and High School) | English Language Development (grades 6-8) |
| E | Computer-Science (grades 1, 2, and 6-8) | Multiple-Subject except Social Studies (Grade 4) |

Two participants classified themselves as Caucasian, one participant considered him/herself to be of Eastern European descent, one participant classified him/herself more broadly as European, and one participant classified him/herself as being of Irish American heritage. Participants identified themselves as one of the following age ranges: 1) n=1 participant 20-25 years, 2) n=2 participants 40-45 years, 3) n=1 participant 45-50 years, and 4) n= 1 participant 60-65 years of age (see Chart 2).

Chart 2

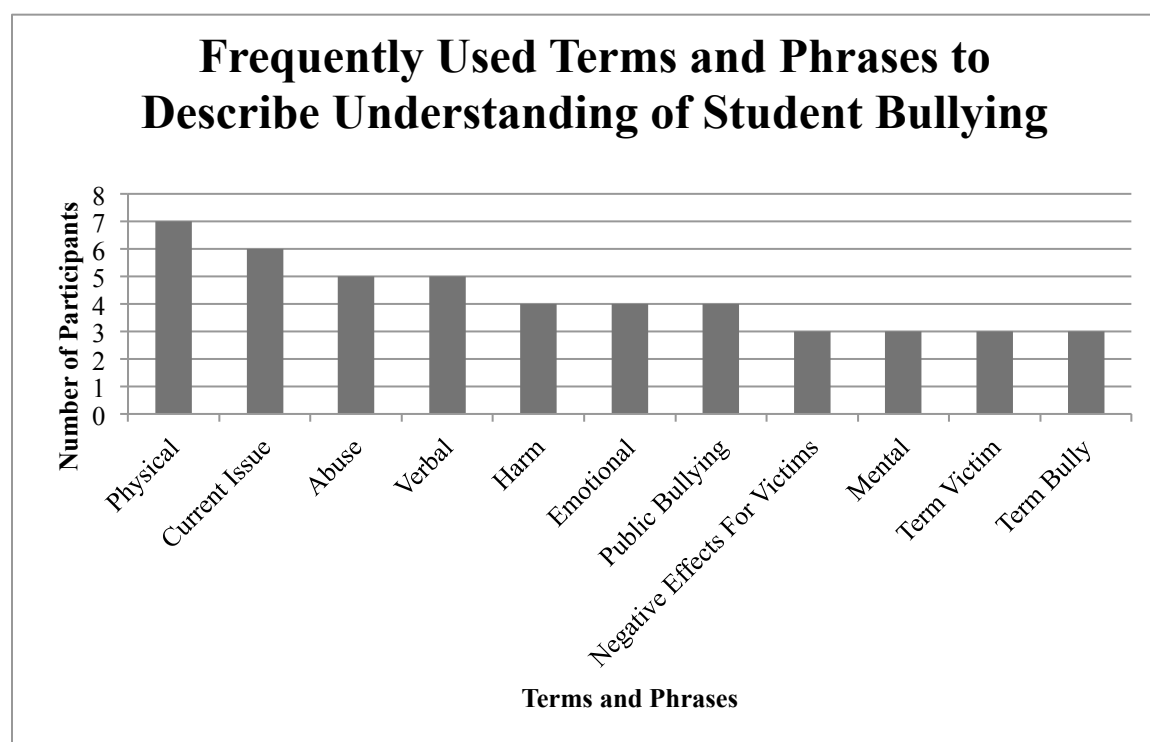


Themes

Pre-Service Teachers

In two short-answer open-response questions, participants shared: 1) what their understanding of bullying was as a pre-service teacher and 2) what their self-perceived responsibility was concerning this issue of student-to-student bullying. From these questions, themes arose. Figure 1 indicated the frequency of certain terms and phrases used to describe participants' understanding of student bullying:

Figure 1



As illustrated by Figure 1, nearly half (46%) of all pre-service teacher participants understood bullying to include a “physical” element. Additionally, a significant number (40%) of participants acknowledged bullying to be a “current issue.” Participants (33%) additionally understood bullying to include some form of “abuse” and moreover, assault that could often be classified as “verbal.” Furthermore, just over one fourth of all participants (26%) understood bullying to cause “harm,” to include an element that could hurt a victim not only physically or verbally, but “emotionally” as well. Findings also indicated participants repeatedly expressed that bullying incidences could often be “public” during its execution.

Fewer participants (20%) pointed out that bullying could also lead to negative effects for victims and that bullying could include “mental” abuse. Participants reportedly used terms such as “victim” or “bully” to help articulate their understanding of student-to-student bullying less consistently. The significance of this question—asking participants about their understanding of

bullying—provided a baseline of their background knowledge on this topic. This inquiry additionally presented the understanding of what common vocabulary was used and accepted to describe this issue. Shown below in Tables 2 and 3 and Figure 2 are tables and a graph concerning the terms and phrases used only once or twice by participants to describe their understanding of this issue of student bullying.

Table 2

Terms and Phrases Used Twice by Participants to Describe Their Understanding of Bullying

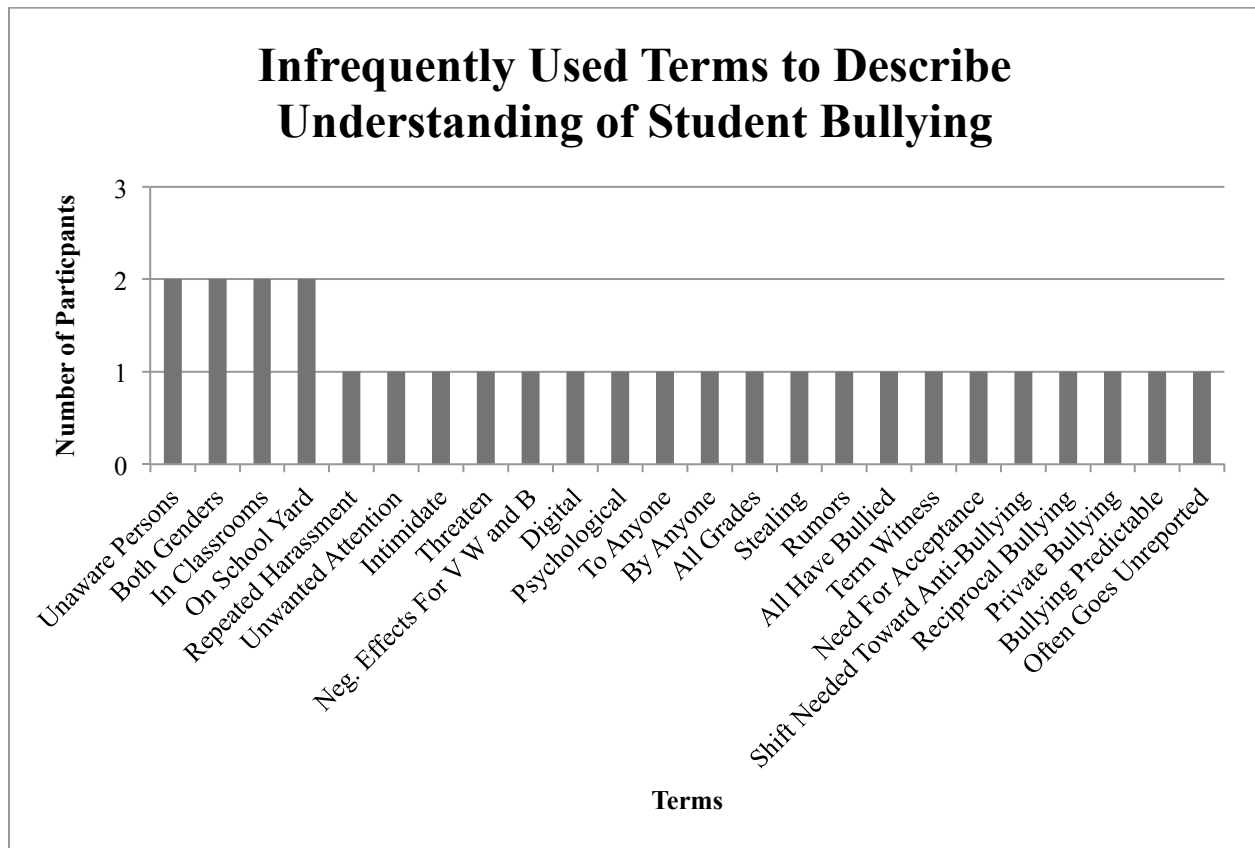
| | |
|-----------------|--------------------|
| Unaware Persons | In Classrooms |
| Both Genders | On the School Yard |

Table 3

Terms and Phrases Used Once by Participants to Describe Their Understanding of Bullying

| | | |
|---|------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Repeated Harassment | Psychological | Term Witness |
| Unwanted Attention | To Anyone | Need For Acceptance |
| Intimidate | By Anyone | Shift Needed Toward Anti-Bullying |
| Threaten | All Grades | Reciprocal Bullying |
| Negative Effects for Victims, Witnesses, and Bullies (“Neg. Effects For V W and B”) | Stealing | Private Bullying |
| Digital | Rumors | Bullying Predictable |
| | All Have Bullied | Often Goes Unreported |

Figure 2



Significant findings illustrated by Tables 2 and 3 indicated participants acknowledged the following. Only two participants acknowledged the reality that individuals could be “unaware” of the effects of bullying or that both girls and boys—“both genders”—bully. In addition, only two participants included in descriptions of their understanding of bullying that an act of bullying could occur in specific locations within a school (i.e. “classrooms” or in “school yards”). Even fewer participants included the following elements that could be linked with an understanding of what bullying entails.

Only singular references were made to the following terms and phrases to describe a participants’ understanding of what student bullying could mean. Terms and phrases used included: 1) “repeated harassment,” 2) “unwanted attention,” 3) people(s) who “intimidate”

(an)other(s), 4) people(s) who “threaten” (an)other(s), 5) “negative effects for victims, witnesses, and bullies,” 6) “digital” or initiated via technology—i.e. cyber bullying, 7) and “psychological.” To continue, isolated references described bullying to mean that it could happen: 1) “to anyone,” or 2) “by anyone,” 3) in “all grades,” 4) in the form of “stealing” from (a) person/persons, 5) through the spreading of “rumors” among students.

Reference was made to the following expressed beliefs such as: 1) “all have bullied” (an) individual/individuals, 2) bullying includes “witnesses,” 3) acts of bullying are signs that there is a “need for acceptance” of others, and 4) a “shift needed toward anti-bullying.” Additional beliefs shared by participants included: 1) bullying could be “reciprocal” when students are mean, disrespectful, or inconsiderate to each other, 2) “private bullying” could occur, and therefore acts of bullying could occur without witnesses, 3) signs of bullying could be predicted and therefore bullying could be “predictable,” and 4) bullying “often goes unreported.”

What was significant about Tables 2 and 3 as well as Figure 2—which served to support and better illustrate the findings of Tables 2 and 3—was that participants showed a surprisingly low acknowledgement that bullying could mean: 1) “repeated harassment,” 2) people(s) who “intimidate” others, 3) “stealing,” 4) the spreading of “rumors,” or 5) the incorporation of the term “witness” or its synonyms—i.e. bystander—as being relevant adjectives to describe student-to-student bullying. Tables 2 and 3 and Figure 2 indicated that although pre-service teachers proved to be collectively knowledgeable on this matter of student-to-student bullying, and although there were commonly used vocabulary amongst participants, individual participant responses demonstrated significant gaps in their understanding of this issue. Additional themes were provided by the responses from the second of the two open-response questions—regarding

what were the participant's "self-perceived responsibility concerning this issue of student-to-student bullying"—included within the pre-service survey.

Figure 3

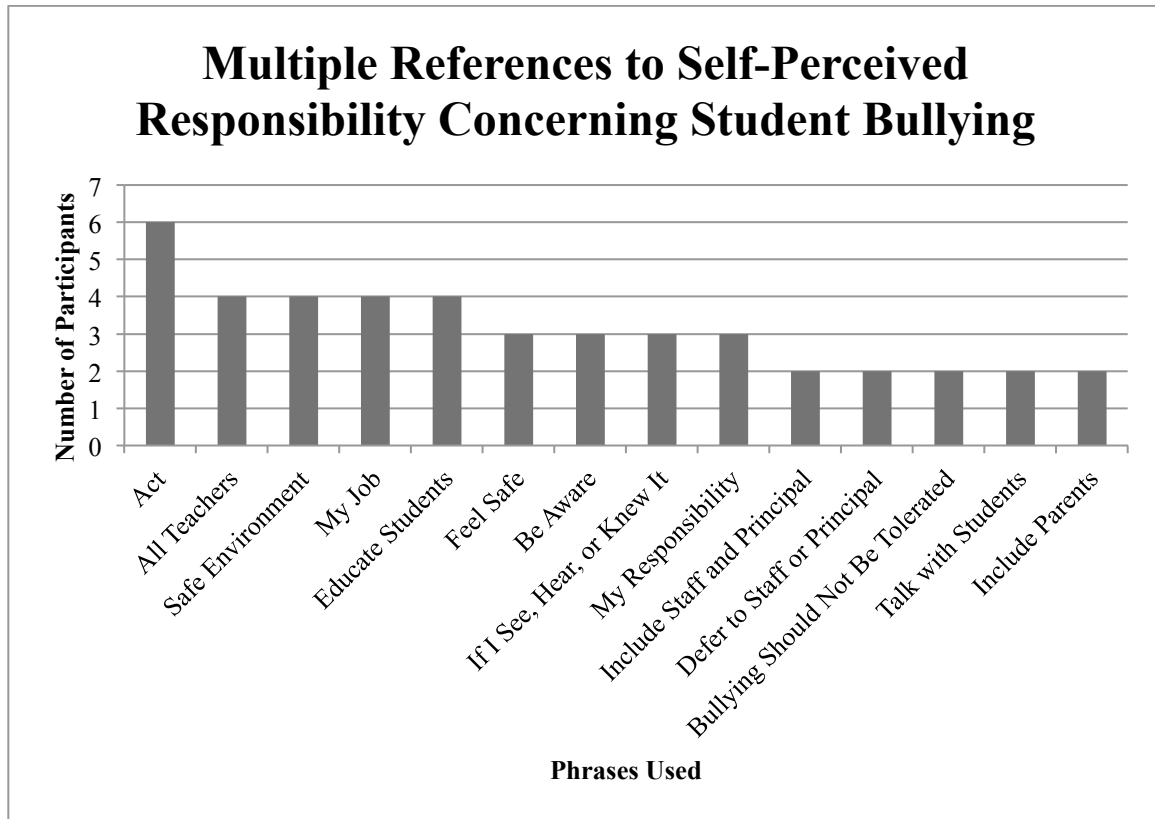
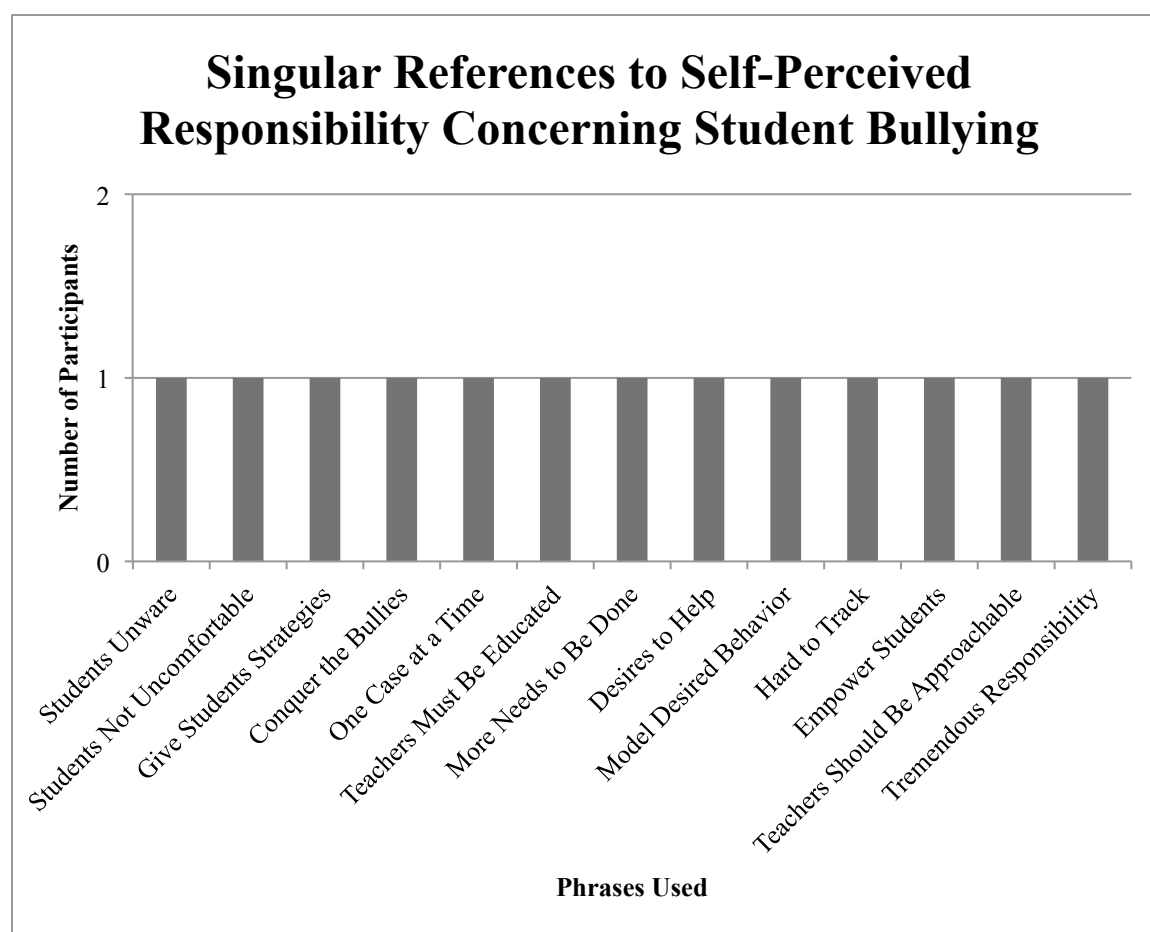


Figure 3 illustrates four main clusters of participant responses. Participants indicate: 1) their responsibility is to "act" (38%), 2) that it is the responsibility of "all teachers" or the responsibility of the individual participant ("my job") to provide a "safe environment" and to "educate students" in this matter (25%), 3) it is their responsibility ("my responsibility") to make students "feel safe," to "be aware" of bullying, to deal with bullying if participants either see it, hear about it, or know of bullying incidences that occur at their school ("if I see it, hear it, knew it") (19%), and 4) it is their responsibility to "include staff and the principal," to "defer to the principal," to "not tolerate" bullying, to "talk with students," and to "include parents" in the

addressing of any bullying incidence (13%). Figure 4 explores additional answers provided regarding participant's self-perceived responsibility toward this issue of student bullying. More specifically, Figure 4 provides phrases used only once by participants to describe their responsibility to addressing student-to-student bullying in elementary schools:

Figure 4

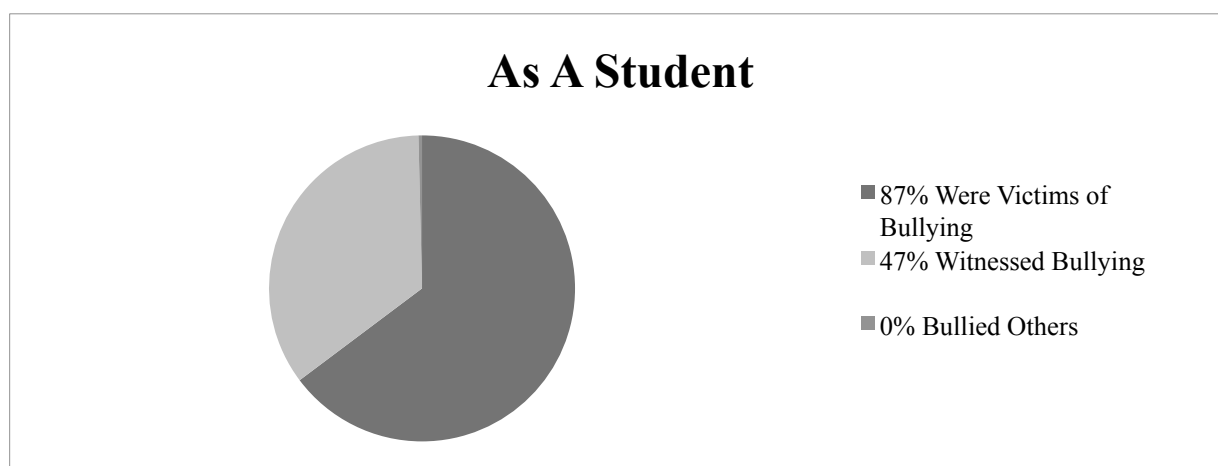


What was surprising about the results as reflected by Figure 4 was that only individual participants (6%) indicated it was their responsibility to: 1) “be educated” about this issue, 2) “help” with this issue, and to 3) “model desired behavior.” Figures 3 and 4 illustrated that although participants expressed their self-perceived responsibilities to address student-to-student bullying appropriately and with clarity, and despite significant consistency in vocabulary used to

articulate said responsibilities, the responses to this open-response question demonstrated a significant lack of understanding, clarity, and consistency concerning what teachers are responsible for and what teachers should be accountable for in addressing bully-like situations.

Additional survey responses revealed 80% of participants reported experiencing bullying as a student. Of those 80%, most participants experienced witnessing bullying. Nearly half (47%) of participants were victims of bullying, and none of the participants reported bullying others (see Chart 3).

Chart 3



Additional data revealed all participants found student-to-student bullying to be a current issue in elementary schools. Over half (60%) of participants revealed having witnessed bullying as a pre-service educator, and the majority (87%) of participants indicated seeing other staff help in bullying incidences. A significantly low percentage (21%) of participants claimed that they had received training to address student-to-student bullying, yet an overwhelming 92% claimed to have intervened in bullying situations.

Further findings indicated that a smaller percentage of participants (78%) who reportedly intervened in a bully-like incident felt their efforts were successful in execution. Just over half

(60%) of participants expressed having strategies to combat student bullying, but only 15% of those participants felt confident in their strategies. Participants (all but one) consistently (93%) indicated a desire to learn more about strategies to address student-to-student bullying.

Furthermore three significant correlations, regarding the pre-service teacher survey data, were revealed: 1) a statistically significant positive correlation was revealed showing the more participants experienced bullying as students, the more they experienced witnessing bullying as students, 2) a moderately significant negative correlation was discovered which indicated the more participants had seen staff help intervene in bully-like behavior, the less participants were confident in their strategies to intervene when needed, and 3) a moderately significant positive correlation showed that the greater the number of participants who indicated having witnessed bullying as a student, the greater the likelihood those participants additionally witnessed bullying as pre-service teachers.

Veteran Educators

Several themes emerged through reviewing data from the veteran teacher interviews. First, a moderate majority (60%), or three out of the five participants, related having experienced bullying as a student, whether in the role of victim, witness, or bully. From this finding, 60%, or three participants, reported having been a victim of bullying, 60% reported having witnessed bullying, and 40%, or interestingly the two male participants, reported having been a bully in their youth. Of these explored experiences of bullying as youth, 80%, or four participants, reported experiences of bullying in high school, and 60%, or three participants experienced bully-like behavior in middle school. Participants consistently had difficulty recalling specific experiences of bullying in their elementary school years, and therefore these experiences of

bully-like behavior went unexplored during interviews. Findings showed a moderate majority, or three out of the five participants as having been involved in bullying as a student. Of those participants, a significant majority experienced bullying during their high school years.

Second, the researcher of the present study ascertained the methods in which participants were bullied through the interviews. Participants who were victims and/or were a witness of bullying either experienced: 1) physical abuse, 2) verbal abuse, 3) being or seeing others threatened, or 4) victims that were excluded by their bully/bullies. Participants experienced physical abuse in the way of: 1) bottoms getting “smacked,” 2) bullies “picking up and placing [a participant] into a garbage can,” or when 3) ““close friends’ sprayed cologne or deodorant in [a participants] face.” Participants witnessed physical bullying when their peers experienced: 1) “being sprayed with a hose,” 2) “getting tied and left at the dump,” 3) getting “slapped on the belly,” 4) being “followed” by (a) bully/bullies, or when 5) a victim’s behavior was mocked by their perpetrator(s).

Participants who experienced verbal abuse were reportedly: 1) called names such as “slut” and 2) “teased for being a virgin.” Participants who witnessed others being verbally abused also observed: 1) name-calling, 2) teasing, and 3) victims as the “brunt of jokes.” Participants experienced being threatened in written form on a bathroom wall—“if I ever catch [participant] alone I will kill [him/her],” and participants witnessed victims being told by their bully/bullies that they were: 1) “gonna punch,” 2) “gonna slap,” or 3) “gonna beat” up the victim. Finally, participants felt they were victimized via exclusion and participants also witnessed peers being excluded. Of the two male participants who admittedly bullied others, they revealed doing so in the following manner: 1) physically via “pushing,” 2) verbally via “making jokes about another” or “talking about others behind their back,” or by 3) excluding a peer. To conclude, findings

revealed three manners in which a moderate majority of participants experienced student bullying in their youth: as victims, witnesses and bullies. Some participants experienced abuse from their bully/bullies physically, verbally, or when threatened. Furthermore some participants witnessed others experience physical and verbal abuse, being threatened as well as excluded by their bully/bullies. Last, a small percentage of participants—40% or two participants—bullied others physically, verbally, and by excluding (a) peer(s).

After being asked to describe their experiences with bullying as a student—whether as a victim, witness, or perpetrator—participants were asked to articulate their understanding of what bullying entails. From this question some common language was used among participants. More specifically participants described student bullying as: 1) “physical” abuse (80% or four of the five participants), and 2) “verbal” abuse or “intimidation” (40% or two participants). Other terms and phrases used to describe student bullying that were unique to individual participants included: 1) “sneaky,” 2) “under the radar of adults,” 3) “bullying is about ‘power’ or ‘control,’” 4) bullying is “covet-based,” or about 5) bullies trying to “get things” from their victims, 6) some form of “assault”—whether physical, verbal, “mental,” “psychological,” or 7) “emotional” abuse—that happens “more than once.” Findings demonstrated that although veteran teachers were collectively knowledgeable on this matter of student-to-student bullying, and although there was commonly used vocabulary amongst participants, individual participant responses showed significant gaps in their understanding of this issue.

Next, participants used some common language to explain what their self-perceived responsibility is in dealing with student bullying. More specifically, veteran teachers felt their responsibility was that they: 1) “must intervene”—80% or four of the five participants agreed—and, 2) need to “educate students” in a way that will help them to address this issue

autonomously (60% or three of the five participants agreed). Other language used by participants, that was unique to the individual, articulated that they and other teachers need to: 1) “protect the whistleblower”—i.e. victim and/or witness, 2) “provide a safe environment,” 3) “get information” on a given situation prior to fixing the circumstance—i.e. asking if bully-like behavior is a result of a one-time or pattern-based situation, 4) get other parties involved—i.e. “the solution team,” and 5) ask bullies “why they are bullying.” Responses to the questions regarding veteran teachers’ self-perceived responsibility in dealing with bullying indicated that although veteran teachers were collectively knowledgeable on this matter of student-to-student bullying and that there were a few commonly used vocabulary amongst participants, individual participant responses demonstrated significant gaps in their understanding of this issue.

Following these open-response questions, the researcher and interviewer of the present study asked participants whether they felt student-to-student bullying to be a current issue in schools. Four participants responded affirmatively by more specifically stating bullying is: 1) “human nature,” 2) perpetuated by “social networks,” as well as by us, as educators when we “give [students] the language”—i.e. posters in the classrooms that say “this is a no bully zone,” 3) a method used by students who are having to “figure out their place” or social status amongst peers, 4) inevitable when there is “such a range in students and causes of why kids bully,” and 5) to “say bullying isn’t a current issue and won’t happen is an ‘unrealistic expectation.’”

Conversely, one of the five participants concluded bullying to not be a current issue. This participant explained bullying: 1) “was a popular topic” in previous years, that 2) “it is more prevalent in public schools”—whereas this participant taught at a private institution, and 3) because of statements claimed above, the participant opined saying they believed student bullying to be “currently declining.” Responses to a question regarding whether or not veteran

teachers believe student bullying to be a current issue indicated that the majority of veteran teachers did recognize bullying as a current issue within schools. With this said, however, responses additionally revealed an ongoing need to educate teachers concerning current findings in the prevalence of student bullying in both private and public institutions schools.

The next set of participant responses answered the question of whether participants witnessed bullying as a teacher. Results revealed four participants, or 80% of veteran teachers had witnessed student bullying. Of those participants, one relayed “going toe to toe with gangs,” which had come to attack students at the participant’s campus. The same participant described having a “13 year-old, seventh grade male student who was six foot one inch and 200 pounds.” This student: 1) pulled pranks, 2) called peers names, 3) threw a desk across the participant’s classroom, and 4) stole from his classmates as well as the participant.

Another participant who witnessed bullying as a teacher responded saying he/she observed a student who seemed to bully others to “project home life” with an alcoholic father and difficulties with learning English as a second language with weak or “raw academic verbal skills.” Mostly, however, this participant witnessed female students bullying one another. [On a side note, this participant also volunteered witnessing teacher-to-principal bullying. From his/her observations, the participant felt the bullying stemmed from the teacher’s: 1) tendency to make excuses for their behavior, 2) lack of awareness of their negative attitude, 3) lack of professionalism on the job, and 4) inclination to “play the role of the victim by blaming others for things they themselves were doing”—i.e. bullying].

A third participant shared experiences of witnessing a student threaten another at knifepoint and otherwise bully a peer by: 1) hitting, 2) kicking, or 3) stabbing—via a pencil. All scenarios explained by the participant were related as having happened “more than once.” A

fourth participant reported witnessing students: 1) give peers “mean looks,” 2) “make mean comments,” and 3) threaten peers. In another situation, this participant knew of a female student who was a gymnast bullied and out-skilled by other gymnasts and said student seemed to regain control lost in school over her classmates through redirected retaliation, becoming a “powerful persona in her school life.” The remaining participant who had not reported having witnessed bullying as an educator had, however, reported having helped with a bullying situation when the participant had “heard tell” of an incident. Thereafter, the participant was recruited by his/her assistant principal to get involved. Responses to this question, pertaining to whether or not veteran teachers had witnessed bullying when an educator, served to support the necessity for the present study. With a majority of veteran teachers indicating having witnessed bullying in their place of employment, student bullying within schools should be considered an important issue worth studying and addressing.

Following that inquiry, the researcher of the present study asked whether participants had seen other teachers or school staff take action to stop student-to-student bullying. All participants responded affirmatively. Reports were of: 1) seeing non-teaching staff on the playground during morning or lunch recesses, 2) seeing both principals and teachers work dutifully in lieu of ignoring an issue or “brushing it under the carpet,” 3) observations of master teachers who “watched students” work out issues autonomously until adult intervention became necessary, 4) colleagues taking steps to solve issues through school anti-bullying programs or through “peer court,” 5) announcements made on their school’s loud speaker that “often interject[ed] a school day reference to the need to ‘stop bullying,’” or 6) teachers being seen “conferring” with their superiors—i.e. the head or principal of a participants school—and ultimately deciding on giving a perpetrator a one-day suspension among other consequences.

When asked whether or not participants received training to address student-to-student bullying, four, or 80% of participants responded by saying that they had received training. One participant relayed having received training “ad nauseam.” Another said training was done both informally—i.e. working with experts in the field or with master teachers—and formally—by inviting a psychologist and teacher with 20 plus years of experience into their classroom to introduce student-led activities that were designed to: 1) challenge students to work cohesively with peers and 2) determine the leaders, the followers, as well as potential bullies and victims among the students. A third participant explained receiving training through professional development seminars, and a fourth participant expressed working with programs like “facing history” where teachers talk about bully-like scenarios and the social-emotional learning of students. The same participant also discussed another school program—the “Tool Box” program—where teachers discuss: 1) bullying, 2) student self-advocacy, and 3) conflict-resolution techniques. The remaining participant did not believe they had received training. The findings concerning this question of whether or not veteran teachers felt they had received training showed education personnel taking this issue seriously, but more research could be conducted to discern the best practices for identifying, intervening, and preventing student bullying.

Next, participants were asked whether or not they had taken action to intervene in situations of student bullying, and if so whether or not they felt successful in the action taken. All participants reported having taken action to stop student bullying and they explained how they dealt with this issue in a myriad of ways. Participants reported: 1) planning and leading lessons to address bullying in the classroom, 2) confronting a classroom bully in the act of bullying, 3) talking with students, 4) playing games to include a victim and then weaning

themselves (a.k.a. the participant) out of the game, 5) sending a bully to the principal's office, 6) encouraging victims to write notes to the teacher about bullying behavior, 7) "yelling at [the bully] saying 'I am disgusted by your behavior,'" when caught in the act of bullying others 8) coaching victims by saying "get your shoulders back" and "get your hands out of your pockets," 9) telling a victim to practice yelling back at their bully by having the victim yell at the participant, 10) working with colleagues, and 11) involving parents. Despite all aforementioned actions taken by veteran teachers, opinions regarding whether they found their actions to be successful were mixed.

Two participants found action taken to be successful because they: 1) saw the victim as happier and because, 2) the victim saw how the bully was immediately punished. Another participant felt successful in the action they took with a bullying situation because the bullying had stopped. With this said, however, this participant volunteered that even though they felt a resolution had occurred, the participant surmised that the victim's parents "felt there were not enough consequences."

Another two participants felt they were both successful and unsuccessful in their effort to address a bully-like situation. Of these participants, one expressed mixed feelings in saying that they successfully were able to calm the victim down but felt unsuccessful in seeing a victim "play the victim." The second of these two participants voiced feeling successful in seeing a bully get expelled or reassigned, but could not monitor whether action taken was successful in the long term because they could not: 1) follow up on a student who was expelled and because 2) there had been "no proof of rehabilitation." The remaining participant did not feel successful at all in action the taken because he/she observed the identified bullies "fool[ing] around and taking [a school] project—that dealt with bullying in a classroom setting—less seriously." Responses

regarding this line of inquiry suggested inconsistencies in teachers' ability to intervene effectively in bullying incidences and to explore related influences—i.e. an update on the bully and/or victim, and the opportunity to work with other parties involved such as parents—that pertained to incidences addressed. In addition, findings concerning these questions showed how veteran teachers were taking this issue seriously but more research could be conducted to discern the best practices for addressing student bullying and to aid teachers so that they feel successful in actions taken.

Following this line of questioning, participants were asked whether they felt they had strategies to address bullying and whether they were confident in the strategies they possessed. Three participants or 60% of veteran teachers affirmed that they did have strategies, which included the following. One participant expressed having “relational strategies,” which: 1) involves all students when bullying occurs, and 2) ensures student safety. The same participant additionally mentioned having “conflict-resolution” strategies which aim to: 1) prevent students from becoming victims or perpetrators of bullying, 2) help students work through thought processes, and 3) help students discern right from wrong. This participant went on to say they believe “kids become bullies because their needs aren’t being met,” and with this reasoning, this participant justified using relational strategies to address student bullying in schools.

Another participant verbalized having school-initiated programs at their disposal—i.e. “Tool Box”—which provide opportunities for community and empathy building. In continuation, this participant expressed that the structure of the school itself “gives opportunities for positive interactions among students.” Additionally, this participant went on to say how they have their students read books—i.e. *Blubber* by Judy Blume—or participate in “bibliotherapy” (McCarra &

Forrester, 2012, p. 47) to address bullying as a way to open up this discussion of student bullying organically.

The next participant described having “interpersonal strategies,” but not formal strategies for ongoing bullying or cyber bullying situations. The last of the participants did not feel they have strategies. With that being said, this participant did reflect having: 1) “media tools,” 2) a willingness to “step between kids to stop them,” 3) a strategy to remove temptations that facilitate bullying—i.e. have student put away computers—and 4) a plan to defer bullying incidences to others—such as the principal, parents, or the police.

Regarding participants’ confidence in strategies, responses varied. One participant felt he/she was “intuitive” when having to address bullying situations but “not brilliant” with student bullying strategies. Conversely, two other participants felt “very” confident or sufficiently confident in their strategies whether because participants were well trained or their schools provided effective programs to combat this issue. The last of the participants expressed feeling both confident and not confident in strategies to deal with student-to-student bullying.

Of the reasons provided regarding how participants did not feel confident, the most interesting reflections included the recognition that feelings are dependent on the “environment or situation,” in which “each case is different,” and that bullying “happens a lot during recess,” when teachers are not observing student behavior and cannot practice student bullying prevention practices. Responses to questions—regarding strategies in addressing student bullying and the level of confidence in strategies for veteran teachers—indicated that teachers and schools alike are making efforts to address student bullying. However, this study suggested an ongoing need for training and the sharing of strategies to combat student bullying. Moreover, ongoing efforts showed an ongoing necessity to raise awareness of teachers regarding how best

to handle this issue in a manner in which: 1) positive results can be identified, and 2) teachers can rest assured actions taken are parallel to researched practices most conducive to minimizing and/or eliminating the existence of student bullying.

The final two questions asked of the five veteran teacher participants were: 1) whether or not school programs that addressed student bullying were implemented at the participant's location of employment, and 2) whether or not participants wanted to learn more about strategies that addressed this issue of student bullying. Four participants, or 80% of veteran teachers reported effective programs as being implemented in their schools. Of these participants, all expressed the desire to learn more strategies to address student bullying. The remaining participant expressed not having a program implemented at his or her current location of employment, but that the participant had a program integrated at a previous school where the participant was employed.

As mentioned by the above participant in that academic institution, the school had a campus policeman who "would have dealt with bullying issues." This participant expressed not wanting to learn more strategies to deal with student bullying on account of having "no need for personal involvement." Furthermore the participant expressed that if bullying—or more specifically cyber bullying—had been discovered by the participant, the participant planned to "turn [the involved parties] over to parents and the principal." The responses to the final interview questions revealed promising progress in schools and a level of accountability among veteran teachers with the moderately consistent report of implemented programs being incorporated in educational settings. With this, however, findings of the current study also showed an ongoing need to educate teachers on the importance of being aware of student bullying and knowing how best to identify, intervene, and prevent student bullying. The present

study also revealed there being an ongoing need for recognition regarding the importance of understanding the correlation that exists between a teacher's perception and attitude toward student bullying and the level of effectiveness whereby this situation is being addressed.

Chapter 5 Discussion /Analysis

Summary of Major Findings

Pre-Service Teachers

Findings showed many pre-service teachers understood bullying as a current issue. In the attempt to provide a definition of student-to-student bullying, many pre-service teachers stated that bullying included physical and/or verbal abuse. When asked what their self-perceived responsibility toward bullying was, a significant number of pre-service participants reported it was their duty to act, to create a safe environment for their students, and to educate their students about bullying.

Additional major findings indicated that a majority of pre-service teachers, who were surveyed through this study, reportedly experienced bullying as a student. Moreover, a majority of these pre-service teachers who experienced bullying as a student, more specifically experienced witnessing bullying acts. Of the pre-service teachers who reported experiencing bullying as a student, nearly half indicated being victimized by peers. No pre-service teachers reported bullying others when students themselves.

As pre-service educators, nearly all participants revealed having intervened in a bullying incident, yet very few pre-service teachers felt adequately trained to intervene, and few participants felt confident in any strategies learned to address bully-like situations. To continue, nearly all pre-service teacher participants demonstrated a desire to learn more strategies to combat student-to-student bullying. Finally, three correlations were discovered pertaining to survey responses of pre-service educators. First, results showed that the more pre-service

teachers experienced bullying as a student, the higher the likelihood that they experienced witnessing a bully-like situation. Second, the more pre-service teachers had seen other school staff intervene in bullying incidents, the less confident pre-service teachers felt in their own strategies to help address student bullying. Finally, a third correlation revealed the more pre-service teachers witnessed bullying as a student, the higher the likelihood that participants of this survey witnessed student bullying as pre-service teachers.

Veteran Educators

Findings regarding veteran teachers revealed a majority of veteran teachers understood bullying to be a current issue. In addition, a majority of veteran teachers understood student bullying to include some form of physical abuse, and some veteran teachers also understood bullying to include the variation of verbal abuse. When asked what their self-perceived responsibility toward bullying was, a significant majority of veteran participants felt they “must intervene” while a moderate majority of veteran teachers believed it was their duty to educate students about bullying.

In addition, major findings indicated that a moderate majority of veteran teachers reportedly experienced bullying as a student. More specifically, a modest majority of veteran teachers experienced being victims and/or witnesses to student bullying as a student. Furthermore, interviews with these participants indicated that a significant majority of participants experienced bullying when in high school, a moderate majority of participants experienced bullying in middle school, and none of the veteran teachers surveyed could recall with reasonable certainty any events of experiencing bullying as an elementary school student.

Two out of the five veteran teachers interviewed—the two male veteran educators—reportedly bullied one or more peers as a student. To continue, veteran teachers articulated experiencing student bullying as a student—whether as a victim or witness—in one of four ways: 1) physical abuse, 2) verbal abuse, 3) threats, and/or 4) exclusion. Furthermore, when young students, the two male veteran teachers explained bullying peers in the follow methods: 1) physical abuse, 2) verbal abuse, and via 3) exclusion.

As veteran educators, a significant majority of participants volunteered having witnessed student bullying. All veteran teachers indicated having seen other school staff intervene in bully-like behavior amongst students, and all participants indicated having intervened in bully-like situations. With that being said, responses were mixed among veteran teachers when judging their actions of intervening as successful.

A moderate majority was revealed when veteran teachers expressed having strategies to address student bullying. With this, responses were mixed when participants revealed their level of confidence in the strategies they possessed to deal with student bullying. Last, a significant majority of veteran teachers indicated working in schools with implemented programs. Of that same majority of participants, veteran teachers indicated wanting to learn more strategies to combat bullying in schools.

Comparison of Findings to the Literature

Many findings of the present study could be compared to the findings of the literature reviewed in chapter two of this thesis. First, literature supported the present study and its conclusion that bullying—as expressed by both pre-service and veteran educators—is still a

current issue. Second, parallel to the present study, several pieces of reviewed literature stressed the need for further training opportunities for teachers with regard to student bullying.

In continuation, an article in which an expert on bullying was interviewed, Gourneau, discussed common reasons why witnesses do not report a bullying incident. Gourneau (2012) articulated that one reason why witnesses do not report an incident of bullying is because they are unknowledgeable as how to best to help in bullying instances. This finding validated the responses of the present study of both pre-service and veteran teachers with regard to participants' self-perceived responsibility in dealing with bullying as needing to "educate students."

In yet another study conducted by Kahn, Jones and Wieland (2012) it was suggested that pre-service teachers are more likely to aid in the intervention of bullying acts if pre-service teachers, themselves, experienced bullying as either a victim or bully in their youth. In the present study, findings showed that the more pre-service teachers reported witnessing bullying acts as students, the higher the likelihood pre-service teachers witnessed student bullying as a pre-service teacher. Though the present study did not specifically support the findings concerning the correlation of the Kahn et al. (2012) study, the author of the present study likened the literature to the present study and its correlation found among pre-service teachers.

Another comparison was made between the present study and the Roberts (2011) study when Roberts suggested teachers believed non-teaching staff implemented intervention to be most helpful in the prevention of bullying. This belief was supported by one of the veteran educator participants of the present study who had seen a non-teaching staff (i.e. "yard director") successfully intervene in student bullying on the play yard during recess. Another belief voiced by a second veteran educator—"[bullying] happens a lot during recess [when the participant is not observing student behavior]"—additionally supported the finding of Roberts (2011) study.

In a hypothesis made by Duong and Bradshaw (2013), it was refuted by both their study and the present study that inexperienced, or pre-service teachers, had a higher likelihood of responding to bully-like situations than experienced veteran teachers (Duong & Bradshaw, 2013). Within the same study additional paralleled conclusions were made by the present study in two ways. The Duong and Bradshaw (2013) study showed: 1) that the majority of participants who reportedly experienced bullying were witnesses to bullying acts and 2) the importance of teachers “creating safe climates” (p. 422). It should also be noted that several other studies reflected the importance of teachers creating classrooms that “promote a positive classroom environment” (McCarra & Forrester, 2012, p.47) or classrooms that are “more democratic [where] the social power is more evenly distributed, [and where there is] a less hostile environment for students” and the like (Espelage, 2012, p. 19). With this, observations were made regarding the need to create positive environments for students as stressed by both the present study and additional literature.

In the present study both elementary and secondary veteran teachers were interviewed. A concern among secondary veteran teacher participants in the present study was that their responses would skew the findings because they were secondary educators being interviewed for a study focusing on bullying in elementary school. Duong and Bradshaw (2013) also eased concerns with results showing no findings to suggest secondary teachers as more likely to respond than elementary school teachers, or vice versa. Findings of the present study paralleled that of the Duong and Bradshaw (2013) study.

Another study showed experienced teachers as being more likely to interrupt bullying behavior. In comparison with these findings, the present study reflected similar results, however minimally. To further explain, all five veteran teachers interviewed articulated having

intervened in bully-like behavior amongst students, while *nearly* all pre-service teachers—92% of participants who answered this survey question—reported intervening when a situation arose.

Comparisons between the literature and the present study continued when the Biggs, Dill, Fonagy, Twemlow and Vernberg (2008) study stated the effectiveness of programs intended to aid in this social issue to be inconsistent at best. This was affirmed by the present study through the veteran educator interviews. As suggested by Biggs et al. (2008) and the present study, the argument that the attitudes of teachers can determine the effectiveness of a school-implemented program was presented.

Additional findings of other studies were reflected in the findings of the present study. First, findings in other studies revealed the effects bullying could have on victims—i.e. feelings of low self-esteem and anxiety. Second, other studies discussed the many faces that could represent bullies [pre-service teacher: “anyone can be a bully;” Veteran teacher has their students respond to: “raise your hands if someone has been mean to you (all hands are raised in participant’s classroom)”]. Third additional studies addressed the traits of victims who possess smaller structure, lack confidence, etc., and what bullying is all about—“control,” “covet-based,” an “imbalance of power,” etc. Further comparisons of findings concerning the present and other studies indicated bullying to include elements of verbal and/or physical abuse inflicted by one or more students against another student, and often times these acts were viewed as bullying when carried out by the bully on more than one occasion.

Regarding how participants—both of the present and of other studies—specifically defined bullying, differences were revealed. Whereas one source of literature revealed participants to most frequently recognize bullying as: 1) verbal abuse followed by 2) physical abuse, and then 3) exclusion or isolation, the present study found a majority of participants to

view physical abuse over verbal abuse as a key element of bullying behavior for both pre-service and veteran teachers. Terms to further define bullying such as “exclusion” or “isolation” was ironically excluded from the definition of bullying among both pre-service and veteran teachers of the present study. Findings seeking to discover intention behind a bully’s behavior were less evidenced by both the researcher and participants associated with the present study and other studies. Still, findings revealed one veteran teacher interviewed for the present study, and at least two researchers behind other studies, who articulated the relevance and importance of understanding why a bully bullies as a way to better intervene and prevent bullying occurrences.

The need for developing empathy among students and teaching both students and parents how to report bully-like behavior were additional themes regarding both the findings of the present study and of reviewed literature. Furthermore, themes were raised regarding the necessity to incorporate parental involvement. More themes were raised regarding the need to conduct further research in gender-specific programs. Moreover, themes that indicated the need to conduct additional research regarding the development of bully prevention programs tailored to supporting “bystander” or witness intervention as a way to prevent future bullying acts, were revealed. One method of bullying prevention found effective in both the literature and the present study were student-led clubs such as the gay-straight alliance or “peer-court,” as mentioned by a veteran teacher interviewed which supported the present study.

Rigby (2012) additionally paralleled the present study by advocating for the need to establish more positive relations between members of a school community and using more “non-punitive intervention strategies” which would thereby provide a “more effective and humane approach” (p. 349). Participants of the present study, particularly the veteran educators interviewed, articulated effective “non-punitive intervention strategies” used by their schools to

address this social issue of student bullying—i.e. programs to build community and empathy, efforts made to watch or make movies dealing with student bullying, using “relational strategies,” and using programs like “cooperative adventures” that provide activities to challenge students to work together, etc.

A final comparison made between the present study and findings from the literature indicated an importance of addressing bullying by embedding key aspects of this issue in curriculum to help in its prevention. Veteran educators interviewed in the present study expressed addressing student bullying by embedding concepts like sympathy, compassion, empathy, and respect within the teacher’s curriculum. Participants of the present study voiced using books like *Blubber* by Judy Blume as a method of addressing student bullying or using class time in computer-science and media to watch and then make videos dealing with bullying in schools. This method of addressing bullying by embedding programs into curriculum was specifically supported as a valid practice within several sources of the literature mentioned in chapter two of this thesis.

Limitations/Gaps in the Research

General Limitations

The research could have been restricted in a myriad of ways. First, gaps in research could have been attributed to the literature review, which spanned the years 2007 to 2013.

Second, the literature could have been limited by the level of accuracy of researchers and their abilities to: 1) research, 2) design, 3) execute, 4) interpret, and 5) describe their study and their findings. Third, the methods of the present study could have additionally provided limitations and gaps in the research. More specifically, the methods of the present study could have only been as accurate and significant as was the researcher competent in: 1) designing and, 2) executing the study, as well as 3) gathering, interpreting, and 4) reporting data. The discrepancies that existed regarding the design of both pre-service teacher surveys and veteran teacher interview questions could have accounted for limitation in the present study.

Pre-Service Teachers

The pre-service teachers could have limited the research in several ways. The first limitation or potential gap in the research of the present study pertained to the homogenous demographics of pre-service participants. The participants were predominately female, and all were reportedly Caucasian, or also described as “white.” Additionally, all participants were attending the same university and likely received identical, or nearly identical, education as they were pursuing the same degree—or license—to become an elementary school educator. Second, only a small sample of fifteen pre-service teachers, were surveyed. These facts point to a homogenized and limited demographic and thereby could have restricted the research from capturing a bigger reality that would more appropriately represent pre-service teachers nationwide and worldwide.

Pre-service teachers also could have limited the research by answering survey questions inaccurately. More specifically, these participants could have answered questions in a manner they believed was desired by the researcher. Furthermore, participants could have responded to

survey questions to the degree in which a participant was comfortable answering candidly—despite the fact that participants volunteered to take this anonymous survey. Last, participants could have responded to survey questions inaccurately when providing bullying-related experiences as an elementary student, when in fact, experiences shared pertained to their years as a middle school or high school student.

Limitations or gaps in the research also could have resulted from the restrictions put upon pre-service participants. Time given to complete the pre-service teacher survey before the start of one of their classes could have limited participants and could have, therefore, somewhat limited the present study. Furthermore, the design of the survey itself restricted participants to answer nearly exclusively “yes” or “no” questions. Only two questions allowed participants to provide a short-answer response. The design of the survey could have effectively limited participants’ responses. In addition, a participant’s ability to remember experiences of bullying as a student and as a pre-service teacher could have restricted the research. With these reflections, the design of the pre-service teacher surveys could have limited the exploration of this issue of student bullying.

Veteran Educators

Veteran teachers could have limited the research in the following ways. The first limitation or potential gap in the research of the present study pertained to the homogenous demographics of veteran participants. The participants were predominately female, and participants were reasonably of similar ethnicities—meaning none of the participants were of

Asian, Hispanic, Native American, Middle Eastern, or African American descent. Furthermore, all veteran teachers were licensed in the state of California, and thereby met similar if not identical governmental mandates to become an educator in California. Only five veteran teachers were interviewed. These facts point to a homogenized and limited demographic and thereby could have restricted the research from capturing a bigger reality that would more appropriately represent veteran teachers nationally and worldwide.

Next, veteran teachers could have limited the research by providing limited answers for the following reasons. With a face-to-face interview, veteran teachers could have been nervous, especially with the fact that one participant met the interviewer for the first time during the scheduled meeting of the interview. With nerves, there could often be feelings of self-consciousness. Considering this, answers during personal interviews could have been restricted. Short answers, lacking depth or explanations, additionally could have limited the research of the present study.

As with the pre-service teachers, veteran teachers could have given answers to questions believed desired by the researcher, and veteran teachers could have given answers to the degree of willingness to respond candidly. In addition, the intention behind word usage could have limited the research—i.e. a participant using the word “harass” could have been intended to mean physical or verbal, or otherwise, harassment. Interviewees could have also shared their experiences with bullying and inadvertently provided an inaccurate timeline as to when the bullying occurrences happened—i.e. elementary, middle, or high school. Furthermore, answers could have been further limited by participants’ ability to recall memories of their individual experiences with bullying, or lack thereof.

A participant's body language and vocal intonation could have also limited research. This could be argued as a legitimate restriction as it could have also potentially limited the research by subtly signaling to the researcher the level to which the participant was willing to be questioned—despite the fact that all participants signed a consent form to participate in a personal interview. Finally, the research could have been affected by the chosen location to interview participants. This could have been the case as there was one participant who decided to meet the researcher of the present study for the interview in their personal classroom with an open door. There were several interruptions caused by visitors and an incoming call to the participant. With this circumstance, self-censorship on the part of this participant could have resulted. Other participants were in an empty classroom with a closed door and a note on the outside of the classroom to dissuade a passerby from entering.

Veteran teachers additionally could have been limited by several other aspects, which could in turn have caused a gap in the research. First, participants could have been limited by the time allotted to complete interview questions. In addition, the level at which the interviewee knew and trusted the researcher could have restricted veteran teachers. Unlike pre-service teachers, veteran teachers were never provided with a formal definition of bullying—courtesy of Olweus (2007)—upon which to base their responses. This could have also limited the research of the present study. Finally the veteran teacher participants, as well as pre-service teacher participants, could have been limited by their ability, or lack thereof, to recall memories of bullying as both a student and as an educator.

Implications for Future Research

In light of the literature concerning student-to-student bullying, and the findings of the present study, the implications for future research include the following. First, there is an ongoing need to learn best practices for identifying, intervening, and preventing bullying incidences. Next, future research should try to understand how best to educate all parties involved including teachers—pre-service and veteran—non-teaching staff, students, and parents on the: 1) precursors to bullying, 2) the signs of bullying incidences, 3) the effects of bullying, and 4) how to report bullying in a manner that considers what is best for the victims, witnesses, as well as the perpetrators of bullying. In addition future research should attempt to understand how best to design programs that address bullying by focusing on individual groups involved with bullying—i.e. young students, older students, boys, girls, victims, witnesses, and bullies.

Overall Significance of the Study

Bullying is still a current issue within schools and elementary teachers have the unique opportunity to “nip” this reality “in the bud” should their skill match their level of desire to address this issue. This social phenomenon is one of great importance and one that—if ignored—results in devastating and long-lasting consequences for any individual who becomes involved. It is a moral imperative of and for teachers that additional research and action be taken to address this behavioral issue.

Efforts toward change have been proven evident in recent research studies including the present study. Still, the very fact of the newness of studies serves to prove the relevance in the exploration of this topic. Moreover, there is validity in an ongoing concern for the continuing threat of student-to-student bullying which seems to disturbingly withstand the test of time.

Student-to-student bullying clearly remains in existence despite ongoing efforts to identify, intervene, and prevent this learned behavior. With this and aforementioned arguments, the researcher of the present study suggests that educators—whether pre-service or veteran—be provided with more substantial and ongoing support in this matter. It is of utmost importance to address student bullying and for teachers to serve both as role models and deterrents for those who cannot see the detrimental effects of their actions. It is critically important to help those who cannot, or will not, stand up for themselves, their future, their friends, and the societal future of generations to come.

About the Author

Heather Gant Bradley received her Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology from Dominican University of California in May of 2008. Gant Bradley continued on at Dominican in

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Currently Gant Bradley is completing the Masters' degree program this May 2014. Gant Bradley lives in the greater Bay Area and currently works as an Instructional Aide for a local elementary school. She is pleased to have had the opportunity to pursue higher learning in the field of education.

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