

A HEURISTIC CASE STUDY OF THE EXPERIENCES OF TEACHERS  
WHO ADDRESS BULLYING IN MIDDLE SCHOOL

A DISSERTATION IN  
Education

Presented to the Faculty of the University  
of Missouri-Kansas City in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

by  
LAUREN ELIZABETH GECHTER

B.S. University of Kansas, 2008  
M.ED. University of Missouri-St. Louis, 2010

Kansas City, Missouri  
2014

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Lauren Elizabeth Gechter, Candidate for Doctor of Education Degree

University of Missouri- Kansas City, 2014

ABSTRACT

Bullying behaviors and incidents increase during the middle school years. Bullying is a problem that affects teachers, staff, students, and families, especially during the middle school years. The purpose of this study was to describe the experiences of six teachers who have worked with students experiencing bullying in the classroom in a Midwest middle school. This study sought to contribute to the body of knowledge concerning teachers' experiences with student to student bullying in the classroom.

Data were collected through interviews, direct observations, and written documents. Moustakas' (1990) five steps for heuristic analysis was followed during the data analysis process. The themes identified during data analysis of these data sources partially overlapped with each other, but as an individual set, were unique. The recurring themes related were types of bullying, teacher approaches, and barriers to solving the problem of bullying. There

is a great need for professional development in this area so that teachers can clearly identify their responsibilities and acquire the most effective anti-bullying techniques.

## APPROVAL PAGE

The faculty listed below, appointed by the Dean of the School of Education have examined a dissertation titled “A Heuristic Case Study of the Experiences of Teachers Who Address Bullying in Middle School,” presented by Lauren Elizabeth Gechter, candidate for the Doctor of Education degree, and certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.

### Supervisory Committee

Dianne Smith, Ph.D., Committee Chair  
Educational Leadership, Policy & Foundations

Loyce Caruthers, Ph.D.  
Educational Leadership, Policy & Foundations

Jennifer Friend, Ph.D.  
Educational Leadership, Policy & Foundations

Robert Leachman, Ed.D.  
Continuing & Professional Education

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost I would like to acknowledge the support of my parents, Gino and Marcia Licata, without them, I do not know where I would be. Throughout all of my endeavors, they have been my side to support, encourage, and love me as I worked toward my goals. I also would like to acknowledge my husband, Clinton Gechter, who would not allow me to give up, supported me in every way he could, and made his own sacrifices to help me on this journey. I appreciate all of the time on his part that went into supporting me in my endeavor to complete this project.

I could not have completed this study without the unwavering support of my advisor, Dr. Dianne Smith. Dr. Smith saw me through each step of this process and was always willing to answer any question. Dr. Smith was always willing to provide assistance and be an advocate on my behalf. I cannot thank her enough for all of the help she has provided. I would also like to thank the other members of my doctoral committee: Dr. Loyce Caruthers, Dr. Jennifer Smith, and Dr. Rob Leachman. I sincerely appreciate all of the time and invaluable feedback each one of you provided when serving on my committee

## PREFACE

### **Personal Reflection**

11:30 sitting alone at lunch. 12:00 standing by the teacher at recess. 12:30 going to the nurse to fake being sick so mom comes. 1:00 sitting in class worrying about who was going to be in the hall between classes or at the bus stop after school. 2:15 hoping that today the teacher will see and stop the teasing. 4:00 going home to cry to the dog. For many students, these are daily happenings and what dominates their thoughts. Everyone has had a bully. I have yet to find a person who was never bullied. I myself was bullied in school and remember being overcome with anxiety, worrying about the next encounter I would have with my nemesis.

I remember telling my mom what was happening in school and every day in 5<sup>th</sup> grade telling myself that in 10 years none of this would matter. I was right. Most of the time in 10 days whatever had been plaguing me before no longer mattered. I sought refuge in my friends, parents, and teachers. I remember sharing these experiences and tips I had picked up along the way with my little brother when he did not want to go to school because of bullies. That was the most difficult bullying experience of all. I could explain that things would get better and practice with him how to handle certain situations, but the look of despair was heart wrenching.

I grew up and decided to help others to achieve their goals through education, and maybe impart a little guidance too. I became a middle school teacher in a failing urban school district. I remember going to work as a bright eyed, bushy tailed, first year teacher, and being completely appalled at how my students were treating each other. It was everything I had experienced and wanted to help others avoid. However, there was one

problem, like my teachers, I did not know how to truly stop them from tormenting each other.

I express these memories not for pity; I do not need it or want it, but to state my experiences with the research topic. Bullying is something every child experiences and every parent dreads. Bullying has long-term academic, physical, and emotional effects on both students who are the target of bullying behavior and students engaged in bullying behaviors. Children exposed to bullying in any form have an increased chance of experiencing depression, anxiety, eating disorders, drug use, excessive psychosomatic symptoms, excessive drinking, and increased likelihood of dropping out (Kaltiala-Heino et al., 2000).

I take this moment to insert myself in the text as the research instrument who has experienced many of these things and as a person who has been impacted and shaped by bullying. I have intimate experiences with bullying and I expected to be emotionally moved by this study, but I used bracketing to prevent injecting my emotions into the research. By sharing my experiences I was able to gain a more intimate insight into my research subjects through processes and experiences.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### **The Problem Statement**

Bullying behaviors and incidents increase during the middle school years. Bullying is a problem that affects teachers, staff, students, and families, especially during the middle school years. The Center for Disease Control (2010) conducted a study in 2009 with children and adolescents from across the United States. The study revealed that almost 20% of high school aged adolescents had experienced some type of bullying. Statistics from the study also showed that bullying was most prevalent during the upper elementary and middle school years. Twenty-two percent of fourth through eighth graders reported academic problems due to bullying (Alegent Health, 2011). The U.S. Department of Education (2004) estimate that 160,000 students miss school every day because they fear being bullied, with the highest ratio of those students in middle schools. To reduce bullying, it is important to understand what is considered bullying.

Bullying has three elements that make it different from other forms of aggressive behavior. First, bullying must take place between persons of the same age; aggressive and hurtful actions from adults toward children is considered maltreatment (Arseneault, Bowes, & Shakoor, 2010). Additionally, the bullying behaviors must take place repeatedly, over time. One incident is not considered bullying behavior. Finally, there must exist an imbalance of power between the person exhibiting bullying behaviors and the individual these behaviors are directed toward. In adolescence, physical strength, popularity, and small differences in

age have the potential to produce a power imbalance (Arseneault, Bowes, & Shakoor, 2010). The results of bullying can impact students academically, physically, and emotionally.

Bullying can negatively affect students in several ways. A study completed across 11 large urban middle schools and across multiple time points reported data that found a direct association between bullying and academic performance (Juvonen, Wang & Espinoza, 2011). A meta-analysis of 33 studies revealed that bullied students are more likely to earn lower grades and lower scores on standardized state tests (Nakamoto & Schwartz, 2009). Kochenderfer and Ladd (1996) did one of the earliest studies on the effects of bullying with kindergarteners. The research showed that bullying experiences were an antecedent to school adjustment problems such as, academic achievement, school avoidance, and loneliness. A study done by Kaltiala-Heino et al. (2000) of 17,643 students in eighth and ninth grade revealed that bullying has long-term academic, physical, and emotional effects on both students who are the target of bullying behavior and the students engaged in bullying behaviors.

Adolescents involved in bullying in some ways had a higher likelihood of experiencing depression, anxiety, eating disorders, drug use, suicide attempts, and excessive psychosomatic symptoms. Girls who are the target of bullying behaviors and individuals who have a role as both a bully and a target, have increased self-harm behaviors and suicidal ideations (Klomek et al., 2009). This correlation is so strong that being bullied in childhood was a better predictor of suicide attempts up to the age of 25 years among females, than early conduct problems and depression (Klomek et al., 2009). Adolescents who are routinely bullied have an increased probability of exhibiting bullying behaviors themselves. (Barker et al., 2008). Furthermore, targets of bullying behavior and those who are both targets and

bullies show increased rates of psychotic symptoms later on in life (Kelleher et al. 2008; Schreier et al., 2009). Moreover, studies have observed a relationship between the frequency of being the target of bullying behaviors and levels of psychotic symptoms (Campbell & Morrison, 2007). Bullying behaviors increase in middle school through an increase in physical, psychological, and emotional aggression. These behaviors manifest themselves at a higher rate and intensity during middle school.

The cause of the increase in bullying in middle school is the disturbance and distress caused by the transitions from elementary school to middle school. According to a study done by Pellegrini (2002), the increase in bullying behaviors is a response to the transition from elementary school to middle school. In studies done in 2000 and 2002, bullying increased at the beginning of the transition to middle school and decreased as dominance status increased (Pellegrini & Bartini, 2000; Pellegrini, 2002). These studies were done from a longitudinal, multi-method, perspective as children made the transition from elementary school through middle school. Smith, Madsen, and Moody (1999) suggest that bullying increases during the middle school years and then declines once students transition to high school. On average, bullying tends to increase through the elementary grades, peaking in middle school, and dropping off by grades 11 and 12 in high school (Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 2001; Olweus, 1993).

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to describe the experiences of six teachers who have worked with students experiencing bullying in the classroom in a Midwest middle school. The goal of the study was to develop a thick description of ways teachers address this

phenomenon in middle schools. When a researcher utilizes thick description it can “open up a world to the reader through rich, detailed, and concrete descriptions of people and places... in such a way that we can understand the phenomenon being studied and draw our own conclusions about meanings and significance” (Patton, 2002, p. 438). Utilizing thick description and examining teacher experiences will add to the body of knowledge surrounding student to student bullying and may illuminate ways teachers can effectively intervene. The study utilized heuristics in the research design in order to understand and describe the classroom experiences of teachers with this phenomenon.

Heuristics is a form of phenomenological inquiry that uses the researcher’s experience to aid in understanding the phenomenon (Patton, 2002). In this type of research, the researcher must have a deep connectedness to the topic being studied. As the researcher, I used personal insights into the phenomenon of bullying to help inform the study.

In addition to a heuristic approach, a case study design was also utilized in this research study. A case study is “...a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence” (Yin, 2009). According to Yin (2009), a case study design should be considered when, the focus of the study is to answer “how” and “why” questions; the researcher cannot manipulate the behavior of those involved in the study. A researcher should cover contextual conditions because he or she believes they are relevant to the phenomenon under study, and the boundaries are not clear between the phenomenon and context. A case study approach was chosen because the phenomenon will be studied in its real life context and because the context and conditions, I believe, are relevant to the phenomenon.

The unit of analysis for this study, as determined by the research questions (Patton, 2002), were perceptions from six sixth grade teachers regarding bullying activities in the classroom and how the teacher addressed these activities.

### **Research Questions**

The study sought to answer the following questions concerning the experiences of teachers with bullying in their classroom. The purpose of these research questions was to provide insight. The preliminary research question was; what are the experiences of sixth-grade teachers who address bullying in the classroom? The sub-questions were: a) What are the experiences of sixth-grade teachers who witness bullying in the classroom?; b) How do sixth-grade teachers address bullying behavior in the classroom?; c) What interventions do sixth-grade teachers find effective and ineffective in addressing bullying in a middle school classroom?; and d) What support is needed from school administrators to address bullying behaviors in the classroom?

### **Theoretical Framework**

The term conceptual framework is interchangeable with theoretical framework, and centers on the beliefs and assumptions of the researcher, concepts, theories, experiential knowledge, and present research and literature (Maxwell, 2013). Bell (2005) defines a theoretical framework as:

An explanatory device which explains either graphically or in narrative form, the main things to be studied, the key factors, constructs or variables, and the presumed relationships among them. It is an efficient mechanism for drawing together and summarizing accumulated facts . . . which makes the body of accumulated knowledge more accessible and thus, more useful both to practitioners who seek to implement findings and to researchers who seek to extend the knowledge base. (p. 103)

The theoretical framework I used was centered around my own beliefs and assumptions captured from personal experiences dealing with bullying in school. Having experienced the various roles involved in bullying first hand has formed my belief that no child should have to endure bullying, especially at school. In my experience, being bullied resulted in severe anxiety and a disinterest and fear of school. My experiences as a target of bullying and as a teacher who has intervened in bullying, has illuminated my understanding of the role a teacher can play in student to student bullying. The intent of this study was to develop a description of the experiences of sixth grade teachers who address bullying and what interventions they perceived as effective in reducing the problem of bullying in a Midwest middle school.

The contextual concepts I used to underpin the problem of bullying during the middle school years include, heuristic inquiry, adolescent behavior, anti-bullying legislation and programs, the teacher's role in bullying, and the school leader's role in bullying. The first strand is heuristics. Heuristics is the theoretic tradition used in this study. In this tradition, I used personal experiences with the phenomenon to make meaning of the experiences of others. I think it is important to first explore the concept of heuristic inquiry since that is the main approach I utilized. I chose to use this form of inquiry because of my intimate connection with the research topic. I felt that combining my experiences with those of others would yield more insightful data. The second conceptual strand is adolescent behavior. It is important to have a clear understanding adolescent characteristics and their behavior in order to understand the severity of the problem of bullying. This is a worldwide problem and what the entirety of the research inquiry focuses on exploring (Banks, 1997). The next conceptual strand focuses on anti-bullying legislation and programs. Many states have enacted

legislation that requires the adoption of anti-bullying policies (Limber & Small, 2003). Districts create these policies and schools are obligated to implement them. This is a relatively new process, with Missouri passing its anti-bullying statute in 2007 (Sacco, Silbaugh, Corredor, Casey, & Doherty, 2012). I have always been aware of anti-bullying policies in the school I have worked, yet until I began my research, I had never seen the actual policy. This strand also looks at three popular anti-bullying programs and their components. The next conceptual strand is the teachers' role in bullying. Teachers play a pivotal role in the growth and development of students (Pajares, 1992). They often serve as a mentor, role model, and protector. These roles become increasingly important when students are involved in bullying (Flaspohler, Elfstrom, Vanderzee, Sink, & Birchmeier, 2009). The final strand is the school leader's role in bullying. The school leader and their approach to leading a school can have a significant impact on the culture of the school. The school leaders also have an impact on the school's bullying policies and how behaviors are ultimately addressed.

### **Heuristics**

A form of phenomenological inquiry, heuristics brings to the forefront the personal experience of the researcher (Patton, 2002, p. 107). Heuristic research can be considered a search for the discovery of real meaning and essence in significant human experience. "Heuristics involves a subjective process of reflecting, exploring, sifting, and elucidating the nature of the phenomenon under investigation" (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985, p. 40). This type of inquiry focuses on the meaning and experiences. "Heuristics is concerned with

meanings, not measurements; with essence, not appearance; with quality, not quantity; with experience, not behavior” (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985, p. 42).

Though considered a form of phenomenology, heuristic and phenomenology differ in four major ways. Heuristics focuses on connectedness, personal significance in the search to know, intuition and tacit understanding, and retaining the essence of the person. In contrast, phenomenology is more detached, emphasizes definitive description of the structures of experience, distillation of the structures of experience, and ends with the essence of the experience (Patton, 2002). According to Moustakas (1990), heuristic inquiry does not exclude the researcher from the study but instead incorporates the researcher’s experiences with the experiences of the participants. The researcher is required to have a direct experience of the phenomenon in question in order to discover its essence and meaning.

When conducting a heuristic inquiry there are seven concepts related to the research: identifying with the focus of inquiry, self-dialogue, tacit knowing, intuition, indwelling, focusing, and internal frame of reference (Moustakas, 1990). The unit of analysis is the major entity that is being analyzed in heuristic studies. It is the what or who is being studied. The systemic steps in heuristic inquiry are initial engagement, immersion, incubation, illumination, explication, creative synthesis and validation of the research (Patton, 2002). The data can be collected through narratives, poems, paintings, and stories or other creative forms. Heuristic inquiry was used to explore teachers experience with student bullying in schools.

## **Adolescent Behavior**

Adolescents have specific characteristics that make them unique. The developmental characteristics of young adolescents include seven domains, physical, intellectual, emotional/psychological, moral/ethical, and social (Caskey & Anfara, 2007). During adolescence, students will experience growth and maturity in each of these domains. To fully reach the developmental step, adolescence should have their needs met fully. These needs can be identified in Maslow (1954) hierarchy of needs. Maslow's hierarchy of needs contains five levels, physiological needs, safety needs, belonging needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization needs. The extent to which an adolescent's needs are met and they develop has an impact on their achievement academically and socially. One area a lack of development can be detrimental in is that of peer interactions and bullying.

Bullying in schools is a worldwide problem that can have negative consequences (Banks, 1997). Bullying negatively affects the general school climate and inhibits the right of students to learn in a safe environment without fear. Aside from the school setting, bullying can also have negative lifelong consequences--both for students who bully, the bystanders who observe it, and the students who are the target of bullying behavior. Most formal research on bullying has taken place in the Scandinavian countries, Great Britain, and Japan (Banks, 1997). However, the problem of bullying and its effects has been researched and documented everywhere schooling exist (Banks, 1997).

Bullying encompasses behaviors such as teasing, taunting, intimidating, threatening, hitting, stealing, verbal, physical and psychological abuse by one or more students against a target. In addition to direct harassment, bullying may also be indirect by causing a student to be socially isolated through deliberate exclusion. Boys who bully typically engage in direct

bullying methods, while girls who bully are more likely to employ indirect strategies, such as spreading rumors and enforcing social isolation (Ahmad & Smith, 1994; Smith & Sharp, 1994). The key component of bullying, whether direct or indirect, is that the physical or psychological intimidation occurs repeatedly and over time which results in an ongoing pattern of harassment and abuse (Batsche & Knoff, 1994; Olweus, 1993). The prevalence of bullying in U.S. schools and its severe effects and has prompted an increase in anti-bullying legislation. Between 1999, when the first bullying legislation was passed, and 2010, more than 120 bills that either introduced or amended statutes to address bullying were enacted by state legislatures nationally. (Stuart-Cassell, Bell, & Springer, 2011).

### **Anti-Bullying Legislation and Programs**

Bullying policy became an important issue after the devastation of the 1999 Columbine shootings and an increase in bullying-related suicide. Georgia was the first state to pass bullying legislation (Stuart-Cassell, Bell, & Springer, 2011). Since then there has been an increase in new state legislation to establish school and district policies that define, prevent, and prohibit bullying behavior. Currently, forty-six states have bullying laws and 45 of those mandate that school districts adopt bullying policies (Stuart-Cassell, Bell, & Springer, 2011). In 2007, Missouri required all school districts to adopt and implement a bullying policy in all public schools (Sacco et al., 2012).

Based on these requirements, schools are now moving from traditional bullying policies, which were part of a larger discipline policy, to a separate anti-bullying policy. The traditional policies punished bullying-type behavior, whereas the new policies focus on specific interventions schools use to address bullying. Smith, Smith, and Osborn (2008)

studied the specifics of these anti-bullying policies and found that most of them addressed issues of improving school climate, identifying types of bullying, and developing procedures for notifying parents when bullying incidents occur. Smith, Smith, and Osborn (2008) also found that most of these policies failed to address the responsibilities of district employees, other than teachers, follow-up after bullying incidents occurred, and describe preventative steps in less supervised areas. Additionally, little difference was found between elementary school policies and secondary school policies, despite the fact that the form, frequency, and severity are different in these two settings.

Anti-Bullying policies refer to bullying in a general sense and seldom are cyber bullying and homophobic bullying mentioned. Osher, VanAcker, and Morrison (2004) stated that most schools' anti-bullying policies addressed bullying with disciplinary consequences designed to reduce the probability that the behavior would happen again. However, research reveals the need to promote a positive community, school, family, and peer interactions to mitigate the bullying behavior. This can be addressed with anti-bullying programs. Three well known anti-bullying programs are the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, and Steps to Respect, and the KiVa programs. All three programs have aspects that involve teachers, students, and strengthening the school environment.

The Montana Healthy Schools Network (2005) asserts it is the responsibility of all stakeholders to ensure a safe environment for students. In order to prevent bullying, intimidation, and harassment, schools must develop specific policies which addressed the issues that are currently happening and prevent future incidents. Only through proper policy development can schools ensure a safe environment where teaching and learning can take place.

## **The Teacher's Role in Bullying**

The teacher's role in bullying situations is a unique role that has not been extensively explored. Teachers play a pivotal factor in prevention and intervention of bullying in schools. Teachers are in a position of power and authority. Delpit (1988) proposes five aspects of power:

1. Issues of power are enacted in classrooms.
2. There are codes or rules for participating in power; that is, there is a "culture of power."
3. The rules of the culture of power are a reflection of the rules of the culture of those who have power.
4. 4. If you are not already a participant in the culture of power, being told explicitly the rules of that culture makes acquiring power easier.
5. Those with power are frequently least aware of – or least willing to acknowledge – its existence. Those with less power are often most aware of its existence.  
(p. 282)

Delpit has a realistic understanding of power and the influence of the dominant culture. She knows that students cannot simply ignore the rules of the culture of power, to pretend they do not exist. Delpit (2006) proclaims, "When I speak, therefore, of the culture of power, I don't speak of how I wish things to be but of how they are" (p. 40). The power dynamic in schools skews to the teachers having the power. However, between students, the power dynamics are more fluid. A teacher can influence the balance based on his or her actions. A teacher's power and influence make it easier to halt bullying behavior immediately.

How a teacher's perceived or actual power is exercised and how they intervene on bullying situations depends on the individual teacher. Teachers may use a variety of approaches when it comes to prevention and intervention of bullying behaviors. To prevent bullying, teachers often hold class meetings, teach an anti-bullying program, and address

minor incidents before they repeat and become bullying. Once bullying has begun there are four main strategies available for teachers to utilize when addressing bullying incidents (Jacobson, 2007). Jacobson (2007) describes these strategies as punishment, information based strategies, skills mastery, and incentive strategies.

A teacher's approach is influenced by several factors, including level of skill in mediating bullying situations, attitude towards bullying and aggression, support of school or district anti-bullying policies, perceived seriousness of the incident, and environment. Espelage and Swearer (2008) propose that to reduce bullying behaviors teachers must be adequately skilled in mediating bullying situations through appropriate training that helps them identify bullying behaviors and address such situations. Additionally, teacher's beliefs about bullying can affect how they handle bullying situations, and those who believe in their schools anti-bullying policy are more likely to be committed to its implementation. A teacher's beliefs and actions may also be effected by the perceived seriousness of the situation. When teachers believe that situations are less serious, they are less likely to intervene; when they do intervene, they use more lenient strategies (Yoon & Kerber, 2003). Finally the climate created by the teacher and students will influence the level of bullying in a classroom. Classrooms with more caring climates have less bullying incidents. Kasen et al. (2004) surveyed 500 students from 250 schools on both the school environment and student problem behaviors such as bullying and physical and verbal aggression. In schools where teachers were ineffective in creating an orderly caring environment, there were more instances of defiance, fighting, and bullying (Kasen et al., 2004).

## **The School Leader's Role in Bullying**

School administrators are in a unique position to understand and observe many aspects of bullying. Dillon (2012) explains “School leaders play the key role in connecting the student experience in school to the adult experience so that they can work together ...They must facilitate the change of how bullying is understood and the approach to addressing it” (p. 17).

The phenomenon known as leadership was noted as early as the 12th century, but was not a scientific research topic until the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Bass, 1981). In 1990 Van Seters and Field compiled a detailed description of the major leadership eras throughout history. The major leadership eras are the Personality Era, Influence Era, Behavior Era, Situation Era, Situation Era, Contingency Era, Transactional Era, Anti-Leadership Era, Culture Era, and Transformational Era. These eras often overlapped and contained several periods and different theories within each one.

Currently, three major types of leadership, transactional, transformational, and instructional are popular. Transactional leadership can be easily understood by thinking of it as bartering, while Transformational leadership places a focus on intrinsically motivating people. Instructional leadership instead focuses on the leader being a model and resource for followers. Several studies have been conducted analyzing these leadership styles and their effectiveness.

### **Overview of the Methodology**

I chose to study the experiences of middle school teachers who address bullying. As the researcher, I was the instrument of the research (Patton, 2002). Being the research

instrument allowed me to consider the situation and its components, respond to the context, and adapt the methods and procedures of data collection to best fit the given circumstances. According to Patton (2012), the trustworthiness of the methods used is largely dependent on the skill, competence, and rigor of the research instrument. Maxwell (2013) discusses a more and less structured approach and encourages the researcher to have a tentative plan which gives direction for some aspects, but leaves the researcher with some flexibility to adjust the plan. Echoing this idea, Guest, Mitchell, and Namey (2013) indicate that while some data collection and analysis techniques are more structured than others, qualitative research by nature is inductive and flexible.

This was a qualitative heuristic case study. A case study can focus on an individual, decision, or a program. I have chosen to focus on six individuals for this inquiry. When conducting a case study the researcher must be able to make intelligent decisions about the data being collected. This required knowledge about why the study is being done, what evidence is being sought, what variations can be anticipated, and what would constitute supportive or contrary evidence for any given proposition (Creswell, 2013). The survey or interview designer, myself, also needed to know the purpose of the survey and the nature of the analysis that followed. When utilizing a case study design the researcher should be able to ask good questions, be an attentive listener, be adaptive and flexible, have a firm grasp of the issues being studied, and be unbiased by preconceived notions.

In this heuristic case study the purposeful sampling strategy was incorporated (Patton, 2002). Creswell outlines three considerations that go into the purposeful sampling strategy: selecting participants, specifying the sampling strategy, and choosing the size of the sample to be studied. The site of the study was a middle school serving grades sixth through eighth

in a major Midwestern city. Two sampling strategies were used to identify the participants in this location.

The sampling strategies used to select participants were snowball sampling and intensity sampling. Johnson and Christensen (2008) state snowball sampling is useful when you need to locate members of hard-to-find populations. Creswell (2013) states intensity sampling uses “information-rich cases that manifest the phenomenon intensely but not extremely” (p. 158). By using intensity sampling I was able to find teachers who have had deep experiences with this phenomenon but are not the outliers. While considering which sampling strategies to use, I reflected on Maxwell’s (2005) goals of purposeful selection. Maxwell (2013) identified five possible goals for purposeful selection: to achieve representativeness, to adequately capture the heterogeneity of the population, to select cases that are critical for testing the theories, to establish comparisons to illuminate the reasons for differences between setting or individuals, and to select groups or participants with whom you can establish the most effective relationships.

It was my intent to purposefully select six cases that “manifest the phenomenon” (Creswell, 2013). The six participants were drawn from the larger sixth grade population of 21 classroom teachers. Two participants were male and four were female. One teacher was less than 30 years old, three were between 30 and 50, and two were over 50 years old. These individuals were identified and chosen using snowball sampling and intensity sampling techniques. This small number allowed me to extensively collect data from each individual. When potential participants had been identified they were invited, via email, to take part in the study. Once the participants were selected, negotiating research relationships was an important aspect of conducting research. Maxwell (2013) reports, “the

relationships that you create with participants in your study are an essential part of your methods, and how you initiate and negotiate these relationships is a key design decision” (p. 90).

I collected a variety of data on each of the teachers’ experiences. According to Stake (1995) and Yin (2009), there are six forms of evidence: documentation, archival records, physical artifacts, interviews, direct observations, and participant observations. In this study I utilized documents, interviews, and direct observations. Documents, in the form of the school districts discipline policy and the state’s anti-bullying statute, were gathered to aid in corroborating evidence from other sources. The interviews were conducted individual with each participant. The interviews were in an open-ended format but still used specific questions derived from the case study protocol. Each participant participated in one interview that took approximately 60 minutes. Finally, I conducted direct observations. I observed each participant once. The minimum length was one hour, and I stayed a maximum of two hours to observe the teacher addressing a bullying situation. The exact day and time was decided upon by the participant. I asked participants to consider when they address bullying the most when choosing a date and day of the week. By making a field visit to the case study site, I created the opportunity for direct observations.

As the data were collected they were analyzed. Richards (2009) states data analysis should be done throughout the process because waiting until all data are in is “dangerous.” Moustakas (1990) outlines five steps for heuristic analysis. Immersion is the first state and involved fully emerging oneself into the content. In this phase the research question is lived in waking, sleeping and even dream states. Incubation is the second phase. It involves a deliberate retreat from the intense, concentrated focus and allows the expansion of

knowledge to take place at a more subtle level. Illumination is the phase that involves a breakthrough, a process of awakening that occurs as the research becomes more open and receptive. In this phase themes and patterns emerge. The fourth stage, explication, is when meaning is added to the themes and patterns that have emerged. Further exploration may take place and new connections made. Creative synthesis is the final stage. In this phase the sections of the research have been brought together to communicate the total experience.

Patton (2002) refers to this process in the analysis as coding data and says the first step in analysis is developing some classification or coding system. Analyzing the data I collected involved generic coding analysis to identify themes from each data source. When analyzing the case study, data from these multiple sources was converged in the analysis process rather than handled individually. Each data source was one piece of the “puzzle,” with each piece contributing to my understanding of the whole phenomenon. This union added strength to the findings.

Every form of research comes with limitations. The limitations in this study included the minimal control placed on procedures in heuristic research. As a novice researcher this was a limitation. An additional limitation was presented in the increased researcher bias in this form of inquiry. In heuristic inquiry, importance is placed on the subjective experience of the phenomenon, which increases the researcher’s bias. Validity and reliability were another concern when conducting a heuristic inquiry since the researcher is the primary judge of validity.

## **Significance**

Bullying has recently become a topic of interest to American public school educators due in part to the new trend of school shootings and an increase in media attention on the subject. The U.S. National Center for Education Statistics and U.S. Department of Justice (2009) reported that in 2007 42.9% of sixth grade students reported being bullied. Sixth graders reported the highest incidents of bullying out of all grades. Schools should be safe places where students do not have to fear being bullied and can focus on getting a quality education.

Bullying has a negative influence on children's mental and physical health, so it is important that teachers have a good understanding of bullying behavior and take measures to prevent or stop such behavior (Rigby, 2001). Efforts to resolve and reduce bullying are often centered on the teachers' approaches to both preventing and intervening in bullying incidents. Teachers are instrumental in managing bullying behaviors. Nearly every school's anti-bullying program requires the active participation of teachers to address this problem.

In a study conducted by Fekkes, Pijpers, and Verloove-Vanhorick (2005), 53% of the regularly bullied children told their teacher about the bullying that took place. Once informed, the teachers who attempted to stop the bullying were successful in 49% of the cases. Despite this success rate, studies conducted by Craig and Pepler (1997) reported that teachers intervene to stop bullying in only 4% of bullying incidents. Some possible reasons for this limited intervention may include lack of awareness, skills, and confidence to deal with the incidents. When teachers knew about the bullying, they often tried to stop it. Yet in several cases, the bullying stayed the same or even got worse. This indicates that teachers should learn effective ways to mitigate and solve bullying incidents, and schools should aim

to improve their intervention rate. Organizations and educational training centers like Kidscape in the UK, and APS and KPC in the Netherlands, provide training to teachers on a variety of anti-bullying strategies (Ross, 1993; Elliott, 2002).

Recently many states began mandating that school districts create and adopt anti-bullying policies. School and district policies are written documents that set out the school or district's aims in relation to bullying behavior and strategies used to address and prevent it (Smith, Ananiadou, & Cowie, 2003). Bullying policies are supported by systems and procedures within a school to effectively implement, monitor, maintain, and communicate the policy's aims. As of 2007, the Missouri Revised Statutes Chapter 160 Schools--General Provisions Section 160.77 required all Missouri public school districts to adopt an anti-bullying policy.

At the center of anti-bullying policies are teachers. Teachers' involvement may include planning, implementing, and evaluating strategies. They may be required to attend professional development workshops and conferences to learn more about managing bullying. Teachers are charged with transferring bullying information to their classroom by facilitating student discussions, teaching from a curriculum on bullying, actively looking for incidents on the playground, and supporting the students who are the target of bullying behavior and disciplining the students engaged in bullying behaviors.

The importance of teachers in managing daily bullying problems is emphasized in one of the first bullying program evaluations that examined the process of implementing an anti-bullying program (Beran, 2005). Kallestad and Olweus (2003) found that the most important factors of a program's success in reducing bullying are teachers' knowledge and

concern. Teachers with a vast amount of knowledge and empathy concerning bullying put forth the greatest amount of effort when implementing anti-bullying strategies.

Keeping in mind that the teacher is a major factor in reducing bullying, the target audience for this study was teachers and educational leaders in United States schools. This study informed teachers and educational leaders of the experiences of teachers and possible benefits of various anti-bullying techniques. I sought to explore teacher experiences and to identify potentially the most useful approaches in addressing bullying in the classroom. This study influences how teachers approach bullying and the types of anti-bullying strategies schools use. The results of this study have the opportunity to impact teacher practice and student's experiences through the way bullying behaviors are addressed in the classroom.

In this chapter, I have introduced research project including the problem, purpose, theoretical framework, overview of the methodology, limitations and significance. Chapter 2 includes a review of the relevant literature, which addresses each of the strands of the theoretical framework. Chapter Three contains a more in-depth discussion of the methods and design. This chapter will cover the project's design, including the rationale for qualitative research, the theoretical tradition of heuristics, sampling technique, participants, setting, data sources and analysis plan, and limitations comprised of reliability, validity, and ethical considerations. Chapter 4, the findings, will describe the experiences of the participants and give meaning to the phenomena from the perspective of the teacher participants. The final chapter, Chapter 5, will include conclusions and recommendations as well as implications of the study and suggested future studies.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of six middle school teachers. I attempted to gain insight into their experiences and perspectives on how to disrupt bullying in the classroom. Exploring teacher experiences addressing bullying meant exploring the problem of bullying itself. I used the conceptual concepts of heuristic inquiry, adolescent behaviors, anti-bullying legislation and programs, the teacher's role in bullying and the leader's role in bullying to underpin my research and the problem of bullying during the middle school years. The literature review will address heuristic inquiry, adolescent behaviors, anti-bullying legislation and programs, the teacher's role in bullying and the leader's role in bullying. There is a gap in the literature that explores teachers' experiences' with bullying at the middle school level. The study helps fill that gap.

#### **Heuristic Inquiry**

Heuristics comes from the Greek word *heuriskein*, which mean to discover (Moustakas, 1990). Heuristic methodology was developed by Clark Moustakas. He wrote about this process at length in his 1961 book, *Loneliness*. Heuristic inquiry is an adaptation of phenomenological inquiry but differs in that it explicitly acknowledges the involvement of the researcher. Heuristics is a process of internal searching in which one uncovers the meaning of experiences and process for further investigation (Moustakas, 1990). It is a research method that places experiences above all else. As such, "heuristics is concerned with meanings, not measurements; with essence, not appearance; with quality, not quantity; with experience, not behavior" (Douglass & Moustakas, 1984, p. 42). It is deeply rooted in

tacit knowledge, which leads to subjective and creative connections between the researcher and phenomenon (Sela-Smith, 2002). In a heuristic study, a researcher focuses on meaning and relationships that underpin the question being investigated. Known as the father of heuristics, Moustakas (1990) describes this as “The focus in a heuristic quest is on recreation of the lived experience; full and complete depictions of the experience from the frame of reference of the experiencing person” (p. 39).

The researcher plays a principal role in the heuristic process. According to Moustakas (1990), “In heuristics, an unshakable connection exists between what is out there, in its appearance and reality, and what is within me in reflective thought, feeling, and awareness” (p. 12). Unlike other research methodologies, Heuristic inquiry does not exclude the researcher from the study but instead incorporates the researcher’s experiences in to the study. The researcher is the central point around which the process rotates. So important is the researcher to this method of inquiry, that he or she must have a direct, personal connection to the phenomenon. Additionally, the heuristic research process is not one that can be forced or bound by time constraints. In this line of thought Moustakas (1990) asserts, “the heuristic research process is not one that can be hurried or timed by the clock or calendar” (p. 14). Though free flowing in time, heuristic inquiry is grounded in six core concepts and six phases.

### **Heuristic Concepts**

Moustakas (1990) claims heuristic research begins with a question or phenomenon that needs to be illuminated which represents a search that involves seven concepts. These concepts are utilized throughout the entire heuristic process. The seven concepts are

identifying with the focus of inquiry, self-dialogue, tacit knowing, intuition, indwelling, focusing, and the internal frame of reference.

**Identifying with the focus of inquiry.** The first task that must be undertaken in any investigation is that of identifying a research question. The question will relate to something that is deeply connected to the researcher. So intimate is this topic, that Moustakas describes it as “a question that is strongly connected to one’s own identity and selfhood” (p. 40). Beyond a strong connection, the researcher must also truly understand the question and what is at the heart of it. According to Moustakas (1990) “through exploratory open-ended inquiry, self-directed search, and immersion in active experiences, one is able to get inside the question, become one with it, and thus achieve an understanding of it” (p. 15). In the beginning the researcher may not know or realize understand the question fully, but through the aforementioned process a clearer more intimate understanding will be reached.

**Self-dialogue.** Self-dialogue is the second concept. Self-dialogue involves speaking to the phenomenon being researched, and allowing it to speak to you. “Self-dialogue is the critical beginning; the recognition that if one is going to be able to discover the constituents and qualities that make up an experience, one must begin with oneself” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 16). This is an important beginning step because it represents recognition of the researcher’s connection to the phenomenon.

**Tacit knowledge.** A third concept is tacit knowledge. “Underlying all other concepts in heuristic research, at the base of all heuristic discovery, is the power and revelation in tacit knowledge” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 20). Tacit knowledge allows us to understand the

wholeness of something, by recognizing and understanding its individual parts. This concept is essential to all other concepts and process in heuristic research. “When we curtail the tacit in research, we limit possibilities for knowing. We restrict the potential for new awareness and understanding” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 22). Tacit knowledge represents all one’s possessed knowledge that we cannot describe or explain. Polanyi (1964) describes two elements of tacit knowledge, the subsidiary and the focal. Subsidiary knowledge attracts immediate attention but is secondary in importance to the focal elements, which are unseen and less predominant. The subsidiary and focal must both be present to create a whole experience (Polanyi, 1964). Once tacit knowledge becomes explicit, the full description of the phenomenon is likely to take place.

**Intuition.** Intuition is the link between our explicit knowledge and our tacit knowledge. Intuition is one of the essential features of searching for knowledge (Moustakas, 1990). Intuition allows the researcher to recognize the immediate knowledge and it increases the probability of advanced perception and understanding. “In intuition, from the subsidiary or observable factors, one utilizes an internal capacity to make inferences and arrive at a knowledge of underlying structures or dynamics” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 23). Intuition is what you know in your gut. It is what you is true or right solely based on your feelings. Intuition plays a pivotal role in several phases of the inquiry process. Moustakas (1990) describes this by writing, “Intuition guides the researcher in discovery of patterns and meanings that will lead to enhanced meanings, and deepen and extended knowledge” (p. 24). In this sense, intuition aids the researcher in knowing what the true meanings of experiences are.

**Indwelling.** Indwelling is the concept that most involves looking inside yourself as the researcher and a person who has an intimate connection with the phenomenon. Moustakas (1990) refers to indwelling as the “heuristic process of turning inward to seek a deeper, more extended comprehension of the nature or meaning of a quality or theme of human experience” (p. 24). Indwelling allows the researcher to consciously and purposefully gain insight. Continuous self-searching and analysis is an illuminating but heavy process.

**Focusing.** Focusing is another key concept in heuristic inquiry. Focusing is much what it sounds like, explicit purposeful attention being given to something. Focusing is used in several ways including “clearing of an inward space to enable one to tap into thoughts and feelings that are essential to clarifying a question; getting a handle on the question; elucidating its constituents; making contact with core themes; and explicating the themes” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 25)

**Internal frame of reference.** The internal frame of reference is the base for all knowledge (Moustakas, 1990). An individual’s internal frame of reference is comprised of their internal experience of the phenomena. All meaning and interpretation of data is colored by the researcher’s internal frame of reference. Moustakas (1990) says “to know and understand the nature, meanings, and essences of any human experience one depends on the internal frame of reference of the person who has had, is having, or will have the experience” (p. 26). Your internal frame of reference is the point or experience form which you base all other experiences. Each person relates everything they encounter to something they have already previously encountered, as a frame of reference.

## **The Six Phases of Heuristic Inquiry**

The previous seven concepts are essential to conducting heuristic research but are not the actual process. However, these concepts are important because they each play a role in the heuristic inquiry process. Heuristic research has six phases that guide and comprise the research investigation. The six phases of heuristic research are; initial engagement, immersion, incubation, illumination, explication, and creative synthesis (Moustakas, 1990).

**Initial engagement.** The first step in the heuristic process is initial engagement. During the initial engagement phase the researcher discovers a problem or questions he or she has a great interest in. Moustakas (1990) asserts that this topic already resides in the researcher, writing “within each researcher exists a topic, theme, problem, or question that represents a critical interest and area of search... a passionate concerns that calls out to the researcher, one that holds important meanings, and personal compelling implications” (p. 27). This process involves inner searching and dialogue to find what is of true interest to the researcher. During this time the researcher immerses into self- dialogue and extensive self- exploration to discover and utilize their tacit awareness and intuition, which aids in the formation of the research question (Moustakas, 1990). A research question is unique and contains specific characteristics. Moustakas (1990) provides a list of five elements of a heuristic research question.

1. It seeks to reveal more fully the essence of meaning of a phenomenon of human experience
2. It seeks to discover the qualitative aspects, rather than quantitative dimensions of the phenomenon
3. It engages one’s total self and evokes a personal and passionate involvement and active participation in the process
4. It does not seek to predict or to determine casual relationships.

5. It is illuminated through careful descriptions, illustrations, metaphors, poetry, dialogue, and other creative renderings rather than by measurements, ratings, or scores. (p. 42)

An effective heuristic research question will meet all five criteria. Once an initial question has been defined, the research can move onto phase two.

**Immersion.** Phase two of heuristic inquiry is known as the immersion phase. During this period, the researcher allows the topic to engulf his or her life. The researcher becomes one with the topic and question. The relationship from the researcher to the topic can be likened to that of a young girl eagerly waiting for someone to bring up her boyfriend in conversation. Moustakas (1990) describes this as “the researcher is alert to all possibilities for meaning and enters fully into life with others whenever the theme is being expressed...anything connected with the question becomes raw material for immersion” (p. 28). During this phase a researcher remains focused and concentrated on the topic. Like initial engagement, this phase involves self-reflection and self-searching to more fully understand the research question. To stay focused and connected with the question, the researcher will often engage in “spontaneous self-dialogue and self-searching, pursuing intuitive clues and hunches, and drawing from the mystery and sources of energy and knowledge within the tacit dimension” (p. 28). After the intense focus of the immersion process comes a time of retreat known as incubation.

**Incubation.** Incubation is the third phase of heuristic inquiry. During this phase the researcher transfers his or her focus and thoughts away from the intense immersion with the question, from the previous stage. The researcher becomes detached from the phenomenon

under investigation. Incubation can be thought of as forgetting in order to remember.

Polanyi (1964) stated that a discovery does not happen through intentional searching. When one stops focusing on the problem, a solution illuminates itself. According to Moustakas (1990),

Incubation is the process in which the researcher retreats from the intense, concentrated focus on the question. Although the researcher is moving on a totally different path, detached from involvement with the question and removed from awareness of its nature and meaning, on another level expansion of knowledge is taking place. (p. 28)

During incubation, the tacit dimension and intuition continue to be at work to clarify understanding (Moustakas, 1990). There is no set time period for this process, instead the question being researched continues to grow in the researcher's mind until he or she is ready for the illumination phase.

**Illumination.** The fourth step in heuristic inquiry is illumination. Illumination naturally develops once the researcher becomes fully open to tacit knowledge and intuition (Moustakas, 1990). Illumination is like the ah-ha moment, when the light bulb goes on in your head. It is during this time when relevant themes begin to emerge from the data and take form. "The illumination as such is breakthrough into conscious awareness of qualities and clustering of qualities into themes inherent in the constituents of the experience" (Moustakas, 1990). This breakthrough occurs when the researcher is in an open state of mind and receptive to new knowledge and possibilities. Once illumination occurs, the explication process, a more in-depth form of illumination, begins.

**Explication.** Explication is the fifth process in heuristic inquiry. In this phase the researcher attempts to explain the deeper meanings of the experiences and themes that surfaced during the illumination phase. “The concentrated, heavy work of heuristic research is part of the demand of the explication process, a process through which one gathers detailed life experiences related to the qualities and constituents of the phenomenon under investigation” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 24). It is in this phase that the researcher employs the concepts of focusing, indwelling, self-searching, self-dialogue and internal frame of reference, which allows for recognition of the uniqueness of experiences (Moustakas, 1990). Like the other phases of heuristic inquiry, with the exception of incubation, the researcher must stay in tuned to their thoughts. Throughout the explication phase it is necessary that the researcher “attend to their own awareness’s, feelings, thoughts, beliefs, and judgments as a prelude to the understanding that is derived from conversations and dialogues with others” (Moustakas, 1990, 31). This leads to the development of core themes. In addition, new views, alternative explanations, and new patterns are identified. These themes provide meaning and are the essence of the research participants’ experiences.

**Creative Synthesis.** The final stage in heuristic inquiry is the creative synthesis page. Creative synthesis involves combining the core themes and material that answer the research question. The presentation of this information can take several forms. “This usually takes the form of a narrative depiction utilizing verbatim material and examples, but it may be expressed as a poem, story, drawing, painting, or by some other creative form” (Moustakas, 1990, 32). Creating a creative synthesis is the concluding step in heuristic inquiry.

Completion of the creation of a meaningful synthesis is not the end of the heuristic study. As a final step, the researcher must engage in focusing, recognizing the elements of the experience that were out of the researcher's consciousness, related to his or her personal growth, insight, and change. (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985; Moustakas, 1990).

### **Limitations**

The heuristic inquiry paradigm has many strengths but it also has limitations. One element that could be a hindrance to novice researchers is the minimal control placed on procedures. While heuristics does have definitive steps, there are not specific guidelines which must be followed as in other forms of research. In addition, heuristic methodology requires the researcher to have a solid knowledge in the philosophy of heuristics, which may be a difficult process for inexperienced researchers (Creswell, 1998).

Another limitation lies in the increased researcher bias in this form of inquiry. Importance is placed on the subjective experience of the phenomenon, which increases the researcher's bias. The identified themes, a synthesis of the co-researchers experiences, are interpreted through the researcher. Having a direct experience of the phenomenon may influence the study and interpretation of the findings.

Validity and reliability are another concern when conducting a heuristic inquiry. Moustakas (1990) asserts that unlike qualitative research, a heuristic inquiry's validity cannot be "determined by correlations or statistics" (p. 32). To ensure validity in a heuristic study, the researcher needs to be concerned with meaning, as the researcher is the primary judge of validity (Moustakas, 1990). To ensure validity, the researcher should repeatedly revisit the data to ensure the meanings and essence of the participant experiences were captured. The

participants experiences' will be captured in the teachers' own educational environment which will additionally increase the validity of the research.

## **Adolescent Behavior**

### **Adolescent Characteristics**

Adolescence is a distinct and transitional period of marked by growth, development, and needs that are unique to this age group. Adolescence begins with the onset of puberty which usually begins at age 10 to 15, but can begin as early as eight (Caskey & Anfara, 2007). Adolescence ends when a person reaches young adulthood. This is a period when a person reaches full physical and developmental maturity, usually occurring between 17 and 21 years of age.

The concept of early adolescence gained acceptance and development in the 20th century. The interest in early adolescence began when the American psychologist, Hall (1904), studied and acknowledged preadolescence as a unique growth stage. Influenced by Hall's work, later psychologists and theorists further developed early adolescence and other developmental stages (Flavell, 1963; Piaget, 1960). Young adolescents are defined in as those students who are 10 to 15 years old (National Middle School Association, 2003). The term adolescence and young adolescents will be referred to interchangeably in this dissertation, but will always refer to people in the 10 to 15 year old age range.

The developmental characteristics of young adolescents include seven domains, physical, intellectual, emotional/psychological, moral/ethical, and social (Caskey & Anfara, 2007). These developmental domains are interconnected and often occur concurrently. According to Scales (2003), the categories can vary and be somewhat arbitrary depending on

who is writing about adolescent stages. For the purpose of this study, the seven domains previously mentioned will be used.

**Physical developmental characteristics.** One developmental characteristic in young adolescence is physical. Physical development includes better gross and fine motor skills, biological maturation, and physical growth including increases in height, weight, internal organ size, and changes in skeletal and muscular systems (Kellough & Kellough, 2008). The commencement of young adolescents varies and growth is accelerated and uneven (Kellough & Kellough, 2008). Girls tend to mature one to two years earlier than boys do (Bramen et al., 2011). The start of adolescence begins with puberty. Puberty is a phase of physiological changes including development of sexual reproductive systems (Manning & Bucher, 2005). Highly visible changes like these and unequal rates of maturity cause many young adolescents to feel uncomfortable about their physical development (Simmons & Blyth, 1987).

**Intellectual developmental characteristics.** Intellectual development is another characteristic of adolescence. When people develop intellectually their ability to understand, reason, and abstract thinking increases as well as their metacognition (Kellough & Kellough, 2008; Piaget, 1960). Archetypally, young adolescents prefer to learn about topics they find interesting, desire active learning experiences and interactions with peers during educational activities (Kellough & Kellough, 2008). During adolescence there is typically an increase in ability to analyze abstract concepts, argue a point, question authority, think about the future, anticipate needs, and develop personal goals (Kellough & Kellough, 2008; Stevenson, 2002).

While intellectual development is not as outwardly visible physical changes adolescence go through, the changes can be just as extreme (Stevenson, 2002).

Intellectual development is influenced by experience. Adolescence build upon their experiences and prior knowledge to interpret and process world around them (Piaget, 1960). While they use their experience to understand their current situations, adolescence still have difficulty anticipating future outcomes and the relationships between their behavior and potential risks.

**Moral and ethical developmental characteristics.** Another development of adolescent occurs in their moral and ethical characteristics. Development in this area is around a person's ability to make hard choices. Adolescence are usually idealistic and have a focus on fairness (Kellough & Kellough, 2008). During this time, adolescence evolve from a more self-centered perspective to considering others feelings (Scales, 2003). Additionally during this period, adolescence stop blindly accepting the moral and ethical guidelines of others and begin developing their own values.

**Emotional and psychological developmental characteristics.** Yet another area of growth occurs with adolescence emotional and psychological characteristics. Emotional skills include the ability to exhibit appropriate emotions in a given to situation, the ability to monitor one's own emotions, and the ability to control or regulate those emotions (Salkind, 2005). It is during this time that people begin seeking more independence and a desire to form their own identity. Adolescence are searching for an identity that is their own, is acceptable by adults, and is condoned by their peers (Kellough & Kellough, 2008).

Adolescence become more aware of how they compare to others and may experience more vulnerable feelings during this search for identity (Scales, 2003). According to Salkind (2005),

Because they are keenly aware of their own body image and are sensitive to the criticism of others, the high incidence of bullying and teasing that occurs at this age can have a significant impact on how the young adolescent feels about himself or herself and responds to his or her environment. (p. 32)

These peer interactions can make navigating through emotions even more complex. Young adolescence are characteristically moody, self-conscious, sensitive, and inconsistent in their behavior (Kellough & Kellough, 2008). In difficult situations people of this age can vary between extremely rational responses very childish behavior. Young adolescence are also more likely to view things in terms of right or wrong, black or white, and they are apt to believe that their experiences, feelings, and problems are unique (Scales, 2003). During adolescence, students feel a wide variety of emotions which can be very daunting to deal with.

**Social developmental characteristics.** The final characteristic is social development. Social development refers to the level of social skills a person has and that person's ability to interact with others. Social skills include the ability to develop and maintain friendships, have appropriate interpersonal relationships with others, the ability to be empathetic and selfless Salkind (2005) states that "Social skills also include the adolescent's ability to adopt the moral values of his or her culture and of the greater society" (p. 32). Because of differing cultures, one person's social skills may look different from someone from a different culture. People will try to abide by the socially acceptable norms of

their peer group and culture. As peer approval becomes increasingly more important and the need for adult approval decreases, adolescents will feel a stronger need to belong to a peer group importance (Scales, 2003).

Young adolescents try on different personalities by emulating their peers and non-familial adults. However, the family values and norms remain a critical factor in final decision-making (Kellough & Kellough, 2008). This is due to the fact that while adolescence may rebel against their parents, they still depend on them for their basic needs. Additionally, social maturity typically develops slower than physical and intellectual maturity (Caskey & Anfara, 2007). This can easily be seen in middle schools, where what look like fully physically enveloped men and women behaving in socially inappropriate ways are in actuality young adolescence who have not developed socially and emotionally as quickly as they have physically.

Young adolescence have a unique set of developmental characteristics. Humans will go through changes more rapidly in this period of life than any other, except infancy. With these developmental changes, adolescence will need to be educated in multiple areas.

Dewey (1916) believed the whole child should be educated, socially, emotionally, physically, and intellectually. This belief sparked what is known as the whole child movement. The whole-child movement advocates that education must move beyond preparing students to become citizens who are productive; it must also nurture and grow children's creativity, imagination, compassion, self-knowledge, social skills, spirituality, respect for the environment, and sense of social justice (Noddings, 2005). According to the Commission on the Whole Child (2007), the whole child is "intellectually active; physically, verbally, socially, and academically competent; empathetic, kind, caring, and fair; creative

and curious; disciplined, self-directed, and goal oriented; free; a critical thinker; confident; and cared for and valued” (p. 10). To fully educate adolescents in all of these domains, they have certain needs that must be met to insure they grow and develop fully.

Meeting needs on a variety of levels was first introduced by psychologist Abraham Maslow (1954) with his concept of a hierarchy of needs. Maslow’s hierarchy of needs contains five levels, physiological needs, safety needs, belonging needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization needs. Maslow postulates that people are motivated to fulfill basic needs before moving on to other needs. The first two levels are known as deficiency needs, needs meaning that these needs arise due to deprivation (Swayne & Dodds, 2011). The highest three needs, are growth needs. Growth needs stem from the desire to grow in relationships and as a person.

### **Adolescent Needs**

The most basic needs are physiological needs. Physiological needs encompass what your body needs for survival, such as air, water, and food (Swayne & Dodds, 2011). In adolescence people start to fulfill these needs independently. While an adolescents parents may still provide food, he or she can now cook and feed themselves. Once the physiological needs have been met, then a person can address security needs.

“Security needs include an individual’s motivation to secure a safe environment, such as adequate shelter, clothing, and a steady income” (Swayne & Dodds, 2011, p. 871). The fulfillment of security needs allows for an individual’s progression to higher levels of the hierarchy. The majority of security needs during adolescents are still met by adults (Cherry, 2011). While adolescents are not seeking the security of health insurance or employment,

they may begin to be more aware of their safety as they transition to a middle school environment which forces students to be independent of teacher supervision more frequently.

As a person progress up Maslow's pyramid, needs become increasingly psychological and social. The third level in Maslow's hierarchy of needs is social. Social needs include the need for relationships, acceptance from peers, sense of community, and love (Maslow & Frager, 1987; Swayne & Dodds, 2011). These needs are fulfilled through friendships and families, and in adolescence increasing through romantic attachments. During this time, young adolescence start to feel the need for romantic relationships and are beginning to explore the details of being in an intimate relationship (Cherry, 2011). Additionally, involvement in social, religious, or community groups can help fulfill this need for companionship and acceptance. This segues to the higher level of esteem needs.

Once the physiological, safety, and social needs have been satisfied, a person's esteem needs becomes increasingly important (Maslow & Frager, 1987). Esteem needs are comprised of both self-esteem and esteem from others. Esteem needs include for things that reflect on self-esteem, personal worth, social recognition and accomplishment. Esteem needs are seen through an individual's desire and actions to achieve both social and career recognition, through personal advancement (Swayne & Dodds, 2011).

Young adolescents are sensitive when it comes to esteem needs. As they are spending more time with peers they can begin to place higher value on what others think of them. A study done by Laible, Carlo, & Roesch (2004) found relationships with peers were significantly related to adolescents' reports of self-esteem. Similarly, research has found a strong link between supportive parenting practices and high levels of self-esteem in adolescence (Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg, & Dornbusch, 1991).

The highest level on Maslow's hierarchy of needs is self-actualization. When individuals reach this stage they have self-awareness and are concerned with personal growth and meeting their full potential. Even if all of the prior four level needs are satisfied, a person may feel restless they are not doing what they were fitted for (Maslow, 1987). For example, a person who is meant to be an artist would need to make art to help fulfill this need.

Silverman (2011) says of self-actualization, "Self-actualization needs are unique and they can never be fully satisfied or fulfilled...According to theory, the more self-actualization needs are fulfilled, the stronger they become. This is why a stop condition is required to decide the near-optimal solution" (p. 2012). This stage is often hard to navigate in adolescence because they are still learning new skills and developing their interests.

### **Well-Being and Academic Achievement**

When adolescence have all their needs met and are able to develop appropriately, they are able to achieve more to their full potential. Several studies have demonstrated an association between well-being and school success (Gilman & Huebner, 2003). A study conducted by Fleming, Haggerty, Brown, Catalano, et al., (2005) provided evidence that students who receive interventions that strengthen their social, emotional, and decision-making skills positively impact their academic achievement, in terms of higher standardized test scores and better grades. A multiple methods study that assessed 8-12 year olds after 7, 10, and 20 years found that children's developmental competence is integral to their academic competence (Masten et al., 2005).

Wentzel (1993) conducted a study specifically with adolescence. Wentzel's study looked at the prosocial and antisocial behaviors of 423 students in 6th and 7th grade students.

The study examines these behaviors in relations to GPA and standardized test scores.

Wentzel (1993) found that prosocial and antisocial behavior are significantly related to GPA and standardized test scores. The results from the study suggested that both types of social behavior are significant, independent predictors of classroom grades. These behaviors can also lead to bullying behaviors.

### **Bullying Behaviors**

Bullying is a widespread problem in our schools and communities. It has a negative impact on school climate and on students' experiences and academic performance. The first landmark study on bullying was conducted in the 1970's in Norway by Olweus. Olweus' research led to anti-bullying prevention and intervention programs that developed in the 1980's and 1990's. This initial study serves as a foundation for modern research and still influences programs currently being developed.

According to Olweus (1996) a student is the target of bullying when he or she is "exposed, repeatedly and over time," to abuse or harassment by one or more persons. A person engages in bullying behavior to gain power over other individuals. Students exhibiting bullying behaviors engage in hurtful behavior against those who cannot defend themselves because of size or strength, or because the target is outnumbered or less psychologically resilient (U.S. Department of Justice, 2009; Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 2001; Olweus, 1993).

The six main forms of bullying are physical, verbal, racial, sexual, psychological, and cyber-bullying. A full description of these forms are located in Appendix B. Physical bullying includes hitting, kicking, spitting, pushing, stealing, and destruction of property

(Crick, 1997; Casas & Mosher, 1997; Rigby, Cox, & Black, 1997; Samnani, 2013; Thompson & Sharp, 1998; Wang, Iannotti, & Nansel, 2009; Wang, Iannotti, & Luk, 2012). Verbal bullying involves mockery, taunting, malicious teasing, name-calling, and threatening (Crick, 1997; Casas & Mosher, 1997; Rigby, Cox, & Black, 1997; Samnani, 2013; Thompson & Sharp, 1998; Wang, Iannotti, & Nansel, 2009; Wang, Iannotti, & Luk, 2012). Sexual bullying singles out a person because of gender and demonstrates unwarranted or unwelcome sexual behavior. Sexual bullying can take the form of sexual comments, abusive comments, or unwanted physical contact. Racial bullying involves gestures, racial slurs or taunts, name calling, making fun of customs, skin color, accent, food choices, rejection or isolation of a person because of ethnicity. Psychological bullying is usually the most subtle form of bullying and most difficult to stop. Psychological bullying can involve spreading rumors, manipulating social relationships, humiliation, excluding one from a peer group, extortion, and intimidation (Crick, 1997; Casas & Mosher, 1997; Rigby, Cox, & Black, 1997; Samnani, 2013; Thompson & Sharp, 1998; Wang, Iannotti, & Nansel, 2009; Wang, Iannotti, & Luk, 2012). Cyber bullying can encompass the previous forms. Cyber bullying is when one child torments, threatens, harasses, humiliates, embarrasses or otherwise targets another child using the Internet, interactive and digital technologies, or mobile phones. The most frequent form of bullying is verbal abuse and harassment, whether in person or through technology, followed by social isolation and deprecating comments about a person's physical appearance (Shellard, 2002). What and how adolescent characteristics are developed, to what extent their needs are met, and academic achievement can all play a role in what extent a student's exhibits bullying behaviors or becomes the target of bullying behaviors.

## **Facts About Bullying**

Bullying has been a consistent problem throughout the world. The World Health Organization's Health Behavior in School-aged Children (HBSC) study in 2006 had some countries reporting adolescent bullying as low as 3% and others ranging up to a high of 33%. The HBSC survey in the spring of 1998 revealed that a total of 29.9% of students in the sample reported moderate or frequent involvement in bullying. Frequently students in grades six through 10 are involved in bullying as a perpetrator, target, or both (Nansel et al., 2001; Harris & Willoughby, 2003; Cohn & Canter, 2003; Bowman, 2001; Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 2001). Researchers from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) report that 13% of students say they bully other students, 11% report being bullied, and 6% say they are both bullies and targets (Nansel et. al, 2001). Harris (2005) found that students in grades eight through 12 were involved in frequent bullying 20% of the time as either bullies or targets. On average, bullying tends to increase through the elementary grades, peaking in middle school, and dropping off by grades 11 and 12 in High School (Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 2001; Olweus, 1993).

Bullying occurs in the classroom, but is often more prevalent in less supervised areas such as hallways, locker rooms, cafeterias and bus stops (Shellard, 2002). Both boys and girls are involved in bullying. While boys and girls can be both bullies and targets, most research indicates that boys are more likely than girls to be involved in any aspect of bullying (Cohn & Canter, 2003; Nansel et al., 2001; Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 2001).

Boys who bully use more physical forms of aggression, while girls who bully often use more subtle forms such as teasing and social exclusion. It has been found that girls are

more likely to bully other girls while boys bully both boys and girls (Nansel et al., 2001; Hoover & Oliver, 1996). Few differences have been found in involvement in bullying based on race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status. According to the Indicators of School Crime and Safety Report (2004), white students, at eight percent, were slightly more likely than Hispanic and Black students, at six percent, to report being bullied.

### **Students Engaged in Bullying Behaviors**

Students engaged in bullying behaviors have been found to be more aggressive than their peers (Olweus, 1978, Roland & Idsoe, 2001). Depressive systems have been suggested as another factor that increases bullying, but a study by Roland (2002) suggests that depression is not a cause of bullying but rather a correlate to aggression. Parente and Mahoney (2009) explored some of the risk factors for children's aggression, which included residential mobility and neighborhood crime. Change in residence is a common experience among children. Moving has been identified as a risk associated with behavioral and emotional problems, which can often be expressed through aggressive behavior (Parente & Mahoney, 2009). Exposure to neighborhood crime and violence also increases the risk of aggression in children (Parente & Mahoney, 2009). Parente and Mahoney state that children exposed to neighborhood crime and violence are "more likely to show poor social functioning, including increased rates of aggression and psychological distress" (2009, p. 561).

Farmer and Xie (2007) analyzed the social dynamics of aggression to reveal that aggressive students' peers do not reject approximately 50% of aggressive youth. A common conception of aggressive youth is that they are socially unskilled and marginalized (Farmer

& Xie, 2007). Research has shown that their peers do often not reject the aggressive youths, but instead become bullies and are associated with power held around their peer group (Farmer & Xie, 2007). Farmer and Xie (2007) noted that socially skilled students who use aggression and bully other students are often motivated by the need to establish dominance or to prevent further transgressions.

Students engaged in bullying behaviors repeatedly engage in physical aggression, teasing, name-calling, or intimidation. This is usually directed at those who are smaller or less able to defend themselves. Students engaged in bullying behaviors Students engaged in bullying behaviors often view themselves as superior to other students and fault others for being weak or different. It is common for students exhibiting these behaviors to show aggressive behavior toward both peers and adults (Blazer, 2005). Students engaged in bullying behaviors generally have positive attitudes toward violence, are impulsive, like to feel in control, and have little sympathy for the person they are targeting. They may have a yearning for power and control.

Contrary to common assumptions, Students engaged in bullying behaviors generally have average or even high levels of self-esteem (Shellard, 2002; Olweus, 1993). Students engaged in bullying behaviors can be popular with both teachers and classmates and may also perform well in school (Shellard, 2002; Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 2001; Olweus, 1993). Some children will start to bully in an effort to fit in with their peers. Certain groups of children may support or promote bullying behaviors, making those behaviors the group norm (Cohn & Canter, 2003; Shellard, 2002). Studies indicate that homes where physical punishment is used, where children are taught to strike back physically as a way to handle problems, and where parental involvement and warmth are lacking, are

more likely to create children who transfer this behavior to school and engage in bullying behaviors, directing their actions towards targets (Cohn & Canter, 2003).

### **Students Who Are the Targets of Bullying Behavior**

Students who the bullying behaviors are directed towards are known as targets. Some studies have found that students who are the target of bullying behaviors are not bullied more based on their physical appearance such as wearing glasses or obesity, but instead below average physical size and strength is the only physical characteristic that increases a student's chance for being bullied (Blazer, 2005). Students who are the target of bullying behaviors are characteristically more apprehensive, have low self-esteem, are insecure, cautious, quiet, shy, and sensitive (Boulton & Smith, 1994; Olweus, 1994; Mynard & Joseph, 1997). They appear to be weak and easy to dominate which makes them targets for students who engage in bullying behaviors (Shellard, 2002; Banks, 1997; Kreidler, 1996).

Most students who are the target of bullying behaviors subconsciously portray their insecure feelings and passivity. Students who are the target of bullying behaviors often characterized as people who will not retaliate if attacked. Studies show that students who are the target of bullying behavior have parents and school personnel with a higher level of over-protectiveness of them than is experienced by their peers. Because of this over-protectiveness, students who are the target of bullying behaviors often lack in developing coping skills to use in peer conflict situations. Students who are the target of bullying behaviors often strive to gain acceptance from their bullies and continue to attempt to interact and make connection even after being exposed to bullying (Cohn & Canter, 2003).

Students who are the target of bullying behavior usually have few or no close friends and are socially isolated or ostracized in the setting in which they are bullied (Boulton & Smith, 1994; Salmivalli, 1998). They will often try to be near adults who they feel can protect them, avoid unsupervised areas where bullying can occur, or stay home from school (Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 2001; Olweus, 1993).

Students who are the target of bullying behaviors often are anxious, depressed, have low self-esteem, are rejected by peers, and often lack friends (Hawker & Boulton, 2000; Sainio, Veenstra, Huitsing, & Salmivalli, 2011; Salmivalli & Isaacs, 2005). These students often have difficulty concentrating on their teachers and work. Their academic performance may decline as a result of their lack of concentration. Students who are the target of bullying behaviors generally have higher than normal absenteeism when compared to uninvolved students. They can have trouble making social and emotional connections to others, difficulty relating to others, and poor relationships with peers (Blazer, 2005). A student who is the target of bullying behaviors is often subjected to humiliation, experience more insecurity, and may ultimately develop a fear of going to school.

**Students who exhibit and are the target of bullying behaviors.** Students who exhibit and are the target of bullying behaviors are children and adolescents that are involved in both the bullying role and the target role. Students who exhibit and are the target of bullying behaviors are different from students who are categorized as only engaged in bullying behaviors or students who are only the target of bullying behavior. Students who exhibit and are the target of bullying behaviors report less power relation structures in the family than that of students engaged in bullying behaviors or students who are the target of

bullying behavior (Kaltiala-Heino et al., 2000). These children have contradictory views of themselves. They view themselves as being powerful and as having many negative traits in social, emotional, physical, and intellectual areas. Students who exhibit and are the target of bullying behaviors have lower levels of social acceptance and higher levels of neuroticism and psychoticism (Mynard & Joseph, 1997). Though they straddle both categories, these children are generally more like students engaged in bullying behaviors than students who are the target of bullying behavior (Mynard & Joseph, 1997). Students who exhibit and are the target of bullying behaviors are often rejected by peers in a way that is different from students who are the target of bullying behavior because they are proactive and will initiate arguments (Bowers, Smith, & Binney, 1992). Students who exhibit and are the target of bullying behaviors have a combination of anxiety and aggression and often have problems concentrating in school, which attracts negative attention to them from their peers (Olweus, 1994, 2001b).

### **Social, Emotional, Physical, and Intellectual Effects of Bullying Behaviors**

Bullying has long-term academic, physical, and emotional effects on both students who are the target of bullying behavior and students engaged in bullying behaviors. In a study done by Kaltiala-Heino et al. (2000), 17,643 students in 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade completed a survey about their experiences with bullying and the effects it had on them. Girls who were involved in bullying in some way had a higher likelihood of experiencing depression, anxiety, eating disorders, drug use, and excessive psychosomatic symptoms. Boys who were involved in bullying had an increased likelihood of frequent excessive drinking (Kaltiala-Heino et al., 2000). Depression and anxiety were more prevalent in bully-targets and equally

common in students engaged in bullying behaviors and students who are the target of bullying behavior (Kaltiala-Heino et al., 2000). Excessive drinking and substance abuse were most common among students engaged in bullying behaviors, followed by bully-targets, and then students who are the target of bullying behavior. Bully-targets had the highest incident of depression, anxiety, eating disorders and psychosomatic symptoms (Kaltiala-Heino et al., 2000).

Additional researchers have found similar findings. Fekkes, Pijpers, Fredriks, et al. (2006) found that children who were the target of bullying behaviors are more likely than their uninvolved peers to develop physical problems such as stomach pain, sleep problems, headaches, tension, bedwetting, fatigue, and poor appetite after having experienced bullying. Additionally, Gini and Pazzoli (2009) discovered that children who were the target of bullying behaviors are more likely than their uninvolved peers to develop psychosomatic problems. Evidence also exists that suggests involvement in bullying behaviors may affect the academic work of adolescents. Students who are the target of bullying behaviors are more likely than uninvolved peers to have higher absenteeism rates dislike school, and say that they receive poorer grades and lower standardized test scores (Smith, Talamelli, Cowie, et al., 2004; Eisenberg, Neumark-Sztainer, & Perry, 2003). Children and adolescents who exhibit bullying behaviors are also more likely than noninvolved peers to experience psychosomatic problems and academic difficulties (Gini & Pazzoli, 2009; Cook, Williams, Guerra, et al., 2010). These factors further complicate successfully navigating through school both socially and academically. Ten percent of high school dropouts reported fear of being bullied as the number one reason for not returning to school (Greenbaum, Turner, & Stephens, 1988; Hoover & Oliver, 1996; Weinhold & Weinhold, 1998).

The development of communication technologies has spurred further bullying. Livingstone, Haddon, Gorzog, and Olafsson (2011), conducted a study of 25,142 children aged nine to 16 years; they found 93% of children and adolescents use the Internet at least weekly and 60% daily. In 2010, The Kaiser Foundation reported that youth ages 8-18 years old in the United States on average spend over seven and a half hours each day using some form of media or technology, not including the approximately 90 minutes each day spent texting and talking on the phone.

The high levels of communication technology usage have resulted in a new phenomenon known as cyber bullying. Kowlski & Limber (2013), describe cyberbullying as “Cyberbullying involves bullying through the use of electronic venues, such as instant messaging, e-mail, chat rooms, websites, online games, social networking sites, and text messaging”(p. 1). Cyberbullying is as an aggressive, purposeful act, towards a target who cannot easily defend him or herself, by either an individual or group using electronic forms of contact, repeatedly and over time (Smith et al., 2008). Like traditional bullying, cyber bullying also has negative effects on the participants.

People involved in any aspect of cyberbullying report feeling depressed, hurt, lonely, insecure, worried, hopeless, embarrassed, threatened, anxious, frustrated, angry, socially inept and stressed having lower self-esteem, and interpersonal, behavioral and physical problems, than their uninvolved peers (Baker & Tanrikulu, 2010; Beran & Li, 2008; Hoff & Mitchell, 2009; Raskauskas, 2010) Researchers Juvonen and Gross (2008) found students who were the target of bullying behaviors both in school and through cyberbullying, increased rates of social anxiety. Ten to 15 year olds who are the target of cyberbullying have

an increased likelihood of using alcohol and other drugs as well as increased behavior problems and weapon-carrying at school (Ybarra, Diener-West, & Leaf, 2007).

In more recent years, bullying has led to students who are the targets of bullying behavior exacting their revenge in the form of school shootings. Studies have shown that students who are the target of bullying behavior experience more depressive symptoms and psychological issues than non-targets (Hawker & Boulton, 2000; Kumpulainen & Ransanen, 2000; Mills et al., 2004). The studies examining the relationship between students engaged in bullying behaviors and depression are less consistent. Some studies found that students engaged in bullying behaviors, like targets, experience more depressive symptoms than those not involved (Kaltiala-Heino et al., 2000; Kumpulainen & Ransanen, 2000; Roland, 2002). Bully-targets are at the highest risk for depression (Fekkes, Pijpers, and Verloove-Vanhorick, 2004; Kaltiala-Heino et al., 2000). Additionally, an increased risk in suicide attempts has been found among students engaged in bullying behaviors, students who are the target of bullying behavior, and bully-targets (Kim, Kohl, & Leventhal, 2005; Klomek et al., 2007). The more involved students were in bullying, whether as someone who is the target of bullying behavior or as the person engaged in the bullying behaviors, the more likely they were to have depressive symptoms, serious suicidal ideation, and attempt suicide (Klomek et al., 2007). The correlation of suicidal ideation and involvement in bullying is stronger in girls than boys (Roland, 2002; Van der Wal, De Wit, & Hirasing, 2003). A study done by Kaminski and Fang (2009) found that students who were bullied by their peers had significantly greater reports of suicide ideation than could be attributed to age, sex, race, ethnicity, or depressive symptoms.

Frequent bullying as an adolescent can have an impact on targets into adulthood. Victimization can be a long-lasting situation that may even be repeated in new situations and surroundings (Boulton and Underwood, 1992; Salmivalli, 1998). People who are bullied as children and teens appear to be at greater risk of depression and other mental health problems when they reach adulthood (Shellard, 2002; Ericson, 2001).

Bullying also has an effect on the students engaged in bullying behavior in the situation. As adolescents, students engaged in bullying behaviors are more likely to be involved in alcohol use, drug use, and have behavior and conduct problems. Bullying others has negative consequences and has been linked to antisocial behavior such as vandalism, shoplifting, skipping and dropping out of school, fighting, and drug and alcohol use (Ericson, 2001). Additionally, a correlation between bullying and later criminal activity has been found. According to a study conducted by Olweus (1999), 60% of boys who were labeled as bullies in grades six through nine had at least one criminal conviction by age 24, compared to only 23% of boys not characterized as bullies. Children and adolescents who were engaged in bullying behaviors have an increased rate of substance abuse and participation in violent crime as adults (Ballard et al., 1999).

A person who witnesses bullying is known as a bystander. These people are also affected by bullying behavior. Bystanders are more likely to experience depression, anxiety, anger, stress, and lower grades than those who have not witnessed bullying behavior (Shellard, 2002). Students who witness bullying often experience a fear of becoming the next target and a feeling that adults cannot control the situation; this leads to the feeling of a less secure learning environment (Shellard & Turner, 2004).

## **Anti-Bullying Legislation and Programs**

In the wake of an increase in school drugs and violence in the 1980's and early 90's, Congress passed the Gun-Free Schools Act (GFSA) in 1994. The GFSA required each state, in order to receive certain federal education funding, to enact legislation that would mandate any student who brought a firearm to school to automatically receive a one-year expulsion. The policy allows for the school or district to decide their own definition of a weapon. This definition varies among districts. Some definitions are very narrow, including only firearms, while others have been broadened to include pocketknives, nail clippers, forks, and butter knives. Schools have also been allowed to include other offenses under what is known as zero tolerance policies.

### **Zero Tolerance**

The early state and federal drug enforcement policies in the 1980's spawned the term zero tolerance, which became associated with the GFSA (Skiba & Peterson, 1999). According to McAndrews (2001), zero tolerance policies are “administrative rules intended to address specific problems associated with school safety and discipline” (p. 1). Zero tolerance policies were initially the administrative response to weapons, drugs, and violent acts of students. The response with these policies is punishment of the students, suspension, or expulsion. Schools expanded the policies to mean the “automatic expulsion of students who bring guns, knives, or items that look like weapons onto school grounds” (Ashford, 2000, p. 1). Many schools have adopted zero-tolerance policies against drugs, bomb threats, and some forms of aggressive threats and/or harassment.

Most recently, some states have extended their zero tolerance policies to be applied to the new anti-bullying laws. The GFSA legislation ushered in an era of zero tolerance policies and practices for the vast majority of U.S. public schools (Fenning & Bohanon, 2006; Skiba & Rausch, 2006). Two years after the GFSA was passed, 94 percent of public schools had zero tolerance policies for firearms, 91 percent for other weapons, 88 percent for drugs, and 87 percent for alcohol (Kaufman et al, 2000).

The goal of zero tolerance policies is to create a safe environment for students and staff. This involves punishing and removing students who are a serious criminal threat. The assumption is that eliminating disruptive students will deter others from misbehaving and increase the overall safety of the school. Despite the noble aim of increasing school safety, the policies have come under scrutiny. It is not the goals of the policies under question, but rather, the implementation and punishment of minor trivial behavior. The policy was not created to be the sole method of discipline in a school (Casella, 2003).

Zero tolerance policies have become a paradox. On one hand, zero tolerance policies have an innate aspect of totality for punishment, while on the other hand they are also subjective in their definitions of punishable behaviors (Peden, 2000). There has been a drastic evolution of the seemingly simple policies, which has led to unintended and often disproportionate consequences for students. Some deem the extensive use and application of zero tolerance policies as justified as good educational policy “by the implicit or explicit recognition that security must be a fundamental concern for public schools” because “schools must be safe places for children to learn” (Haft, 2000, p. 795).

Consequently, zero tolerance policies have criminalized the students whose acts are obviously dangerous as well as the children who made a onetime error in judgment (Hanson,

2005). Zero tolerance policies do not allow adequate room for taking into consideration that these are decisions of children whose reasoning skills may not be fully developed.

Furthermore, while some studies show a decline in victims of crime and weapon possession in schools, other studies question the actual effectiveness it has had in reducing school violence (American Psychological Association [APA] Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008; Skiba, 2000, 2004; Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002). Research suggests that schools with higher rates of school suspensions and expulsions have lower academic achievement (Raffaele-Mendez, 2003; Skiba & Rausch, 2006) and a moderate association with higher dropout rates and failure to graduate on time (Bowditch, 1993).

While I believe there is definitely a place for zero tolerance policies, it is not the panacea to school discipline problems. Those in favor of the zero tolerance policy believe that it can provide uniformity, equity, and a concrete approach to discipline. However, this tough and swift “one-size-fits-all” approach has resulted in rampant of out-of-school suspensions. Additionally, zero tolerance policies disproportionately affect African American and Hispanic students; these groups of students are suspended at roughly three times the rate of their white peers (Fenning & Bohanon, 2006; Rausch & Skiba, 2004). Zero tolerance discipline policies have also resulted in criminalization of behaviors, with students being referred to law enforcement and being arrested for sometimes minor offenses.

One example of the discipline policy not fitting the situation occurred in Chicago, when 25 middle school students who participated in a food fight were arrested and taken to jail (Salny, 2009). Actions like these are leading to what the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) is calling the school-to-prison pipeline. The Michigan chapter of the ACLU (2009) issued a report containing data that illustrates public schools are suspending and expelling a

disproportionately number of African American students which contributes to those students not completing high school. Criminalizing student behavior “places students on a high-risk path to incarceration” (Dupper, 2010, p. 67). The results are disastrous. Nearly one in four African American male dropouts is either in jail or in a juvenile detention center (Giroux, 2009).

### **State Legislation**

The GFSA and zero tolerance policies were not enough to stop the 1999 school shootings at Columbine. Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado was the site of a tragic school shooting. On April 20, 1999, two students entered their high school and shot and killed 13 of their classmates and a teacher. The two young men, who had been the targets of bullying, then committed suicide in the school library. News coverage captured students fleeing the school and the aftermath. This tragedy and its coverage evoked intense discussion regarding bullying and its effects. Partly in response to the Columbine shootings, states began adopting anti-bullying policies. Since then, state legislation on education policy across the United States has passed a variety of new state laws meant to enhance school safety. These laws are often implemented in conjunction with zero tolerance policies. “These state laws include requirements for schools to implement and strengthen zero-tolerance policies,” (Stein, 2003, p. 786). As of June 2013, 49 states have passed or pending legislation requiring school districts to adopt policies regarding bullying. Montana is the only state that has not yet enacted legislation.

Though most states have laws, the content and detail varies greatly from state to state. Some states have minimal requirements for school districts to develop policies, while other

states have more complex laws containing many provisions. Most of the laws go beyond a research-based definition of bullying to include a wide range of behaviors. These laws often borrow and modify language from the legal definitions of harassment (Sacco et al., 2012). Overall, state laws on bullying emphasize the investigation of bullying incidents, consequences for students engaged in bullying behaviors, and reporting systems for schools to the district or state.

One inconsistency between the state laws is with the definition of bullying and the lack of adherence to research-based definitions. According to a report commissioned by the United States Department of Education (DOE) entitled *Analysis of State Bullying Laws and Policies* “researchers have traditionally defined bullying as a repeated pattern of aggressive behavior that involves an imbalance of power and that purposefully inflicts harm on the bullying victim” (Stuart-Cassel, Bell, & Springer, 2011, p. 19). Some states have chosen to use parts or all of this definition while others draw on definitions from other legal areas. Eight states define bullying only as encompassing behaviors that are repetitive, systematic, or continuous in their anti-bullying policies. A mere five states only define bullying as severe or pervasive conduct (Sacco et al., 2012). Sixteen states refer to bullying in terms of encompassing only behaviors that are intended to harm another. An imbalance of power is often an antecedent in bullying incidents, as a result four states have provided some treatment of power differential or imbalance between the aggressor and target (Stuart-Cassel et al., 2011). Cyber bullying is a new form of bullying that has emerged since the development of personal computers and the internet. In response to this newer form of bullying, 38 states address cyber bullying, or bullying involving electronic acts in their definitions (Stuart-Cassel et al., 2011).

In many school district policies, bullying and harassment are used interchangeably. Green & Ross (2005) assert that this transposition is the result of directly borrowing legislative language from harassment statutes when creating bullying laws. According to Stuart-Cassel et al. (2011),

This has frequently led to a conflation of terms used to define prohibited conduct, with ‘bullying’ and ‘harassment’ often used interchangeably in laws, despite their important legal distinctions. Harassment is distinguishable from more general forms of bullying in that it must be motivated by characteristics of the targeted victim. It is generally viewed as a subset of more broadly defined bullying behavior. Harassment also violates federal civil rights laws as a form of unlawful discrimination. (p. 35)

Districts often use harassment and bullying interchangeably despite their differences. This could become an area of concern when determining unlawful discrimination.

One recurrent characteristic in most state policies is the prominence on investigation and reporting of bullying. Stuart-Cassel et al. (2011) proclaim state legislation “emphasizes traditional approaches to managing bullying misconduct that involve reporting and investigating bullying complaints and imposing disciplinary actions” (p. 18).

In matters of investigating incidents of bullying, 32 states laws require, and 3 states encourage, the creation of school procedures for investigation. Mandatory reporting by staff members of bullying incidents of which they are aware are required by 17 states. Three of those states also require student reporting of bullying incidents. Eleven states require schools to allow anonymous reporting. In nine states, administrators are required to report bullying to law enforcement in certain circumstances (Sacco et al., 2012).

The state laws also vary in their description of disciplinary consequences. Thirty-four states’ laws require, and an additional two states encourage, the districts to provide disciplinary consequences for bullying (Sacco et al., 2012). However, there is a range of what

is considered disciplinary action, and the wording in these laws provides for a high level of interpretation. The majority of state laws favor broad terms like “disciplinary action,” “disciplinary consequences,” “consequences,” or “consequences and remedial action.”

Recently, students being disciplined are receiving harsher consequences. In an effort to eliminate the problem of bullying, districts across the nation have adopted a zero tolerance policy in conjunction with their anti-bullying policies, which has resulted in a trend towards criminalization of behaviors. A report by Stuart-Cassel et al. (2011) for the DOE, acknowledged new state legislation and policy on school bullying “has emphasized an expanded role for law enforcement and the criminal justice system in managing bullying on school campuses. . . An increasing number of states also have introduced bullying provisions into their criminal and juvenile justice codes” (p. 19). For example, eight state anti-bullying laws have created or modified crimes to target bullying behaviors. Furthermore, all states have criminal laws that could be applied to certain types of bullying behaviors.

### **Anti-Bullying Laws and Students with Disabilities**

Disciplinary consequences, or whatever term is applied, must be balanced with the requirement to provide a free and appropriate education. This becomes more complicated when students with disabilities are involved in bullying. Whether as a bully, target, or bystander, when students with disabilities are involved in any aspect of bullying, the school must follow federal and state law related to students with disabilities. Disability laws supersede the state’s anti-bullying law.

Students with disabilities have Individualized Education Plans, known as IEP’s, which tailor the aspects of the education process to meet the needs of that student. A

student's IEP may include specific procedures to be followed when addressing behavior. These guidelines could also contain exemptions from compliance with certain provisions of school codes of conduct (Young, Ne'eman, & Gelsner, 2011). Discipline for students who receive special education services must be in compliance with federal and state laws concerning students with disabilities. "Under federal law, when behavior is a manifestation of a child's disability, certain procedures must be followed prior to removing the child from his or her current placement — which includes removal via in-or-out-of-school suspension" (Sacco et al., 2012). Anti-Bullying laws are applicable to most students, but when an incident involves students with disabilities, it is essential for the school to adhere to the state and federal laws that also apply to this group of students. Being proactive when it comes to bullying could help us circumvent issues with all children, not just those with disabilities.

### **Proactive Legislation**

While discipline, consequences, and criminalization is a reactive way to address bullying, most states are also instituting a proactive approach to educating students about the issue of bullying. Laws in 41 states indicate use of some form of student bullying education programs or prevention programs. The other eight states with anti-bullying laws make no reference to education or prevention programs (Stuart-Cassel et al., 2011). That is not to say those states do not have districts which employ bullying education and prevention programs, it is just not specified in their state law. Like other aspects of the laws, the specificity of the use of bullying education programs or prevention programs varies. Of the 41 states that refer to these programs, 10 states make ambiguous reference to bullying prevention programs, which could be interpreted to mean implementing some form of bullying education for

students. Another 17 of those state laws have a brief section requiring or encouraging bullying prevention education for students in some form. Taking a more extensive approach in their laws, 14 states require or encouraging more comprehensive forms of education aimed at preventing bullying, including character education and evidence-based best practices (Stuart-Cassel et al., 2011). One state, Massachusetts, contains the most comprehensive requirements by adding the desideratum of “social and emotional learning curricula ... by which children acquire the knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to recognize and manage their emotions, demonstrate caring and concern for others, establish positive relationships, make responsible decisions and constructively handle challenging social situations” (2010 Mass. Legis. Serv. Ch. 92 (S.B. 2404), § 16).

Another proactive approach that several states are taking revolves around professional training and development for staff on student bullying. Of the states with anti-bullying policies, 22 of those policies require or encourage schools and school districts to provide training or professional development on bullying prevention to the staff (Stuart-Cassel et al., 2011). School and district training and professional development ranges from broad references to “bullying prevention” training, down to very specific outlines of what the training programs must include. Staff training or professional development specifically on the school district’s bullying policy is required in 10 states (Stuart-Cassel et al., 2011). Consistent professional development on district policies allows for all staff to stay up to date on the most current laws concerning bullying, which is a rapidly changing arena.

## **Constitutional Considerations and Civil Laws**

Before the emergence of anti-bullying laws, some federal and state laws addressed aspects of bullying. Now with the passage of many anti-bullying laws, previously instated federal and state civil laws must be considered. Certain amendments and laws will impact the ways in which schools address bullying and the types of consequences that students may face.

Several parts of the United States Constitution limit public schools' power. The First Amendment, the Fourth Amendment, and the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment bound a public schools ability in punishing certain speech, reaching speech acts that occur off-campus, searching student property including computers and cell phones, engaging in investigations, and disciplining students (Hutton & Bailey, 2007).

Under Federal Civil Rights laws, private parties are allowed to seek monetary damages from federally funded educational institutions if they feel they are being discriminated based on sex, race, color, national origin, or disability (Sacco et al., 2012). In 2010 the Department of Education issued a letter addressed to schools stating,

that some student misconduct that falls under a school's anti-bullying policy also may trigger responsibilities under one or more of the federal antidiscrimination laws enforced by the Department's Office for Civil Rights...school districts may violate these civil rights statutes and the Department's implementing regulations when peer harassment based on race, color, national origin, sex, or disability is sufficiently serious that it creates a hostile environment and such harassment is encouraged, tolerated, not adequately addressed, or ignored by school employees. (Ali, 2010)

The statutes he refers to in this letter are Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and

Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972, prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, prohibits discrimination based on race, color, or national origin. Discrimination on the basis of disability is prohibited by both Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Additionally, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and state laws provide protect for students with disabilities (Imber, Van Geel, Blokhuis, & Feldman, 2013). IDEA requires schools to follow the students' Individualized Education Plans (IEP) in addressing incidents and limits how students with disabilities are disciplined. Along with these national acts, there are also federal and state laws that cover bullying behavior.

### **Federal and State Criminal Laws**

Federal and state criminal laws cover a large breadth of activities. Because of this extensive range, some bullying behaviors may also be classified as criminal. This mainly relates to laws that address stalking, cyber stalking, obscene electronic communications, harassment, assault, battery, preventing or interfering with school attendance, criminal trespass, conversion of property, and others (Sacco et al., 2012). In addition, federal and state child pornography laws and state sexting statutes, make bullying incidents involve images of minors a criminal issue.

One form of criminal law that may be applicable to bullying incidents is hate crime law. Hate crime laws have gained attention as potentially applicable to the most extreme cases of bullying behavior. There are federal and state hate crime laws. While there are some

differences, both classes of laws apply to situations in which an aggressor is motivated by a target's special characteristic (Sacco et al., 2012).

Federal Law 18 U.S.C. § 245, originally enacted as part of the Civil Rights Act of 1968, outlaws the use of force or threat of force to prevent someone from voting, attending school, seeking employment, and engaging in other federally protected activities based on the person's race, color, religion or national origin. Federal Law 18 U.S.C. § 249 is better known as, the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr., Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2009. This law criminalizes the deliberate cause of bodily harm to any person or attempt to cause harm, through the use of fire, a firearm, a dangerous weapon, or an explosive or incendiary device, because of the actual or perceived race, color, religion, or national origin of that person. Additionally, it is criminal to cause intentional bodily harm because of the actual or perceived gender, disability, sexual orientation, or gender identity of that person, but only if the acts affect interstate commerce or take place in the Special Maritime and Territorial Jurisdiction of the United States (Sacco et al., 2012).

According to the Anti-Defamation League (2013), most states have enacted hate crime laws. However, the states differ as to which populations they protect. Forty-six states' state hate crime statutory provisions include protection based on race, religion, and ethnicity, 31 include sexual orientation, 31 include disability, 27 include gender, and 14 include gender identity (Anti-Defamation League, 2013).

In addition to the GFSA and in response to an increase in school violence, state and federal laws have been passed to target bullying in schools. The landscape surrounding anti-bullying legislation is still new and evolving. The current laws place responsibility for preventing and responding to bullying on schools and center on consequences for bullying

behavior. Anti-Bullying laws cannot rely on one-size fits zero tolerance policies. When implementing these laws schools and districts must also consider constitutional regulations, as well as civil and criminal laws. In addition to the introduction of anti-bullying legislation, many schools and districts have begun implementation of bullying prevention programs.

### **Prevention Programs**

Several bullying prevention programs exist for school implementation. Many of these packaged programs claim to address bullying and peer victimization in schools but few of these have undergone rigorous evaluation (American School Counseling Association, 2009). Three well known anti-bullying programs are the historically significant Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, and the more recent Steps to Respect, and Kiva programs.

Olweus, a Norwegian psychology professor is regarded as the founder of bullying research and prevention programs. Olweus conducted the world's first systematic bullying research in the early 1970's. This research was the foundation for his and others' later work on bullying intervention programs. In 1983, three adolescent boys in Norway committed suicide, thought to be the consequence of sever bullying. Shortly after the incident, the country's Ministry of Education initiated work on a national campaign against bullying in schools. Olweus was the leader of this program which resulted in the development of the now widely used Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP).

Olweus conducted research on the first prevention program, which was implemented in Bergen, Norway. The OBPP was carefully evaluated in the First Bergen Project Against Bullying in a large-scale implementation involving 2,500 students from forty-two schools. The students were followed over a two and a half year period, from 1983 to 1985. A

description of the program components is available in Appendix C. In the 1983-84 evaluation, the relative reduction for being bullied was 62.0% and 33.0% for bullying other students, and similar results were found in 1985 (Olweus, 1991, 1993, 1997). Peer and teacher ratings of bullying problems have generated similar results. There was a significant reduction in student reports of general antisocial behavior. Additionally, students reported improvements in satisfaction with school, more positive relationships and schoolwork, and improved order and discipline (Olweus, 1993). Since 2001, OBPP has been implemented throughout the country in elementary and lower secondary schools to prevent and reduce violence among children in Norway. OBPP is now being implemented in several countries throughout the world.

The Steps to Respect program also has some empirical support for decreasing bullying (Frey et al., 2005). In 1996 the Committee for Children began to research bullying prevention in schools, and in 2001 the *Steps to Respect* bullying prevention program was launched. The Steps to Respect program was originally designed to reduce bullying behavior in elementary school students grades 3-6 (Frey et al., 2005). Studies on the Steps to Respect program and have shown declines in self-reported and observed victimization among students in the program (Brown, Low, Smith, & Haggerty, 2011).

The Steps to Respect program was designed to decrease school bullying problems by increasing staff awareness and responsiveness, fostering socially responsible beliefs, and teaching social-emotional skills to stimulate healthy relationships. The program combines environmental changes at the school and classroom-based instruction on bullying (Frey et al., 2005). Step to Respect involves staff training, classroom lessons, a school-wide program guide which contains the goals of the program as well as a blueprint for developing school-

wide policy and procedures. All Teachers, counselors, and administrators receive training on the program and how to coach students involved in bullying. The curriculum aspect of this program is comprised of skill and literature-based lessons over three to four months. The Steps to Respect curriculum covers positive peer relations, emotion management, and recognizing, refusing, and reporting of bullying behavior.

In 2006, the Finnish Ministry of Education commissioned the University of Turku to develop and evaluate an anti-bullying program for schools (Salmivalli, Poskiparta, Ahtola, & Haataja, 2013). The anti-bullying program was entitled KiVa, an acronym for Kiusaamista Vastaan, against bullying. In addition, the Finnish word kiva means nice.

The KiVa anti-bullying program is based on the participant role approach to bullying; in which peer bystanders have a role in either maintaining or stopping bullying behaviors (Salmivalli, Lagerspetz, Björkqvist, Kaukiainen, & Österman, 1996). Students become aware of their own role as a bystander to bullying. . By emphasizing the role of the bystander, this program provides ways to enhance empathy and self-efficacy to support them, each of which have been found to be associated with higher levels of peer-reported defending behavior (Pöyhönen, Juvonen, & Salmivalli, 2010).

The KiVa program includes interventions targeted at all students. Student lessons in the elementary grades and theme days in the secondary grades consist of discussion, videos, computer games, internet forums, and small group exercises. The KiVa program teaches students about group dynamics and interactions, the consequences of bullying, and ways students can counteract bullying and support students who are the target of bullying behavior.

The student lessons are delivered by classroom teachers (Salmivalli, Poskiparta, Ahtola, & Haataja, 2013). Additionally, the classroom teacher meets with selected affluent peers of a students who has been the target of bullying behavior and challenges them to provide support for the targeted student. Following anti-bullying laws and implementing prevention programs is an important task. Adhering to legal guidelines and intervening in the daily bullying behaviors falls largely on the shoulders of the classroom teacher

### **The Teacher's Role in Bullying**

Bullying is defined as any physically aggressive acts, verbal diminutions, and ostracizing that is shown repeatedly over a long period of time and when an imbalance of power occurs between a target and a bully (Olweus, 1994). As previously discussed, research on bullying is a topic of national and international interests, as researchers across the world demonstrate (Pugh & Chitiyo, 2012; Srabstein & Leventhal, 2010). As a result of their findings, it has become an important task for schools and communities to address these bullying behaviors (Buckman, 2011; Fayne & Matthews, 2010). The bullying phenomenon requires our education system's full consideration and development of curative and preventive approaches (Sairanen & Pfeffer, 2011). One potential source of intervention and prevention lies within the classroom teacher and their power.

### **Teacher Power**

In my experiences in the classroom I have discovered that teachers have a unique power to intervene in almost any kind of situation. The combination of authority and

relationships with students puts teachers in a unique position to effectively intervene in bullying situations.

Though bullying among school children is hardly a new phenomenon, highly publicized media accounts have brought the topic a great deal of attention recently. In approaching this problem, research has suggested that reduction of bullying is best accomplished through a comprehensive, school-wide effort that involves everyone—especially teachers. (Limber, 2003)

Teachers play an important role in prevention and intervention of bullying in schools. A teacher's role in addressing bullying has a direct connection to their perceived states of power. Teachers utilize disciplinary power that makes them visible and permits the extraction of time and labor. This disciplinary power is used when addressing and correcting bullying behaviors in schools. Disciplinary power is ingrained in the world around us, but most people are often unaware of it or its' power. According to Hutchinson, Vickers, Jackson, and Wilkes (2006) it is "Institutionalized as part of everyday practice, disciplinary power is so effective that we subject ourselves to its control without conscious awareness. We are shaped through the disciplinary power, but unaware of the shaping" (p. 119). Teachers, schools, and districts use disciplinary power in their attempt to create a utopian environment, and students often accept it unquestioningly because of the perceived sovereign power of the educator or institution. Many schools and teachers use their power to prevent and intervene in bullying situations.

### **The Teacher's Role and Approach to Student Bullying**

Teachers are seen as leaders of the class because of the power and knowledge they possess. As the leader, the teacher's role is to create and sustain a productive and positive environment that fosters student learning. Creating this kind of environment involves

reducing the opportunity for bullying and addressing bullying behavior when they arise. Teachers handle bullying using a wide variety of techniques, some more effective than others (Bauman, Rigby, & Hoppa, 2008; Sairanen & Pfeffer, 2011; Yoon, Bauman, Choi, & Hutchinson, 2011). Effectively executing basic classroom management practices consistently, like adhering to classroom rules, actively monitoring student interactions, and fostering appreciation for differences, automatically reduces the likelihood of bullying behaviors in the classroom (Grumm & Hein, 2012). Being a good classroom manager is the first step in preventing bullying behaviors. However, once bullying has begun there are four main strategies available for teachers to utilize when addressing bullying incidents (Jacobson, 2007). Jacobson (2007) describes these strategies as punishment, information based strategies, skills mastery, and incentive strategies.

An often used approach by teachers involves reiterating the rules and prescribing punishment for violation of those rules. Punishment can range from disapproving looks to expulsion from school. The underlying belief is that students will change their behavior if they are being monitored and at risk for receiving consequences (Jacobson, 2007). Punishment is a tool that is used in an attempt to normalize behaviors. This punitive strategy is frequently used, but not always considered the most effective.

Another approach to addressing bullying is the informational strategy. In the informational approach, the goal is to make the bully understand the results their actions are having on the target. Through dialogue, roll playing, and stories, this approach seeks to provide information which will allow the bully to understand the effects of their actions (Salmivalli, 2001; Whitaker, Rosenbluth, Valle, & Sanchez, 2004). The informational approach hinges on students making rational changes in their mindsets once they gain the

additional information, and consequently changing their actions to correlate to this new mindset.

Skill mastery is another strategy used to address bullying. In this approach it is necessary to teach both the bully and the target skills they lack so they can coexist peacefully. Skill mastery involves empathy training, confidence building, coping skills, anger management skills, and social skills (Olweus, 2001a; Rigby, 2001; Smith, Shu, & Madsen, 2001). According to Jacobson (2007), “The assumption of educational transformation at work here rests upon the understanding that bullying (or the lack thereof) involves certain interpersonal skills and that change will be effected through greater expertise” (p. 1949). Teaching the students the social skill sets they are missing will increase relation ability and minimize the bullying behavior.

A final response, which has similarities to the punishment approach, is the surveillance and incentives strategy. The surveillance and incentive strategy begins with stated rules regarding bullying and student contracts in which they pledge not to bully or condone bullying. Concomitant with this approach is the surveillance aspect, which focuses on assisting parents and teachers in becoming more aware of warning signs and creating incentives for positive behavior choices (Hoover & Oliver, 1996; Olweus, 1993, 2001b; Rigby, 2001). The surveillance and incentive strategy is based on the theory that students who partake in bullying behaviors can be taught to comply with rules and be trained into new behavior patterns through monitoring and positive incentives. Who and how these strategies are used will be influenced by several factors.

## **Factors Influencing Teacher Intervention**

The interpretation of what is most important and effective in handling school bullying differs depending on whom you ask. A study done by Buckman (2011) compared secondary students' and teachers' perceptions of bullying prevention practices. The study revealed that students referenced classroom rules and the intervention of bystanders as important. Conversely, teachers emphasized classroom discussions.

A teacher's level of skill on how to intervene in bullying situations, attitude towards bullying and aggression, support of bullying policies, and perceived seriousness of a situation all play a part in the effectiveness of reducing such incidents. It is essential that teachers are appropriately trained in identify bullying behaviors and addressing such situations to effectively minimize bullying behaviors (Espelage & Swearer, 2008).

A teacher's response to bullying can be a reflection of their training and experiences. Becoming a teacher generally entails two to five years of training to become certified. This training typically includes college courses, professional seminars, and supervision in the field through student teaching experiences. Training covers topics related to pedagogy, teaching history, ethics, school law, curriculum development, and some classroom management. A strong focus on academic-related content leaves many programs with minimal time devoted to discussing the socio-emotional development of children. The lack of time spent on understanding the social and emotional needs of children may be related to subsequent teachers' reported concerns about managing students' behavior problems (Merrett & Wheldall, 1993). Behavior problems in a classroom can interfere with the academic aims of the classroom. Few teachers consider their training programs to have adequately prepared them to manage these distracting classroom behaviors (Beran, 2005). To address bullying

issues, teachers should be familiar with the definition, types, frequency of bullying, and gender differences in how students bully and how they are affected. Additionally, teachers should understand the needs of the bully, target, and bystander. Beran (2005), recommends teachers be aware of community resources, such as counseling programs to help children cope with bullying.

A teacher's beliefs around bullying are equally as important as his or her skill set. Byers, Caltabiano, and Caltabiano (2011) postulate that it is important to examine individual teacher characteristics because of their possible influence on a teacher's response to bullying. Teachers' attitudes and beliefs have an impact on the severity and extent of bullying problems found in the classroom (Sairanen & Pfeffer, 2011). When teachers assume that bullying is the result of a stable trait-like disposition, instead of having a growth mindset that the child can change, he or she may be less motivated to intervene.

A German study done by Grumm and Hein (2012) examined correlates of aggression to the ways bullying is addressed by teachers. The study surveyed 107 teachers working in 85 different German schools. The researchers used an online questionnaire to gain insight into teachers' ways of handling bullying. The study found that attitudes toward aggression and beliefs about the changeability of aggressive behaviors are correlates of the different strategies that teachers use. The research revealed five different strategies to handle bullying incidents: ascribing responsibility to the target, ascribing responsibility to the bully, ignoring bullying, a smoothing approach, and problem solving approach (Grumm & Hein, 2012).

Grumm and Hein (2012) describe the correlation between views on aggression and strategies teachers employ stating,

In the present study we were able to show that individual attitudes toward aggression are a correlate of the tendency to take action in case of bullying. The correlation demonstrates that teachers who hold more negative attitudes toward aggression are the ones who tend to react more actively. This correlation highlights that it might be fruitful to take individual teacher characteristics into account when trying to improve ways to handle bullying incidents in the classroom. It can be helpful to support negative attitudes towards aggression and to help teachers to critically reflect positive or neutral attitudes towards aggression. (p. 306)

Teachers' attitudes towards bullying can have a significant impact on how they intervene in bullying situations. Teachers who view aggression and bullying more negatively utilize more active approaches to bullying, like problem solving.

Another factor impacting bullying is the level of teacher support and implementation of the school's anti-bullying policy, which influences the amount of bullying found in a school (Rigby, 2002). Teachers who believe in their school's anti-bullying policy are more likely to be committed to its implementation. Belief in a policy, however, is not enough to stop bullying. Teachers often fail to intervene in bullying situations because they are not aware of it, (Dawkins, 1995; Newman, Murray, & Lussier, 2001). Students frequently do not seek teachers help because they assume it will be ineffective or make matters worse (Harris, Petrie, & Willoughby, 2002). This assumption may be well founded considering the lack of training teachers receive. Without training, teachers have difficulty understanding and addressing bullying effectively (Bauman & Del Rio, 2006). In addition to a lack of awareness of the situation, teachers may also fail to intervene because they are afraid to become involved or believe it is not their responsibility. This is especially true in bullying situations involving violence (Ting, Sanders, & Smith, 2002).

The perceived seriousness of the situation is another factor influencing teacher intervention. Rigby (2002) pointed out that seriousness might be judged in various ways, including degree of target distress, level of parental concern, and duration of the bullying. How the seriousness of the situation is judged will impact the type of response a teacher might take. When teachers believe that situations are less serious they are less likely to intervene, and when they do intervene, they use more lenient strategies (Yoon & Kerber, 2003).

A study done by Ellis and Shute (2007) investigated the relationship between teacher intervention and the perceived seriousness of the bullying. One hundred twenty-seven teachers from five schools in South Australia completed questionnaires rating various aggressions and the seriousness of those acts. Teachers rated nonverbal expressions, such as dirty looks, as the least serious. Name-calling was rated as moderately serious and physical violence was considered highly serious. The study revealed the main concern of the teachers was stopping the behavior and getting the students back to work. The frequency of relieving the target from the inflicted behavior and punishing the bully decreased as the perceived seriousness decreased (Ellis & Shute, 2007). Teacher concerns about making the situation worse for the target, resulted in less intervention for less serious incidents. A fraction of teachers reported that they did not consider intervention their responsibility or did not have time to address the incident. Nine teachers reported that they did not feel confident in their skills in handling serious bullying, while seven did not feel confident in even moderately and mildly serious incidents. An additional three teachers indicated that they were afraid of the bully. The level of comfort in their skills related to addressing bullying along with the perception of seriousness of the incident impacted the teacher's likelihood of intervening.

Perception of seriousness may not always be accurate or consistent. Research shows the gender of the teacher impacts the perception of seriousness. Generally, male teachers take dirty looks and name calling less serious than female teachers (Shute, Owens, & Slee, 2002). Additionally, Mynard, Joseph, and Alexander (2000) found that teacher ratings of seriousness are not consistent with the impact of the bullying behaviors on students. Yoon and Kerber (2003) reported teachers are up to five times more likely to intervene in verbal and physical bullying than social exclusion. Social bullying, also known as relational or indirect bullying, continues to be treated less seriously by teachers than verbal and physical bullying. This continues despite the fact that social bullying has been shown to cause significant psychological harm in its targets and occurs more often than physical bullying (Rigby, 1996). Adequate training, negative attitudes towards bullying, belief in a policy, and perceived seriousness is not always enough to ensure a teacher can adequately address bullying situations. The ability to intervene in a bullying incident is weakened when the teacher exhibits bullying behavior or is a target of student bullying. One study found that over 50 percent of teachers alleged they were bullied at least once during the past term (Terry, 1998). Like students, teachers can be subjected to repeated name-calling, noncompliance, threats, theft, and physical, emotional, and mental mistreatment. Conversely, teachers can also bully students.

A study done by James et al., (2008) examined bullying reports in Irish secondary schools. Students were surveyed in 2003 and 2005. The first study in 2003 reported 30.8 percent (710) of students stated that teachers had bullied them. In the second study, 30.7 percent (282) students said that teachers had bullied them. Being called names and being ignored were the most commonly reported forms of bullying for both groups. This data

should be interpreted with caution. “Ignoring a student who is attention seeking may be an effective method for managing class discipline but is it bullying” (James et al., 2008).

Depending on the circumstance, ignoring a disruptive student could be considered a viable management technique. In the initial study in 2003, 28.2 percent (648) of students admitted they had bullied teachers. In the second study, 16.3 percent students admitted to bullying teachers. In both years, more boys than girls reported bullying teachers. Name-calling and ignoring the teachers were the most common forms of bullying reported.

Managing bullying is a difficult task for some teachers (Byrne, 1994; Doll, Song, & Siemers, 2004). The task can be complicated even further if a teacher is partaking in bullying behavior, being subjected to bullying or are unprepared to disrupt these situations. Training and support can help teachers feel more confident in handling bullying situations and increase students’ perception of teachers’ competence and interested in addressing bullying (James et al., 2006). In addition, teachers should lead by example through our own caring actions towards others. “We have to show in our own behavior what it means to care. Thus we do not merely tell to care and give them texts to read on the subject; we demonstrate our caring in our relations with them” (Noddings, 1995, p. 190).

One environmental factor that may influence the level of bullying in a school or classroom is the caring climate created by the teacher (Gano-Overway, 2013). By promoting a caring climate, students learn to care and develop empathy for others. Fry and Gano-Overway (2010) described the caring climate as an “overarching context that is characterized by engrossment (listening, accepting, and attending), motivational displacement (honoring interests, supporting and helping achieve goals, empowering), [and] respect (trust, sensitivity)” (p. 295–296). This idea is built on Noddings’ ethics of care, which has two main

components, engrossment and motivational displacement. Engrossment is the initial step in creating a caring relationship. It is considered mental attentiveness to someone else's emotions and needs. Motivational displacement involves the caregiver's adoption of the ends and goals of another person, the one receiving the care. "Caring involves stepping out of one's own personal frame of reference and into the other's" (Noddings, 1984, p. 24).

Teaching students the skills of engrossment and motivational displacement can lead to more caring students and a more caring environment. A caring community can create feelings of connectedness and provide a sense of attachment and safety for students and teachers (Battistich, Watson, Solomon, Lewis, & Schaps, 1999).

Wentzel (1997) reported that middle school students who perceived their teachers as more caring were more willing to help and cooperate with their classmates. This could result in decreased levels of classroom bullying. Olweus (1993) and Orpinas and Horne (2006) emphasizes the importance of creating a caring climate to reduce bullying behavior. An emphasis on respect and caring is a crucial element in preventing bullying (Orpinas & Horne, 2006). To instill this level of respect and caring in our schools, teachers must take a multidimensional approach to teaching students about caring. "Children need to *participate in caring* with adult *models* who show them how to care, *talk with them* about the difficulties and rewards of such work, and demonstrate in their own work that caring is important" (Noddings, 1995, p. 191). By modeling and talking with students about caring, the classroom can become a safer more compassionate space. Researchers have found indirect connections between a caring environment and bullying (Langdon & Preble, 2008). Thus, classrooms with higher levels of caring also have less bullying.

In conclusion, teachers play a powerful role in addressing bullying because of their actual and perceived power. Teachers use a variety of approaches when it comes to prevention and intervention of bullying behaviors. A teacher's approach is influenced by several factors, including level of skill in mediating bullying situations, attitude towards bullying and aggression, support of bullying policies, perceived seriousness, and environment. Considering all of the aforementioned factors, it is imperative to create quality, sustainable, professional development programs to enhance teachers' effectiveness in preventing and intervening on bullying behavior.

### **The School Leader's Role**

In addition to teachers, school leaders also play a role in addressing and influencing the bullying behaviors that take place in a school. Dillon (2010) proclaims, "Principals must take the lead in creating an atmosphere where bullying prevention is a school and community goal" (p. 20). The classroom teacher cannot solve the problem of bullying alone, "Without the support and leadership from the principal, there is little chance that significant progress can be made in preventing and reducing bullying" (Dillon, 2010, p. 20). A school leader is in the best position to create the conditions for the staff to discuss the problem of bullying. These conditions require a high level of trust between administration and staff and a sense of shared leadership will help produce a variety of proposed solutions.

Barton (2006) advises that school leaders be a part of keeping records on the situation, conferencing with students, and meeting with the family of the bully. Dillon (2012) suggests several things a school leader should do to reduce bullying including learning about bullying, assume staff does want to help stop bullying, acknowledge our reliance on students'

observations, make trust a priority, welcome reports of bullying, reframe the problem, and acknowledge that bullying is complex. Once an administrator has invested time in learning about the nature of bullying, then he or she can lead the staff in learning about the phenomenon. In assuming the staff wants to prevent and reduce bullying may at times needs to reexamine resistance, as it may be due to a misunderstanding of this complex problem (Dillon, 2012). Acknowledging that students are our eyes and ears and accepting all reports will help staff members realize the frequency in which bullying is happening in the school setting. For students to feel comfortable reporting bullying trust between students and adults must become a priority. To welcome reports of bullying, the administrator should listen to every report and thank those who complain for their responsibility and helping make the school a safer place. Often an administrator will have to reframe the problem of bullying so all efforts are supported, not criticized. Finally, administrators should acknowledge that bullying is a complex problem and nurture an environment where being wrong and having misconceptions is acceptable.

School administrators are in a unique position to understand and observe many aspects of bullying. Dillon (2012) explains “School leaders play the key role in connecting the student experience in school to the adult experience so that they can work together ...They must facilitate the change of how bullying is understood and the approach to addressing it” (p. 17). The question now becomes, what type of leader is best suited to lead this change and effectively tackle the problem of bullying?

Effective leadership is the key to successful organizations. Leadership is multi-dimensional. It “involves a carefully selected complex system of thoughts, actions, and process that occur in a temporal order that solves problems, builds culture, nurtures

leadership in others, communicates values and purpose, and institutes meaningful changes” (Kelley & Peterson, 2007, p. 369).

Leadership is a multifaceted phenomenon that involves many people and insight into one’s self. Leadership cannot be solely vested in one person; it needs to be democratic and shared. Each leader needs to constantly analyze themselves to improve their skills, “leadership is an ongoing and reflective process that is responsive to changing social context and needs to stakeholders, rather than an imposed structure that is rigid or resistant to revision or rethinking” (Friedman, 2004, p. 222). Leaders who are able to be constantly reflective can have enormous positive impacts on an organization. This requires leaders to be reliable and sure in their beliefs and actions. Leaders who model the behavior they desire out of others and are consistent in their speech and actions are the most effective (Pazant, 2011).

## **History**

The phenomenon known as leadership was noted as early as the 12th century, but was not a scientific research topic until the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Bass, 1981). The study of leadership is relatively new (Yukl, 1981, 2002). Leadership is a complex topic that is not fully understood and has no set of rules or guidelines for a person to follow. “Leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth” (Burns, 1978, p. 2). Several theories of leadership have been presented to try to explain what makes a good leader. Van Seters and Field (1990) outline the major leadership eras consisting of the Personality Era, Influence Era, Behavior Era, Situation Era, Situation Era, Contingency Era, Transactional Era, Anti-

Leadership Era, Culture Era, and Transformational Era. These eras often overlapped and contained several periods and different theories within each one.

The Personality Era was the first leadership era and contained the first formal leadership theories. The two documented periods in this era are the Great Man Period and the Trait Period. The Great Man Period identified great men and women in history and focused on their personalities and behaviors, suggesting that if those aspects were copied, one could become a great leader (Van Seters & Field, 1990). The Trait Period was similar to the Great Man Period, but focused on general traits instead of specific individuals. The commonality between these two periods was that both identified behaviors they believed led to good leadership.

The Influence Era was more sophisticated because it recognized that leadership is about relationships and not just characteristics. This era was made up of the Power Relations Period and the Persuasion Period. In the Power Relations Period "attempts were made to explain leader effectiveness in terms of the source and amount of power they commanded and how it was used" (Van Seters & Field, 1990, p. 32). In this period, it was thought that leadership was affected by the legitimacy of the source and level of power a leader was given. The Persuasion period focused on the leader being the dominant factor and highlighted a leader's influence.

The following era in leadership theory, the Behavior Era, emphasized what leaders do (Van Seters & Field, 1990). This was the first era that looked at leader's actions, not just their personality traits and power. This era has three sections, the Early Behavior and Late Behavior Period, and the Operant Period. The Early Behavior Period studied behavior traits instead of personality traits. The Late Behavior Period grew out of the Early Behavior Period

and adapted the theories to be applied in managerial settings. The realization that leaders do not cause followers to have certain behaviors, but merely influence it, led to the emergence of the Operant Period. This period focused on how leaders affect the working conditions and manage the reinforcements of behaviors (Van Seters & Field, 1990).

The Situation Era was the next to develop. This era acknowledged that there existed factors beyond the leader and follower that effect leadership. Some other factors involved include the type of task, class status of the leader and follower, the position power of the leader, and the external environment (Bass, 1981). These situational factors dictate the leader traits, skills, and behaviors needed for effective leadership to occur. The Environment Period and the Social Status Period make up the Situation Era. The Environment Period was based on the idea of luck; leaders were only people who were in the right place at the right time in the right circumstances. In this period the leader's skills were thought of as irrelevant and that any leader was replaceable. The Social Status Period was rooted in the idea that being in a group influences how one acts. The group reinforces acceptable behaviors and expectations that have been mutually confirmed (Van Seters & Field, 1990). In this period, leadership was thought to be controlled by the dynamics of a group. The later Socio-technical Period combined the environmental and social factors on leadership. During this time, theorists believed that good leadership was a result of luck, group dynamics, and the situation.

The Contingency Era which subsequently developed, acknowledged that leadership was dependent on more than one factor. The contingency theory, path-goal theory, and normative theory were the highlights of this era. Fiedler's (1964) contingency theory stressed placing leaders in situations which matched their own style. In this theory leaders

needed to be matched with conditions and followers that suited their approach if they want to be effective. The path-goal theory emphasized providing conditions that would allow followers to be successful (House, 1971). This might affect a follower's job location or the type of task he or she was to perform. The normative theory's focal point was that leaders could change their behavior to increase effectiveness in different situations. This contrasted the contingency theory. Instead of the leader being placed in circumstances which were most fitting to his or her style, in the normative theory a leader had to adapt to the situation.

The Transactional Era is characterized by its input that leadership, in addition to personal and situational factors, is also affected by role differentiation and social interactions. In this era emphasis was put on the reciprocal effect which leaders and followers have on each other. This is similar to the Influence Era which also addressed influence between leader and follower. This era has two periods, the Exchange Period and the Role Development Period. In the Exchange Period leadership involved transactions between leaders and followers that influenced relationships. This period also recognized that leaders have varied transactions and relationships with different followers. During the Role Development Theory "the group conveys esteem and status to the leader in return for the leader's skills in furthering goal attainment. Leadership becomes an equitable exchange relationship" (Van Seters & Field, 1990, p. 36). In this theory leaders can increase their power and influence by boosting their reputation through helping followers reach their own goals.

Frustration over the past leadership paradigms not working resulted in the Anti-Leadership Era. In this era theorists began proposing that perhaps the concept of leadership could not be explained and was not as imperative to success as previously thought (Van

Seters & Field, 1990). The Ambiguity Period in this era suggested that the leader is merely a symbol and actual acts of leadership have little significance. The Substitute Period evolved from the Situational Era. This period focused on substitutes for leadership. There was a decrease in focus on the main leader and an increase in looking to the followers to sustain their own leadership needs. The Anti-Leadership Era subsided and the Culture Era emerged.

In the Culture Era it was hypothesized that leadership is supreme in the culture of a whole organization. This era also saw a focus shift from quantity of work being completed to quality of work. The era contained the Leader-Substitute Period. Similar to the Substitute Period, this period suggested that if leaders can establish a strong culture in an organization, then followers will be able to lead themselves (Van Seters & Field, 1990).

The Transformational Era came next, and is the current leadership era. The Transformational Era uses intrinsic, not extrinsic, motivation. In this era leaders must be proactive rather than reactive as in the Transactional Era. The Charisma Period and the Self-Fulfilling Prophecy Period make up this era thus far. The Charisma Period is built on the theme of leadership being visionary. The Charisma Period proposes that leadership must instill a vision in people and give them a strong sense of purpose. This period focuses on leader traits, behaviors, influence, and situational factors that combine to effect ideological appeals (Van Seters & Field, 1990). The Self-Fulfilling Prophecy Period is based on the Self-Fulfilling Prophecy phenomenon. This phenomenon says that if you create expectations and believe in them, they will be fulfilled. Leaders can be activated from any level of the organization and the key factor to success is building positive expectations (Van Seters & Field, 1990). Leadership has evolved greatly throughout history and will continue to evolve

in the future. Currently, three major types of leadership, transactional, transformational, and instructional, are considered popular.

### **Transactional Leadership**

Transactional leadership can be easily understood by thinking of it as bartering. Leaders give rewards in exchange for followers providing services. This kind of leadership only works when both parties understand their role and are willing to take part in this exchange. A transactional leader focuses on the material needs of their followers (Bass, 2000). There are four transactional dimensions in this style of leadership, contingency reward, active management by exception, passive management by exception, and laissez-faire leadership (Bass, 1985, 1997; Bass & Avolio, 1990; Nguni, Slegers & Denessen, 2006). Later laissez-faire leadership was identified as its own leadership style independent of transactional leadership. Contingency rewards are given after leaders set goals and those goals are met. Of the transactional dimensions, contingency reward is the one with the highest level of activity from leaders. Contingency rewards require leaders to be involved in goal setting and supervise all the activities of the followers. Leaders who closely monitor their followers' performance and focus on tracking mistakes are using active management by exception. When leaders are unaware of problems until informed and even then don't become involved until serious problems arise, they are leading using the passive management by exception strategy. The lowest leadership activity level is exhibited in laissez-faire leadership. These leaders avoid responsibility, decisions, and requests. Laissez-faire leaders are often not available when problems arise and leaders are needed.

Transactional leadership is most effective when followers are extrinsically motivated. People who are extrinsically motivated are seeking material rewards for their work and effort. This style of leadership is useful when the leader clearly describes the goals and the followers know what outcomes are expected of them. Transactional leadership can be used to boost short term production or success, but is not useful for sustaining long term motivation or when making structural changes in an organization as the extrinsic rewards cannot usually be sustained for extended periods of time.

### **Transformational Leadership**

Transformational leadership places a focus on intrinsically motivating people. Intrinsic motivation is the desire people have in themselves and the enjoyment they get out of a task that motivates them to perform well. Transformational leadership also focuses on increasing a follower's capacity to enable higher performance. Liethwood (1994) identified six major aspects of transformational leadership: communicating a vision, developing group goals, articulating high-performance expectations, providing intellectual stimulus, offering individualized support, and modeling values and practices. Transformational leaders raise their followers' awareness about what is important and lead followers in looking beyond themselves to analyze what is good for the group.

In 2009 Bass and Bass updated these aspects and reduced them to four main dimensions of transformational leadership. The four dimensions are intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, inspirational motivation, and idealized influence. Intellectual stimulation inspires followers to be part of the change process and view challenges in new ways. Leaders who are intellectually stimulating encourage creativity and independent

thinking (Bass & Bass, 2009; Friedman, 2004). Individualized consideration involves attending to followers needs and integrating stakeholder's beliefs and ideas into the change process. Individualized consideration involves the leader acting as a coach or mentor and taking into account each person and their views on a matter. Inspirational motivation is how leaders express a vision and future goals that inspire followers. This inspiration creates a strong sense of purpose in an organization. Idealized influence is when a leader acts as a role model for ethical behavior, infuses pride, and gains trust. To execute this aspect of transformation leadership, a leader must behave in a way that reflects the organizations values. The leader's actions will impact others and set an example of how to conduct oneself.

Transformational leadership is a key factor in successful school reform (Bass, 1985; Friedman, 2004). It is not solely useful for restructuring organizations; it also expands the followers' personal leadership capacity and encourages interdependence along everyone in the organization. Transformational leadership is most successful during periods of change but only once a high level of trust has been established. Transformational leaders work on giving their organization and followers a more meaningful purpose which will be beneficial for long-term success. This style can be used to reinvigorate an emotionally depleted and unmotivated organization.

### **Instructional Leadership**

Instructional leadership and research on the topic first appeared in the 1980's. The idea of instructional leadership was developed specifically as a school leadership style during the transformational era, but unexpectedly does not follow the transformational model of

intrinsically motivating people. Instructional leadership instead focuses on the leader being a model and resource for followers.

Smith and Andrews (1989) assert that principals impact teachers as instructional leaders. Four themes transpired from research conducted during the 1980's. These themes focus on interactions between the school administrator, usually the principal, and the classroom teachers. The themes are:

1. The principal as a resource provider
  2. The principal as an instructional resource
  3. The principal as a communicator
  4. The principal as a visible presence
- (Andrews & Soder, 1987; Smith & Andrews, 1989)

This leadership theory expands the role of the principal beyond that of a manager into a multidimensional resource. The role of instructional leader provides a critical connection between the actions and behaviors of the principal and the success of the school (Fredericks & Brown, 1993).

In their role as a resource provider, the principal provides the necessary resources to achieve the desired vision and goals (Smith & Andrews, 1989). An instructional leader uses the resources available, recognizes that staff members are an important resource of the school, and delegates some of his or her power to them.

Being an instructional resource involves the principal facilitating good teaching practices by staying up to date on the latest effective teaching strategies and techniques (Smith & Andrews, 1989). In practice, principals may conference with teachers on their instructional style, observe classrooms and provide feedback, or even model lessons for

teachers to observe. In this version of leadership, principals are ultimately responsible for the improvement or decline in teaching and learning at their school.

When the principal acts as a communicator they express the school's vision and goals and lead the school in a direction that adheres to those principles. The principal will act as a communicator when interacting with anyone through speech, writing, and behavior. Along with communicating, the principal must also know how to listen in this style of leadership. The principal should understand how to use active listening skills and clearly express his or her thoughts.

In addition, instructional leadership involves the principal being a visible presence in the school. This involves being seen out of the office, frequently talking with teachers and students, and encouraging a positive school culture through modeling. Schools with good school culture often have principals who are highly visible on a daily basis.

The instructional leadership style is most effective in educational settings. A strong professional environment is necessary as the success of instructional leadership requires the followers to respect the leader as an instructor and trust in his or her professional skills. This type of leadership is especially useful when working with teachers who need a role model and may not have much experience. The principal must be knowledgeable about best instructional practices and be a skilled instructor for this leadership style to be successful.

### **Evaluating Leadership – the MLQ**

The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) is the most widely used assessment to measure transactional, transformational, and laissez-faire leadership (Avolio, Bass, & Jung, 1999). The MLQ form 5x is the current version of the questionnaire. The MLQ

contains 45 questions on which you rate yourself. Studies evaluating transactional, transformational, and laissez-faire leadership use the MLQ to measure the dimensions of these leadership styles. The four dimensions of transformational leadership are intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, inspirational motivation, and idealized influence. In the MLQ idealized influence is broken into two categories, attributed and behavioral influence. The three dimensions of transactional leadership are contingent reward, active management by exception, passive management by exception. Laissez-faire leadership is considered its own style and is characterized by an avoidance of leadership responsibilities or non-leadership. This questionnaire has been found to be reliable in research studies (Bass, 1985; Bass & Avolio, 1997; Nguni, Slegers & Denessen, 2006).

## **Studies**

In a research study conducted by Moolenaar, Daly, and Slegers, 51 principals from 51 public elementary schools in the Netherlands were analyzed. The authors used quantitative data to determine the principal's position in the school culture, level of transformational leadership, and how these factors impacted schools. The findings in this study suggest principals who are viewed as transformational leaders play more central positions in their social networks and schools. Transformational principals have stronger relationships with their teachers. "Teachers with transformational principals seek out their principals more often for work-related and personal advice, thus enabling principals to exert control over the (new) knowledge that gets disseminated within teams" (Moolenaar et al., 2010, p. 655). Transformational leaders have more to offer their followers than traditional leaders. The principals that were identified as transformational leaders were better at sharing

the school's vision, attending to teachers' needs, giving advice, and intellectually stimulating teachers. The study also suggests that the transformational principals reach their teachers more quickly with professional information and support.

Another major finding of this study was that transformational leaders are positively related to a school's innovative climate. The authors define innovative climate as "the shared perceptions of organizational members concerning the practices, procedures, and behaviors that promote the generation of new knowledge and practices. Central to this definition are educators' perceptions" (Moolenaar et al., 2010, p. 627). An innovative climate requires a leader who is willing to analyze and adopt new practices and new knowledge that leads the organization towards successfully meeting goals. The leader must also be able to secure teacher support to meet the goals. Transformational leaders are more apt to exhibit the behaviors necessary to achieve an innovative climate.

A study done by Marks and Printy (2003) reviewed existing studies in a meta-analysis and analyzed principal leadership and school performance. This study examines 24 public schools in the United States. The 24 schools consisted of eight elementary schools, eight middle schools, and eight high schools. Relationships between principals and teachers were examined in reference to their collaboration around instructional matters that influence teaching and student performance.

The analysis focused on two types of leadership within these schools, transformational and instructional leadership. Transformational leadership provides intellectual stimulation and spurs motivation and innovation within the organization while supporting teachers as partners in making decisions that affect the school (Marks & Printy, 2003). This study focused on a form of instructional leadership known as shared instructional

leadership. Shared instructional leadership involves the principal and teachers actively collaborating to share the responsibility for staff development, curriculum, instruction, assessment development, and managerial behaviors of running a school (Marks & Printy, 2003).

Shared instructional leadership differs from traditional instructional leadership because shared instructional leadership involves multiple people as instructional resources and role models whereas traditional instructional leadership vests those responsibilities exclusively in the administrator. Since this type of leadership focuses solely on instructional and managerial aspects, it is often used in conjunction with transactional leadership. Combining instructional leadership with transactional leadership provides a way to motivate or reward followers for abiding by the leaders directives.

This study found that transformational leadership is important when building a vision and can create an enduring sense of purpose in the organization, but this leadership style lacks an explicit focus on teaching and learning (Marks & Printy, 2003). Instructional leadership is able to fill that void by emphasizing instruction, pedagogy, curriculum, assessment, and providing the managerial direction needed to run the school on a daily basis. The study found the schools which were the most effective in teaching practices and had high student achievement had administrators that integrated both transformational and instructional leadership into their own leadership style. “Where integrated leadership was normative, teachers provided evidence of high-quality pedagogy and students performed at high levels on authentic measures of achievement” (Marks & Printy, 2003, 392). Thus, the study found that the most effective form of leadership in this group of schools was a combination of transformational and instructional leadership.

Cemaloglu (2011) conducted a study on bullying with 500 teachers working in primary schools in Turkey. Cemaloglu found a positive relationship between transformational leadership acts of principals and a school buildings organizational health, or climate. There was a negative relationship between the transformational leadership acts of principals and bullying. It appear While a reverse relationship between organizational health and workplace bullying is identified, there that schools run by transformational leaders had better climates and less bullying. Transactional acts of leadership on the other hand were found to have a negative relationship with organizational health and no relationship to bullying.

Based on the current leadership practices and research, a combination of transactional, transformational, and instructional leadership would be the most successful method of leadership for reducing bullying and running a safe and successful school. This combination of leadership styles would be most likely to produce positive school culture, effective teachers, high achieving students, and less a decrease in bullying behaviors. Previous researchers have supported the view that effective leaders use transactional and transformational leadership. Research done by Bass and Avolio (1990) found that effective administrators used transactional and transformational dimensions in their leadership practice. An effective leader will be able to exercise both transactional and transformational effectively, but will use transformational leadership more often (Bass, 2000; Bass & Avolio, 1990; Kelley & Peterson, 2007). The combination of multiple leadership styles allows the administrator to vary his or her style depending on the situation.

In this chapter, I have reviewed relevant literature pertaining to heuristic inquiry, adolescent behaviors, anti-bullying legislation and programs, the teacher's role in bullying

and the school leader's role in bullying. Heuristic inquiry involves seven concepts: identifying with the focus of inquiry, self-dialogue, tacit knowing, intuition, indwelling, focusing, and the internal frame of reference. In addition to these concepts, heuristic research has six phases that guide and comprise the research investigation. The six phases of heuristic research are; initial engagement, immersion, incubation, illumination, explication, and creative synthesis (Moustakas, 1990). Student behaviors and characteristics change and intensify during adolescents. The developmental characteristics of young adolescents include seven domains, physical, intellectual, emotional/psychological, moral/ethical, and social (Caskey & Anfar, 2007). To fully reach the developmental step, adolescence should have their needs met fully. These needs can be identified in Maslow (1954) hierarchy of needs. Maslow's hierarchy of needs contains five levels, physiological needs, safety needs, belonging needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization needs. Adolescents also marks the peak in bullying behaviors. In response to bullying behaviors and their effects, anti-bullying legislation and programs increase. Zero tolerance policies, state and federal laws, and anti-bullying legislation are all ways to mitigate bullying. Additionally, prevention programs, like the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, have become quite popular. Teacher also play a role in deterring bullying. A teacher's power and influence make it easier for them to halt bullying behavior, and how a teacher's perceived or actual power is exercised and how they intervene on bullying situations depends on the individual teacher. A teacher's approach is influenced by several factors, including level of skill in mediating bullying situations, attitude towards bullying and aggression, support of school or district anti-bullying policies, perceived seriousness of the incident, and environment. In addition to teachers, school leaders also play a role in addressing and influencing the bullying behaviors that take place in

a school. Currently, three major types of leadership, transactional, transformational, and instructional are popular. The next chapter, Chapter 3 will cover the project's design, including the rationale for qualitative research, the theoretical tradition of heuristics, sampling technique, participants, setting, data sources and analysis plan, and limitations comprised of reliability, validity, and ethical considerations.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

Throughout the world, teachers are confronted with the problem of bullying. Bullying negatively influences a schools' climate and obstructs students' rights to learn in a safe environment. Additionally, bullying can also have negative consequences even after the initial bullying is over, for students who exhibit bullying behavior, the bystanders who observe it, and the students who are the targets of the bullying behavior.

Teachers have the opportunity to witness the phenomenon of bullying in its purest form because of the amount of time they spend with students while they are interacting with their peers. Teachers are able to witness the complexities of student bullying, including the problems students face in relation to bullying, how teachers and students cope with bullying, and what interventions are effective in dealing with bullying. Teachers have the unique ability to witness bullying and subsequently have the authority to address and stop it. Bullying interventions and policies will only be truly understood by examining the experiences of those who see it most often; teachers.

The height of the problem occurs during the middle school years (Smith, Madsen, & Moody, 1999). This heuristic case study seeks to explore the experiences of six middle school teachers who address bullying in the classroom.

The goal of this study was to learn more about student bullying by examining the experiences of teachers who had dealt with this phenomenon. By talking to teachers about their experiences, I gained a better understanding of student bullying and the complexities which surround it. In addition, the information gathered from this study revealed more

effective interventions for dealing with bullying, as well as has the potential to guide professional development and policy for schools. The preliminary research question was, what are the experiences of sixth-grade teachers who address bullying in the classroom? The sub-questions were: a) What are the experiences of sixth-grade teachers who witness bullying in the classroom?; b) How do sixth-grade teachers address bullying behavior in the classroom?; c) What interventions do sixth-grade teachers find effective and ineffective in addressing bullying in a middle school classroom?; and d) What support is needed from school administrators to address bullying behaviors in the classroom?

Chapter 3 entails the critical elements of qualitative research and grounds the study as a heuristic inquiry and a case study. First, I review the rationale for qualitative research and provide the definition and history of heuristics as it relates to qualitative design. The specific phenomenological form of heuristics will be situated within the larger context of phenomenology. This tradition will ground the framework defined by personal experiences and social practices of the ‘lived world’ (Husserl, 1990). Heuristics will provide a foundation for the qualitative study of the experiences of classroom bullying of six teachers’ in an urban school district. Next, I will connect the tradition of heuristics to the case study research design which includes (a) setting and participants, (b) data collection and role of the researcher (c) data analysis procedures, (d) validity and reliability, and (e) limitations of the study. I conclude the chapter with a plan to share the findings.

## **Rationale for Qualitative Research**

When discussing qualitative research I think it is important to start with a definition of this type of research. For this study I preferred the definition by Denzin and Lincoln (2011),

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. (p. 3)

Qualitative research involves the systematic use of a variety of materials; case study, personal experience, introspective, life story, interview, observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings attached to those experiences in individual's lives. Additionally, qualitative research attempts to see and experience the phenomenon from the insider's view. According to Miles & Huberman (1994) using qualitative research, the researcher is able to focus on "naturally occurring ordinary events in its natural setting" (p. 10). In order to fully understand teachers' experiences, this study occurred in the natural setting. By doing this, I was able to accurately develop the rich, thick description necessary to fully answer the research questions. This allowed me to be actively engaged and get a clear picture of the phenomenon.

Qualitative and quantitative research varies in three distinct ways. First, qualitative research utilizes an inductive reasoning process whereas quantitative research utilizes a deductive reasoning process. A qualitative researcher will seek to inductively understand the experiences of the participants. Making meaning of experiences is *sine qua non* to qualitative

analysis. A quantitative researcher will base his or her findings on theoretical knowledge and deductive findings from the data.

The second difference lies in the flexibility of qualitative data. Guest, Mitchell, and Namey (2013) indicate that while some data collection and analysis techniques are more structured than others, qualitative research by nature is inductive and flexible. This was my first research study and the flexibility that comes with qualitative research allowed me to change and adapt the aspects of my research based on the evolution of the project.

Additionally, qualitative research focuses on thick, rich data. Merriam (2009) defines thick description as, “the complete, literal description of the incident or entity investigated” (p. 30). Merriam (2009) further states that, “rich, thick description provides enough description so that the readers will be able to determine how closely their situations match the research situation, and hence, whether findings can be transferred” (p. 211). This thick, rich description is necessary for capturing and communicating the experiences of teachers. Unlike qualitative research, quantitative research designs are specific, rigid, and generally inflexible

The final difference is in the linear aspects of the design. Qualitative research designs are non-linear and non-sequential. Qualitative data analysis moves in analytical circles rather than within a linear approach (Creswell, 2013). In qualitative research, data collection and analysis is often undertaken concurrently. The steps in data analysis are not distinct and often go on simultaneously (Creswell, 2013). Richards (2009) believes data analysis should be done throughout the process and waiting until all data is in is “dangerous.” Though it is not linear, it does have a beginning and ending point. The data analysis spiral begins with data collection. Once data is imputed the spiral touches on organizing the data, reading and memoing, describing, classifying, and interpreting data into codes and themes, interpreting

the data, representing, and visualizing the data. The spiral goes around in circles and can encounter each of these steps multiple times. Finally, the data analysis spiral concludes with an account or narrative (Creswell, 2013). Quantitative data has a much more distinct and linear process. In quantitative research data is collected, then analyzed, then reported. It is very sequential and there is little mention of returning to a data source.

Qualitative researchers often use a theoretical lens through which they view their study in terms of what issues to study and “how the researcher will position himself [or herself] in the study” (Creswell, 2003, p. 131). A theoretical lens can also be thought of and referred to as traditions, theories, or paradigms. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) define theoretical traditions as “a loose collection of logically related assumptions, concepts, or propositions that orient thinking and research” (p. 24). This case study was oriented through the tradition of heuristic inquiry, which I describe in the following subsections.

### **Case Study**

Case study research is a qualitative research approach in which the researcher explores a real-life case through in-depth data collection that occurs over time. This data collection includes multiple sources such as observations, documents, and interviews. Though the main concept is the same, there are many different interpretations of what a case study encompasses. Qualitative case study research is described as a form of research that focuses on descriptive data, the participants’ own words, and observable behaviors (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). Case study research is a choice of what to study, not a methodology that governs the study (Stake, 2005). Case study research involves investigating a real life case in a current context or setting (Yin, 2009). Many researchers consider case study as a

methodology, strategy for inquiry, and research strategy (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2009). Other researchers have described a case study as a detailed examination of a setting, a subject, a group, or an event (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 2003; Patton, 2002). Case study research is used in many disciplines and is difficult to confine to one single definition. For this study, however, the following definition of case study was employed: “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident, and in which multiple sources of evidence are used” (Yin, 1989, p. 23).

According to Stake (1995) cases can be classified into three categories: intrinsic, instrumental, and collective. Instrumental case studies consider the case as ancillary and as a tool for the exploration of an issue, building theory, or redrawing generalizations. A collective case study consists of the study of multiple instrumental case studies. On the other hand, intrinsic case studies occur when the case itself is of primary interest in the investigation. In intrinsic case studies the research is driven by a desire to know more about the case itself. This type of study does not seek to build theory or how the case represents other cases. The intrinsic case is often guided by the researcher's interest which is the case with the study.

For the research study I used an intrinsic case study to examine a contemporary example of teachers' experiences with bullying. My aim as a researcher is to view the phenomenon with an open mind, suspending speculation, conjecture and judgement. The research formulates meaning and its significance from patterns and data. To identify a case study the researcher must first “cast a wide net” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 59) to select an initial possible site or data source for exploration. The study is then bound by defining the

setting, participants, and questions (Creswell, 2013). For this study, the case was six urban teachers in a Midwestern middle school. I am currently an urban middle school teacher and have experienced bullying during my own schooling. Because I have deep and meaningful experiences with the phenomenon being studied, bullying, this study took on a heuristic approach. Heuristics is situated in the larger theoretical tradition on phenomenology, both of which I discuss next.

### **Heuristics**

The theoretical tradition that was used in this study is heuristic inquiry, a form of phenomenology. Taylor & Bogdan (1998) state that, “phenomenology is committed to understanding social phenomena from the actor’s own perspective and examining how the world is experienced” (p. 3). According to Van Manen (1990), “phenomenology is the systematic attempt to uncover and describe the structures, the internal meanings of lived experiences” (p. 10). Both of these descriptions include a focus on experience. This focus on experience makes the phenomenological tradition applicable, because my study design sought to understand the experiences of teachers. The objective of this approach is to focus on how people make meaning of their lived experiences. My goal as a researcher was to reveal how the participants experience, construct, and make meaning of a particular phenomenon and discover the essence of the participant and their experience. Van Manen (1990) states that, “essence is that what makes a thing what it is (and without which it would not be what it is); that what makes a thing what it is rather than its being or becoming something else” (p. 177).

According to Douglass and Moustakas (1985), while heuristics is a form of phenomenology, it differs in four distinct ways:

1. Heuristics emphasizes connectedness and relationships, while phenomenology encourages more detachment in analysing an experience.
2. Heuristics leads to depictions of essential meaning and portrayal of the intrigue and personal significance that imbue the search to know, while phenomenology emphasizes definitive description of the structure of the experience.
3. Heuristics concludes with a creative synthesis that includes the researcher's intuition and tacit understandings, while phenomenology presents a distillation of the structures of experience.
4. Whereas phenomenology loses the persons in the process of descriptive analysis, in heuristics the research participants remain visible in the examination of the data and continue to be portrayed as whole persons. Phenomenology ends with the essence of the experience; heuristics retains the essence of the person in experience. (p. 43)

Moustakas (1990) defines heuristic research as a “process of internal search through which one discovers the nature and meaning of experience and develops methods and procedures for further investigation and analysis” (p. 9). This process required me to reflect on my own experiences with this phenomenon. As a form of phenomenology, heuristic research revolves around the researcher's effort to discover the essence of a lived phenomenon or significant human experience “through the internal pathways of the self” (Douglas & Moustakas, 1985, p. 39). In heuristics the researcher must ask themselves, “What is my experience of this phenomenon and the essential experience of others who also experience this phenomenon intensely?” (Patton, 2002, p. 107). My desire to uncover the essence of others' experiences with bullying to better understand my own has guided this study.

According to Patton (2002), “Heuristics is a form of phenomenological inquiry that brings to the fore the personal experience and insights of the researcher” (p.107). To use a

heuristic approach the researcher must have an intense personal experience with the phenomenon. I have intensely experienced bullying as a child and dealt with it in my own classroom as an adult and s teacher. As a researcher, heuristics required me to connect to my own experiences while at the same time acknowledging my assumptions and biases. Moustakas (1990) states that “the self of the researcher is present throughout the process and, while understanding the phenomenon with increasing depth, the researcher also experiences growing self-awareness and self-knowledge” (p. 9). Being so close to this phenomenon I knew it would be impossible to keep myself out of the research, as I have intensely experience the phenomenon myself, it was not a realistic goal to omit my experience from the research. Heuristics provided me with a voice throughout the process. Craig (1978) best describes this intertwinement of the researcher and the study by stating that heuristics “affirms the possibility that one can live deeply and passionately in the moment and be fully immersed in mysteries and miracles, and still be engaged in meaningful research experiences” (p. 20). This concept is what interested me in heuristic inquiry.

As the key research instrument in this heuristic study I was actively and personally engaged throughout the study. This engagement was through what Moustakas (1990) refers to as, “self-dialogue and self-discovery . . . my primary task is to recognize whatever exist in my consciousness as a fundamental awareness, to receive and accept it, and then dwell on its nature and possible meanings” (p. 11). This engagement allowed me to further understand the deeper meanng of these experiences and the people who experience them by sharing the essence of the experience. I discovered the essence of these experiences through a variety of

data sources as well as my own personal reflections and discoveries. Using data from observations, interviews, and documents, I searched for the meaning and essence of the lived experience of each participant.

### **Design of the Study**

The methodology a research study employs depends on the research questions (Crabtree & Miller, 1999; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). To understand processes or the how or why of a phenomenon, qualitative research is necessary to provide in-depth and exploratory tools to gain a clear picture of the process being studied (Symon & Cassel, 1998). To describe the methodology of this study, I will begin with the design of the study, including the setting, participants, and sampling of participants. I will then provide an overview of the types of data and techniques I will use to gather and manage the data. Next, I will define data production and data analysis techniques that will be utilized. Finally, I will illustrate the ethical considerations and limitations in this study.

### **Setting**

This study was conducted in one urban middle school in Missouri. "Urban" is defined as either an urbanized area or places with populations of 2,500 or more outside urbanized areas. An urbanized area includes places and their adjacent densely settled surrounding territory that together have a minimum population of 50,000 (U. S. Department of Commerce, 1992).

This study was conducted in a mid-size, urban school district in a Midwestern city. The total student enrollment for the entire school district was under 9,000 students. Approximately half of students were African American, one-third were White, and the

remaining students were Hispanic, Asian, and Native American. Of these students, two-thirds qualified for free and reduced lunch. The district had under 20 schools and employed around 800 certified staff members. In 2013, teachers in the district had an average of nearly 10 years of experience, and over half of the teachers held a master's degree or higher (Missouri Comprehensive Data System, 2013).

Participants were chosen from one middle school located in this urban, mid-size district. For confidentiality purposes, the individual school and the participants will not be identified in this study. The school will be referred to in the study as Mariano Middle School. According to the Missouri Comprehensive Data System (2013), the school had around 600 students enrolled between grades 6, 7, and 8. The average class size was under 20 students (Missouri Comprehensive Data System, 2013). The school employed more than 40 certified teachers and administrators. The teachers at this school had an average of over 10 years of experience; more than two-thirds of the teachers had a master's degree or higher. The majority of the teachers in this district were White females. In the school where research was conducted around 70% of the teachers were female and 30% male, almost 95% were White and about 5% were African American. In the specific school in this study, roughly 60% of students were African American, 30% were White, and the remaining 10% were Hispanic, Asian, and Native American. Of these students, more than two-thirds qualified for free and reduced lunch. In 2012, there was an attendance rate was over 90% and there were less than five suspensions of 10 or more days. Demographic information about students and teachers is summarized in the table below:

Table 1

*School Demographic Information*

Race/Gender	Populations	
	Students	Teachers
African American	60%	95%
White	30%	5%
Hispanic/Asian/Pacific Islander	10%	0%
Male	45%	70%
Female	55%	30%

\*Percentages have been rounded to the nearest 5% for confidentiality purposes.

This middle school was chosen for several reasons. First, this school depicted an average middle school in Missouri, in terms of school and class size, number of teachers, and student disciplinary and attendance rates in comparison to other middle schools across the state. Second, the school was located in an urban area as defined by the US Department of Commerce (1992). Finally, in talking with administrators from this school, they expressed their support and the need for the study, acknowledged the fact that there was a bullying issue in the school, and welcomed any information and interventions that could help.

**Participants**

Teachers were ideal participants because of their intimate interaction the phenomenon. Teachers were a better choice for participants because asking students of bullying to relive traumatic experiences from their past is likely to be distressing for those

individuals. Teachers are the adults most likely to witness student bullying on a first-hand basis and have direct observational insight into the phenomenon of bullying in the classroom.

I began this study by seeking permission from the superintendent for the school district. I submitted a hard copy and electronic copy of a letter outlining who I am, the research study, and purpose, along with a request for permission to enter one of the middle schools and do this research study (Appendix D). An email followed five working days after the permission letter is mailed to the superintendent to confirm approval. Upon receiving permission from the superintendent, a letter of consent was mailed with a self-addressed and stamped envelope. Once I received the consent form, I contacted the school administrators.

I set up an in-person preliminary conversation with the school principal prior to approaching teachers. The purpose of these preliminary conversations were to explain the study, gain permission to survey and interview teachers, and begin identifying the participants. To begin identifying the participants, the administrators and counselors were asked to individually identify at least six teachers that they believe are effective at intervening and addressing situations involving bullying behaviors. Participants were chosen using snowball and intensity sampling to select my participants. Intensity sampling involves selecting information rich cases to gain useful data and excellent examples of the phenomenon. Intensity sampling allows the researcher to select a small number of information rich cases that provide in depth information. Patton (2001) explains that intensity sampling requires information and exploratory work to be able to identify intense examples. This information was within the individuals who suggested the participants. Patton (2002) states, when using this type of purposeful sampling, it is essential to “select information-rich cases whose study will illuminate the questions under study” (p. 48).

To choose cases that illuminate the question I used the specific purposeful sampling strategy of snowball sampling. Snowball sampling involves asking well-situated people to recommend a person who knows a lot about a specific topic (Patton, 2002). Asking many people for recommendations leads you to the most information rich participants. I began by asking the principal, assistant principals, and counselors to identify teachers who have had a lot of experience successfully handling bullying in the classroom. From the principal, assistant principal, and two counselors, I collect a list of six recommended participants. The principal, assistant principal, and counselors were asked to rank their participants from one to six, one being their first recommendation based on who they believed most consistently handled bullying situations effectively.

From the data gathered from the administrators, I narrowed my pool down to six participants based on who ranked the highest. Some participants were suggested multiple times; these were the ideal participants and the first teachers asked to participate in the study. Four of the participants appeared on all four collected lists. The final two participants appeared on two of the four lists. The remaining suggestions all appeared only once, and were not invited to participate. The six teachers who appeared on the highest number of administrators' lists were invited to participate and all agreed. Participants were six middle-school teachers chosen using purposeful sampling to select my participants.

I contacted the certified teachers at the school through an individual e-mail. In the e-mail I invited the teachers to participate in the study and gave them the consent form (see Appendix F). I also inform the identified teachers that their participation in the project involved one interview and at least one classroom observation, both of which are voluntary.

The interview questions (Appendix E) were concerned with the experiences of teachers with student bullying. Teachers were informed that their participation in the study is voluntary and that they may discontinue their involvement at any time. I explained the purpose, risks, and safeguards. Participants were ensured responses are treated with confidentiality and that participation is completely voluntary. Additionally at this time, teachers were informed that participation includes both classroom observations and interviews, both of which are voluntary.

### **Data Sources**

Data sources are anything from which a researcher can collect information. Qualitative research typically incorporates three different data sources: interviews, direct observations, and written documents (Patton, 2002). I utilized all three of these methods in this study. In using multiple data sources, “A rich variety of methodological combinations can be employed to illuminate an inquiry question” (Patton, 2002, p. 248). This allowed me to fully answer the research questions and corroborating the findings through what I see in observations, hear in interviews, and read in documents.

### **Documents**

In the course of conducting qualitative research, documents can be examined as a data source. Documents can serve an important role and provide a plethora of information.

According to Patton (2002)

Records, documents, artifacts and archives....constitute a particularly rich source of information about many organizations and programs...in contemporary society, all kinds of entities leave a trail of paper and artifacts, a kind of spoor that can be mined as part of field work. (p. 293)

The documents that I examined were the Missouri Revised Statute covering bullying and the bullying policy of the district in which I conducted research. These documents were chosen because they dictate what defines bullying and outline teacher responsibility in bullying situations. These documents offered a wealth of information and data for me as a researcher.

These documents are used by teachers and administrators as a guide to definitions, practices, and responsibilities in reference to bullying. The documents provide educators with useful clarifications and requirements. Documents alone would not provide enough information for me to answer my research questions. In order to answer these questions more thoroughly I utilized interviewing to collect more data.

## **Interviews**

The purpose of interviewing in any qualitative research study is “to contribute to a body of knowledge that is conceptual and theoretical and is based on the meanings that life experiences hold for the interviewees” (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006, p. 315). While interviewing is useful in all qualitative studies, it is especially useful in heuristic studies which focus on experiences. Weiss (1994) states, “Interviewing gives us access to the observations of others. Through interviewing we can learn about places we have not been and could not go and about settings in which we have not lived” (p. 1). Essentially, interviewing paints a picture from the person’s point of view. An interpretation of their own experience cannot be gained any other way.

Interviews allow us to gain insight into feelings, thoughts, intentions, and previous experiences (Patton, 2002). These thoughts and feelings are what give experiences their

meaning to an individual. According to Patton (2002), “The purpose of interviewing, then, is to allow us to enter into the other person’s perspective. Qualitative interviewing begins with the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit” (p. 340). I conducted two interviews per participant to enter into their perspective.

Before designing my interview I consulted Creswell (2013) and reviewed the nine steps outlined for the interview process. The first step is to decide on the research questions. “Your research questions formulate what you want to understand, your interview questions are what you ask people to gain that understanding” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 101).

The second step is to identify the interviewees. I used purposeful sampling to select my participants. My participants were teachers I identify through snowball sampling and intensity that was previously discussed.

The third step is to determine what type of interview is practical. I used one-on-one interviews. The individual interview allows the interviewer to delve deeply into social and personal matters in addition to getting thorough descriptions of experiences. I employed the use of semi-structured also known as guided interviews (Lichtman, 2010) with my research participants. Guided interviews are open and allow new ideas to be discussed based on the interviewee’s responses. The researcher in this kind of interview has a general set of questions and themes to be explored, but allows deviation from the interview questions. The freedom of this style of interviewing allowed me to tailor my questions to the specific participant.

The fourth step is to design and use adequate recording procedures. I recorded my interviews using Audio Note, an application used to make audio recordings. As a backup in

case of faulty equipment, I also recorded the interview on my iPad using an application entitled QuickVoice.

The fifth step is the design and use of an interview guide. I found it intriguing that this was the fifth step because I have developed my interview guide before I have selected my participants (see Appendix E). I followed Creswell's (2013) suggestion of including "five to seven open ended questions" and settled on six. My questions consisted of some specific questions on experience and some generalized questions about their thoughts and feelings on bullying. I began my interview by obtaining basic background information. This allowed me to build a relationship and learn information about the teachers' past experiences. The preliminary research questions I used were:

1. Tell me who you are, family history and values, etc.
2. Tell me about your early educational experiences.
3. Tell me about a significant teacher from your past and tell why they were special.
4. Tell me why you decided to pursue the field of education.

I then proceeded to the main interview questions (Appendix E). The main research statements I chose to gain understanding of my research questions are:

1. Define bullying in your own words.
2. Describe your school's anti-bullying policy.
3. Describe bullying at your school.
4. Think of a time when you were aware of a bullying incident in your classroom and tell me about that incident.
5. What strategies have you seen work with students in regards to stopping bullying behaviors?

6. What would you recommend to reduce bullying in your school?
7. What support do you need from school administrators to address bullying behaviors in the classroom?

Dere, Easton, Nadel, and Huston (2008) highlight the importance of asking about specific events to access episodic memory. When a researcher asks someone to describe a specific event the researcher is able to gather a richer description than he or she will receive from a generalized question. Maxwell (2013) suggests using a combination of specific and generalized questions. By combining these types of questions I can “address the same issues and research questions, but from different perspectives” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 104). Similar to using multiple data collection methods, multiple question types creates a greater depth of understanding.

The sixth step is to refine the interview questions and procedures through pilot testing. In a previous semester, I conducted a pilot test of the questions I used. This pilot test made me well aware of my own deficiencies in interviewing and helped me to refine my questions for the future. The main change I made was to the first question: participants will be asked to define bullying in their own words.

The seventh step is to determine the place for conducting interviews. I interviewed my participants at a comfortable location. Interviews were held in the teacher’s classroom, provided the room is not in use and has a door that can be closed. Alternatively were offered the option of choosing the location, such as a conference room in the UMKC library. This provided us with privacy. Additionally, I conducted the interviews outside of the school day as to not be limited by the time constraints of a single period. I anticipate each interview to

take around an hour. I conducted two interviews with each participant. The initial interview was directed by my interview guide. A follow up interview was conducted to review transcripts and ask any additional questions that emerged during data analysis.

Participants had the freedom to choose the times, dates, and (secure) locations of the observations and interviews. They could also choose to opt out of any piece of the data collection at any time or completely withdraw without consequences.

The eighth step is to have the interviewee sign a consent form. This step was completed before any interviews begin. The consent form reviews the guidelines associated with the study (see Appendix F). The final step is to use good interview procedures. This involves completing the interview in the 60 minutes allotted, avoiding leading or judgmental statements, and being a good listener (Creswell, 2013). Many of these steps were applicable when I began planning and conducting observations.

## **Observations**

Documents and interviews would not have been sufficient in providing me with the necessary data to achieve a well-rounded interpretation of the experiences, so observations were also employed. Observations were used in combination with interviews and documents to fill in the holes that often accompany using only one data collection strategy. We cannot learn everything through documentation only, so observations are a critical element in qualitative research. According to Adler and Adler (1994) it is “the fundamental base of all research methods” (p. 389). Observations are a useful tool in qualitative research studies and provide a wealth of information. Qualitative research study observations are conducted in natural field settings and offer the researcher first hand encounters with phenomena being

studied. Maxwell (2013) claims, “observations can enable you to draw inferences about this perspective that you couldn’t obtain by relying exclusively on interview data” (p. 103). By observing my participants, I witnessed first-hand their experiences with bullying and gained access to aspects of their bullying experiences that were omitted during the interview process. Participants choose both the day and time of observation. Observations lasted a minimum of one hour and a maximum of two hours. Observing these interactions gave me a deeper understanding of the phenomenon taking place in the classrooms in this particular school.

During the observation I considered the student actions to which the teacher responds. Relevant student interactions and behaviors were recorded. No identifying traits were recorded and all students involved were simply referred to as "the student." Only general descriptions of the student actions that are responded to by the classroom teacher were recorded.

Bullying is defined as any physically aggressive acts, verbal put downs, and ostracizing that is shown repeatedly over a long period of time and when an imbalance of power occurs between a target and a bully (Olweus, 1994). Due to the short time frame of the observations, I had to put guidelines on what constituted bullying. If a physically or verbally aggressive act or ostracizing occurred more than once in the hour or was sustained for more than five minutes, I considered it bullying.

There are several different reasons for using observation as a data collection tool. I most aligned myself with Patton’s (2002) six different purposes of observation. Patton’s (2002) six advantages of direct observation are:

1. Through direct observations the inquirer is better able to understand and capture the context with which people interact
2. Firsthand experience with a setting and the people in the setting allows an inquirer to be open, discovery oriented, and inductive because by being on-site the observer has less need to rely on prior conceptualizations of the setting
3. The inquirer has the opportunity to see things that may routinely escape awareness among the people in the setting
4. Direct observation is the chance to learn things that people would be unwilling to talk about in an interview
5. The opportunity to move beyond the selective perceptions of others
6. Getting close to the people in a setting through firsthand experience permits the inquirer to draw on personal knowledge during the formal interpretation stage of analysis. (p. 262–264)

This list of advantages convinced me to include observations in the study. The benefits of getting firsthand experience with a fresh pair of eyes and observing things that are either misconstrued or left out will be valuable in determining the true essence of the teachers' experiences.

There are several challenges that accompany conducting observations. Creswell (2013) states that some challenges are remembering to take field notes, accurately recording quotes, deciding when and if one should move between participant roles, refraining from being overwhelmed by the information, and funneling the observation information. The use of current technology such as personal computers can help alleviate some of these problems by providing a quick way to take field notes.

### **Data Analysis**

For this study I collected data through three methods, interviews, observations, and document analysis. As a heuristic case study, I followed the research steps developed by Moustakas (1990). There are six stages in Moustakas (1990) heuristic approach. Immersion is the first stage and involves fully emerging oneself into the content. In this phase the

research question is lived in waking, sleeping, and even dream states. The second stage is incubation. Incubation involves a deliberate retreat from the intense, concentrated focus and allows the expansion of knowledge to take place at a more subtle level. The third stage is illumination. Illumination is the phase that involves a breakthrough, a process of awakening that occurs as the researcher becomes more open and receptive. It is during this stage that the raw data were analyzed and coded for patterns and themes. Following the discovery of themes the explication stage occurs. During explication, meaning is added to the themes and patterns that have emerged. Further exploration may take place and new connections are made. Creative synthesis is the final stage. In this phase the sections of the research have been brought together to communicate the total experience.

As I mentioned earlier, the data collected were analyzed during the illumination stage. To analyze the information gathered I utilized Miles and Huberman's (1994) data analysis process of coding. Miles and Huberman (1994) describe coding and analysis "to review a set of field notes, transcribed or synthesized, and to dissect them meaningfully, while keeping the relationships between the parts intact, is the stuff of analysis" It is important to analyze the data while keeping its essence intact. I reviewed the codes and themes that were developed and compared them to the original transcripts to ensure the essential meaning is still there.

Miles and Huberman (1994) describe the codes at the base of their analysis as "labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study. Codes usually are attached to "chunks" of varying size- words, phrases, sentences or whole paragraphs, connected or unconnected to a specific setting" (p. 56). These codes helped me categorize my research and develop themes.

Before I began my analysis I generated a preliminary list of codes from my research questions, and theoretical framework (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I chunked my interviews by paragraphs and statements and assigned descriptive codes to these sections. As I develop new codes, I tracked them in a Microsoft Word document and create definitions to clarify the meaning of each code. The majority of these descriptive codes were included in the final code book; however, a few were be discarded once I determined the true essence of the participant's experiences.

My initial codes were divided into descriptive and interpretive codes during the analysis phase. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), descriptive codes “entail little interpretation. Rather, you are attributing a class of phenomena to a segment of text” (p. 57). Conversely, interpretive codes offer more meaningful understanding of data collected.

A third class of codes, pattern codes, and offer even deeper insight than interpretive codes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Pattern coding is undertaken after a set of descriptive and interpretive codes are completed. These were used later in data collection as themes became clearer, as they indicate a specific theme or pattern that has become distinct to the researcher. The process of pattern coding involves grouping sets of descriptive and interpretive codes from the data into larger themes that encompass those codes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Codes are grouped into themes according to meanings and relevance to the phenomena. The identified themes were essential in answering the study's research questions.

Coding and identifying themes is a key element in data analysis. Discussion of the interpretive codes, themes, descriptions, and rational from the data will be presented in Chapter 4 to give the reader insight into the analysis process. With thorough data analysis

and research, a study's research questions can be answered with a clear, valid, and reliable answer.

### **Limitations and Ethical Considerations**

Qualitative research is meant to provide rich, thick data, but as with every type of research, qualitative research has its own limitations. Analyzing qualitative data can lead to errors in interpretation. These errors are described in terms of reliability and validity. Maxwell (2005) explains that the researcher must identify validity threats, or ways in which he or she might be wrong, and then incorporate strategies into the study in an attempt to eliminate threats. I attempted to insert these strategies into this research study.

In the study, I have identified three potential threats to the validity and reliability: (a) the interpretation of events as seen through my lens as a researcher (bias); (b) influencing the participants during data collection (reactivity); and (c) the accuracy of data captured.

Schwandt (1997) describes validity as how accurately the account or description represents participants' realities of the social phenomena that is being studied and is credible to them. Validity is in essence establishing the credibility of your study.

On establishing validity, Creswell and Miller (2000) state "Qualitative researchers routinely employ member checking, triangulation, thick description, peer reviews, and external audits. Researchers engage in one or more of these procedures and report results in their investigations" (p. 124). There are a wide variety of methods a researcher can use to help ensure validity in a study. Patton (2002) suggests techniques for increasing validity, such as, "systematic data collection, rigorous training, multiple data sources, triangulation, and external reviews are techniques aimed at producing high-quality qualitative data that are

credible, trustworthy, authentic, balanced about the phenomenon under study, and fair to people studied” (p. 51). The techniques mentioned by Patton (2002) and Creswell and Miller (2010) were used in the study in an attempt to establish validity and reliability. Increasing a study’s validity provides the research with more authority. However, there are potential roadblocks to achieving research validity.

Maxwell (2005) has identified two threats to research validity: researcher bias and the influence of the researcher on participants, also known as reactivity. All researchers inevitably bring their own personal values to a study, which often results in bias (Creswell, 2007). While many would assume that these biases should be eliminated, that is not the case in qualitative research. In qualitative research, the goal is not to eliminate bias, but to identify strategies to control the bias so that it does not interfere with the validity of the study (Patton, 2002; Maxwell, 2005). Qualitative research is concerned with “understanding how a particular researcher's values and expectations influence the conduct and conclusions of the study...Explaining your possible biases and how you will deal with these is a key task of your research proposal” (Maxwell, 2007, p. 108). To minimize my biases I used a technique known as bracketing. Moustakas (1994) stated, “Bracketing is when the focus of the research is placed in brackets; everything else is set aside so that the entire research process is rooted solely on the topic and question” (p. 97).

Bracketing is a method of phenomenological reduction; the setting aside of beliefs that enables “the essence of the phenomenon to become more visible, allowing you to build up a picture over time in terms of emerging patterns, relationships, and interconnections” (Grbich, 2013, p. 95). The German philosopher Husserl uses the term *epoche* to refer to this suspension of judgment. I bracketed my biases and assumptions through mind-mapping and

journaling. Creating a bracketing mind-map is how I began the bracketing process. For this, I followed Simon's (2011) seven steps for creating a bracketing mind-map,

1. Write a central idea or question in the center of a blank sheet of paper; you could also draw a meaningful symbol that represents this construct. This central term or image should capture the problem being investigated.
2. Brainstorm other terms that relate to this central concept, and write them as branches emanating from the main idea.
3. Add sub-branches that include your beliefs, perceptions, attitudes, and views of each word or construct in each sub-branch.
4. Draw connections among the various terms you have written as you see them, based on how you believe or feel each of these terms interact.
5. Continue jotting down terms and drawing connections among them, without pausing to edit yourself, until you have exhausted your ideas about this central topic. Use additional sheets of paper if necessary.
6. Re-read your mind-map of concepts and their connections; on a separate sheet of paper, list the connections that reoccur or appear most prominent.
7. Create another mind-map with the same main branches and think of how a person with opposing view might view these terms and their interconnections. You may wish to research these views or discuss them with a person you know holds opposing views. (p. 41)

Mind-mapping allowed me to put all of my thoughts, assumptions, and biases on paper and then analyze those and set them aside.

In addition to mind-mapping I also engaged in reflective journaling. In reflective journaling, the researcher brackets their emotions by identifying "his or her own personal experiences, or presuppositions, with the phenomenon under investigation in an effort to minimize their effect" (Shotton, 2008, p. 35). This makes the researcher's background and beliefs transparent. I utilized a reflective journal throughout the data collection to acknowledge and bracket my thoughts, feelings, and assumptions I have associated with the process, participants, or data collected. Utilizing reflective journaling helps ensure any personal presuppositions do not encroach on the data.

As the research instrument in this study, I bring my own biases to the study. One bias is my belief that teachers can help students cope with difficult feelings and experiences. With this in mind, I must consciously try to avoid inserting my bias into the study. It is essential to avoid influencing the participants, which is known as reactivity. In an attempt to eliminate reactivity from this study, I refrained from asking leading questions during the data collection.

While validity is described as the credibility of the data, reliability can be described as factual trueness. Reliability is a precondition for validity. Kerlinger (as cited in Lincoln & Guba, 1985) explained reliability by describing it as synonymous with the terms “dependability, stability, consistency, predictability, and accuracy” (p. 292). In research studies, a test can be reliable, but if it is measuring the wrong thing, then the test is invalid. Reliability refers to whether or not another researcher can follow the procedures and processes used to collect and interpret the data. Reliability in a research study is established through the researcher’s documentation of the choices made during research, the path they followed. The documentation can be done through field notes, templates used for coding and assembling data, and any other document that provides an evident trail of data analysis and interpretation. In addition to documentation providing a map of the research, Yin (2009) stated, “The goal of reliability is to minimize the errors and biases in a study” (p. 45). To minimize errors and biases in my own study I utilized a critical friend. The use of these outside sources helped to offset potential threats to the study.

In addition to the use of a critical friend, I also maintained a journal during interviews to record any observations or unrecorded sounds. This provided me with another data source

which aided in capturing the accuracy, authenticity, and reliability of the observations (Patton, 2002).

Triangulation was also used to increase validity and reliability among the data sources. Triangulation is defined as using different data sources to study the same setting, issue, or program (Creswell, 2003; Maxwell, 2005; Patton, 2002). Patton (2001) states that, “the logic of triangulation is based on the premise that no single method ever adequately solves the problem of rival explanation” (p. 555). There are five primary types of triangulation, data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation, methodological triangulation, and environmental triangulation (Guion, 2002). I employed methods triangulation which involves using multiple methods of data collection. The three methods I used are documents, observations, and interviews. Using three methods instead of one reduced the study’s vulnerability to errors associated with a particular method. By using a methods triangulation approach I was able evaluate the consistency of the findings. A common assumption is that the point of triangulation is to confirm that the findings all have the the same or similar conclusions. However, according to Patton (2002), “Finding such inconsistencies out not to be viewed as weakening the credibility of results, but rather as offering opportunities for deeper insight into the relationship between inquiry approach and the phenomenon under study” (p. 248). Triangulating these three data sets strengthened the findings in the study by enabling me to compare similarities and differences and validate findings, patterns, and conclusions.

To avoid any power issues I did not introduce myself as a researcher or teacher, but I instead interacted with participants on a first-name basis. Additionally, I plan to utilize a common strategy known as member checking (Creswell, 2013). After I transcribed the

interviews and observations, I asked the participants to review them for accuracy. The data were collected and went through member checking. Triangulation was achieved through using multiple data points. It is accepted action “that researchers should not rely on any single source of data, interview, observation, or instrument” (Mills, 2003, p. 52).

Additionally, I used templates and documents to create a clear trail of analysis.

Researchers must anticipate ethical issues which may occur in writing research questions, collecting and analyzing data, and communicating findings (Creswell, 2013). Rossman and Rallis (2003) described ethics by stating, “All people have fundamental rights that may not be denied, even for the greatest good for the greatest number” (p. 71). In an effort to achieve this, I followed all guidelines outlined by the University of Missouri – Kansas City and obtain informed consent provided by the parents. In addition, I also took sufficient time to communicate directly with the research participants to clarify that all participation is voluntary. I also thoroughly explained that they can withdraw at any time.

I let participants know up front as truthfully as possible what my intentions were for conducting this qualitative study. Participants were treated in an ethical manner by respecting their decisions, protecting them from harm, and making efforts to ensure their well-being. To protect participants, several safeguards were put into place. Confidentiality or privacy issues are important to monitor in conducting research activities, so the data collected were safeguarded, and pseudonyms were used for participants. Additionally, names of others mentioned in the transcripts also received pseudonyms.

During a research study data security is of the utmost importance. All research documentation and data, while in the possession of the student researcher for analysis purposes, were kept in a locked filing cabinet in the student researcher’s office. All

observation and interview recordings were only accessible by the student researcher using a security code. Immediately after the digital recordings were conducted, written transcription took place. After the transcription, all digital recordings were erased. Upon completion of the final analysis, data were moved to a locked filing cabinet located in the office of the primary researcher for a period of seven years. No personal or identifying information of participants was on the student researcher's laptop; however, as an additional safeguard the documents pertaining to the research were also encrypted. In conclusion, this study sought to protect participants and adhere to all ethical standards.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS

#### **Overview of Study**

This was a single case study that utilized heuristic inquiry to describe the bullying experiences of six urban middle school teachers. Intensity and snowball sampling were used to identify participants for this study. As the researcher, I used documents, in-depth interviews, and observations to explore teachers' experiences with bullying in the classroom. The use of multiple data sources served as a method to triangulate and validate the data.

My research focused on studying the experiences of urban teachers in the reality of their own classroom. For this study "Urban" is defined as either an urbanized area or places with populations of 2,500 or more outside urbanized areas. An urbanized area includes places and their adjacent densely settled surrounding territory that together have a minimum population of 50,000 (U. S. Department of Commerce, 1992).

The preliminary research question was; what are the experiences of sixth-grade teachers who address bullying in the classroom? The sub-questions were: a) What are the experiences of sixth-grade teachers who witness bullying in the classroom?; b) How do sixth-grade teachers address bullying behavior in the classroom?; c) What interventions do sixth-grade teachers find effective and ineffective in addressing bullying in a middle school classroom?; and d) What support is needed from school administrators to address bullying behaviors in the classroom?

## **Methodology**

Phenomenology is a tradition for research design. Phenomenological qualitative research seeks to explore meaning, experiences, and perceptions to gain a better understanding of the essence of the lived experiences (Patton, 2002). My study took a heuristic approach which is a specific method of phenomenology. Heuristics places an emphasis on the experiences and insights of the researcher that is not present in other forms of phenomenology. “Heuristic inquiry focuses on intense human experiences, intense from the point of view of the investigator and co-researcher. It is the combination of personal experience and intensity that yields an understanding of the essence of the phenomenon” (Patton, 2002, p. 107). While I am able to easily access my own experiences, I needed to explore the experiences of others to find the essence of experiencing student to student bullying as a teacher in the classroom. Interviewing encourages the interviewee to share rich descriptions of phenomena while leaving the interpretation and analysis to the investigators (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006).

## **Data Collection**

In the course of conducting qualitative research, documents should be examined. Documents can serve an important role and provide a plethora of information. According to Patton (2002) “records, documents, artifacts and archives...constitute a particularly rich source of information about many organizations and programs...in contemporary society, all kinds of entities leave a trail of paper and artifacts, a kind of spoor that can be mined as part of field work” (p. 293). The documents that I chose to code were the school district’s bullying policy and the Missouri Revised Statutes Chapter 160 Schools--General Provisions

Section 160.77. These documents offer a wealth of information and data to be coded for a researcher that Patton speaks about.

School and district policies are written documents that set out the school or districts aims in relation to bullying behavior and strategies used to address and prevent it (Smith, Ananiadou, & Cowie, 2003). Bullying policies are supported by systems and procedures within a school to effectively implement, monitor, maintain, and communicate the policy's aims.

Bullying policy became an important issue after the devastation of the 1999 Columbine shootings and an increase in bullying-related suicide. Georgia was the first state to pass bullying legislation (Stuart-Cassell, Bell, & Springer, 2011). Since then there has been an increase in new proposed state legislation to define acts of bullying in schools and to establish school and district policies that define, prevent, and prohibit bullying behavior. Currently, 46 states have bullying laws and 45 of those mandate that school districts adopt bullying policies (Stuart-Cassell, Bell, & Springer, 2011). In 2007, Missouri required all school districts to adopt and implement a bullying policy in all schools.

The documents I coded are the Missouri Revised Statutes Chapter 160 Schools-- General Provisions Section 160.77 and the bullying policy of the district in which I conducted research. These documents are used by teachers and administrators to serve as a guide to what defines hazing and bullying and their responsibilities addressing this area. The documents provide educators with useful clarifications and requirements. Documents alone

did not provide enough information for me to answer my research questions. In order to answer these questions more thoroughly I turned to interviewing to collect more data.

The purpose of interviewing in any qualitative research study is “to contribute to a body of knowledge that is conceptual and theoretical and is based on the meanings that life experiences hold for the interviewees” (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006, p. 315). While interviewing is useful in all qualitative studies, it is especially useful in phenomenological studies which focus on experiences. According to Weiss (1994), “Interviewing gives us access to the observations of others. Through interviewing we can learn about places we have not been and could not go and about settings in which we have not lived” (p. 1). Essentially, interviewing paints a picture from the person’s point of view. An interpretation of their own experience cannot be gained any other way.

Interviews allow us to gain insight into feelings, thoughts, intentions, and previous experiences (Patton, 2002). These thoughts and feelings are what give experiences their meaning to an individual. According to Patton (2002), “The purpose of interviewing, then, is to allow us to enter into the other person’s perspective. Quantitative interviewing begins with the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit” (p. 340). After we have been exposed to the other person’s perspective through the interview that data must be transcribed, coded, and analyzed.

Miles and Huberman (1994) describe coding and analysis “to review a set of field notes, transcribed or synthesized, and to dissect them meaningfully, while keeping the relationships between the parts intact, is the stuff of analysis” (p. 9). Dissecting the interview transcripts required the use of coding or applying meaningful labels to chunks of information.

Before beginning my interviews I consulted Creswell (2013) and reviewed the nine steps outlined for the interview process. The first step is to decide on the research questions. “Your research questions formulate what you want to understand, your interview questions are what you ask people to gain that understanding” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 101). The main research statements and questions I chose to gain this understanding are:

1. Think of a time when you were aware of a bullying incident and tell me about that time.
2. Describe bullying here at school.
3. Describe any training you have had in dealing with bullying.
4. Describe your school’s anti-bullying policy.
5. What strategies have you seen work in regards to stopping bullying behavior?
6. What is your personal philosophy on how to handle bullying?
7. How do you address bullying behavior in your classroom?
8. What support do you need from administrators to help you address bullying in your classroom?

The second step is to identify the interviewees. I used intensity and snowball sampling to select my participants. Intensity sampling involves selecting information rich cases strategically to gain information rich data. Another strategy I used was snowball sampling. Snowball sampling involves asking well-situated people to recommend a person who knows a lot about a specific topic (Patton, 2002). Asking many people for recommendations leads you to the most information rich participants. I began by asking the principal and counselors to identify teachers who had a lot of experience successfully

handling bullying in the classroom. At the end of this process I had six names that kept reoccurring in conversations.

My participants were six teachers I identified through intensity and snowball sampling at a middle school in the Midwest. Male and female participants were present in the study. All participants had been teaching for a minimum of five years and were white. One teacher was less than 30 years old, three were between 30 and 50, and two were over 50 years old. The participants taught a variety of subjects including core content courses and exploratory classes.

Determining what type of interview is practical is the third step. I chose one-on-one interviews. The individual interview allows the interviewer to delve deeply into social and personal matters in addition to getting thorough descriptions of experiences. I employed the use of semi-structured or guided interviews (Lichtman, 2010) with my research participants.

The fourth step is to design and use adequate recording procedures. I recorded my interviews using Audio Note, an application used to make audio recordings. Recordings were used solely to make accurate transcripts and were kept on my password-protected iPad that only I had access to; after the transcripts had been created and I verified their accuracy, the recordings were deleted. I sat at a table with my interviewee and positioned the recording devices between us. We were in a small classroom with the door closed and minimal outside noise from the hallway.

Step five is the design and use of an interview guide. I followed Creswell's (2013) suggestion of including "five to seven open ended questions" and settled on one extra, to give me eight. My questions consisted of some specific questions on experience and some generalized questions about their thoughts and feelings on bullying. Dere, Easton, Nadel, and

Huston (2008) highlight the importance of asking about specific events to access “episodic memory.” When a researcher asks someone to describe a specific event the researcher is able to gather a richer description than they would receive from a generalized question. Maxwell (2013) suggests using a combination of specific and generalized questions. By combining these types of questions we can “address the same issues and research questions, but from different perspectives” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 104). Similar to using multiple data collection methods, multiple question types creates a greater depth of understanding.

Refining the interview questions and procedures through pilot testing is the sixth step. I conducted a pilot test of the questions I used. This pilot test made me well aware of my own deficiencies in interviewing and helped me to refine my questions.

The seventh step is to determine the place for conducting interviews. I conducted interviews within the school the teachers are employed. Interviews took place at a table in the interviewee’s classroom before and after school. The interviews took approximately 60 minutes each.

Step eight is to have the interviewee sign a consent form. The consent forms were given to the participants two day before interviews to give them time to consider their participation. The day of the interviews we discussed the consent forms and they were signed before the actual interview took place.

The final step is to use good interview procedures. This involves completing the interview in the time specified, avoiding leading or judgmental statements, and being a good listener (Creswell, 2013).

Documents and interviews were not sufficient in providing me with the necessary data so observations were employed. Observations were used in combination with interviews

and documents to fill in the holes that often accompany using only one data collection strategy. We cannot observe everything, so observations are a critical element in qualitative research. According to Adler and Adler (1994) it is “the fundamental base of all research methods” (p. 389). Observations are a useful tool in qualitative research studies and provide a wealth of information. Qualitative research study observations are conducted in natural field settings and offer the researcher first hand encounters with phenomena being studied. According to Maxwell (2013) “observations can enable you to draw inferences about this perspective that you couldn’t obtain by relying exclusively on interview data” (p. 103). By observing my participants I was able to witness first hand their experiences with bullying and gain access to aspects of their bullying experiences that they omitted. This gave me a deeper understanding of the phenomenon taking place in these particular classrooms in this particular school.

There are several different reasons for using observations as a data collection tool. I most align myself with Patton’s (2002) six different purposes of observation. Patton’s (2002) six advantages of direct observation are:

1. Through direct observations the inquirer is better able to understand and capture the context with which people interact
2. Firsthand experience with a setting and the people in the setting allows an inquirer to be open, discovery oriented, and inductive because by being on-site the observer has less need to rely on prior conceptualizations of the setting
3. The inquirer has the opportunity to see things that may routinely escape awareness among the people in the setting
4. Direct observation is the chance to learn things that people would be unwilling to talk about in an interview
5. The opportunity to move beyond the selective perceptions of others
6. Getting close to the people in a setting through firsthand experience permits the inquirer to draw on personal knowledge during the formal interpretation stage of analysis (p. 262–264)

This list of advantages convinced me to include observations in this study. The benefits of getting firsthand experience with a fresh pair of eyes and observe things that were either misconstrued or left out was valuable in determining the true essence of the teachers' experiences.

There are several challenges that accompany conducting observations. Creswell (2013) states that some challenges are remembering to take field notes, accurately recording quotes, deciding when and if one should move between participant roles, refraining from being overwhelmed by the information, and funneling the observation information. The use of current technology such as personal computers and video recorders can help alleviate some of these problems by providing a quick way to take field notes and a visual reference of the account.

### **Data Analysis**

To analyze the information gathered I utilized Miles and Huberman's (1994) data analysis process of coding. Miles and Huberman (1994) describe the codes at the base of their analysis as "labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study. Codes usually are attached to "chunks" of varying size- words, phrases, sentences or whole paragraphs, connected or unconnected to a specific setting" (p. 56).

Before I began my analysis I created a start list of codes from my research questions, and theoretical framework (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I chunked my interviews by paragraphs and assigned descriptive codes to these sections. As I developed new codes I tracked them in a word document and created definitions to clarify the meaning of each code.

The majority of these descriptive codes were included in the final code book; however a few were discarded once I determined the true essence of the participants' experiences.

My initial codes were divided into descriptive and interpretive codes during the analysis phase. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), descriptive codes "entail little interpretation. Rather, you are attributing a class of phenomena to a segment of text" (p. 57). Conversely, interpretive codes offer more meaningful understanding of data collected.

A third class of codes, pattern codes, offer even deeper insight than interpretive codes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Pattern coding was done after a set of descriptive and interpretive codes were completed. These are used later in data collection as themes become clearer, as they indicate a specific theme or pattern that has become clear to the researcher. The process of pattern coding involves grouping sets of descriptive and interpretive codes from the data into larger themes that encompass those codes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Codes are grouped into themes according to meanings and relevance to the phenomena. The identified themes are essential in answering the study's research questions.

Coding and identifying themes is a key element in data analysis. Discussion of the interpretive codes, themes, descriptions, and rationale from the data are presented to give the reader insight into the analysis process. With thorough data analysis and research, a study's research questions can be answered with a clear, valid, and reliable answer.

### **Data from Documents, Interviews, and Observations**

Using Miles and Huberman's (1994) steps, I analyzed all three data sources and developed themes for each. I began by collecting the documents and analyzing those first. Then I moved onto observations. This was the most difficult source for me to collect data

from because I continually wanted to step into the situation and address the bullying. Finally I conducted the interviews. Each participant had different experiences which resulted in some overlapping and some distinct codes for each individual. The codes from all three data points were analyzed and combined into overarching themes. Some of the findings were consistent with my own experiences while other were distinctly different. The findings are summarized in the table below:

Table 2

*Themes From All Three Data Sources*

Themes	Data Sources		
	Documents	Interviews	Observations
Roles	X	X	
Consequences	X		
Definitions	X		
Policy	X		
Types of Bullying		X	
Teacher Approaches		X	X
Experiences		X	
Barriers		X	X
Needs		X	

**Documents**

Through the activity of coding the documents, the Missouri Revised Statutes Chapter 160 Schools--General Provisions Section 160.77 and the bullying policy of the district in

which I conducted research, I found four major themes, seven interpretive codes and fifteen descriptive codes. The four major themes that were identified in this document were roles, consequence, definitions, and policy.

The theme of roles can be thought of in terms of what a person can and should do based on their obligations as part of an educational community. This was broken down further into two interpretive codes of student roles and adult roles.

The interpretive code of student roles addressed the concept of students who are the target of bullying. The interpretive code of student roles examined the importance of students playing an active part in stopping bullying. This involves abstaining from participating in bullying behavior and reporting instances of bullying. Student responsibility was described when “Students who have been subjected to hazing or bullying are instructed to promptly report such incidents to a school official” (Mariano School District, 2007, p. 1).

The interpretive code of adult roles can be described by “district staff, coaches, sponsors and volunteers shall not permit, condone or tolerate any form of hazing or bullying or plan, direct, encourage, assist, engage or participate in any activity that involves hazing or bullying” (Mariano C-2 School District 2007, p. 1). The concept of adult roles includes preventing, addressing, and reporting hazing and bullying in any form. The current Missouri statute requires “district employees to report any instance of bullying of which the employee has firsthand knowledge” (Missouri Revised Statute, 2012, p. 1). The concept of adult roles encompasses administrator responsibilities, employee responsibilities, and employee reporting. Administrator responsibilities cover anyone in a leadership role and their obligation to investigate and address bullying behavior. The employee responsibility descriptive code is assigned to any instance of employee’s who have knowledge of bullying

behaviors to not condone or permit these behaviors. Employee reporting involves an employee's duty to report knowledge they have of bullying behavior. Adult and student roles are reoccurring topics in each bullying document that was examined.

The second theme was entitled consequences. The consequences theme was described in this document to address students who have engaged in bullying behavior or witnessed and failed to report the behavior and employees who have condoned, permitted, or failed to report this behavior. This was detailed further through two interpretive codes, student consequences and adult consequences.

The first interpretive code under the theme of consequences was student consequences. This theme identified the actions of the bullies and bystanders. The student consequences include but are not limited to the "suspension or expulsion from school and removal from participation in activities" (Mariano School District, 2007, p. 1). Employee consequences was the next interpretive code for this theme. This code identified areas in the document that addressed disciplinary actions of staff "District staff who violate this policy may be disciplined or terminated" (Mariano School District, 2007, p. 1).

Definitions was the third theme identified in this document. The definitions provide a base language for stakeholders to communicate with. By having a common language everyone in the district has a clear understanding of what is permitted and prohibited. A reoccurring sentence is "For purposes of this policy, bullying is defined as" and "For purposes of this policy, hazing is defined as" (Mariano School District, 2007, p. 2). The interpretive code associated with this theme is harmful behavior definitions.

Harmful behavior definitions are all explanations of various abusive behaviors. "Bullying includes, but is not limited to: physical actions, including violence, gestures, theft,

or damaging property; oral or written taunts, including name-calling, put-downs, extortion, or threats; or threats of retaliation for reporting such acts” (Mariano School District, 2007, p .2). This code covers bullying, cyber bullying, hazing, and the infliction of physical and mental harm.

The final theme that was identified in this document was policy. According to the Missouri Revised Statutes Chapter 160 Schools--General Provisions Section 160.77(2012), “Every district shall adopt an anti-bullying policy by September 1, 2007” (p. 1). These policies are focused on keeping all students safe and they are “founded on the assumption that all students need a safe learning environment” (Missouri Revised Statute, 2012, p. 1). This theme was detailed further through two interpretive codes.

The first interpretive code in this theme was current policy. This code describes any educational institutions written rules. The second interpretive code, Safe School Requirements, describes how “students need a safe learning environment” (Missouri Revised Statute, 2012, p. 1).

The documents offered an abundance of information on how bullying should be addressed as well as what students and teachers should do and should consider bullying, However, these were guidelines and did not give insight into teachers’ true experiences. As a result, once the policy documents were coded and analyzed, I conducted interviews. The interviews were then transcribed and coded in the same fashion as the documents.

## **Interviews**

Through the activity of coding the interview document I found six major themes, eighteen interpretive codes and forty-nine descriptive codes. The six major themes that were

identified in this document are roles, teacher approaches, experiences, barriers to solving the problem of bullying, types of bullying addressed, and needs.

The first theme was roles. Each person in a school has a role to play. The interpretive codes that make up the roles theme are the teachers' role, administration interactions, other staff interactions, parent interactions, and student responsibility. The participants described the teacher role not in terms of teaching content, but meeting students emotional needs. According to Juvonen, Graham, and Schuster, (2003), "Teachers play a key role in preventing and intervening with bullying at school" (p. 1236). Expressing this idea, Mrs. Stull said, "And I think you need to teach kids... I think kids are less likely to be bullied if they are confident and feel of worth so I think when you give kids that attention and those things that they need, both the bully and the person being bullied benefit." Mrs. Kelly spoke of students needs in terms of time and allowing them the space to process.

Mrs. Kelly: Also, if the kids really need time let's figure out where we're going to give them the time to process through some of this stuff.

Interviewer: can you elaborate on giving them more time?

Mrs. Kelly: I've seen them come back and not fixed but I can't blame the counselors for that sometimes it just takes time so but are we saying all that we need to say.

Though teachers try to meet their student emotional needs, sometimes teachers cannot provide enough attention, self-worth, or time to solve the problem on their own and administrators must become involved.

A recurring sentiments was the need and usefulness of administrators being involved in addressing bullying situations and constitutes the second interpretive code. Mrs. Picasso described an administrator she thought was especially helpful in his role. She said:

There was an assistant principal here. He was here when I was first working here and my kids were here and such. And I would watch him take two kids and he would be

at lunch, this big man, these two little kids, on either side. And on this particular day I looked at the two kids he had and thought well that's a chance you're taking. I thought whew wonder what that's going to be like? Together in close proximity? But you know, isn't that the only way to deal with it it's just head-on. You got to talk about the issue. And he did a great job with those kids.

Like Mrs. Picasso I have seen administrators address bullying with students, but more often I get the impression that they rely on doling out consequences instead of addressing the student's behavior and working to replace those hurtful behaviors with more positive interactions. What I have seen is that when administrators do work with students on their exhibited behaviors and help them process through some of their feelings, there are more positive results.

Administrators are not the only ones intervening in situations with feuding students. The third interpretive code is other staff interactions. The majority of other staff references were related to school counselors. In response to other staff members involved in addressing bullying, Mr. Hedge said, "We get support from the counseling center... The homeroom teacher usually sends them to the counselor. ..The counselor will have a one-on-one sessions with them then usually get them together." There were also references to counselors holding mediations between the student who is exhibiting bullying behaviors and the student who is being bullied. Mrs. Kelly said, "Students are pulled out quite often by the counselors for drama that's going on." In my teaching experience the counselors have also been very involved in holding interventions on bullying situations. Most of the time it is resolved and considered a misunderstanding due to gossip, but some of the chronic bullying issues were addressed by the counselors putting a student on alternative passing, in which they cannot

change classes with the other students but must wait until the halls are clear so that conflict is avoided.

Parent interactions were another interpretive code associated with this theme. Parent interactions involved any communication or relating to the parents in any way. Mr. Dunn communicates with parents about bullying saying, “Most of the time it’s minor enough I can deal with it by calling home to parents and things like that.” Mrs. Picasso talked of her parent interaction in terms of her conversation with them and connecting to them. Mrs. Picasso stated:

Through some of these things I’ve had conversations with parents. They told me that, God love them, they were just like ‘I don’t know what to do with this. I feel (the parents) like I can’t say no to my kid about having a phone. I need them to have it so I can communicate with them. I don’t like what they are doing. I follow them I friend them to try to keep track of them but even that is a slippery thing.’ So I (Mrs. Picasso) really feel for the parents who have to try to manage this.

In my own professional experiences I have found that it is heart breaking to listen to parents describe the pain they feel for their child who is being bullied. However, over the years it has also become apparent that most parents believe their child is the victim and would never bully someone else, which makes addressing the issue successfully harder. Additionally, the involvement of parents has several times escalated the problem and resulted in violence or threats of violence in the neighborhood and at school from the parents of the children involved.

The last interpretive code for this theme was student responsibility. The student’s main responsibility was described in terms of reporting to adults. According to Mrs. Kelly, “I tell students to come to me with their problems before it gets out of hand and they get in trouble.” Mrs. Camron said she “pulls the other student aside and tell them they need to

report these things and let an adult know so we can help you.” Throughout all participants interviews there was insinuation that students would and do report bullying behaviors to adults.

Teacher approaches is the second theme found in the interview documents. Milsom and Gallo (2006) suggest that “middle school personnel should consider approaches that have proven effective and work to implement programs that will best meet their school’s unique needs” (p. 16). The approaches teachers utilized were future connections, conversation solutions, emotional connection, and proximity, which were also the interpretive codes that supported this theme. Future connections included any reference to the life in the future. Some teachers used future connections to prepare students for a similar event in the future. Mrs. Picasso asks students “What this does is give you good practice because you are going to have issues with somebody else so how do you deal with that? What do you say to a person who's bothering you?” Mr. Dunn said he tried to explain to his students the repercussions when adults act in the same way his students are. Students may then think of these conversation in the next time they are confronted with a similar situation.

Conversation solutions was another approach teachers used. Conversation solutions focus on talking the problem out. This type of approach is often used by the teacher or counselor. Mr. Hedge mentioned that counselors take students to “talk it out.” Mrs. Stull illustrated the use of teacher conversations in her comment,

It definitely depends on how severe it is but I think to have a conversation about it. If I can't do it immediately then I would probably set up a time to talk to both of them. I would probably talk to the counselor first to decide if she wants to do a mediation. But I still even if they have a mediation with the counselor I would still probably talk to each of them individually and say look put it out on the table just have them tell me what's going on and why it's happening.

I have found in my experience that sometimes when talking with students it feels as though you are talking to a wall. I often feel they are regurgitating answers they think you want to hear and not truly processing what you say. I am occasionally happily surprised when students repeat things I have told them when I did not think they were paying attention or behave in a kinder way when presented with a bullying situation.

In addition to discussing the bullying situation, teachers mentioned appealing to a student's emotions. In the interpretive code emotional connections, all emotions were phrased in how the person exhibiting the bullying behaviors would feel. Mr. Dunn said "I always ask them how it would make them feel if someone said that to them. Another example, Mrs. Camron taps into the emotions of the person exhibiting the bullying behaviors,

I just try to turn it back on how they look when they say that. So when they say something mean or rude I'll say how does that make you look if you are talking stuff on a kid? How does that make you look? And it kind of hits home when it is about them. Because they don't have an idea of what the other person's feelings are or they don't care. But if they turn it around and put it on them then they are like, "Oh."

There was never mention of the emotions of the target of the bullying.

The final interpretive code of proximity appeared in four of the six interviews. Proximity referred to either students' proximity to each other or the teacher's proximity to the students. Mrs. Kelly described the ways she uses both types of proximity saying, "moving students away from each other. Making sure you are strategic and not putting kids who are getting picked on with the students who are bullying them." She went on to say "I also try to always be out in the classroom so I am hearing it, so I can catch it ... sometimes it's just putting your hand on the student who is bullied and reassuring them." In these ways, proximity was used as another teacher approach to bullying.

The third theme from the interviews is experiences. Experiences are personal descriptions of events that are related to a bullying incident or some aspect of the teachers past. Nass (1994) states that knowledge and skills are the primary result of learning from experience. This theme is made up of three interpretive codes, positive experiences in education, negative experiences in education, and experiences as a teacher. When positive education experiences came up in the interviews it was often in the context of a specific teacher the participant had when they were a student. Mrs. Picasso was able to articulate how that positive experience still affects her today.

I don't have a particular one from elementary or high school that I can remember clearly. But I had a college professor, he was really... He was really passionate about what he taught and I wasn't a huge history person but I really, history just became really interesting to me. I actually took a second class from him just because I appreciated it so much how he presented the information and his enthusiasm. It actually made me really enjoy investigating and traveling to historical places. More of just how he presented it and told stories and connected it to the past with the present for me and so it was a huge part of my teaching now. If you are enthusiastic it really helps to reach the kids.

Mr. Dunn had a positive education experience, describing it as "Overall a very positive experience, I mean I can't really remember ever having a bad day at the school because it was like everyone was your friend."

Five of the participants also mentioned a negative portion of their education experience, usually this did not last for any significant length of time. However, one participants had an extremely negative experience which was the result of poor teacher relationships, inadequate special education services, and bullying.

When I was early on in my elementary, I had a reading disability. So I was labeled immediately as dumb and not being able to do the work. In fourth grade I was actually kicked out of a private school because of my learning disability. They told me I was just being lazy and that's the reason I was failing. So I moved to a public

school at that time and I received an IEP for written expression and reading disability, I was dyslexic. In fourth and fifth grade I was fine, I went to a couple different classes but it didn't bother me too much. In sixth grade I was actually taken out of the building so in having to go to a trailer in the back of the school. Seventh grade was the same but in the classroom but I was very much targeted in seventh grade with kids bullying me for being slower and not being able to do what everyone else was doing. At one point the bullying got so bad I had a friend who someone else had written I hate Jenny all over her folder so when I sat down next to her on the bus this is what I saw and she was supposed to be my friend. So I had lots of bullying experiences when I was a kid. In eighth grade it went on. I struggled in high school. It was so bad I ended up leaving high school and going to an alternative school and finished in an alternative school so I never finished at a traditional high school. After that it took me about eight years to go back to school because of my experiences. I went back and got my associates and then got a bachelor in elementary education. A few years later I went back to get my masters in quality education and now I've worked to get masters plus 48 hours in various courses.

These excerpts from different interviews show the wide range of teachers' personal experiences with bullying. What is interesting is some participants hardly remember bullying, while it seems to be the only thing other participants remember. The other participants talked about positive school experiences, but all did mention a bully or bullying experience they had lived through.

I can relate to both positive and negative experiences, however I think my memories, like Mrs. Cameron, are more dominated by negative experiences. While I enjoyed school greatly, I am a very sensitive person and would get hurt and then carry those feelings with me for a long time.

The third interpretive code in the theme of experiences was experiences as a teacher. Two of the six participants were not able to think of a specific time they had addressed a bullying situation. The other four participants were able to describe an experience and how they handled the situation. It appeared as though some questioned whether or not they had handled it in the best way or if some other approach would have been more useful. Mrs.

Picasso was suggested by her administrators for this study but she shared she had previously been “to the principal’s office” for how she handled a bullying situation.

Mrs. Picasso: It was a computer class and incoming sixth-graders and they had their cell phones which were not supposed to be visible, but they had them out and they were taking pictures of each other and I knew there was this underlying sense of bullying between the girls themselves. There was always some issues and people needed to go to the counselor every five seconds and people were just nasty, just flat-out nasty to each other. Well on this particular day apparently there was a girl that was in the bathroom and there was a rush into the bathroom. You could see all the cell phones up above and they're taking pictures and then that all went away and then the very next day apparently they had taken those pictures had put them on the internet. They had said just amazingly hurtful things on the internet about this girl. So it's like what do we do about this and I had a room of about 30 of them. I could say easily about half of them were in some way involved. They were somewhat involved. So that just made me sick to my stomach.

Interviewer: So what did you do?

Mrs. Picasso: Well, what did I do? I thought that we would... I hopped on the internet and I was like what can we do about this? What is anyone doing about this? I hopped on the Internet and I got to bullying.gov and I started reading, started reading, started reading the resources that they had. I thought ‘man these are really good it really makes you think about what is this bullying in the first place? Where does it cross the line?’ Overall just a lot of good information. I thought, ‘you know what, if there's anything that I can bring to those girls and have them research with their computers and create a PowerPoint or a report to help them understand... that they would understand what they were doing the results the cost of what they were doing sometimes, then I would be doing them a great service.’ So, I made up this thing, this whole unit about researching, going to websites, what does it say bullying is, what, where can it happen? What about kids your age and the potential effects, one of them being suicide. And so I found this video and I showed this video of parents who had lost their kids because I wanted them to understand that you know you have no idea what those words are going to do and you have no idea of the ripple effect that that happens and you are not touching just one person that you're touching the web of people that are affected. Apparently, there was a student who went to the counselor and talked about the video and of course I didn't even think to ask. I knew there was a problem. I knew the counselors were working on it because they were pulling them in and out, but I didn't even think to have a conversation with the counselors about what I was thinking about. So the minute that student went to them and said that is upsetting for me to see well of course it was upsetting for them to see. It was just bad judgment on my part but that's the reality. So who's talking to them about the reality? Who's really laying that right there at their feet so, I was called into the office had a talk with the principal and the counselor had a great discussion and they were laying out their concerns and that they had them, certainly, certainly, and I probably overstep

my bounds and needed to do a lot more footwork before pushing that out there so I was happy for that conversation and so that was my attempt.

This experience seemed to really leave an impression on her. She seemed frustrated that she was singled out for her attempt at a positive solution, worried that enough was not being done to address bullying, and regretful for not having cleared her activity with the counselors first.

Mrs. Cameron described an experience she had with students in the hall the day before our interview.

It is a problem. In fact yesterday I was walking down the hallway and one student walked by the other one and flung their papers all over the hallway. So you he is on the floor and the other one is laughing and you know. It's very ...they do it when they don't think an adult is looking. It's just bad... but when they do see you they pretend it was an accident or they are just playing. You tell them it is not ok and they need to apologize but you know it is going to happen again. It is a real problem in middle school.

Similar to these teachers I frequently address bullying experiences but at times question if I am doing enough or addressing it in the most effective way. As something that can cause lasting effect on a person's emotions and psyche I worry that I am not doing enough to make a lasting impact on students bullying behaviors. The experiences of the participants as students and as teachers make up the experiences theme.

The fourth theme was entitled barriers to solving the problem of bullying. Barriers to solving the problem of bullying was detailed through four interpretive codes, unaddressed bullying, student actions, missing knowledge, and confusion. All of these codes are barriers and can be attributed in part to a lack of communication about the problem. Sharp and Smith (2002) claim "this barrier of silence only helps to perpetuate the bullying" (p. 397).

The first interpretive code under the theme of barriers to solving the problem of bullying was unaddressed bullying. This interpretive code centered around the unawareness of a problem. When asked “how do you address bullying in your classroom?” Mrs. Kelly responded, “I’m not sure that I see it all. That’s the disturbing part for me. I’m not sure that I see it all.” Another participants commented on the stealth that allows these behaviors to go unseen. Mrs. Stull said “I really feel like if there’s bullying it is so covert that I don’t notice it.” At first I believed she was implying that bullying was not a large issue in the school, however late she stated “A lot of bullying here happens in the hallway and lunch and a lot of the more chaotic places that are not as supervised.” I attribute this change to her comfort level increasing as the interview went on, and feeling more secure expressing the true state of the school.

Student actions was the next interpretive code for this theme. This code identified the various student behaviors that participants felt hindered their ability to solve the problem of bullying. Sometimes it is the sheer numbers of students involved in these actions that becomes a barrier. In one instance Mrs. Kelly described a situation in which she had almost every girl in her classroom involved in one incident. Students’ actions with technology and their use of it to bully others has also become a problem. All participants said students’ actions on social media sites and with technology has made the problem of bullying harder to control. Mrs. Picasso described one of many incidents about students’ use of technology, “They had said just amazingly hurtful things on the internet about this girl.” Student actions inside and outside of school contribute to the theme of barriers to addressing bullying.

The third interpretive code is missing knowledge. This code was characterized by the participants’ expression of being unsure of the proper procedures and not having enough

training. When asked about the school's anti-bullying policy, participants responded with statements like "Um, I know that there is stuff outlined in our planner that all students have but I am not 100% sure or have been told so here's what to do here are the steps" and "Um, we are... a no bullying school. That's all I know about it." All participants also commented on the lack of training. Mr. Dunn said of his training,

I can't say we have had professional development where the topic is bullying, no training like that. ...Maybe in college they hit on it but never in the school district with a set of steps and said here's bullying here's how to address it.

The lack of knowledge about policies and training make up this interpretive code.

The final interpretive code is confusion. The interpretive code of confusion is characterized by different interpretations of what I believe should be a set procedure on addressing bullying. Mrs. Picasso acknowledges that she doesn't know the expected procedure and needs, "a very clear roadmap of how they want it dealt with in the building." Mrs. Stull believes that the teacher who observes the bullying should report directly to the counselor. Mrs. Stull asserts,

I mean, it's you know, immediate, if we see it then we report it to the counselors, what we see. They intervene if it is appropriate for the teacher and then report it to the counselor and the counselors pass it then on to administrators. If we observe a bullying incident, then I think they take it pretty seriously. Kids are ISS or OSS depending on the severity of what happened.

Conversely, Mr. Dunn believes teachers use their own judgment in handling a bullying situation. "It's kind of left up to the teacher" (p. 4). Mr. Hedge follows a somewhat different procedure than Mrs. Stull,

If we have problems, you contact the cardinal teacher. The cardinal teacher usually sends them to the counselor. We'll get support from a plan in place. When we're having problems we contact the cardinal teacher and they usually send them to the

counselor. The counselor will have a one-on-one sessions with them then usually get them together. As far as administration, we go through the counseling center, we don't go through them first. They would be the next step beyond the counselor, so if there is nothing happening there, then they call in the administrators. I don't go to my administrators first. I use my chain of command, which is cardinal class teacher and then counseling center.

The difference in these responses clearly illustrates the confusion present among the participants in this school.

The fourth theme that emerged from the interviews was types of bullying addressed. This theme was composed of only one interpretive code, forms of bullying. The forms of bullying that participants mentioned in their interviews were physical bullying, verbal bullying, psychological bullying, and cyber bullying. Physical bullying includes open violence towards others which can include behaviors such as hitting and kicking (Jacobsen & Bauman, 2007, p. 1). Jacobsen & Bauman (2007) stated of verbal bullying "Verbal bullying refers to name calling, teasing, and verbal threats" (p. 1). Psychological bullying encompasses behaviors causes mental and emotional distress like threatening, manipulation and stalking. Cyber bullying was defined by Kowalski and Limber (2013) as "bullied through e-mail, instant messaging, in a chat room, on a website, or through a text message sent to a cell phone" (p. 515). Mr. Hedge described the types of bullying saying,

What will happen is they will touch somebody in the back of the neck and things like that...Yelling at each other, sometimes it's physical sometimes it's taking people's stuff. But more so it's verbal. They put each other down. They think it's cool. Their excuse is oh we're just playing around.

When Mrs. Picasso was asked to describe bullying at the school she stated,

Hum. Sometimes it's very blatant like out there just people walking through the halls and of course they have got their friends and they go pick up on this one that's all by themselves, and your know sometimes it can be physical...often times it's just hurtful

words. Ha, *just* hurtful words. Hurtful words! But this is the first time I knew how amazing this social media thing is and just how pervasive and social media. Blatant like physical punching hitting stealing stuff and just verbal abuse.

Still another participant, Mr. Dunn, was asked “Describe bullying here at your school” to which he responded,

Bullying here... I definitely see it see it in various forms like I said you see a lot of, um, how do I want to say it. Students who you think they do it to make themselves feel better type of thing. Like calling kids out on their shoes a lot, like your shoes aren't cool or whatever terms they use. That's a lot of it. Trying to prove themselves. Show that they have money type of thing. That's what I see the most of. And like I said I see a lot of boy girl drama and the stuff like on social media that I've seen two or three times this year. Big, big things like that. I guess that's what I see the most of.

Physical bullying, verbal bullying, psychological bullying and through cyber bullying all appear in multiple participants interviews. This indicates that the problem of bullying takes on many forms, further complicating attempts to address it.

The final theme from the interviews was needs. Needs was made up of two interpretive codes, student needs and teacher needs. Student needs refers to any student's need, whether they are the target or the person exhibiting the bullying behaviors. Mr. Dunn believes that students bully their peers because of their need to build their self-esteem. Similarly, Mrs. Stull points out students' need for attention,

I think it's attention they need to feel safe and like they matter so I think that if you work really hard to make kids feel like that in whatever space you are in they don't have that need to bully anymore because they are getting those things that they need and they don't feel like they have to have that power struggle.

Students who are the target of bullying also have needs that the participants emphasized.

“Also, if the kids really need time let's figure out where we're going to give them the time to process through some of this stuff” Mrs. Kelly said when discussing how students are too

quickly put back into the classroom before the problem is solved. Mrs. Stull referred to a similar idea, giving students “support for mediation and not just one time mediation but like enough support to check on the situation multiple times and give... that attention and the focus that can help them stand up to bullies and help bullies calm down.”

In addition to the students’ needs, the participants pointed out teachers’ needs as well. Then discussing their needs, participants often referred to what they needed from administrators. Mrs. Stull described the needs she has,

I think there needs to be an immediate action, that is, I think that mediation is a super important part of the process of eliminating bullying but I also think that you know there needs to be consequence for students who are bullying. They just need to feel like it’s not okay and it’s not okay and there’s going to be consequence if you do it because we don’t treat people like that so I think all of those from an administrators standpoint I would say consequence of its observed by an adult’s.

Mr. Dunn focused on the need for teachers to have training in how to handle bullying. “It would be a good idea or a wise idea to have some training on bullying... some of those new teachers don’t know how to take care of it so that’s something that we probably need is professional development.” Further training and administrator support make up the main needs to teachers.

The first two data sources, documents and findings offered valuable information but did not paint the whole picture. In qualitative research direct observation are an essential element used to provide triangulation among findings from interviews and documents, as well as to increase credibility of the study’s findings. Direct observations were used to corroborate the participants’ responses from interviews with their actions, and to better understand the context and experiences of those participants. There are limitations to what a person reveals in interviews. To fully understand the complexities of someone’s experience,

interviews and documents must be analyzed in conjunction with direct observations (Patton, 2002). Direct observation allowed me to see aspects of the participants' experiences that may have been omitted because they are deemed trivial or unimportant by the participant.

### **Observations**

Once the interviews and their analysis concluded I began the final stage of my data collection which was conducting observations. For the observation I chose to take on the role of Observer-as-Participant. This required me to expose my identity but have limited interaction with the participants. My primary role in this observation was as information gatherer. I did not engage in any classroom activities or insert myself into the discussions. In observer as participant observations, the level of information is controlled by the group members, and thus the data collected is a reflection of that.

Once the data were collected I coded the transcription. Through the activity of coding the observation document I found two major themes, six interpretive codes and 16 descriptive codes. The two major themes that were identified in the observation documents are teacher approaches and barriers to solving the problem of bullying.

The first theme was teacher approaches. Yoon and Kerber (2003) emphasize the importance of teacher approaches to bullying situations saying "Teachers' responses to bullying behaviors may influence future behaviors of both victims and perpetrators" (p. 27). The teachers in this study used a variety of approaches to reduce, prevent, and intervene on bullying situations. This theme is made up of four interpretive codes; indirect corrections, proximity, direct corrections, and conversations solutions. The first interpretive code, indirect corrections, was the most frequently used teacher approach. I think this approach was the

most popular because the teacher could quickly correct students without stopping instruction. Indirect corrections are corrections made, not to the bullying behavior, but some other behaviors. For example, during one observation, “A student yells out ‘he keeps kicking my chair’ Mr. Dunn tells them to turn around. He instructs the boy to take his hood off, then continues teaching.” In this situation a behavior was addressed, but not the behavior causing the problem. Teachers will also use content redirects to correct students, but not for the bullying behavior. When bullying would begin in Mrs. Cameron’s class she would redirect students to activity going on in class with questions like “Ezra, Escobar, where should your focus be?” Many indirect corrections were nonverbal. In one situation “Mr. D responds by calling the girls name out and shaking his head.”

The next interpretive code in this theme is direct corrections. Direct corrections are when the bullying behaviors are directly addressed. I found these correction were usually quick and clear. In one instance, “Student C pushes another student. Mr. Dunn tells the student to move directly next to him then says ‘absolutely not, no absolutely not. Do you understand?’ student stands quietly next to him and nods.” Direct corrections of behavior were at times public and other times private. When public corrections were made directly to the student, they were loud enough for the class to hear. Private corrections on the other hand took place where no one could hear. In Mrs. Cameron’s class she preferred private direct corrections. “[The] teacher immediately asks both students involved to step outside. She speaks to them in the hall for under 30 seconds. Both students come back in.” All of these corrections are directed towards specific students involved in the situation.

Proximity is the third interpretive code. Proximity can be controlled through placement of the teacher or the students. Teachers can use proximity by positioning

themselves in strategic points within the room. Mrs. Stull was observed continuously rotating to each table. Other times. Teachers separated students physically. When two students were having problems in Mr. Dunn's room, I observed "Mr. Dunn has student move all of his things to a desk up front by himself." Mrs. Kelly sent students initiating bullying to a different classroom known as a "buddy room." This approach appeared to temporarily suspend the conflict.

The final interpretive code in this theme is conversation solutions. Conversation solutions would manifest in teachers talking with the students about their behavior. Mr. Hedge was observed having one of these conversations and said "you know I love your potential to be a leader but you have to lead in the right direction. You need to care about people." Often during these conversations the teacher would question the students' understanding of the conversation. Mr. Dunn would ask the students directly "Do you understand?" All of these interpretive codes are how teachers addressed and prevented bullying behaviors in the classroom, making up the teacher approaches theme.

The last theme that I found when analyzing the observation documents was barriers to solving the problem of bullying. Bullying in this case refers to any action that appears to be or supports bullying behavior. According to a study done by Nansel et.al. (2001), "bullying is a serious problem for US youth" (p. 2095). Barriers to addressing this behavior was uncovered during observations. The barriers to solving the problem of bullying theme were detailed further through two interpretive codes.

The first interpretive code under the theme of barriers to solving bullying is unaddressed bullying. This interpretive code centered around teachers appearing to be aware of the bullying situation but not addressing or intervening on the situation. In one instance

Mrs. Picasso does not address the bullying behavior, “A student repeatedly laughing at another students work, and saying ‘Can you not, can you not.’ Student is upset. Teacher is standing next to students. Teacher does not respond to student comments and walks away.” In Mrs. Kelly’s classroom, “student B laughs at other student when a word is mispronounced. Teacher continues on without correction of behavior.” During these situation I found myself hoping that the teacher chose this approach out of strategic thinking to withhold attention versus lacking a feeling of responsibility. The next interpretive code that was a part of the second theme was that of unknown bullying. Through the observation documents are lines such as, “Teacher does not hear,” “Teacher has back turned getting sticky notes and does not hear,” and “teacher is on opposite side of the room.” These instances were common during observations and highlight one of the main barriers to resolving and reducing bullying, being unaware of its existence.

This study’s research design as a qualitative study was beneficial in examining these experiences as it attempts to probe the lived experiences of the individuals who are being investigated (Sanders, 1982). Examining bullying incidents allows us to learn from the participants experiences. Throughout the coding process I was intrigued by the reoccurrence of many of the same interpretive codes and themes throughout the varying data points. These themes will help answer the research questions posed in this study.

### **Synthesis of Results**

This study sought to contribute to the body of knowledge concerning teachers’ experiences with student to student bullying in the classroom. After conducting, coding, and analyzing each data source, I reviewed and synthesized themes that were found in the

documents, interviews, and observation. The themes in the documents indicated a much more fact based approach to bullying whereas the interviews and observation elicited a wider range of personal approaches and experiential perspectives. The themes in these data sources partially overlapped with each other, but as an individual set, were unique. The recurring themes related were types of bullying, teacher approaches, and barriers to solving the problem of bullying. It appeared to me that the documents focused on actions and consequences by discussing ways to address bullying before and after it occurs, while the observations and interviews were more focused on reactionary measures once bullying occurs. It is significant that the types of bullying was a recurring theme and pointed to new and different forms of bullying that are emerging in today's schools which teachers may or may not be trained in handling. This indicates possibilities for research and for professional practice, which I will discuss in the final chapter.

The research question guiding this study was: What are the experiences of sixth-grade teachers who address bullying in the classroom? To fully understand their experiences in addressing bullying, the question was broken into four sub-question. The sub-questions are: a) What are the experiences of sixth-grade teachers who witness bullying in the classroom?; b) How do sixth-grade teachers address bullying behavior in the classroom?; c) What interventions do sixth-grade teachers find effective and ineffective in addressing bullying in a middle school classroom?; and d) What support is needed from school administrators to address bullying behaviors in the classroom?

The first sub-question was: What are the experiences of sixth-grade teachers who witness bullying in the classroom? The teachers experiences centered on their own reality of what happened in the classroom and what they witnessed. The teachers' description of what

they witnessed in their own classroom was best collected during interviews which were an essential data source for answering this question. Teachers' experiences with witnessing bullying contained some similarities and differences amongst the participants. Each participant had different specific experiences but many witnessed the same types of bullying. The teacher experience theme and types of bullying theme from the interviews, as well as the roles theme from both the documents and interviews were directly related to the first sub-question question. Only one of the six teachers could not think of a specific bullying incident when questions, but the other 5 participants thought of and described several. The participants described witnessing a variety of types of bullying in their role as a teacher. Though she could not think of a specific incident, Mrs. Stull did acknowledge that bullying goes on in the school.

You know I just can't really think of a time. But I have had emails you know from counselors that say certain kids aren't getting along but I don't know if I've ever seen anything that was clear clear bullying in the classroom. A lot of bullying here happens in the hallway and lunch and a lot of the more chaotic places that are not as supervised.

Recounting a specific incident addressing verbal and cyberbullying, one participant made the following comment:

Interviewer: Now think of a time when you are aware of a bullying incident and tell me about that time.

Dunn: Um. I was made aware of a girl's bullying earlier in the year, not necessarily in my classroom but in my school. She was my advisory kid and I could tell she was upset. (She) Didn't want to talk to me about it didn't really want to talk to anyone about it. Finally got her to open up. Found out some of the guys were saying some really cruel things through social media sites and they were my football players so I knew them well and went directly to them had a "nice" conversation about how we make people feel and how words can hurt people pretty badly. And they didn't really understand how badly they were hurting someone. And for a couple of them I went to administration and they took care of it. So it was handled in-house, in school because I need to get a message sent across to them.

Another teacher expressed his experiences with verbal, physical, and emotional bullying, saying:

Our kids they want to do the physical, get in their face, say things, immediately attack mothers or they will downgrade them by saying something physical about them like “you’re weak” you hear that. I don’t allow that having had a few experiences with bullying, I don’t allow that in my class but you do see it from time to time. There was an incident yesterday where a kid got in a kid’s face and put him down and he was really just ripping him because of his athletic skills or he didn’t do what he was supposed to happen, and the kid doesn’t have any control, and to me that’s a form of intimidation which is bullying.

Participants’ descriptions like this show their empathy towards the target of the bullying behaviors. Accounts like this were quite common. The teachers remembered bullying experiences in their classroom and recounted general feelings as well as specific actions of the students. Teachers’ memories of their experiences with bullying appear to be tied to emotional descriptions as well as student actions.

The documents analyzed outlined what a teacher’s roles is after witnessing bullying and thus had an effect on the teachers’ experiences. According to the Missouri Revised Statute (2012) “Each district's anti-bullying policy shall require district employees to report any instance of bullying of which the employee has firsthand knowledge.” These requirements demand that teachers pay close attention to bullying incidents so they may report them.

In summation, all teachers in the study had an experience witnessing bullying behaviors. Additionally, they witnessed a variety of types of bullying, including physical, verbal, psychological, and cyber.

The second sub-question was: How do sixth-grade teachers address bullying behavior in the classroom? This was answered through the policy theme from documents and the teacher approaches theme present in both interviews and observation. The district policies analyzed from the state of Missouri have requirements for how to address bullying. According to the Nick Mariano School District, “District staff will report incidents of hazing and bullying to the building principal” (2012, p. 1). In addition to reporting bullying to administrators, teachers may also be involved in teaching students about bullying policies before the bullying occurs. “This notification may occur through the distribution of the written policy, publication in handbooks, presentations at assemblies or verbal instructions by the coach or sponsor at the start of the season or program” (2012, p. 1). Through participating in the dissemination of this information teachers preventively address this phenomenon.

The Nick Mariano policy states what the teachers should be doing, but the interview and observation gave true insight into how teachers actually address bullying in their classroom on a daily basis. When talking about the specific school policy they were very unsure about what it contained. When asked to describe the schools anti-bullying policy, participants responded with statements like “Um, we are... a no bullying school. That’s all I know about it” “I don’t know” “I don’t know if there’s like an actual policy” and “Um, I know that there is stuff outlined in our planner that all students have but I am not 100% sure.” When talking specifically about their own approach, the participants in this study offered several strategies they use for addressing bullying. During interviews and observation discussing the problem with the students involved came up frequently. Mr. Dunn recounted “I’ll usually pull the person who is bullying out and have a conversation with them and a lot

of the times they don't realize what they're doing some of them to but I feel like that initial one-on-one conversation works for a lot of kids." The teachers also remarked on addressing it with the individual students, and approaching a problem with the whole class if the scenario required it. Mrs. Stull described one experience addressing the entire class:

We had a conversation one time when he went on a walk with Mrs. C one time and we talked about how, remember that even if you're not saying anything, well they were never saying anything mean or doing anything mean, they were just kind of be laughing when he would speak or say something. I never said his name. But we just kind of talked about the fact that body language can be really hurtful and remember everything that you say into everyone is observing it and to be a kind person. That's a really good class and for the most part I haven't seen any of that happening anymore.

If the problems persisted, the teachers referred the situation to other resources in the school.

"I call home...if it's that big of an issue... I go take care of it with the guidance counselors. I guess that's a source that I utilize and then administration if it's a huge deal" stated Mr.

Dunn. When observed, participants addressed bullying quickly with simple statements like "I need you to sit down in your seat and turn around," "absolutely not, no absolutely not. Do you understand," and "Ladies, what should our focus be on?" This data in this study has shown that while teachers do know how to address bullying behavior in a more in-depth way, they limit their daily strategies to quick redirections and reprimands.

The third sub-question was: What interventions do sixth-grade teachers find effective and ineffective in addressing bullying in a middle school classroom? The school policies analyzed each mentioned discipline to address bullying, but no policy had a specific structure for the various forms of bullying. Instead the policies spoke in generalities with comments like "Students participating in or encouraging inappropriate conduct will be disciplined in accordance with JG-R. Such discipline may include, but is not limited to, suspension or

expulsion from school and removal from participation in activities” (p. 1). Wording the policy like this may have been a strategic move in order to provide autonomy to the individual schools. This would be considered an intervention, however the data collected did not address teachers’ perceptions on whether or not suspension and expulsion are effective.

The interviews and observation revealed the overlapping theme of teacher approaches related to effective interventions. The teachers described several successful interventions they use.

Mrs. Picasso: so what I do I sit the kids together usually after class I sit them right together and I say you guys you got issues and I understand that and I'm sorry about that but not too much. What this does is give you good practice because you are going to have issues with somebody else so how do you deal with that? What do you say to a person who's bothering you? What I messages can you say to that person so that they understand you? And then can you solve it. What you might find is that you really do like each other or respect each other that might be the other side of this. So see if you can plow through. That usually fixes it and if not then we say okay can we come up with something else, proximity, we got to figure out where you're going to be that you feel okay.

This excerpt from an interview shows that this teacher tends to rely on conversation as the first attempt to resolve the problem. This participant is teaching students life lessons, and is trying to get the students to use their problem solving skills. She is a parent herself and I imagine she is comfortable with talking to students in a way a parent would. She uses the same approach that perhaps should would with her own children. The other participants also focused on conversation interventions before turning to resources outside of the classroom.

Mr. Dunn: Um. It usually starts off with ‘Do you know I’m talking to you?’ and a lot of them are honest you know. They start talking about what that kid did and they start playing the victim and then the conversation usually goes to talking about what you are saying that I don’t think you should be saying or something along those lines and they usually tell me. Then I usually try to play it as “well but if someone is doing this to you how would you be feeling?” We have that conversation so I try to relate it back to ‘well if this is happening to you how would you be feeling’ type of thing.

Sometimes it works sometimes I go onto the other steps where it's like. Obviously you can't be sitting next to some of your classmates, you call home, all that type of stuff, but minor issues that's what the conversation usually sounds like.

Overall participants found conversation solutions to be effective. However, no solution worked for every situation, every time. When conversation solutions were ineffective, participants moved on to other strategies.

Every participant emphasized the importance of addressing bullying right away. Participants made statement like "take care of it right away and try to take care of it in a manner where the person who is being bullied isn't going to feel like they're helpless," "if I catch it I take care of it right away," and "take care of it right away and let them know that you don't allow it." I found this interesting because during observations, I saw participants ignoring bullying behaviors or stopping the behaviors but not addressing the situation.

The observation provided me with the opportunity to witness interventions first hand and evaluate their effectiveness for myself. The participants made several statements like "stop, stop" and "quit." These comments stopped the current behaviors but I do not think they dealt with the larger problem of bullying. Another intervention involved students taking ownership of their behavior. The teacher gave the directive "You need to apologize, if you can't apologize then go to the safe seat." If the student is ready to take responsibility for their actions, then this strategy would work well. If not, the student will resist which will result in a consequence of going to the safe seat. This type of corrections has the potential to be more effective and produce longer lasting effects than orders to simply stop doing an action.

The final sub question was: What support is needed from school administrators to address bullying behaviors in the classroom? The themes that addressed this question were

barriers which was present in interviews and observations and roles which was present in the documents.

The answer to this sub-question can most clearly be seen in the interview transcripts. During the interview I directly asked all of the participants what support they needed from administrators to address bullying behaviors in the classroom. There were reoccurring references to more training, clearer guidelines, and for referrals of bullying to be handled in a serious way.

One participant described her need for clear guidelines and modeling, just as teachers would do for their students. She states that she needs:

A very clear roadmap of how they want it dealt with in the building... So I think a clear message of what we are to do, I want to see it modeled. I want to know exactly how they suggest that I handle that before I do something stupid.

Her reasoning behind this was very school and student centered, saying “when I go off halfcocked and I go make whatever it is I think they need and then I don't do the right thing that's not good for the school.” This reveals that she desires to have specifics about how bullying should be handled and that her request for this information comes from a places that also yearns for a positive school culture.

While Mrs. Picasso focused on what she needs from administration to improve her own actions, Mrs. Cameron and Mrs. Stull focused on the administrators actions. Mrs.

Cameron specified in reference to administrators:

I need it to be addressed immediately. Consequences addressed immediately, and zero tolerance. That is what it needs to be... So when it is reported it needs to be dealt with immediately. And um, consequences accordingly. I don't think... I think once the bullying gets out of...gets to a place where I now have to send it to administration, it should be looked at very seriously and I have dealt with it in my

classroom and I have done what the adult should do. So now it needs to go to the next level. That's how I kind of look at it.

Mrs. Stull voiced similar opinions saying:

I think there needs to be an immediate action, that is, I think that mediation is a super important part of the process of eliminating bullying but I also think that, you know, there needs to be consequence for students who are bullying. They just need to feel like it's not okay and it's not okay and there's going to be consequence if you do it because we don't treat people like that so I think all of those from an administrators standpoint I would say.

Mrs. Kelly focused on the need for administrators to provide bullying training for teachers.

She said "we need training on how to handle these situations that would be helpful." Mr.

Dunn echoed this sentiment, saying "some of those new teachers don't know how to take care of it so that something that we probably need to take a look at is professional

development because I think it's becoming a huge problem." In summation, teachers need

administrators to set clear guidelines, give consequences, and provide training to teachers on how to address bullying.

### **Conclusion**

This study sought to examine experiences of sixth-grade teachers who address bullying in the classroom. According to Byrne (1994) and Doll, Song, and Siemers (2004), managing bullying is a difficult task for some teachers. By examining teachers experiences addressing bullying in the classroom, we can identify the most successful strategies. Teachers use a variety of approaches when it comes to prevention and intervention of bullying behaviors. A teacher's approach is influenced by several factors, including level of skill in

mediating bullying situations, attitude towards bullying and aggression, support of bullying policies, perceived seriousness, and environment.

This study, in contrast to previous studies, was designed to contribute to the body of knowledge concerning teacher's experiences with addressing bullying in a middle school environment, as teachers are often the first adults to witness or be made aware of bullying. This analysis found that, while participants believed they knew how to address bullying, some of those same teachers chose approaches that did not actually address the problem, but only momentarily stopped it. In addition, the data analysis revealed that teachers need professional development to increase their effectiveness, and desire additional support and clarity from administrators.

The participants' experiences revealed that in order to truly be able to recognize and address bullying, teachers need the following: clear communication, professional development which provides teachers with a repertoire of useful approaches to bullying and skills for managing behavior, and administrative support. Clear guidelines can be established at the district level and communicated to each school and teacher. A bank of effective approaches and skills for managing behavior can be acquired through professional development opportunities and experience. Experience will come with time, but without professional development opportunities teachers will not have the skill set for managing the phenomenon. In addition, it is crucial for teachers to have support and clear guidelines from their administrators.

## CHAPTER 5

### RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

#### **Reliving the Past to Become Aware in the Present**

Throughout this study I was confronted with many emotions. Some of these I experienced as a researcher, some as a teacher, and others as a young girl. Being a researcher on the topic of bullying was very difficult for me. Not being in the teacher role but still witnessing bullying in the classroom as an adult was a new experience for me. I struggled to not step in when I saw bullying situations occurring. I knew as an observer I did not want to influence the situation. In one classroom a student was being teased about what she looked like, how she smelled, and not having any friends. The teacher had not responded in several minutes and feeling as though I was about to say something, I stepped into the hallway for one minute to regain my composure as an observer.

When I saw children exhibiting these bullying behaviors I felt upset as an adult that young children could be this cruel. As a person who experienced bullying I felt strangely relieved that I was no longer in situations like I was witnessing. I also felt anger towards the students exhibiting bullying behaviors. That triggered guilt in me for feeling such negative emotions towards children. In reflection I realized that the students who were exhibiting the bullying behavior learned this behavior from somewhere. I should not be angry with the students, but with society that has normalized these behaviors. In the years since I was bullied in middle school I had hoped that bullying in schools had decreased. Unfortunately, I believe it has only become worse.

Overall this experience reminded me of my own experiences but allowed me to make substantial changes to my current classroom practices. I have realized that as the adult in the

room I must be hyper aware of what is going on around me. I must control my emotions and be ever present in the situation, not my own feelings or the past.

### **Implications of the Findings**

The purpose of this study was to describe the experiences of six teachers who have worked with students experiencing bullying in the classroom in a Midwest middle school. The goal of the study was to develop a thick description of ways teachers address this phenomenon in middle schools. When a researcher utilizes thick description it can “open up a world to the reader through rich, detailed, and concrete descriptions of people and places... in such a way that we can understand the phenomenon being studied and draw our own conclusions about meanings and significance”(Patton, 2002, p. 438). Utilizing thick description and examining teacher experiences will add to the body of knowledge surrounding student to student bullying and may illuminate ways teachers can effectively intervene. The study utilized heuristics in the research design in order to understand and describe the classroom experiences of teachers with this phenomenon.

The characteristics that define bullying in every situation are similar, yet every bullying experience is different. Teachers who do not have adequate training to address these situations may not understand their own biases and perceptions of these students; while they may believe they are doing what is best for students, teacher approaches can be ineffective. There is no “one size fits all” teacher intervention in a bullying situation and without adequate training, teachers may fail to address or postpone the bullying, instead of stopping it.

All of the participants who were identified as being able to effectively address bullying in their classroom expressed the need for strategies and training for these situations. If these teachers feel this way, many less effective and beginning teachers are also likely to have a desire for additional training in this area. This is especially true for teachers in the middle school environment as bullying increases during the middle school years (Smith, Madsen, & Moody, 1999). Without training, it may take several years for these teachers to figure out effective solutions to intervene in bullying situations. Unfortunately, in the meantime, all students involved in bullying may experience the negative effects of bullying including term academic, physical, and emotional effects (Heino et al., 2000).

Conducting this research has affected how I address situations in my own classroom and how I view myself. While conducting interviews and observations I found myself identifying with both the teacher and the students who are the target of bullying behavior. I realized that like some of the teachers I get frustrated with the students when having to continuously make corrections. In reflecting I realize that instead of getting frustrated I need to focus on what skills the students are missing and remain compassionate to all students. This made me feel ashamed that I had in some way minimized the seriousness of the issue and let my feelings take priority. I also reflected on how the teachers often missed bullying. Based on this I am making it a priority to be vigilant and aware of the interactions going on in my room. Most importantly I am now taking bullying instances I do see more seriously because I realized, like the teachers in this study, there are probably many instances I miss.

## **Recommendations**

There are three recommendations that will be discussed in order to help teachers have more experiences effectively addressing bullying in the classroom. The first recommendation is to provide clear communication about bullying. Clear communication about bullying is important to effectively convey the guidelines for each stakeholder's role when addressing bullying in school. While the Mariano School did have guidelines established, they were worded in generalities and, based on participant responses, were not clearly communicated. The second recommendation is to provide professional development on increasing teacher knowledge of effective anti-bullying approaches and general behavior management. This area is not only grounded in the literature, but also a specific recommendation of the participants of this study. Administrative support in resolving bullying is the final recommendation. This recommendation encompasses the role of the administrator in bullying situations and their role in creating a democratic education environment. Democratic education, describes the ideal type of classroom environment needed to help students and teachers create an atmosphere where bullying can be addressed.

### **Clear Communication**

Participants in this study expressed the desire for clearer communication about bullying. "Creating a collaborative environment and open communication has been described as the single most important factor for successful school improvement initiatives" (Halawah, 2005, p. 335). Communication in organizations is more than simply transmitting information. Communication is the process of coordinating activities, creating understanding, and building acceptance of organizational goals (Heide et al., 2005).

“Communication is the lifeblood of any organization” (Tourish & Hargie, 1998, p. 176). The need for effective communication systems within schools is crucial when they are operating in a turbulent environment, such as is present in a building with a severe bullying problem. Schools must be innovative to be able to respond and adapt to the challenges presented in such environments. According to Tourish and Hargie (1998), “it is now increasingly evident that those organisations which promote good internal communication reap positive dividends in meeting these challenges” (176).

Clearly communicating is not a simple task. Communication presents many challenges especially for diverse school settings (Ryan, 2007). According to Halawah (2005), “Members of diverse school communities, including administrators, will not always find it easy to communicate with those whose cultural backgrounds and life experiences differ from their own” (p. 335). One difference lies in the differences in worldviews and values between people, and to the differences in power that accompany diversity. The main disseminators of information are administrators. Due to the wide array of stakeholders with whom they must communicate, administrators may struggle with tasks such as understanding others who see the world in different ways, helping all stakeholders participate fully in communication practices and in school activities, and ensuring that educational policies are carried out fully. Clear communication of each staff member’s roles and responsibilities will help alleviate these issues. Additionally it is essential to insert student voices into any communication. Students are at the center of this phenomenon so it is necessary to have their input on the situation and any proposed solutions. Student voices and opinions can be gathered through holding focus groups and integrating students into the development of the strategic communication plan about bullying.

In a study conducted by Ryan and Rottmann (2009), principals tried to explicitly communicate the content of their messages clearly, but structure and culture were obstacles that affected the outcomes. The researchers found that even with a clear structure and a positive culture, “communication is not satisfying if the messages lack content or consistency.” School staff members want to be fully informed about key issues affecting their organization and job responsibilities. This is achieved through clear and effective communication. According to Tourish and Hargie (1998), “staff express a consistent preference for face-to-face communication, yet in many organisations there is an over-reliance on written communication” (p. 179). Ryan and Rottmann (2009) found that a variety of communication channels that support one another contribute to more effective communication.

Effective communication has many benefits. Good communication in an organization instills greater commitment, more innovation, reduced absenteeism, and greater productivity (Clampitt & Downs, 1993). Too often a school or district focuses on just one form of communication and thus does not reap all the benefits of a fully informed staff receiving a consistent message. A focused communication strategy about bullying should be designed as part of a school’s strategic plan and effort to create a positive social environment and to reduce barriers to effective communication in a school (Reilly & DiAngelo, 1990). Negben (1991) has argued that communication is the critical ingredient to success in a school’s strategic planning. By developing a strategic plan for communication about bullying, the Mariano School can increase its ability to clearly and effectively communicate a consistent message to its staff.

## **Professional Development on Increasing Teacher Knowledge of Effective Anti-Bullying Approached and Behavior Management**

A teacher's ability to effectively prevent and address instances of bullying and manage behavior in the classroom is linked to their experiences and knowledge. While administrators and other support staff cannot give teachers experiences, those will come with time, they can equip them with the knowledge they need to be successful when these situations do arise. To do this, I recommend schools provide professional development on behavior management and institute formal anti-bullying training programs for teachers.

Despite the wide acceptance and acknowledgement from educators that behavior management is critically important, many new teachers still report insufficient training and support in creating a well-managed, positive classroom environment (Backer, 2005). The lack of professional development and thus skills with behavior management significantly reduced a teachers effectiveness (Espin & Yell, 1994). Providing professional development that supports a school's behavior program will increase teachers' knowledge and abilities to address difficult behaviors in the classroom. Every school I have worked in has had a behavior management program they follow, accompanying these programs with professional development opportunities will strengthen them further. If a school does not already have a program in place, then the entire school staff should review possible choices and chose a program that best fits the needs of their students.

In addition to professional development on behavior management, I believe schools should also provide their staff with formal anti-bullying training. Two examples of teacher training programs are Bully Busters: A Program for Teachers and the GREAT Teacher Program. Bully Busters is a psychoeducational program that was "designed to facilitate the

teachers' acquisition of skills, techniques, and intervention and prevention strategies specifically related to problems of bullying and victimization, as well as to enhance teachers' self-efficacy for confronting bullying and victimization in the classroom" (Newman-Carlson, & Horne, 2004, p. 261). The Bully Busters program provides training to school staff members through staff development training workshop. The program trains staff on information pertaining to bullying, interventions, prevention strategies, and classroom activities. The GREAT Teacher Program is another anti-bullying teacher training program. GREAT stands for Guiding Responsibility and Expectations for Adolescents for Today and Tomorrow. The GREAT Teacher Program, is a prevention program for middle school teachers used to deter students' aggressive and bullying behaviors. The GREAT program has four main goals:

The goals of the program were (1) to increase teacher awareness of different types of aggression, risk factors, role of the classroom teacher, and influence of the school climate on the child's behavior; (2) to develop strategies that will prevent aggression; (3) to improve teacher management skills to reduce power struggles and aggression; and (4) to enhance skills to assist students who are the targets of aggression. (Orpinas & Horne, 2004, p. 29)

The GREAT Training Program provides training to staff members through 12 hours of workshops and 10 hours of support group sessions (Orpinas & Horne, 2004). In addition to this training, manuals and supervision were provided to assure correct implementation. Both of these programs address teacher knowledge, skills and strategies, and reducing victimization. These three areas were points of concern for the participants in this study. The participants explicitly suggested more training and the data revealed the need for an increase in knowledge of aspects of bullying and a wider array of effective approaches to help

students who are the target of bullying behaviors which this kind of professional development can provide.

In a study conducted by Fekkes, Pijpers, and Verloove-Vanhorick (2005), 53% of the regularly bullied children told their teacher about the bullying that took place. Once informed, the teachers who attempted to stop the bullying were successful in 49% of the cases. Despite this success rate, studies conducted by Craig and Pepler (1997) reported that teachers intervene to stop bullying in only 4% of bullying incidents. In a study conducted by Hazler (1996), two out of three students reported that teachers handled the bullying situations they do intervene on inadequately or ineffectively.

Stephenson and Smith (1989) attribute many teachers' lack of intervention in bullying to the teachers' belief that they lack adequate skills and training to intervene. In a study done by Mishna, Sarcello, Pepler, and Wiener (2005), many teachers expressed concern about their ability to deal with bullying incidents effectively, especially in reference to indirect forms of bullying. Teachers may also fear that intervening in a bullying situation will only make a situation worse (Olweus, 1994). Many students believe that teachers are unaware of the bullying because it appears to go on unnoticed (Bryne, 1994). With this all in mind it seems clear that "bullying will never be eliminated unless teachers and children become partners in this crusade against cruelty" (Fried & Fried, 1996, p. 107).

Teaching teachers about the complexity of the phenomenon and equipping them with intervention strategies may lead to teachers becoming "more vigilant and responsive to bullying problems which, in turn, may give children more confidence to seek teachers' assistance when bullying occurs" (Atlas & Pepler, 1998, p. 94). Providing professional development on behavior management and instituting formal anti-bullying programs that

combining training with follow up, I believe will produce lasting changes in teachers' knowledge and intervention skills.

### **Administrative Support**

A school's success is influenced by many people, however, school administrators remain one of the most important influences. Research by Cotton (2003) found that administrative leadership has an impact on nearly every aspect of a school. Administrators are a key element in creating an overall effective school (Whitaker, 1989). This is especially true in bullying situations.

Administrators play an important role in resolving and reducing bullying behaviors. A report by law-enforcement leaders, researchers, universities, and the U.S. Department of Justice have said the principal's role is "pivotal in stopping bullies" (Cavanagh, 2004). Likewise, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (2004) asserted "School principals are key to stopping bullies" (p. 1).

Principal involvement and awareness is an essential part of administrators helping stop bullying. Harris and Petrie (2002) claim "Principal awareness of the problem leads to involvement; involvement leads to a reduction in bullying, and a reduction in bullying leads to an improved middle school experience for every child" (p. 52). A study conducted in 2004 found that principals' knowledge of bullying was high, yet they were not aware of the level of bullying on their campus and were not aware of locations where bullying occurred (Hathorn). Principals often underestimated the amount of bullying that occurs and sometimes reluctant to get involved (Viadero, 1997).

Principal support of teachers and involvement in school bullying issues is essential to resolving the problem of bullying. “Without the support and leadership from the principal, there is little chance that significant progress can be made in preventing and reducing bullying” (Dillon, 2010, p. 21). Administrators’ involvement directly with bullying issues is essential, but so is creating an environment conducive to preventing bullying. To do this I suggest administrators work to establish democratic school environments where everyone feels responsibility and involvement in the schools culture and community.

### **Democratic Education**

I believe that creating a democratic education environment will greatly reduce instances and severity of bullying. Democratic education, is necessary to creating classrooms that meet the needs of all students. Hecht (2010) describes the purpose of democratic education as a developmental process, which accompanies people throughout their lifetime. He believed democratic education helps develop a young person’s personality, encourages independence, promotes respect for human rights of everyone, and increases social and environmental responsibility (Hecht, 2010). Generally, democratic schools involve shared decision-making among the students and staff, a learner-centered approach in which students choose their daily activities, there is equality among staff and students, and the community is viewed as an extension of the classroom.

The first theorist to introduce the idea of democratic education, Dewey (1916), believed that educating all people could only be done in place where there is “adequate provision for the reconstruction of social habits and institutions by means of wide stimulation arising from equitably distributed interests” (p. 107). Dewey also believed the whole child

should be educated, socially, emotionally, physically, and intellectually. To do this, children must be educated on the effects their bullying behaviors have and how to handle their emotions when bullying behaviors emerge. Navigating a bullying situation in a social setting and being able to take in active part in the prevention and prevention of bullying instances is also key to eradicating this phenomena.

Democratic education sparked what is known today as the Whole Child Movement. The Whole Child Movement advocates that education must move beyond preparing students to become productive citizens; it must also nurture and grow children's creativity, imagination, compassion, self-knowledge, social skills, spirituality, respect for the environment, and sense of social justice (Noddings, 2005). According to Marshall and Price (2007), the whole child is "intellectually active; physically, verbally, socially, and academically competent; empathetic, kind, caring, and fair; creative and curious; disciplined, self-directed, and goal oriented; free; a critical thinker; confident; and cared for and valued" (p. 10).

To reach this goal, students need to develop into well-rounded individuals, not merely memorize content. Democratic education attempts to educate the whole child, and in doing so the educator must take on a different role. ASCD (2008) proposes that adults in the school's surrounding community need to ensure that students are safe, healthy, engaged, supported, and challenged. A school environment in which bullying is eradicated would make a child not only feel safe but also supported. Additionally adults must provide access to a broad curriculum that includes art, music, foreign languages, history, and social studies. Dewey (1916) describes this as:

The educator's part in the enterprise of education is to furnish the environment which stimulates responses and directs the learner's course. In the last analysis, all that the educator can do is modify stimuli so that response will as surely as is possible result in the formation of desirable intellectual and emotional dispositions. (p. 212)

Several theorists on democratic education believe that schools have an obligation to teach young people more than reading, writing, and arithmetic. Apple and Beane, (2007) write that supporters “believe that the schools, as a common experience of virtually all young people, have a moral obligation to bring the democratic way to life in the culture and curriculum of the school” (p 8). In a similar sentiment, Greene (1985) writes, “Surely it is an obligation of education in a democracy to empower the young to become members of the public, to participate, and play articulate roles in the public space” (p. 4). To play a role as she refers to involves more than having the ability to read and write. Dewey (1916), writes on this subject “Discipline, natural development, culture, social efficiency, are moral traits--marks of a person who is a worthy member of that society which it is the business of education to further” (p. 369). I believe that by adopting a democratic education structure, educators can teach students how to effectively resolve their bullying issues. This will be beneficial not only in their school years, but also as adults. Navigating situations in which one is being treated in a negative way is surely a beneficial skill when functioning as a member of a larger society.

The current idea of democratic schools, also known as free schools, are school where students, teachers, and administrators all have equal an equal voice, and to teach democracy they run the school as a democracy. Apple and Beane (2007) have written heavily on the topic of democratic education and state:

In a democratic school it is true that all of those directly involved in the school, including young people, have the right to participate in the process of decision making. For this reason, democratic schools are marked by widespread participation in issues of governance and policy making. Committees, councils, and other school wide decision-making groups include not only professional educators but also young people, their parents, and other members of the school community. In classrooms, young people and teachers engage in collaborative planning, reaching decisions that respond to the concerns, aspirations, and interests of both. (p. 9)

Democratic schools focus on including all stakeholders. In democratic schools there are often meetings open to all students, staff, and parents. In these schools everyone has a voice and a vote. Creating democratic schools “involves more than the education of the young. Democratic schools are meant to be democratic places, so the idea of democracy also extends to the many roles that adults play in the schools” (Apple & Beane, 2007, p. 8). School and classroom meetings are a regular occurrence in democratic schools and the topics addressed can cover school wide issues or personal concerns. In the classroom, teachers and students should implement democratically run meetings. These meetings could cover any issues including bullying. It is important for children to have a chance to share both positive and negative things in their life. By acknowledging their personal successes, failures, and worries, and problems the students develop a deeper bond between themselves, their classmates, their teacher, and the whole school as a community. This bond ultimately increases the success of a classroom.

In addition to a focus on all stakeholders and democratic meetings, these schools also have a heavy focus on encouraging young people to help others and their community. One way of incorporating the involvement of young people in helping other is through peer mediation. Peer mediation allows students to not only help others, but also have a voice in issues that are taking place in school. Additionally, peer mediation have been show to

increase students' "capacity and inclination to handle conflict nonviolently, their relationships with peers, and their attachment to school. Furthermore, such programs can reduce suspensions from school for violent activity and increase academic engagement and achievement" (Bickmore, 2002, p. 38). In this way students can become active participants in the reduction and intervention of bullying in the classroom. By empowering the students in the classroom and equipping them with problem solving tools, they can greatly aid in the eradication of bullying. For democratic schools, "their vision extends beyond purposes such as improving the school climate or enhancing students' self-esteem. Democratic educators seek not simply to lessen the harshness of social inequities in schools, but to change the conditions that create them" (Apple & Beane, 2007, p. 11).

### **Future Research**

This study sought to describe the experiences of six teachers who have experiences addressing student to student bullying in a classroom in a Midwest middle school.

Recommendations for future studies include replicating the study with different participants and in settings where formal anti-bullying training for teachers has occurred.

As a result of the teacher population being 95% white at this school and no criteria in place to ensure teachers of color were present in the study, it consisted of solely white participants. This research should be expanded to include participants of color. Including participants of color may reveal additional themes within their descriptions of experiences. This could potentially influence the suggested effective approaches to bullying situations. Including participants from diverse backgrounds will ensure a variety of voices can be heard on this important topic. It would also be interesting to explore how racial and/or cultural

differences between teachers and students, teacher perceptions, and the cultural competency of teachers may affect a teacher's approach to bullying behavior. I would like to see future research on culturally responsive caring and bullying intervention. Culturally responsive caring places "teachers in an ethical, emotional, and academic partnership with ethnically diverse students, a partnership that is anchored in respect, honor, integrity, resource sharing, and a deep belief in the possibility of transcendence" (Gay, 2000, p. 52).

This study could also be expanded to include student participants in addition to teacher participants. Allowing students to speak about their teachers' interventions and experiences would allow for a corroboration of teacher perceptions. As students are the actual sufferers, it is imperative to understand the types of experiences they are having within the classroom.

Lastly, the setting could be altered. Specifically, researching in settings where teachers' have been provided with formal bullying training would allow the exploration of other experiences. In the setting of this study no participant had received recent training from the district. Including participants who have been exposed to training may provide information about more successful experiences. This would allow for the unique characteristics within each of those settings to be illuminated

### **Conclusion**

The U.S. National Center for Education Statistics and U.S. Department of Justice (2009) reported that in 2007, 42.9% of sixth grade students reported being bullied. Sixth graders reported the highest incidents of bullying out of all grades. Teacher roles, approaches, barriers, and administrative support all influence how successfully bullying is

prevented and addressed. When teachers have more support from administration, the barriers they face are easier to overcome and they feel like their experiences addressing bullying will be more successful. However, many teachers do not possess the necessary knowledge of effective approaches to successfully address this phenomenon. Additionally, many teachers do not know their roles, district rules, and guidelines that should guide their behavior when intervening. Therefore, there is a great need for professional development in this area so that teachers can clearly identify their responsibilities and acquire the most effective anti-bullying techniques. In order to understand more about this phenomenon, there is a need to replicate this study in a setting where teachers are exposed to anti-bullying training to truly identify the most effective experiences and teacher approaches. It is only after taking these steps that we will be able to identify the best approaches, ensuring the best effects to resolving bullying in the classroom.

### **Closing Reflections**

During this study I learned many things. First, I realized that I am addressing bullying situations in ways similar to some of the participants. These approaches were not always the most effective. I started reflecting on the fact that I may be momentarily stopping the bullying behavior, in an effort to preserve instructional time, but not actually addressing the problem in my own classroom. As someone who experienced bullying in school, I was very disappointed that I had not been more sensitive to getting to the root of the issue.

The most difficult part of this experience for me was watching bullying situations happen and not being able to step in. One in particular struck me as especially cruel when several girls began to openly make comments about another girl's hygiene and looks. She

began to cry and was dismissed to the counseling office. Once the student had left, the other girls openly expressed the fact that they did not care that they made the girl cry in class and they thought it was funny. It was hard for me to watch young women be so heartless and uncaring about another person. I could not decide if they were trying to validate themselves and make up for some of their own insecurities or if they were simply mean girls. In the end I chose to believe the former and have faith in the goodness of every human being. As a teacher I would advise my participants to be more vigilant in their observations and more thorough in their responses. Though the situation may seem insignificant, it may stay with that student for years. One day, they may even write a dissertation on the topic.

APPENDIX A  
BULLYING STUDIES

## BULLYING STUDIES

Authors	Article	Hypothesis	Instruments	Methodology	Findings
Klomek et al.	Bullying, Depression, and Suicidality in Adolescents	<p>Greater exposure to bullying behavior will increase the risk of depression, serious suicidal ideation, and suicide attempts.</p> <p>Bullying is less prevalent but produces the same results.</p>	A self-reported questionnaire, Demographic Questionnaire, The Beck Inventory, The Suicide Ideation questionnaire,	2341 students ages 13 – 19 in six high schools in New York Fives schools were coeducational public schools, one was a private boys school	<p>“Victimization and bullying were more prevalent in school compares with away from school” (p. 42).</p> <p>Students involved in bullying as a target or a bully had a higher risk for depression, serious suicidal ideation, and suicide attempts.</p>
Nansel et al.	Bullying Behaviors Among US Youth: Prevalence and Association with Psychosocial adjustment	Goal: Report the prevalence of bullying in a nationally representative sample of US to determine the association to psychosocial adjustment.	Self-report of involvement in bullying and being bullied	15,686 students in grade six through 10 in public and private schools throughout the united States	<p>29.9% reported moderate or frequent involvement in bullying. 13% were the bully, 10.6% were the victim, and 6.3% were both.</p> <p>Experience with bullying was associated with poorer psychosocial adjustment</p>
Kaltiala-Heino et al.	Bullying at School – an indicator of adolescents at risk for mental disorders	To evaluate involvement in bullying, as bully, target, or bully-target is associated with mental health problems in adolescents.	Questionnaire about bullying and victimization in relation to psychosomatic symptoms, depression, anxiety, eating disorders and substance abuse.	<p>17,643 students in 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade</p> <p>Conducted in 1995 in Finland in one region, one city, and two towns.</p>	<p>9% of girls and 17% of boys were involved in bullying on a weekly basis.</p> <p>“Anxiety, depression and psychosomatic symptoms were more frequent among bully-</p>

			Depressive symptoms were measured using a modified version of the Beck Depression Inventory	Conducted in two regions in Finland in 1997.	victims and equally common among bullies and victims” (p.661).
<b>Olweus</b>	Bullying at school: What we know and what we can do (Understanding Children’s Worlds)	Goals: To reduce bullying in schools using a Bully Prevention Program	Self reports OBPP Questionnaire	2,500 students from forty-two schools in Bergen Norway. The students were followed over a two and a half year period, from 1983 to 1985.	1984, relative reduction for being bullied was 62.0% and 33.0% for bullying other students, and similar results were found in 1985 (1991, 1993, 1997).  Peer and teacher rated bullying problems as less severe and less frequent.  There was a significant reduction in student reports of general antisocial behavior.  Students reported improvements in satisfaction with school, more positive relationships and school work, and improved order and discipline (1993).

APPENDIX B  
TYPES OF BULLYING

## TYPES OF BULLYING

Type	Description
Physical	Physical bullying involves harmful actions against another person's body. Examples include: biting, kicking, pushing, pinching, hitting, tripping, pulling hair, any form of violence or intimidation. Physical bullying also involves the interference with another person's property. Examples include: damaging or stealing.
Verbal	Verbal bullying involves speaking to a person or about a person in an unkind or hurtful way. Examples include: sarcasm, teasing, put-downs, name calling, phone calls, spreading rumors or hurtful gossip.
Psychological	Emotional bullying involves behaviors that upset, exclude, or embarrass a person. Examples include: nasty notes, saying mean things, tormenting threatening, humiliation or social embarrassment
Sexual	Sexual bullying singles out a person because of gender and demonstrates unwarranted or unwelcome sexual behavior. Examples include: sexual comments, abusive comments, unwanted physical contact.
Racial	Racial bullying involves rejection or isolation of a person because of ethnicity. Examples include: gestures, racial slurs or taunts, name calling, making fun of customs, skin color, accent, or food choices.
Cyber	Cyber bullying is when one child torments, threatens, harasses, humiliates, embarrasses or otherwise targets another child using the internet, interactive and digital technologies, or mobile phones.

APPENDIX C

COMPONENTS OF THE OLWEUS BULLYING  
PREVENTION PROGRAM

**COMPONENTS OF THE OLWEUS BULLYING PREVENTION PROGRAM  
(Olweus et al., 2010)**

School Level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Establish a Bullying Prevention Coordinating Committee (BPCC)</li> <li>-Conduct trainings for the BPCSS and all staff Administer the – Bullying Questionnaire (Grades 3-12)</li> <li>-Hold staff discussion group meetings</li> <li>-Introduce the school rules against bullying</li> <li>-Review and refine the school's supervisory system</li> <li>-Hold a school wide kick-off event to launch the program, involve parents</li> </ul>
Classroom Level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Post and enforce school wide rules against bullying</li> <li>-Hold regular (weekly) class meetings to discuss bullying and related topics</li> <li>-Hold class level meeting with students' parents.</li> </ul>
Individual Level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Supervise students' activities</li> <li>-Ensure all staff intervene on the spot when bullying is observed</li> <li>-Meet with students involved in bullying(separately for bullies and targets)</li> <li>-Meet with parents of involved students</li> <li>-Develop individual intervention for involved students as needed</li> </ul>
Community Level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Involve community members on the Bullying Prevention Level Coordinating Committee</li> <li>-Develop school-community partnerships to support the school'sprogram</li> <li>-Help spread anti-bullying messages and principles of best practice in the community</li> </ul>

APPENDIX D

LETTER TO SUPERINTENDENT OR SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

## LETTER TO SUPERINTENDENT OR SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

Dear Superintendent,

My name is Lauren Gechter and I am a doctoral student at the University of Missouri Kansas City conducting a qualitative study to gain insight into teacher's experiences with student bullying in an urban middle school. As a practicing teacher I have seen the problems bullying causes in a school. It is my hope to use the evidence gathered in this study to promote better understanding, and to provide interventions which will better address the problem of bullying in schools.

In order to select appropriate participants, I would like to work closely with the principal and assistant principals to identify teachers who have had successful experience addressing student bullying.

Once teachers have been identified, I will meet with them individually to explain the study, purpose, risks, and safeguards, and to have them sign a consent form agreeing to participate in the study. There will be no pressure to participate and teachers may discontinue participation at any time. Strict confidentiality will be maintained and the completed study will not identify participants or schools by name.

It is my sincere hope that you will agree to allow teachers in one of the district's middle schools to participate in this study. If you have any questions, comments, or suggestions, please feel free to contact me. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Thank you,  
Lauren E. Gechter  
UMKC Ed.D candidate  
Mariano Middle School Communication Arts teacher

Lauren Gechter

4058 Warwick Blvd. Unit 3

Kansas City, Missouri

64111

(913)486-4100

[LicataLE@gmail.com](mailto:LicataLE@gmail.com)

APPENDIX E  
INTERVIEW GUIDE/QUESTIONS

## INTERVIEW GUIDE/QUESTIONS

### Introduction

*Start with some version of this introduction*

Hi. Thank you for meeting with me. Let me start with a little background. The purpose of this interview is to collect information on your experiences with addressing bullying behaviors in middle school. I'm looking into teachers' experience with bullying, if they have had any training and what that looks like, what strategies work, what don't, and just the overall experiences teachers are having in the classroom with this phenomenon.

If it is okay with you, I will be tape recording our conversation. The purpose of this is so that I can get all the details but at the same time be able to carry on an attentive conversation with you. I assure you that all your comments will remain confidential. I will be compiling a report which will contain staff comments without any reference to individuals.

### Interview Questions

"I'm now going to ask you some questions that I would like you to answer to the best of your ability. If you do not know the answer, please say so."

#### **Focused Life History:**

5. Tell me who you are, family history and values, etc.
6. Tell me about your early educational experiences.
7. Tell me about a significant teacher from your past and tell why they were special.
8. Tell me why you decided to pursue the field of education.

**Details of Experience:**

1. Think of a time when you were aware of a bullying incident and tell me about that time.
2. Describe bullying here at school.
3. Describe any training you have had in dealing with bullying.
4. Describe your school's anti-bullying policy.
5. What strategies have you seen work in regards to stopping bullying behavior?
6. What is your personal philosophy on how to handle bullying?
7. How do you address bullying behavior in your classroom?
8. What support do you need from administrators to help you address bullying in your classroom?

**Closing**

You have given me a lot of great information here. Is there anything else you would like me to know? Thank you for your time.

APPENDIX F

CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN A RESEARCH STUDY

## CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN A RESEARCH STUDY

A Heuristic Case Study of the Experiences of Teachers Who Address Bullying in  
Middle School

Lauren E. Gechter

B.A. University of Missouri-Columbia, 2007

M.ED. University of Missouri-Saint Louis, 2010

### **Request to Participate**

You are being asked to take part in a research study. This study is being conducted at Mariano South Middle School in the Mariano School District.

The researcher in charge of this study is Lauren Gechter.

The study team is asking you to take part in this research study because you are a teacher who addresses bullying situations in a middle school classroom. Research studies only include people who choose to take part. This document is called a consent form. Please read this consent form carefully and take your time making your decision. The researcher will go over this consent form with you. Ask her to explain anything that you do not understand. Think about it and talk it over with your family and friends before you decide if you want to take part in this research study. This consent form explains what to expect: the risks, discomforts, and benefits, if any, if you consent to be in the study.

### **Background**

You are being asked to participate in this study because you have identified as a teacher who has had experience addressing bullying situations in a middle school classroom. As a subject in this study, you have been asked to take part in this research study because of the experiences you have had in the classroom.

You will be one of about 6 subjects in the study at Mariano South Middle School.

## **Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to describe the experiences of six teachers who have worked with students experiencing bullying in the classroom in a Midwest middle school. The goal of the study is to develop a thick description of ways teachers address this phenomenon in middle schools. There is a gap in the literature that explores teachers' experiences' with bullying at the middle school level. The proposed study hopes to help fill that gap.

## **Procedures**

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to consent to one in-person interview and allow the researcher to observe your classroom at least one time. This study will last from approximately February-May 2014. While you will be considered a participant during this time, your actual involvement is outlined below.

Interviews will take place during the spring semester 2014. Each participant will have one interview, lasting approximately 60 minutes in length. The interview will be conducted in March. The interview will be conducted in-person, at a convenient location for you, such as your classroom or a nearby library's conference room. Interviews can also take place at an off campus location such as a library conference room if you prefer. All questions should be considered optional; you have the option at any time to not answer or skip any question.

The researcher will conduct one observation in your classroom for a minimum of one hour and maximum of two hours but may observe on a second day if bullying situations are not observed the first time. If a bullying incident is not observed you will not be observed again and will still receive compensation. The observation will take place on a day of your choosing in March and April. After this observation, your time as a participant in the study will be finished.

If you are willing, interviews will be audio recorded; interviews can still take place even if you do not want them recorded. After the interviews and observations, the researcher will transcribe the recordings and email them to you so that you can review them and make sure you said things the way you meant them. Recordings will be used solely to make accurate transcripts and will be kept on the researcher's password-protected iPad that only she has access to; after the transcripts have been created and you have verified their accuracy, all recordings will be deleted.

Participation is voluntary. You may refuse to participate in certain activities or answer certain questions. If at any point you wish to withdraw from the study, you may do so by contacting the researcher, Lauren Gechter, at (913) 486-4100.

### **Risks and Inconveniences**

There are no known physical, social, or economic risks associated with this study; there is also no risk of criminal or civil liability. You may, however, feel uncomfortable describing the experiences you have had in your own words. In order to minimize these risks, all participation, including conversations, are voluntary and may be discontinued at any time for any reason. While every effort will be made to keep the information you share with us confidential, there is always a risk of breach of confidentiality. This research is considered to be minimal risk. That means that the risks of taking part in this research study are not expected to be more than the risks in your daily life. There are no other known risks to you if you choose to take part in this study.

### **Benefits**

There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this research. Indirectly, however, talking about your experiences may lead to a better understanding of your own experiences and practices. Other people may benefit in the future from the information about bullying that comes from this study.

### **Fees and Expenses**

There are no fees or expenses linked to being a participant in this study.

### **Compensation**

You will receive a \$20.00 gift card for your participation. If you chose to drop out before the interview and/or observation take place, there will be no compensation. If the participant takes part in an observation that yields no data, they will still receive the \$20.00 gift card.

### **Alternatives to Study Participation**

The alternative is not to take part in the study.

### **Confidentiality**

While we will do our best to keep the information you share with us confidential, it cannot be totally guaranteed. Persons from the University of Missouri-Kansas City Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews and approves research studies), Research Protections Program, and Federal regulatory agencies may look at records related to this study to make sure we are doing proper, safe research and protecting human subjects. The results of this research may be published or presented to others. You will not be named in any reports of the results, nor will the school or school district be identified. Although audio recordings will be used for precise interviews, no audio will be used in publications or presentations. If you

decide to leave the study early, which you may do at any time, all data collected will be destroyed at that point.

During the research, the data collected will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's office. All digital data will be stored on a password-protected laptop or iPad until it is transcribed; all digital copies will be destroyed at that time. After the study is over, all files will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's advisor's office for 7 years.

**Contacts for Questions about the Study**

You should contact the Office of UMKC's Social Sciences Institutional Review Board at 816-235-5927 if you have any questions, concerns or complaints about your rights as a research subject. You may call the researcher Lauren Gechter at (913) 486-4100 if you have any questions about this study. You may also call her if any problems come up.

**Voluntary Participation**

Taking part in this research study is your choice. If you choose to be in the study, you are free to stop participating at any time and for any reason. You will be told of any important findings developed during the course of this research.

You have read this Consent Form or it has been read to you. You have been told why this research is being done and what will happen if you take part in the study, including the risks and benefits. You have had the chance to ask questions, and you may ask questions at any time in the future by calling Dr. Dianne Smith at (816) 235-2458. By signing this consent form, you volunteer and consent to take part in this research study. The researcher will give you a copy of this consent form.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature (Volunteer Subject)**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Printed Name (Volunteer Subject)**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Person Obtaining Consent**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent**

APPENDIX G  
OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

## OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

Research sub questions	Things to look for:
<p>a)What are the experiences of a sixth grade teacher who witnesses bullying in the classroom?</p> <p>b)How do you address bullying behavior in the classroom and</p> <p>c) What interventions do you find effective and ineffective in addressing bullying in a middle school classroom?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Mid/exp - Experiences in middle school</li> <li>○ Bul/exp - experiences with bullying</li> <li>○ Ack/bul - Acknowledgment of bullying behavior</li> <li>○ Ind/bul - indirect bullying (ex: rumors, exclusion)</li> <li>○ Dir/bul - direct bullying (ex: hitting, kicking)</li> <li>○ Bul/dif - difference in bullying associated with age or sex</li> <li>○ Power - imbalance of power</li> <li>○ Unkwn/res - not knowing an answer or solution to the problem</li> <li>○ Uncl/pol - Confusion about the school policy</li> <li>○ St/act - Student actions</li> <li>○ Posbe/ch - Positive behavior changes in students</li> <li>○ Bul/con - Bullying consequences</li> <li>○ admin/res - administrator responsibility</li> <li>○ o-stf/inf -The influence staff members actions</li> <li>○ Teach/approach - How teachers handle bullying</li> <li>○ St/explain - Explaining bullying</li> <li>○ Res/p-con - researchers personal connection</li> <li>○ Res/t-con - professional teaching connection</li> <li>○ phy/bul - Physical bullying</li> <li>○ Teach/bul - Bullying of teachers</li> <li>○ Ver/bul - Verbal bullying</li> <li>○ Play/bul - Any behavior that could be considered bullying or playing based on the context</li> <li>○ Unkwn/bul - Unknown bullying</li> <li>○ Recur/prob - reoccurring problem</li> <li>○ Ind/cor - Indirect corrections</li> <li>○ Dir/cor - direct correction</li> <li>○ Teach/cor - Teacher corrections</li> <li>○ St/help - Student request for help</li> <li>○ St/res - Student negative response to correction</li> <li>○ St/deny - Student denial of bullying behaviors</li> </ul>

APPENDIX H  
OBSERVATION FIELD NOTES

**OBSERVATION FIELD NOTES**

**Field Notes**

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Contact type: observation of \_\_\_\_\_  
Site:

Contact Date:  
Today's date:  
Written by: Lauren Gechter

Time	Transcript	Reflections

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## VITA

Lauren Elizabeth Gechter was born on August, 25, 1985 in Shawnee, Kansas. She was educated in local public schools and graduated from Shawnee Mission West in Overland Park, Kansas, in 2004. She attended the University of Kansas in Lawrence, Kansas from 2004 to 2008. She received her Bachelor of Science degree in Journalism from the University of Kansas.

In the summer of 2008, she continued her education at the University of Missouri-St. Louis (UMSL) in St. Louis, MO by pursuing a Master of Education Degree in Curriculum and Instruction (M.Ed.) from the UMSL School of Education. She graduated with her M.Ed. in 2010. After completing her two year commitment with Teach for America, she continued working in urban Kansas City Schools as an elementary and middle school teacher, new teacher mentor, and ad curriculum writer.

In 2012, she began the pursuit of her Ed.D. at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, School of Education. Upon completion of her degree requirements in summer 2014, Mrs. Gechter plans to continue her career at Raytown School District where she will teach and serve on her school's leadership team.