BULLYING IN SCHOOLS: DILEMMAS OF PRACTICE

by

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Abstract

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This study explores teachers' constructions of, and responses to, bullying in their classrooms and schools. Particular attention was paid to the contextual factors that affected the range of teachers' possible responses to bullying incidents, including their personal experience with, and understandings of, bullying. The research questions were explored in the context of archival research, responses to survey questions, and individual and group interviews with a small group of urban elementary school teachers in New York City. Results showed that teachers had not been informed of federal, state or local mandates related to bullying, nor had their pre-service training included this topic. Considering that the legal arena is currently the focal point of the American response to bullying, and that teachers are the adults who have the greatest contact with students during the school day, these are significant findings. In addition, teachers' responses in the interviews suggest that the current educational climate that relies on high-stakes tests to evaluate students', teachers' and schools' performance leaves them with little time and few resources to successfully address bullying. Rarely heard or heeded in policy discussions of bullying, teachers' stories point to the insidious power of deeply embedded dynamics operating well beyond the individual. Recommendations include a shift away from punitive strategies that blame both students and teachers toward a consideration of contextual factors, and the creation of spaces that allows for teachers' experiential knowledge to inform solutions to the bullying dilemma.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

In the fall of 2010, People magazine ran a cover story on "deadly bullying," with a focus on the recent suicide of Rutgers University freshman, Tyler Clementi (Setoodeh & Smolowe, 2010). The issue included coverage of three other cases of bullying with tragic consequences, as well as six confessionals (five of children who had been bullied, and one of a reformed bully). The subtitle of the headline read, "Why did this happen, and how can it be stopped?" One week after this cover story appeared, the U.S. Department of Education sent a letter to alert all school districts and colleges of their responsibilities to recognize and respond to bullying, especially that which is based on race, color, national origin, sex or disability. That same week, President Obama posted a video for Dan Savage's "It Gets Better Project,"[1] putting the entire nation on notice that bullying is not a "normal rite of passage," nor an "inevitable part of growing up."

In the following year and a half, stories of bullying, harassment and abuse of young people continued to appear on front pages nationwide. One year after Clementi's suicide, a 19 year old Army private died of an apparently self-inflicted gunshot wound after weeks of race-based harassment by his peers. Even though his platoon leader had known about the abuse, he did not report it to his superiors, as required by Army protocol. In March of 2012, the most serious charges of involuntary manslaughter against the accused soldiers were dropped. That same month, a 17 year old "good kid" shot and killed three fellow students at a school in Ohio. News reports described the

[1] An online project created in September, 2010 by columnist Dan Savage in response to a rash of suicides of LGBT young people who had experienced severe harassment.

shootings as “a puzzle,” and after the incident, the superintendent of the school district commented that “we’re not just any old place, Chardon. This is every place. As you’ve seen in the past, this can happen anywhere” (Tavernise & Preston, 2012). Rumbling beneath the headlines, bullying-related suicides – many of LGBT young people – continued to unfold. In one month alone, as many as ten bullying-related teen suicides were reported in the United States (Sherrow, 2011). One school district in Minnesota experienced eight suicides in just two years, at least half of which were claimed to involve LGBT youth.[2]

Rewind to April of 1999. Two white male high school students in Littleton, Colorado kill 12 students and one teacher, injure many more, and throw an entire nation into shock. Week after week, headlines appear communicating a nation’s collective horror and outrage. As details emerged of the chronic bullying and exclusion that the perpetrators experienced prior to the assault, the United States joins countries like Norway, Canada, Australia, and England that for years had been wrestling with the difficult questions of the causes of -- and cures for -- bullying.[3] And yet, 11 years later, the problem seems as intractable as ever. What went wrong, we ask? How did Tyler Clementi’s name suddenly – and sadly – become so familiar to us?

[2] This school district is also notable for its policy that requires teachers to remain neutral on matters regarding sexual orientation.” In July of 2011, a lawsuit was brought against the district that charges that staff members tended to “ignore, minimize, dismiss, or in some instances, to blame the victim for the other students’ abusive behavior” when they witnessed or heard about antigay harassment (Eckholm, 2011).

[3] In many of these countries, bullying has also been put on the map by violent events such as school shootings or a pattern of suicides resulting from chronic and severe bullying (Hymel, Schonert-Reichl, Bonanno, Vaillancourt, & Rocke Henderson, 2010).

Even though school violence is hardly a new concern, in most recent discussions of the topic, "Columbine" is invoked as a defining moment in which the current period of national soul searching over "our violent schools" swung into high gear. Zero tolerance became a buzz word for a quick and easy solution to everything from bullying to guns in schools,[4] and millions of dollars were spent on mandated anti-violence programs. Prior to Columbine, however, the debate over school violence focused on the behavior of boys and young men of color, and did not capture headlines in the same way as school shootings perpetrated by white male teenagers. The central question in that conversation was how to control this taken-for-granted violent behavior rather than puzzling over "what went wrong" with boys who were not "supposed to be" violent (Ferguson, 2000; Kimmel & Mahler, 2003). After years of being considered a "normal" part of white male childhood in the United States, bullying has now become a central concern of American schools, law enforcement agencies, and federal, state and local governments. Ironically, in these efforts, the assumptions about aggression – from its normative status in many aspects of the wider culture to connections between violence and ethnicity – remain mostly under the radar, as do many other key aspects of teachers' and students' experience.

Despite this recent flood of attention focused on bullying, it remains stubbornly pervasive. Only a small percentage of bullying incidents come to the attention of teachers, who intervene in an even smaller fraction of the cases they do notice (Craig & Pepler, 1997; Salmivalli & Voeten, 2004). Both targets and bystanders underreport it,

[4] Only two years after the shooting at Columbine, 90% of U.S. schools had in place a zero tolerance policy for specific criminal or violent offenses (Swearer & Doll, 2001). At present, 48 states have passed some sort of anti-bullying law (up from one state in 1999).

students continue to tell researchers that they do not trust adults to stop bullying (Atlas & Pepler, 1998; Espelage & Asidao, 2001; Fekkes, Pjipers, & Verloove-Vanhorick, 2005; Garfalo, Siegel & Laub, 1987; Olweus, 1991), and targets describe it as a "silent nightmare" governed by a "code of secrecy" in which both targets and witnesses are unlikely to report incidents of bullying (Graham, Bellmore, & Juvonen, 2006; Smith, 1999).

It is also only in the past few years that attention has begun to be paid to the experience of teachers, who play key but perfunctorily considered roles in many of the mandates about bullying from federal, state, and local governments. Surrounded by information and directives about school violence in general (and bullying in particular) from their pedagogical training, the law, and the media, teachers are also shadowed by their own personal history with -- and attitudes about -- bullying, and steeped within the context of cultural and societal ambivalence about aggression (Pepler, Connolly, & Craig, 1997; Hawkley, Little, & Rodkin, 2007). Each day, they make decisions about where to draw the line between "normal" aggressive play and bullying -- between "pretend conflicts" and "authentically coercive behaviors" (Swearer & Doll, 2001). In my own role as an elementary school teacher, I often find myself struggling to formulate a response when I see students engage in what looks and feels like bullying to me. Too often, any intervention remains hypothetical, and the moment has passed long before I can decide if what I witnessed was in fact bullying, as well as what response would be most appropriate. According to leading bullying researchers, I am not alone. Rigby and Bauman (2010) found that teachers' most common response to bullying is confusion

rather than effective action –even when they know that bullying is widespread, causes significant harm, and that they are expected to play a key role in addressing it.

This study seeks to broaden existing work on bullying to include information about how teachers conceptualize and respond to bullying in the midst of multiple pressures about where to place their attention in their classrooms. It focuses particularly on the intriguing – and disturbing – dissonance between mandate and practice that lies at the root of the *People's* questions, "why did this happen and how can it be stopped?"

Chapter 2. Review of Relevant Literature

Despite the extensive body of research on bullying in schools, “we still don’t have very good solutions about what to *do* about bullying, how to *stop* bullying, or, more realistically, how to *reduce* bullying among school-aged youth” (Swearer, Espelage & Napolitano, 2009, p. ix, emphasis in original). What follows is a review of the relevant literature, starting with a brief summary of research directly related to bullying in schools, especially that which focuses on teachers’ experience. This is followed by a summary of research that is, at least at first, less clearly related to work directly focused on bullying, but which might shed some light on why the problem has been so intractable.

Bullying in schools

Certainly, we already know much about bullying, its negative effects, and ways to address the problem. It has been found, for example, that the more students bully, the more likely they are to have lower levels of academic achievement, be involved in fights, and drop out of school (Nansel, Overpeck, Ruan, Simons-Morton, & Scheidt, 2001; Olweus, 1993), although recent attention has focused on socially competent students who bully others to maintain or acquire status (e.g., Cillessen & Borch, 2006; Hawkley, Little, & Rodkin, 2007; Xie, Cairns, & Cairns, 2005). These “high-status” bullies view the compliant response of their targets as respect rather than fear (Vaillancourt, McDougall, Hymel, & Sunderani, 2010) and can be particularly damaging to the social climate of the classroom because of their popularity and influence (Rodkin & Hodges, 2003).

Whatever their status, students who bully are less likely to exhibit empathy and concern for others, intervene in other instances of bullying (Espelage, Mebane & Adams, 2004), or feel a sense of belonging to the school community (Espelage & Holt, 2003). On the other side of the coin, targets of bullying are more likely to be anxious, depressed, and have low self esteem, as well as a variety of physical health problems, including headaches, stomach problems, and trouble sleeping (Limber, 2002; Olweus, 1993). In general, bullying has been found to damage all members of the school community – targets, bullies, and bystanders alike (NEA, 2003).

Much can be done to address this problem. It is perhaps not surprising to find that the more importance administrators and teachers assign to bullying, the more effective their responses are (Ellis & Shute, 2007; Yoon, 2004). Another perhaps unsurprising finding is that, when teachers are uncertain about how to respond, their school's anti-bullying efforts are compromised (Vernberg & Gamm, 2003). Researchers have also found that the most effective anti-bullying programs are those located in settings that believe that bullying is something schools can successfully address rather than an inevitable part of human nature (Charach, Pepler, & Ziegler, 1995; Pepler, Smith, & Rigby, 2004; Rigby, 2008). The number of bullying episodes has been found to be reduced if the school is characterized by warm student-staff relations and shared decision-making between students and staff (Olweus, 1993), as well as respect (Ragozzino & O'Brien, 2009). Small schools do much to strengthen (and sometimes even create) the "central, critical" relationship between student and teacher that fosters a sense of belonging and caring (Ayers, Ayers, & Dohrn, 2001); they have also been found to have lower levels of suicide, violence, vandalism and graffiti, as well as higher

levels of academic achievement and attendance (Ayers, Ayers, & Dohrn, 2001; Wasley, Fine, King, & Powell, 2000). Trust among faculty has also been demonstrated to positively influence academic achievement as well as discipline (Bryk & Schneider, 2002).

Initial research on bullying in the United States focused on students (bullies, targets, and – more recently – bystanders). Until very recently, teachers' experience remained "uncharted territory" (Craig, Henderson, & Murphy, 2000; Mishna, Scarcello, Pepler, & Wiener, 2005). This gap has begun to be addressed, and we are learning more about teachers' understandings of the problem. Leading bullying experts Bauman, Rigby and Hoppa (2008) have even developed a questionnaire (the Handling Bullying Questionnaire, or "HBQ") that has been used internationally to provide a catalyst for staff discussions about best practices in bullying prevention, but also as a way to compare differently situated groups of adults. This is a helpful tool, since it has been found that teachers' beliefs and assumptions are not always aligned with best practices in bullying prevention (Bauman & Hurley, 2005; Bauman & del Rio, 2005), and that they often underestimate the frequency and severity of bullying (Benbenishty & Astor, 2005; Limber, 2002; Smith & Sharp, 1994), do little to discourage it (Olweus, 1993), report not seeing bullying as a problem (Charach, Pepler & Ziegler, 1995; Pellegrini & Bartini, 2000), and feel uncomfortable in dealing with bullying (Holt & Keyes, 2003). It has also been found that when teachers have a consensus about the definition of bullying and are explicit about their commitment to addressing it, rates of bullying drop significantly (Wright, 2004). Numerous studies document an alarmingly low rate of recognition of – and intervention in – bullying behavior. Craig and Pepler (1997) found that teachers

noticed only 17% of observed bullying episodes schoolwide, and intervened in an equally small percentage (23%) of those they did notice.[5] Rates of intervention in the classroom are somewhat higher, but still low (Pepler & Craig, 2000).

Students and teachers also have very different perceptions about how often bullying occurs, as well as how often teachers intervene. Teachers consistently report lower rates of bullying than students (Stockdale, Hangaduambo, Duys, Larson, & Sarvela, 2002), as well as higher rates of teacher intervention (Pepler, Craig, Ziegler & Charach, 1994; Zeigler & Rosenstein-Manner, 1991), and teachers often override or discount children's subjective responses (Mishna, Scarcello, Pepler & Wiener, 2005; Crick 1996). Swearer and Cary (2003) found that 80% of their middle school respondents believed that teachers in the school were not aware of the bullying that took place. In several studies, roughly one quarter of student respondents reported that teachers usually intervene in bullying incidents, compared with three quarters of teacher respondents (Pepler & Craig, 2000; Ziegler & Rosenstein-Manner, 1991).

Teachers' sense that bullying is not a serious problem is a powerful predictor of their disinclination to intervene (Benbenishty & Astor, 2005; Kallestad & Olweus, 2003; Mishna, Scarcello, Pepler & Wiener, 2005; Stephenson & Smith, 1989), as are lower levels of empathy for targets (Bauman & delRio, 2006; Craig, Henderson & Murphy, 2000; Kallestad & Olweus, 2003; Mishna, Scarcello, Pepler & Wiener, 2005). In addition, pre-service teachers have been found to be more empathetic and recognize the importance of bullying more than seasoned teachers (Bauman & DelRio, 2006), and empathy for targets has been found to diminish with teaching experience (Boulton,

[5] Other research has found similarly low rates of teacher intervention (Cohn & Canter, 2003).

1987). Some researchers have suggested that that experienced teachers may "become desensitized to bullying to compensate for their lack of skills to respond to bullying" (Bauman & DelRio, p. 226). Although most teachers feel responsible to address bullying and believe that intervention is necessary, many lack confidence in their ability to deal with bullying, feel unprepared in bullying situations, and express a desire for more training (Beran, 2006; Boulton, 1997). Not surprisingly, unprepared or ill-equipped individuals are less likely to intervene successfully (Novick & Isaacs, 2010), which presents an obvious – and serious – problem.

Challenges to understanding bullying

There is other, less clearly defined, terrain to traverse for those who seek to understand and reduce bullying. In the first place, the complexity of the construct has confounded even the most well-intentioned efforts to address the problem, as have the social and psychological forces that have kept bullying underground. In addition, the experience of those adults charged with the most immediate responsibility to address bullying in both the classrooms in which they teach and the graduate level classrooms in which they were taught – is a critical and – until recently – often overlooked factor. In particular, the ways in which teachers' practice is impacted by the fierce national debate about declining student achievement and how to conceptualize, measure, and "fix" it is a factor that has received scant attention despite its potential to have a profound impact on teachers' ability to address bullying.

<u>Definitions of bullying</u>

At first glance, defining bullying seems like a straightforward process. But a closer look reveals that it is not so simple. Researchers include, but distinguish among, direct verbal and physical bullying, and indirect bullying (known as social or relational aggression). Direct bullying involves face-to-face interactions and includes overt physical violence such as hitting, punching or kicking, and/or overt verbal violence or abuse such as name-calling, teasing and verbal threats. Indirect bullying, on the other hand, occurs through a third party (or parties), most often in the form of social exclusion. The inclusion of relational bullying has been relatively recent, and many educators (and students, as well) have not caught up with the change, viewing it as much less problematic than direct or physical aggression (Bauman & DelRio, 2006; Birkinshaw & Elsea, 1998; Boulton, 1997; Hazler, Miller, Carney & Green, 2001; Nishina & Juvonen, 2005), even though victims of bullying have described social exclusion as the worst form of bullying (Sharp, 1995). Teachers have also noted the absence of guidelines that address indirect bullying (Mishna, Scarcello, Pepler & Wiener, 2005), and often do not know when or how to intervene (Whitman, Horn & Boyd, 2007). This is particularly problematic since relational bullying is not directly observable and its harm must be inferred. Relational bullying is also most often perceived as normative, especially for girls, and particularly in middle school (Jeffrey, Miller, & Linn, 2001; Owens, Shute & Slee, 2000; Vernberg & Gamm, 2003; Yoon, Barton, & Taiariol, 2004), while physical bullying is often normalized for males. By mid-adolescence, it is less socially acceptable to engage in physical bullying, and indirect bullying is the more common type of bullying for both girls and boys (Archer & Coyne, 2005). Recently, cyberbullying has become a concern, especially since electronic bullies can easily remain anonymous which makes

the phenomenon particularly difficult to address (e.g., Beran & Li, 2005; Kowalski, Limber, & Agatston, 2008).

Many researchers see bullying as a type of aggressive behavior (Espelage, Bosworth & Simon, 2000; Smith, Cowie, Olafsson, Liefooghe, Almeida, & Araki, 2002) that is characterized by persistence, an imbalance of power, and malicious intent (Swearer, Espelage, & Napolitano, 2009; Juvonen & Graham, 2001).[6] Some definitions highlight the shifting nature of power, noting that "bullying is a continuum of behavior that involves the attempt to gain power and dominance over another" (Askew,1989). In either definition, friendly teasing is implicitly excluded from the definition, which raises the question of where to draw the line between teasing and bullying – a major definitional problem (Farrington, 1993). In fact, researchers note that "acts of bullying are often ambiguous, especially to outsiders" (Hymel, Schonert-Reichl, Bonanno, Vaillancourt, & Rocke Henderson, 2010, p. 102).

It is important to consider the normalization of bullying. Until recently, physical bullying was considered normative for boys, "endured by many but damaging only to a small proportion of individuals. Being bullied has been seen as an unpleasant but inescapable, and for the most part, ultimately benign part of schooling" (Jeffrey, Miller, & Linn, 2001, p. 144). In terms of boys' behavior, "normative violence" (Kimmel & Mahler, 2003; see also Pollack, 2006) is "deeply inscribed in our mainstream culture, winning hearts and stirring imaginations in the way that the … obedient boy does not"

[6] According to leading bullying researcher Ken Ribgy (2008) there is an important difference between bullying and aggression. Rigby notes that bullying always involves an abuse of power, whether it is intentional or unintentional, singular or long term. Since aggression does not necessarily involve an abuse of power, Rigby suggests that acting aggressively is not always wrong, and sometimes even necessary, even if it may not be a desirable way to behave.

(Ferguson, 2000, pp. 85-6). For decades, boys who complain about bullying have been told to ignore it, stand up for themselves, and not to tattle. This attitude has been visible – and at times explicit – even in educational and developmental psychology textbooks used in teachers' pre-service education (Jeffrey, Miller, & Linn, 2001). At the same time, many of the recent laws and mandates related to bullying have suddenly reframed a whole range of behaviors previously considered normative and unremarkable as pathological (Stein, 2001) or, at the very least, requiring punitive action – with little thought as to how this abrupt shift will be interpreted and enforced by teachers.

Given the historical acceptance of bullying behavior in boys (especially white boys), it is interesting to note that research has found that teachers' sense of bullying is personal rather than shared (Lee, 2006). Without a clearly defined description of the problem that can provide a common frame of reference, teachers will inevitably rely on their own subjective sense of what constitutes bullying, and much of what researchers consider problematic is likely to pass by unnoticed (Hazler, 1998; Hazler, Miller, Carney & Green, 2001; Mishna, Scarcello, Pepler & Wiener, 2005). This is especially true given the multitude of other concerns to which teachers must attend (Kikkawa, 1987; Vernberg & Gamm, 2003; Twemlow & Sacco, 2008). The lack of a clearly defined and consistent definition (understood by all participants, including students, teachers, administrators, as well as researchers) makes it difficult (if not impossible) to compare research findings. Even recent research proceeds with the assumption that the definition of bullying is obvious and shared (and most researchers are explicit about the definition they are using), once it has been established, further steps are considered unproblematic (Rigby, 2008a).

On the ground, however, even the most widely used definition of the construct presents significant problems for teachers. If bullying is "an interaction in which a more powerful individual repeatedly directs aggressive behavior intended to harm toward a target" (Olweus,1993, p. 9), then adult observers deciding whether or not to intervene have to: a) decide whether a behavior has malicious intent; b) judge the power dynamics between two students; and c) determine whether this behavior has been repeated over time. Given the complexity of teachers' days, this process must be almost instantaneous, which means that, even though "we would like to recognize bullying at a glance... sometimes we can't" (Rigby, 2008a, p. 1; see also Hargreaves, Hester & Mellor, 1975).

On closer examination, the recognition and measurement of bullying becomes even more complicated. Researchers have cautioned us to be aware that bullying *works* – at least from the bully's perspective (e.g., Farmer, Estell, Bishop, O'Neal & Cairns, 2003; Frey, Edstrom, & Hirschstein, 2010; Vaillancourt, McDougall, Hymel, & Sunderani, 2010; Xie, Cairns, & Cairns, 2005). They suggest that it is more realistic – and therefore useful – to acknowledge bullying as a human phenomenon rather than psychopathology (Sherrow, 2011).[7] This might begin to explain why meta-analyses show that even the most effective anti-bullying programs have had small or non-existent effects (Merrell, Gueldner, Ross & Isava, 2008; Rigby, 2002; Smith, Ryan, & Cousins, 2007; Smith, Pepler & Rigby, 2004). It also directs our attention toward the conditions that make it a "pervasive and universal" activity (Vaillancourt, McDougall, Hymel, & Sunderani, 2010, p. 218) rather than individuals engaging in aberrant behavior.

[7] It is important to note that this view does not condone bullying behavior.

Traditionally, however, bullying has been defined in dyadic terms, and the characteristics of – and effects on – both the bully and the target have been the focus of attention. Some researchers have begun to emphasize the need for a "binocular" view, with one lens on individual children (targets, bystanders, and those who bully), and another on the social dynamics of the situation (including the role that adults play). In this view, bullying is seen as a violation of relationships rather than rules and thus requires "relationship solutions" (Pepler & Craig, 2007; Smith, 2008). Other approaches focus specifically on the role played by peers of the bullies and targets, suggesting that bullying be defined in triadic terms – in terms of an interaction between bully, victim and bystander. In this view, the bully does not act as an individual, but rather as an agent of the bystanding audience (Twemlow, Fonagy, & Sacco, 2010).

Still others push the idea of broadening the lens of inquiry even further. Like those who consider contextual factors, they do not locate the problem in "faulty" individuals (either bullies or targets, or both). These researchers do, however, question the standard approach to bullying in which the construct is viewed as a quantifiable and measurable problem. In the standard view of bullying, power is seen as the "property of an individual rather than shifting set of power relations" (Zabrodska, Linnell, Laws, & Davies, 2011, p. 711) as if unequal power dynamics between two people are internal and controllable. Instead of focusing on the individual – or even the dyad or organizational context, this approach calls for a "radical rethinking" of bullying that goes beyond the focus on "unhealthy organizational context[s]" to "explore the complex network of shifting discursive material forces implicated in bullying" (Zabrodska et al., p. 717). Clearly, this broader view encompasses much more than individual bullies and

targets, and is necessarily more challenging both to conceptualize and study. But if these *are* the forces at work, then these are the forces that will demand our attention, whether we acknowledge them or not.

Cultural attitudes towards violence

Although much attention has been paid to childhood and adolescent bullying, the phenomenon does not occur only among schoolchildren (Pepler & Craig, 1997). Appearing as sexual harassment, gang attacks, relationship violence, child abuse, workplace harassment, or elder abuse, the common thread throughout all these incarnations is the assertion of power over another. There is, however, a particular way in which this assertion of power plays out for boys (or at least white boys). In a study of the recent string of school shootings by white male teenagers in suburban and rural American schools, sociologist Katherine Newman (2004) noted that the majority of the shooters had struggled with the task of becoming "powerful males" – in other words, becoming "physically dominant, competitive, [and] powerful in the eyes of others" (p. 144). Often adjudicated by fighting and other power struggles, this enterprise was the focus of status competition among boys. Sociologist Ann Arnett Ferguson (2000) has observed that

> for boys and for men [fighting] is not an expression of deviant, antisocial behavior but is profoundly normative, a thoroughly social performance. Though it is officially frowned on as a means of resolving personal problems, it is in fact culturally applauded as a way of settling differences among men" (p. 193).

Not to engage in this ritual – or to be perceived to be uninterested in it – is to risk being labeled gay, which has become a slang term to describe much more than sexual

identity, including “any form of social or athletic incompetence” (Newman, 2004, p. 146; see also Pollack, 2006). As Ferguson describes it, “[white] boys … are mischievous, they get into trouble, they can stand up for themselves…. There is something suspect about the boy who is ‘too docile,’ ‘like a girl’” (p. 85). Bullying based on homophobia – whether directed toward young people who identify as gay or straight – has been shown to have negative effects for all students, including bystanders (Epstein, 2001). Even so, students report that teachers rarely consider homophobic name-calling as bullying nor are they likely to punish those who do the name-calling (Phoenix, Frosh, & Pattman, 2003). Boys who experience homophobic bullying experience more anxiety and depression and describe the school climate more negatively than boys who are bullied for other reasons (Swearer, Turner, Givens, & Pollack, 2008).

In many of the school shootings, the “shooters” had been threatened and bullied “as if” they were gay. Their violent response was retaliation for this abuse, but also an attempt to access the power behind “the homophobic desire to make sure that others know that you are a ‘real man’” (Kimmel and Mahler, 2003, p. 1449). Any “shame, inadequacy, vulnerability … threaten the self; violence, meanwhile, is restorative, compensatory” (Kimmel & Mahler, 2003, p. 1452). While the deadly school shootings fall outside of the boundaries of normative “fighting” and assertion of male power, the storylines leading up to this violence are profoundly unremarkable and even, in an odd way, mandatory. This presents an interesting dilemma. In the words of urban sociologist Pedro Noguera (2001), “until we confront the fact that as a society we both love and fear violence and recognize that this contradictory stance hinders our ability to fully

come to terms with it, we will continue to be trapped in a futile state of paralysis over what should be done to reduce violence" (p. 216).

This tolerance of – and demand for – normative male violence does not apply equally to all boys, however. Ferguson has argued that "normative male practices take on a different, more sinister inflection when carried out by African American boys" (Ferguson, 2000, p. 172). In her research with black male students, she found that "school reads their expression and display of masculine naughtiness as a sign of an inherent vicious, insubordinate nature that as a threat to order must be controlled" (Ferguson, p. 86). Despite the fact that school personnel's responses to the same behavior in white and black boys are very different, race is rarely mentioned in discussions of bullying, as though normative male violence, school shootings, and the suspensions and expulsions of African American male students are three unrelated conversations.

As a result of this acceptance of (indeed, even promotion of) white boys' violence, signs of trouble related to this issue can be difficult to notice (Stoudt, 2006). According to Newman, in the case of the school shootings, the typical school response to warning signs of the impending violence was to give these troubled boys a "clean slate," which made it difficult to form an accurate picture of the situation. The absence of any "institutional memory of disciplinary problems" (Newman, 2004, p. 87) for these boys gave free rein to the underlying forces, and left the troubled students (as well as their future victims) at their mercy. There is a similar pattern of the discounting and scattering of warning signs in the case of many bullycides, after the fact. In both types of cautionary tales about our cultural tolerance of how "gender difference is grounded in a

compulsory and violently enforced heterosexuality" (Ferguson, 2000, p. 192), questions of individual responsibility can seem like the obvious ones to ask: just how could individual schools, administrators and teachers let this happen? But, as Newman explains, "the question is not how *individuals* could have missed the warning signs, but rather how the organization of public school prevents them from recognizing and processing the information correctly" (Newman, 2004, p. 79). In fact, suggesting that schools and the culture at large are actually "set up" to miss bullying, she directs our gaze to those dynamics that keep it hidden.

Teachers as bystanders?

In many ways, the view of teachers failing to intervene in the vast majority of bullying incidents evokes the long tradition of work on bystanders and helping, which sought to understand the often shocking failure of bystanders – in the presence of others – to step in and help someone in need (e.g., Clark & Word, 1974; Latane & Darley, 1968, 1970). In this work, the presence and/or responses of other people influences individuals' decisions about whether or not to take action.[8] Although there has, as of yet, little work done to explicitly connect the bystander and helping literature with the work on bullying, some intriguing connections are beginning to be made.

Perhaps not surprisingly, a positive relationship has been found between moral disengagement and bullying behavior on both the individual and group level. Both bullies and bystanders have been found to engage in processes such as

[8] The two main processes at work are "diffusion of responsibility" in which the presence of other people indicates a kind of shared responsibility that absolves individuals of the need to act, and "pluralistic ignorance" in which individuals look to others for information about how to react. If others do not seem concerned, they are less likely to take action.

deindividuation, displacement of responsibility, diffusion of responsibility, moral justification, euphemistic labeling, advantageous comparisons, disregarding or distorting the negative impact of their behavior on others, and/or dehumanizing or blaming the victim to distance themselves from the harm that results from their actions (Barchia & Bussey, 2007; Gini, 2006; Hymel et al., 2005; Hymel, Schonert-Reichl, Bonanno, Vaillancourt, & Rocke Henderson, 2010; Marini et al., 2008; Menesini et al., 2003; Paciello, Fida, Tramontano, Lupinetti, & Caprara, 2008). While these dynamics may protect or enhance their self esteem, the lack of critical self reflection that would bring bullies – as well as bystanders – face to face with the damage done by their actions allows a maladaptive process – for the group as a whole – to flourish.

In addition, the literature on the failure of most anti-bullying programs to address the "social architecture" of bullying and school violence can potentially be extended to teachers. In this work, researchers describe how the failure to intervene places adults (including policymakers) in an "abdicating bystander" role in which they do not acknowledge their participation in the bullying process (Twemlow, Fonagy, & Sacco, 2010). In this view, abdicating bystanders play their part in "a dissociating process … that is a largely unconscious effort to deal with the anxiety felt by all in response to a dysfunctional, coercive, and disconnected social system" (pp. 74-5). If this is the case, clearly the next step would be to take a closer look at the social systems within which bullying occurs.

Current educational climate

Since the passage of the federal *No Child Left Behind Act* in 2001,[9] the experience of both teachers and students in the classroom has undergone a dramatic transformation; it has, in fact, been characterized as the largest expansion of federal control over education in history (Ravitch, 2010). Scores on standardized math and reading tests have become the dominant (some would argue singular) measure of student achievement. Often described as "high stakes" tests, these assessments carry a tremendous amount of weight. Results are used to rate teachers, administrators, and schools, often with monetary incentives for those teachers whose students show year-to-year growth on these measures, and sanctions for those who do not. These sanctions come in the form of denied tenure, lost jobs, reduced funding, and even closed schools (Ravitch, 2010). It has been argued that this approach has been remarkably successful in "produc[ing] fear and obedience among educators" (Ravitch, p. 16) – and less so in equalizing student achievement across race and class boundaries (even as measured so narrowly) (e.g., Sunderman, 2008).

New York City (where participants in this study taught) has taken on a vanguard role in this national focus on measurement and data in education. According to former Assistant Secretary of Education (and former committed advocate of NCLB) Diane Ravitch, New York City has become "a national testing ground for market-based reforms" (Ravitch, 2010, p. 69). This process began with Mayor Michael Bloomberg's dismantling of the Board of Education (made up of seven appointed members and 32

[9] Emphasizing equal access to education, high standards and accountability, this law was passed in 1965 as part of President Johnson's "War on Poverty." It governs federally funded education programs that are administered by the states, and was reauthorized in 2001 by the Bush administration as *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB).

community school boards), and the implementation of a new Department of Education under mayoral control. In an article in Business Week in 2003, Mike France portrayed Mayor Bloomberg as "almost giddy as he describe[d] how he terrorized New York's educational establishment" (p. 1) by applying business principles to the city's school system. A citywide pedagogy was mandated that replaced teachers' individual judgments and competence with a "rigid orthodoxy about *how* to teach" (Ravitch, 2010, p. 73). This was hardly an intuitive or natural process – at least for those who had to enact it every day in the classroom. Accordingly, the DOE instituted rigorous oversight of classrooms, and demanded strict compliance with their vision of education which, in keeping with the national trend, focused on measuring student achievement through the use of standardized tests of reading, writing, and math skills. These changes, according to Ravitch, "had everything to do with structural changes and accountability, and nothing at all to do with the substance of learning" (p. 16). Schools, principals, and teachers that complied with these dictates were rewarded, and those that did not were punished.[10]

Some would argue that this trend did not begin with NCLB. Apple (1993) has chronicled how, since the 1970s, "movements toward reductive, mechanistic, and industrialized accountability systems, tighter control over the curriculum and pedagogy, the complex dynamics of deskilling and reskilling of teachers, [and] an increasingly close relationship between economic rationality and educational means and ends" (p.

[10] Again, this follows a national trend. In December, 2011, New York State learned that it would not be awarded a *Race to the Top* grant. (*Race to the Top* is a federal program of competitive grants offered to states that adopt key educational reforms such as implementing standardized assessment system to measure student achievement and teacher effectiveness, and to inform educational practice, and phasing out or transforming "ineffective" schools). This was first reported as the result of New York's lack of a clearly formulated test of basic skills for kindergarten students; in later news reports it was characterized as an impasse between the teachers' union and the DOE over the question of linking teachers' evaluation to students' test scores (Santos, Jan. 12, 2012).

93) have become the norm in the United States. Two years before the passage of the law, essayist and social critic Peter Sacks (1999) noted that

> over the past twenty years, bands of politicians, policymakers, and other self-describers crusaders for educational reform, guided by the mantra of 'holding schools accountable,' have accomplished a near-complete makeover of American schools. They've done so with the public's acquiescence, exploiting the public's demand for quick fixes of complex social and economic problems and its desire for results that can be boiled down into easily understood, simplistically quantified terms (p. 68).

The full effect of this tendency (that became a national mandate with NCLB) reaches far beyond academic achievement, however. In describing retired teacher John Taylor Gatto's (New York State Teacher of the Year in 1991) assessment of American education, teacher and activist William Ayers (1995) writes:

> the real lessons of American schooling [are] things like hierarchy and your place in it, indifference, emotional and intellectual dependency, provisional self-esteem, and the need to submit to certified authority. For many students, the experience of schooling is just this: Nothing of real importance is ever undertaken, nothing is ever connected to anything else, nothing is ever pursued to its deepest limits, nothing is ever finished, and nothing is ever done with investment and courage. This may not be the intention of policy makers, politicians, or administrators; it is certainly not the hope of most parents and teachers. Yet it is often what children live and learn (p. 215).

For the purposes of this paper, however, the most salient points to be made are that, when test scores are used to rate teachers and schools comparatively instead of using them as tools for reflection and learning, "they typically become a source of fear and resentment" (Cohen, 2006, p. 218) rather than improving teacher learning and student achievement – their purported goals, and that this narrow focus on reading, writing, and

math skills drives out other aspects of the educational enterprise that are key to students' intellectual, emotional, and social growth.

Effects of the educational climate on anti-bullying efforts

Although a full critique of NCLB is beyond the scope of this paper, it is essential to consider key aspects of the current educational climate as they relate to teachers' ability to respond to bullying.[11] Both its punitive approach and its narrow view of student achievement have presented significant challenges for students and teachers alike. Professor of education David Lee Keiser (2005) describes "teachers who gasp to provide a comprehensive, engaging curriculum, while attending to test preparation … under renewed scrutiny and threat of sanction" (p. 31). In schools under NCLB, trust and respect of both students and teachers are in short supply (Sacks, 1999; Meier, 2002), continuing the trend of the past few decades, in which controlling the behavior of students has become more and more of a concern (Butchart, 1998). When "children are not trusted to learn without predigested lessons, and teachers are not trusted to search out their own materials and ways of presenting them, classrooms become constricted [and] teacher morale drops" (Martin, 1987, p. 24). It has been argued that what teachers have to do to get students to comply with this "cramped, mechanistic, profoundly anti-intellectual definition of education" (Ravitch, 2010, p. 29) can actually compromise "intellectual growth, moral maturity, and democratic potential" (Butchart, 1998, p. 5). Not only does this limit the possibilities for student achievement, it also corrodes essential

[11] It is interesting to consider that test-based accountability has not itself been held accountable. This is especially troubling if Ravitch is correct that the effect of NCLB's "heavy-handed accountability" (Ravitch, 2010, p. 25) has been to create a climate of fear and resentment that undermines teachers' professionalism and competence.

factors to combat bullying. And, in a vicious cycle, when bullying does occur, it "fosters an environment where a hierarchy of domination is maintained through perceived force" (Jeffrey, Miller, & Linn, 2001, p. 145).

Even as NCLB contains language that acknowledges the importance of social and emotional learning in children's academic success, such aspects of learning are not funded priorities in the act (Cohen, 2006). Instead, funding decisions compromise teachers' ability to adequately address social and emotional issues – including bullying – and reinforce the all too common divide between academic learning and social and emotional learning (Cohen, 2006; Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, & Pickeral, 2009). This leads to predictably problematic outcomes. In fact, bullying researchers have documented the connection between classroom experience and the prevalence of bullying:

> when students spend their working time constructively and enjoyably in classrooms where they can learn without distractions, they are less inclined to bully their peers. There is now persuasive evidence that effective classroom management can contribute significantly to the reduction of bullying. Good classroom management engenders a positive classroom climate in which children find the work interesting and rewarding, where they feel personally respected, and where they feel confident that any problems that arise will be dealt with constructively. When a positive classroom climate is achieved, children feel less frustrated and less bored – and less inclined to bully others (Rigby, 2008b, p. 161).

As we seek to understand bullying in schools, it is important to consider how teachers juggle the different – and often contradictory – demands of fostering social and emotional growth, academic achievement, and establishing order in the classroom, and how this affects their perceptions of, and responses to, bullying.

Pre-service education under NCLB

Not surprisingly, graduate schools of education have mirrored these shifts in elementary and secondary schools and classrooms. Just as NCLB promises to improve student achievement in K-12 education (as defined by scores on standardized tests), it also seeks to increase teacher "quality" (as defined by state certification requirements). To comply with this directive, schools of education have been forced to focus more on content standards and linguistic and mathematical literacy prescribed by state regulations, and less on pedagogical questions (Conoley, 2008; Steinberg, 2004). And, as in K-12 education, the focus on "objectivity, hyperrationality, efficiency, and accountability" (Kincheloe, 2004, p. 14) defines priorities and guides practices. This has led to a standards-based approach in which the teacher is seen as a technician – "little more than an implementor of curricula devised by faraway experts" (Kincheloe, p. 5). According to Butchart (1998), teacher education has "abandoned the task of insisting that teachers and administrators reflect seriously and continuously on means and ends, preferring the more 'measurable,' and thus more presumably more 'scientific' task of training educators for schools as they exist" (p. 6). The key phrase here is 'schools as they exist' – which are those that threaten and promise rewards for teachers to impose order and produce "achievement" – as though it were a straightforward process that lies in the hands of individual teachers and students.

Room for bullying in pre-service programs

Reading the headlines and listening to politicians' rhetoric, it seems clear that, as a nation, we believe that bullying is a problem in our schools. We also know that

teachers, as the adults in charge of students during the school day, are key players in program and policy implementations, that the level of teacher training influences how a teacher responds to bullying (Bauman & DelRio, 2006; Beran, 2006), and that teachers need training both to notice and intervene in bullying (Frey, Edstrom, & Hirschstein, 2010). In fact, researchers have found that "methods of responding to bullying require direct training and are not intuitive" (Bauman & DelRio, p. 226). Given this knowledge, it would make sense to include anti-bullying education and training in teacher preparation programs. And, in fact, it has been widely mandated that schools of education address the issue.

Despite these realities, the attention paid to bullying in teacher education programs has been found to be "slight, sporadic and largely uninvestigated" (Nicolaides, Toda & Smith, 2002) and very few education schools include social and emotional learning – let alone bullying – in their teacher preparation programs (Bohlin, Dougherty, & Farmer, 2002). Perhaps the "largely behavioral training of school teachers" (Twemlow, Fonagy, & Sacco, 2010, p. 83) leaves little room for anything else. Or, perhaps not surprisingly, if "coercive power dynamics" have had to be employed (against both teachers and students) to maintain this "narrow focus on intellectual training" (Twemlow, Fonagy, & Sacco, 2010, p. 83), an examination of these same dynamics that are at the core of bullying will be noticeably absent in pre-service programs.

The official response to bullying

Taken together, much of the most recent work on bullying suggests a complex interplay of forces. And yet, our gaze has thus far been firmly fixed on the individual level (bullies, targets, bystanders, and teachers). This can be seen by a quick glance at the most common responses to the problem at present, which include: encouraging students to tell an adult or for bystanders to intervene; enacting zero tolerance policies in individual schools; and implementing increasingly strong laws against bullying. Just as the "responsibilities for the inherent inequalities of American society, manifested in … test scores" (Keiser, 2005, p. x) have been passed on to teachers, administrators, and university-based teacher educators, the responsibility for the fallout from inherently flawed and unjust educational policies and the cultural acceptance of aggression is placed on the shoulders of those on the frontlines of bullying – bullies, targets, bystanders, and teachers.

"Tell an adult"

Given the prevalence of adult discomfort with – and discounting of – bullying problems, it is not surprising to learn that children are reluctant to report bullying when they see and/or experience it (Stephenson & Smith, 1989). Typically, they respond with a combination of: actively encouraging the bullying; worrying that "telling" will draw attention to them and invite retribution (Olweus, 1993; Novick & Isaacs, 2010); and/or feeling relief that they are not the target – this time (Garbarino & deLara, 2002; Olweus, 1993). Both targets and bystanders describe having little faith in teachers' ability to stop the bullying (Atlas & Pepler, 1998; Espelage & Asidao, 2001; Garfalo, Siegel & Laub, 1987; Olweus, 1991), and often believe that telling an adult will only intensify the

bullying (Banks, 1997; Smith & Shu, 2000; Rigby & Barnes, 2002)[12] since confidentiality is often not kept and bullies find out that targets "told" (Espelage & Asidao, 2001). The obvious conclusion made by those on the receiving end of bullying is that "they need to be strong and manage the harassment without adult intervention" (Espelage & Asidao, p. 60), and that somehow they are to blame (Hazler, 1996; Jeffrey, Miller, & Linn, 2001).

As children become older – bullies, bystanders, targets, and teachers alike – seem to offer less resistance to bullying behavior. "Telling" (by the target or the bystander) is viewed more negatively the older children are (Fekkes, Pjipers, Verloove-Vanhorick, 2005; Smith & Shu, 2000; Menesini et al., 1997), and they are more likely to choose to ignore the bullying (Rigby, 2008b). In addition, students report less support for targets as they get older (Jeffrey, Miller & Lin, 2001), with younger children identifying as more sympathetic and able to see the causes for victimization as being beyond victims' control (Graham & Juvonen, 2001). Finally, students' perceptions that teachers are more effective in stopping bullying among younger children are, in fact, accurate: research has found that telling actually becomes less effective the older children are (Rigby & Bauman, 2010).

Hearing about incidents rather than witnessing them also decreases the likelihood that teachers will intervene (Craig, Henderson, & Murphy, 2000), which is a particular problem since bullying is often intentionally conducted out of their view (Farrington, 1993). This hardly encourages targets or bystanders to tell teachers about their experience, which limits teachers' ability to intervene even further. And, when

[12] In fact, parents and friends are more likely to be told than teachers (Smith & Shu, 2000).

teachers fail to intervene, students only become more reluctant to tell (Maunder, Harrop & Tattersall, 2010) adding another layer of victimization to the experience of targets (Mishna & Alaggia, 2005). Clearly, adults should not assume that bullying has stopped when students stop talking about it (Espelage & Asidao, 2001).[13]

Students are also keenly aware of the potential "costs" of telling. In the first place, many teachers discourage tattling, which may play a part in creating the "code of silence" around more violent threats and behavior (Frey, Edstrom, & Hirschstein 2010). In addition, the sanctions for telling on other students can be severe, as are sanctions for being too close to adults (Newman, 2004). Finally, social media researchers Boyd and Marwick (2011) explain that

> for a teenager to recognize himself or herself in the adult language of bullying carries social and psychological costs…. It requires acknowledging oneself as either powerless or abusive [which in itself] requires serious emotional, psychological and social support, an infrastructure unavailable to many teenagers. And when teenagers … do ask for help, they are often let down (Boyd & Marwick, 2011, p. 2).

If we do not provide this emotional, psychological and social support in schools, we should not be surprised to learn that young people do not play their assigned role to "tell an adult". Psychologists Garbarino and deLara (2002) put it bluntly:

> each time we say, 'If a child is being bullied, sexually harassed or whatever, it is up to that child to say something to an adult,' we are basically saying that the adults – teachers, administrators, and parents – who should be and legally *are* responsible for the functioning of the system are not really responsible at all. As

[13] This disinclination to tell does not apply only to young people: research has shown that teachers often do not feel comfortable bringing concerns about bullying to their principals – especially relational bullying since guidelines for this behavior are less likely to be spelled out in school policy – because they are worried that they will be seen as having trouble with classroom management (Bauman & DelRio, 2006).

> long as it is up to the children to be the signal-bearers to the adults, nothing much will change" (p. 25).

Katharine Newman (2004) explains that "for those who buy into the adolescent code completely, telling is not even an option; even for more mature and reflective students, the social imperative to adhere to the code works against conveying loosely held suspicions to adults. When students see that adults cannot be completely trusted with their secrets, or fail to take serious action in the face of a reported threat, they file this information away and act with it in mind. They remain silent." (Newman, 2004, p. 176). Apparently, "in [our] rush to find a solution, adults are failing to recognize how their conversations about bullying are often misaligned with youth narratives" (Boyd & Martin, 2011, p.1), forcing young people to reveal the full dimensions of their experience in other, more disturbing, ways.

When researchers caution that teachers have a special obligation to demonstrate that telling actually improves the situation (Rigby, 2008b) so that students feel able to "entrust" them with this information (Pepler, Connolly, & Craig, 1997; Frey, Edstrom, & Hirschstein 2010), it is important to note that this obligation is not entirely in teachers' hands. Novick & Isaacs (2010) found that, once teachers were actually told about bullying, they were most likely to engage with students only when they felt more prepared to handle the information. But other research that has clearly shown that teachers do not, in fact, receive adequate training to address bullying (Bauman & DelRio, 2006; Beran, 2006; Boulton, 1997), which means that our solution of expecting students to tell – reflexive and comfortable for so many adults committed to addressing

bullying and common in so many anti-bullying programs – is hardly a complete or viable solution, at least at this moment in time.

Zero tolerance

After Columbine, the prevailing approach to bullying (and school violence in general) was zero tolerance.[14] But once zero tolerance policies were put into place, they came under criticism from many educators, academics, and legal experts who suggested that a focus on punishment is inadequate to the task of addressing the roots of school violence and may even make the problem worse (e.g., Ayers, Dohrn, & Ayers, 2001; Martin, 2001; Skiba et al., 2006; Swearer, Espelage, Love, & Kingsbury, 2008). Some experts chronicled the harsh punishments given for often harmless behaviors or minor infractions in "sweeping and mindless applications of zero tolerance policies" (Browne, Losen, & Wald, 2002, p. 94). Still others have noted that, as an "exclusionary measure," zero tolerance is limited in its effectiveness simply because bullying is so widespread (Frey, Edstrom, & Hirschstein, 2010).

Rather than removing students who engage in prohibited behavior, most experts agree that it is more effective to prevent the problems from arising in the first place (e.g., Osher, Sandler, & Nelson, 2001). To do this, teachers need "structures … that support the staff's capacity to sustain a caring environment" (Osher, Sandler, & Nelson, 2002, p. 133), as well as training, planning time, and collaboration that will allow them to

[14] The National Association of School Psychologists (2001) defines zero tolerance as "school or district-wide policies that mandate predetermined, typically harsh consequences or punishments (such as suspension and expulsion) for a *wide degree* of rule violation. Most frequently, zero tolerance policies address drug, weapons, violence, smoking and school disruption in efforts to protect all students' safety and maintain a school environment that is conducive to learning."

integrate this relational approach to discipline and classroom management into their own practice. According to Osher, Sandler and Nelson (2001), the major factor that undermines such an approach is "an impersonal, alienating or chaotic school environment" (p. 148), which many critics of NCLB would argue is exactly what the act has engendered. In addition, anything that does not focus directly on basic skills is likely to fall by the wayside given the pressure that teachers and administrators feel to raise their students' test scores. It is perhaps not surprising that, even though zero tolerance is noticeably absent in descriptions of best practices in bullying prevention (www.stopbullyingnow.org, 2010; Martin, 2001), it is still prevalent in many anti-bullying programs and policies.[15]

But zero tolerance is a problematic response to bullying in another way. Initially, the policy was conceived of as an attempt to limit the discretion of individual teachers and administrators, and thus to increase objectivity and fairness. This was not, in fact, how it was enacted, with boys of color much more likely to be disciplined under zero tolerance policies (Browne, Losen & Wald, 2002; Graham, 2010). Just as the core principles behind NCLB have a history that predates the law's passage, so too does the "logic" behind the "racial discipline gap" (Graham, 2010). As far back as 1975, black students were 2-3 times as likely to be suspended as white students (Children's Defense Fund, 1975). This trend has continued, with recent data from the U.S. Department of Education indicating that black boys are subject to much harsher

[15] As an example of zero tolerance's staying power despite the widespread critique of both its effectiveness and ethics, the NYCDOE proudly attributed a dramatic increase in suspensions in elementary school since mayoral control of the schools was established in 2003 to the establishment of a zero tolerance policy for fighting put into place in 2005 (Monahan, 2011).

discipline than other students (United States Department of Education, 2012). And, just as it has been argued that individual students are routinely blamed for misbehavior that is, at least in part, just as likely to be a response to the narrow and rigid focus of NCLB (and subsequent punitive tone of standard classroom management practices), researchers have noted a similar faulty chain of logic when it comes to explanations of violence and boys of color. It has been documented that students of colors are also more likely to attend struggling schools with new teachers, substandard facilities and inadequate resources (www.orcdata.ed.gov), which "can lead to boredom, disillusionment and alienation from school, increasing the likelihood that [they] will engage in conduct that teachers may subjectively label disruptive" (Browne, Losen, & Wald, 2002, p. 77). When they are removed from the classroom or school under zero tolerance policies, their behavior "disappears," but the problem remains, and "troublemaking acts" become "troubled kids" (Ferguson, 2000) who are relegated to the justice system rather than the classroom.

With a zero tolerance approach, the question of if or how the environment of the school or culture may contribute to the problem is not even addressed (Noguera, 2001). And, ironically, the students who are most often removed under zero tolerance policies are rarely the key players in the headlines about school violence. Instead, they are those students "who interfere in a big way with the maintenance of order" (Newman, 2004, p. 110), which allows for – and even insists upon – a certain degree of white boys' misbehavior, while punishing black boys for the same actions.

The legal response to bullying

As previously mentioned, 48 states have passed anti-bullying legislation since the shooting at Columbine, many in response to shocking "bullycides" or other school shootings perpetrated by targets of chronic bullying.[16] Even as it is acknowledged that state mandates are needed to force school districts to address the problem (Swearer, Espelage, & Napolitano, 2009), critiques of these laws come from many quarters. Some complain that they go too far, and do not allow children to figure out how to deal with "normal" conflict on their own (Hu, August 30, 2011). Others point out that there are no provisions for ensuring that these policies are enforced (Walker, 2009) or even funded once passed (Srabstein, Berkman, & Pyntikova, 2008). Still others note that, although consequences are needed — at the very least to protect targets, it is more important to address school climate, which most legislation does not (Srabstein, Berkman, & Pyntikova, 2008; Rigby, 2008b). Legal scholar Fielkow (1997) argues that courts are restricted to "artificial means" that end at "mere discipline" while the community at large, the school, and families are better able to "address the problems at the root" (p. 17), and suggests that only if there is a "complete failure" of the players in these settings to stop bullying should the courts intervene. A comprehensive approach involving all members of the school community – and grounded in the larger community -- is also advocated by Dan Olweus (1993), one of the foremost experts on bullying who has developed an empirically tested bullying prevention program endorsed for use in schools seeking federal support in promoting school safety. Other scholars go even further. For example, Brown (2008) cautions against a top-down, one-size-fits-all approach and argues that culturally embedded lessons that encourage aggressive

[16] Currently, New Jersey has the strongest anti-bullying legislation in the United States, passed after Tyler Clementi's suicide in the fall of 2010. It requires all public schools to develop comprehensive anti-bullying programs/policies, increase staff training, and report episodes of bullying within one day.

behavior exist everywhere. She argues that, to address this powerful undertow, anti-bullying efforts need to “allow for the messy, on-the-ground work of educating kids.”

Part of the problem is that, as researchers and students have indicated, everyday bullying – the kind that does not make the headlines because it does not (yet) have deadly results – goes largely unnoticed or ignored by adults (Pepler & Craig, 1997). When a case of bullying or harassment results in death – either because one incident was so powerful or because a series of “smaller” acts was discounted, ignored, or even sanctioned or encouraged by the adults in charge – the whole category of behavior is suddenly criminalized including the daily taunts that are so often normalized and overlooked as a rite of passage. Remedies for bullying in general are then focused on resources and approaches from the legal arena.

It has already been mentioned that crime and violence in schools have been seen as the province of boys of color, widely assumed and routinely lamented. When the same behavior is seen in white boys, it is rarely questioned. Until, that is, it crosses a line into the kind of violence that cannot be ignored – such as school shootings or bullying-based suicides. In most academic discussions of bullying, however, race is simply absent – as though it does not exist, and the underlying assumptions about “normal” behavior are left undisturbed. The focus of the recent legal responses to bullying, however, reveals that filling in the contours of these absences is not a simple task. Some scholars suggest that the current approach – which is specifically focused on discrimination and harassment based on categories such as race, color, weight, national origin, disability, religious practice or religion, sexual orientation, gender or sex – ironically blunts our ability to respond to specific categories of discriminatory and

harmful behavior, and leaves out a comprehensive examination of the origins and meanings of the problem. According to Brown (2008), "bullying is a broad term that de-genders, de-races, [and] de-everythings school safety." She recommends that "if it's sexual harassment, call it sexual harassment; if it's homophobia, call it homophobia" (p. 1) and suggests that naming and addressing behavior in this way helps us to "educate children about their rights, affirms their realities, encourages more complex and meaningful solutions, opens up a dialogue, invites children to participate in social change, and ultimately protects them" (p. 1).

Rather than developing programs that would allow for the "messy" work of addressing socially sanctioned aggression, it can seem expedient to draw upon measures that already exist – such as civil rights protections, as well as legal prohibitions against and consequences for behavior that greatly harms others. In many ways, this is not surprising given that many of the new legal protections against bullying have focused on various forms of equal rights legislation (e.g., Title IX; Title VI of the Civil Rights Act; the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment; and New York State and New York City Human Rights Law). The problem with this approach is that the *process* by which bullying occurs is not the central question – if it is addressed at all. In most scholarly discussions of bullying, the defining characteristics of the phenomenon are the behavior and its effects, not on the specific characteristics of a target. For example, Olweus states that "a person is bullied when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other persons, and he or she has difficulty defending himself or herself (… [or] when someone repeatedly and on purpose says or does mean or hurtful things to another

person who has a hard time defending himself or herself. (http://www.olweus.org/public/faqs.page, accessed April 30, 2011). Clearly, bias-based harassment and bullying is a serious problem, but when the definition is so tightly focused on target characteristics, other types of bullying ironically and unintentionally remain outside the definitional boundaries – normalized just as bullying itself has been for decades. And, as important as addressing the harassment or bullying of, for example, LGBT students is, doing so under the category of bullying has the potential to whitewash the original problem, undermining our ability to respond to both bullying in general and harassment based on gender or sexual identity and expression, and perpetuating silences in both arenas (bullying and other discriminatory behavior related to racism or homophobia, for example).

Research questions

Given that bullying is such a widespread problem with such a negative impact, why are the levels of teacher intervention and awareness still so low and how is this experienced by teachers themselves? Teachers do not come to the classroom as blank slates. They have been educated in accredited courses of study that include supervised teaching experience and mandated workshops in school violence prevention, and their teaching practice is directed by national, state and local guidelines. In addition, over the past decade, federal, state and local governments have put forward directives about how teachers are expected to respond to bullying in schools. Teachers also bring their personal experience with bullying and violence – as targets, bullies, or bystanders (or all three). The research questions echo People magazine's query quoted at the beginning of this paper (Setoodeh & Smolowe, 2010), and are intended to illuminate the dilemmas

of practice of a small group of urban elementary school educators as they confront the rhetoric and realities of bullying in their schools.

The questions framing this research are: what do pre-service teachers learn about bullying from textbooks; what are the laws and mandates that govern teachers' responses to bullying and what do teachers know about them; what are the contextual issues that surround how teachers respond to bullying; and how do current teachers define and engage with instances of bullying in their classrooms.

Chapter 3. Methodology

The research questions were explored in the context of archival research, responses to survey questions, and individual and group interviews with a small group of urban elementary school teachers in New York City. Since the question of teachers' understandings of and responses to bullying has received scant consideration thus far, both sampling strategy and interview protocols were chosen to support this study's exploratory nature rather than creating a representative sample that could provide definitive answers.

Design

The survey was based on the Handling Bullying Questionnaire developed by Bauman, Rigby and Hoppa (2008) to assess teachers' attitudes towards bullying, as well as their strategies for dealing with the problem. A subset of teachers who completed the survey participated in individual and group interviews. Finally, archival research consisted of an analysis of a sample of textbooks used in Child Development courses at a local college of education over the past five decades, and all federal, New York State, and New York City Department of Education laws and guidelines from 1999 to the present that address school violence and bullying, as well as public responses to these directives.

Handling Bullying Questionnaire (HBQ)

Forty urban elementary school teachers were recruited to complete an online survey[17] focusing on their perceptions of and responses to bullying. The survey used in this study was based on the Handling Bullying Questionnaire (Bauman, Rigby & Hoppa, 2008), which was developed for a large-scale study of teachers' and counselors' strategies for handling bullying in schools, and has been used extensively in a number of countries including the USA, Canada, Australia and Germany (see Appendix A for the full survey). All teachers who responded to the request to participate were asked to complete an online survey. Putting the survey online allowed respondents to complete it at a time, place, and pace that was convenient to them, and eliminated the need to arrange for any delivery or collection method. Informed consent was obtained from all participants and procedures for ensuring confidentiality were explained.

Besides gathering demographic information as well as information about bullying prevention training and experience, the questionnaire asked participants to respond to statements describing possible responses to a hypothetical school bullying scenario, and to rate the responses in terms of how likely they were to agree with different approaches to bullying. The scenario includes elements of both direct and indirect bullying, and reads as follows: "A 12-year-old student is being repeatedly teased and called unpleasant names by another, more powerful, student who has successfully persuaded other students to avoid the targeted person as much as possible. As a result, the victim of this behavior is feeling angry, miserable, and often isolated." Responses were made on a 5 point Likert-scale from 1 ("I definitely would not") to 5 ("I definitely would"). The midpoint (3) was labeled "I am unsure." One additional closed-ended

[17] Posted at an invitation-only link sent to teachers who responded to the request for participation.

question inquiring how comfortable respondents would be talking to colleagues about different types of bullying was added. Three optional open-ended questions were also included: one asking participants for their definition of bullying; another asking them to describe the severity of the problem at their school; and finally, one that asked them for suggestions of additional ways of handling bullying. This supplementary data provided useful qualitative data from the full sample of 40 concerning their general perspectives about bullying.

Respondents were recruited using a snowball sampling method, starting with the first teacher who responded to a posting at a public library notice board. The only requirements for participation in the study were that respondents be elementary school teachers in New York City, and teach at a public or private school as classroom or cluster teachers.[18] The snowball sampling method was a useful tool to recruit respondents who are as pressed for time as teachers are, and who are more likely to respond to a request for participation from a friend or colleague. Even using this sampling method, however, it was challenging to collect 40 responses, most likely because of the intense demands on teachers' time. Based on ease of scheduling and interest of the part of respondents, ten teachers were chosen from this group of 40 to participate in individual and group interviews.

Pre-service readings

[18] "Cluster" teachers are out-of-classroom teachers in elementary schools who are not assigned to the same group of students for the entire day. They usually teach classes in music, art, drama, science, or physical education.

The original plan was to gather a sample of child development textbooks used in five teacher education colleges in the New York City area over the past five decades. But syllabi from courses taught more than 10 years ago had not been systematically archived in any of these institutions, and so the plan was revised to focus on Bank Street College of Education. This choice was made for many reasons. The first was convenience: Bank Street College is located in the same city in which respondents taught and had the largest number of syllabi available for use. In addition, as a progressive pre-service program with an emphasis on "teaching for understanding, respecting and building on learners' interests and experiences, looking at individual learners with care and attentiveness, and creating community" (Darling-Hammond, 2000, p. 7), it was thought to more likely include a focus on social and emotional learning in its curriculum. The choice of Bank Street College was not made with the intention of producing a definitive summary of the treatment of bullying in teacher education programs in general, or at Bank Street in particular. Neither was it intended to summarize the experience of all participants in their pre-service education. Instead, it was meant to provide a glimpse into the importance placed on bullying from the perspective of those who craft both readings and course content at one graduate school of education over the past 50 years.

Course syllabi were gathered from the archives at Bank Street College's library, as well as through personal communication with instructors. From an examination of these syllabi, it was clear that, since the 1980s, textbooks have typically provided the backbone of reading materials in its Child Development classes. Prior to this time, readings consisted of excerpts from more general works. From the collected syllabi,

either core textbooks or the readings that appeared to provide the most comprehensive or broad overview of "child development" were identified, and a search for these materials was conducted. Not all selected readings could be located, however. To supplement the collection of books included in existing syllabi, relevant texts held in Bank Street library's collection were added to the sample. These texts were identified in two ways: Child Development textbooks were easily found through a search of the library's catalog. For the other, more general, readings, Bank Street College's library catalog was searched using the term "child development." Sections listed in the indexes of all selected textbooks and readings that referenced "bullying" were identified and photocopied. If bullying was not listed in the index, selections listed under "aggression" and "violence" were chosen.

Legal mandates

For the archival research involving the review of legal mandates and guidelines, an extensive online search for all mandates and laws related to bullying issued by the federal government, New York State, and the New York City Department of Education from 1999 to the present was conducted.[19] These 13 years have seen a dramatic increase in the attention paid to bullying, and it is important to understand the development of government's official response to bullying – from essentially non-existent to rapidly changing, authoritative guidelines that have increased exponentially in their complexity and scope – before considering how teachers respond when faced with student bullying in school.

[19] It is on the local level that the official response to bullying has been most finely wrought, as well as the most heavily critiqued. Included in the materials gathered for this phase of research were public reports and papers that have assessed these mandates – not always favorably.

Interviews

Out of the 40 survey respondents, ten teachers were chosen to participate in individual semi-structured interviews that explored their understandings of, and responses to, bullying. These semi-structured interviews asked respondents to:

- articulate and reflect on their definitions and conceptions of bullying
- assess the importance bullying has for them among their concerns as educators in general, and at their school in particular
- describe the concerns that occupy their time and attention as educators
- recall any personal experience they have had with bullying at any time in their life
- describe a time when they witnessed bullying and did intervene, as well as a time when they did not

In addition to the individual interviews, two group interviews were planned (five teachers per group). Teachers often report not having enough time to reflect on their teaching practice in general; these group interviews were planned to allow participants to hear the experiences and thoughts of other teachers, and to provide a space that would foster individual and collective reflection. In these interviews, they were asked to elaborate on their responses to the questions in the individual interviews. The initial guiding questions for the group interviews asked teachers to:

- explore their perceptions of the lines between playing, teasing and bullying and what, if any, difference in their responses to these three behaviors (FN: Kim Payne)

- discuss their awareness of existing national, state, and local mandates that address bullying, and to assess their usefulness for their practice
- recall if and how bullying was addressed in their teacher education and training
- identify the resources necessary in order to respond to bullying in a way that would be satisfying to them

Scheduling these interviews proved to be impossible, however, and the first group interview consisted of only two teachers. Interestingly enough, this structure allowed for a remarkable range and depth of conversation, and it ran well over the allotted time of one hour. These two teachers used the time to wrestle with questions about their individual experiences with, and responses to, bullying. They also explored their responses to laws and mandates that had previously been unknown to them. The entire conversation was probing, challenging and revealing. This approach minimized some of the pitfalls of group interviews, such as the potential for one person to dominate the conversation or the disengagement of one or more participants (Merton, Fiske, & Kendall,1956), and maximized some of the benefits, such as increased recall and the production of data that builds on the responses of others (Fontana & Frey, 2000). But the benefits of this structure were more specific to the situation of interviewing teachers and, in an interesting way, provided an additional source of data. Apple (1993) has used the term intensification to describe the erosion of teachers' working conditions since the 1970s. In his words, intensification ranges from "having no time at all to go to the bathroom, have a cup of coffee, or relax, to having a total absence of time to keep up with one's field" (p 124). He continues:

> it forces people to increasingly rely on "experts" to tell them what to do and to begin to mistrust the expertise they may have developed over the years. In the process, quality is sacrificed for quantity. Getting done is substituted for work well done. And, as time itself becomes a scarce "commodity," the risk of isolation grows, thereby reducing the chances that interaction among participants will enable critiques and limiting the possibility that rethinking and peer teaching will naturally evolve. Collective skills are lost as "management skills" are gained. Often the primary task is, to quote one teacher, to "find a way to get through the day" (p. 125).

The pair interviews carved out a small space apart from these dynamics – a place that allowed for what Apple refers to as "counter-hegemonic activity" (p. 10).

Interestingly. this methodology allowed for the most articulate renderings of solutions to the bullying problem. In fact, in the individual interviews, teachers were surprisingly vague about what they needed to successfully address bullying. But in the pair interviews, the same teachers suddenly accessed an entirely different sense of possibility and power. Perhaps because of this dynamic, many teachers described the pair interviews as a "breath of fresh air," despite the fact that it had to be squeezed into days that held not a spare moment. Before scheduling the next group interview, the plan was changed to have all "group" interviews follow this structure, both for ease of scheduling, but also to create the space for the depth of response apparent in the first "pair" interview. The other four interviews were equally striking in terms of their quality.

Current events provoked another significant change in the interview protocol for the pair interviews. Shortly before the first pair interview took place, Tyler Clementi's suicide – along with a string of other, less widely covered, suicides of LGBT young people in response to extreme or chronic bullying -- led to two remarkable national responses. The first was Dan Savage's "It Gets Better" project (2011), in which adults from all walks of life (including the president) posted online videos encouraging LGBT

youth who might be experiencing harassment that “it gets better.” The second was a letter sent by the U.S. Department of Education to all school districts and colleges notifying them that bias-based harassment and bullying would now be considered a violation of targeted students’ civil rights. In order to include participants’ assessments of the most current national radar on bullying, they were asked to respond to both the letter and the president’s “It Gets Better” video.

Both the individual and group interviews took the form of focused discussions rather than structured interviews, and were guided by a set of general questions (see Appendices B and C). They took place at various locations chosen by participants, and lasted approximately one and a half hours each. Once completed, they were taped and transcribed by the researcher. Because of both financial and time constraints, the transcriptions were not verbatim. Instead, only those parts of the interview that pertained to theoretical (and, on a later round of transcriptions, empirical) themes were transcribed.

Data Analysis

This section summarizes how the data from the four different sources was analyzed, starting with the online questionnaire.

Handling Bullying Questionnaire (HBQ)

The demographic characteristics of participants and their exposure to training and policy were placed in the context of those of the nationwide sample of American teachers and school counselors in K-12 schools (Bauman, Rigby & Hoppa, 2008), as well as the current pool of New York City public school teachers. In addition, responses

to the open-ended questions were read carefully to provide a general sense of the participants' perceptions of the prevalence of bullying, and to augment interview data on teachers' definitions of bullying, and their perceptions of best practices.

Pre-service readings

All copied sections from textbooks and more general readings were first read chronologically (based on their publication date) to get a sense of the evolving attention to – and awareness of – bullying (or, in its place, aggression). They were then read closely for any reference to three themes of interest: prescription for adult (particularly teacher) response to the behavior; degree to which the behavior is normalized; and reference to causal factors.[20] Across all readings, particular interest was paid to the absence of discussion of these themes, and to whether – and/or how – the treatment of aggression and bullying changed over time.

Legal mandates

The documents related to laws and mandates that have governed bullying from 1999 to the present were read closely in order to piece together both the chronology and content of the official response to bullying. Content analysis focused on four themes: prescription for teacher response; definitions of the construct; specific plans to implement these directives; and support for teachers in these plans. As with the textbook analysis, particular attention was paid to silences around any of these topics.

[20] Clearly, bullying, aggression, and violence are not equivalent. In fact, subsuming bullying under either of these constructs has been, until recently, a central problem in many legislative responses to the problem. It was, therefore, important to note when bullying itself was not mentioned at all in a textbook, and then to refer specifically to the text's treatment of aggression in general (to give a sense of how bullying in particular was ignored but also how bullying might be addressed through the lens of aggression).

The first step was to create a multi-leveled timeline that brought the connections among the different levels of government and historical events into sharp relief. The timeline included the passage of laws as well as rejection of proposed legislation, and significant events such as the Columbine shooting and Tyler's Clementi's suicide. Once this was done, the content of the collected mandates, laws, and public responses was examined to begin to understand the legal narrative of bullying. The federal response was examined first, to see if and how it might have shaped New York State's response. The same approach was taken to connect the development of local laws and mandates with state laws and policy. Woven into the analysis of these official conversations was a consideration of the public response to their recommendations and direction.

Interviews

Since only those portions of the interviews related to certain themes were transcribed, the analysis of this data category began with the transcription process. The transcription focused on theoretically generated themes first: definitions of bullying; responses to bullying; distinctions between teasing and bullying; cultural attitudes about bullying; childhood experiences with bullying, especially adult intervention; impediments to and requirements for teachers' optimal responses to bullying; and knowledge of and response to mandates and laws. But as the teachers' words were transferred from tape to text, other themes of interest emerged: students' ignorance of the phenomenon; the hidden nature of bullying; and spheres of bullying beyond student-student bullying.

When the transcription process was complete, all sections of the individual and pair interviews pertaining to these themes were read as a whole to get a sense of the

overall story teachers were telling. Next, each participant's responses (from both individual and pair interviews) were read to get a sense of their individual concerns. Then, all the transcribed responses from individual interviews were read as a group, followed by the responses from the pair interviews, to note any differences between the two interview structures.

To delve more deeply into the themes of interest, the responses were then separated by theme. Each transcribed section was tagged with the alias of the participant, so the identity of the speaker was not lost. The bulk of the analysis focused on connecting individual teachers' responses based on a particular theme, and then linking these themed "stories" with the archival research and survey responses.

Chapter 4. Results

Demographic information for the 40 teachers who completed the online survey is included in Table 1 below, along with the same information for the 2009/10 New York City teaching pool and the teachers sampled in Bauman, Rigby & Hoppa's nationwide study of teachers' attitudes towards bullying.

Table 1

Demographic Information of Teachers Surveyed

		Current Sample (n=40)	Bauman, Rigby & Hoppa (n=735)	NYCDOE (K-12, Common Branch)
Gender				
	Male	12.5%	15%	23%
	Female	87.5%	85%	77%
Age[21]				
	18-30	22%	17%	29%
	31-40	40%	24%	22%
	41-50	20%	24%	17%
	51-60	20%	32%	17%
	60+	0%	3%	15%
Ethnicity[22]				
	African-American	7%	3%	14%
	Asian-Pacific Islander	13%	5%	6%
	White	77%	85%	66%
	Latino	3%	4%	12%
	Native American	0%	3%	0.3%
	Other	3%	2%	2.3%
Experience				
	0-5	22%	33%	28%
	6-10	28%	19%	23%
	11-15	22%	15%	16%
	16-20	9%	9%	11%
	21-25	6%	8%	10%
	26+	13%	16%	12%

Information about gender, age, and years of experience for New York City teachers (in 2009-10) was obtained from the New York State Education Department Office of Information, Reporting and Technical Services. Unfortunately, ethnicity of these same

[21] Age was difficult to compare to New York City teachers since the only available source of data (the New York State Department of Education Information and Reporting Services) used age groupings different from those used in Bauman, Rigby & Hoppa (2008). To facilitate comparisons, categories were combined in such a way to match the age groupings used in Bauman, Rigby & Hoppa as closely as possible.

[22] For new hires only.

teachers was not included in their data. After weeks of searching, the ethnic breakdown of the current NYC public school teaching workforce remained elusive. There has been a significant amount of controversy about the disparity between the ethnicity of NYCDOE teaching staff and students – with the critique being that a predominantly white teaching force teaches a predominantly African American, Latino and Asian student body, and that this disparity has become more marked since Mayor Bloomberg secured mayoral control of the city schools. Despite – or perhaps because of – this controversy, no information was available on the actual ethnic breakdown of New York City's public school teachers, either from the DOE itself, the teachers' union, or the academics and activists who put forward this critique. The only data available for New York City public teachers was for new hires, which was used as a comparison for the ethnicity of current respondents.

Table 2 provides demographic and background information on the study participants:

Table 2

Background Information for Teachers Interviewed

	Age	Years experience	Grade taught	Public or private school	Where they were raised	Ethnicity
Alison	Late 30s	15	Principal (former Second grade teacher and AP)	Public	NYC	White
Anita	Early 50s	3	First	Public	Midwest	White
Edwin	Mid 40s	2	Second	Private	Southeast	White
Erica	Mid 30s	3	Dance	Public	NYC	African American
Jennifer	Early 30s	10	Fifth	Public	Caribbean	Caribbean American
Maria	Late 30s	10	Assistant principal (former First grade teacher)	Public	NYC	White
Melissa	Late 40s	9	Fourth	Public	Suburban New York	White
Michael	Mid 40s	20	Fifth	Public	NYC	Asian
Sonia	Mid 40s	10	Third	Public	Pacific Northwest	White
Stacy	Late 50s	20	Fourth	Public	NYC	White

Pre-service education

None of the teachers who were interviewed could recall bullying ever being addressed during their teacher education coursework or training, including the New York State mandated School Violence Prevention workshop. The only mention of anything close to bullying was made by Jennifer, a fifth grade public school teacher in

her 30's, who recalled a special education class that dealt with aggressive behavior as a disability.

Their experience is not surprising, since a close look at the sample of textbooks and required readings in Child Development classes over the past 50 years revealed that, at least in pre-service education, bullying has remained in the zone of undefined (and therefore normative) behavior throughout the past five decades (see Table 3). Only 50 years ago, readings were explicit in their advice to "let boys be boys" as they learn how to stand up to the bullies. As time passed, bullying faded from view in required readings, only occasionally making an appearance during general discussions of aggression. For the most part, both aggression in general – and bullying in particular – have been presented as developmental realities that are not to be questioned. In addition, even though the generic term "children" is used, it is typically the experience of boys' that is being considered. The (most often unspoken) assumption is that aggression (and therefore bullying) belongs in the psycho-social space occupied by boys, made visible and worthy of concern only by the occurrence of alarming violence.

Table 3

Treatment of Bullying and Aggression in Pre-Service Texts

Textbook	Date	Direct Mention of Bullying?	Recommendations for Adult Intervention (to bullying or aggression)	Causes of bullying and/or aggression
Jersild	1968	No	Descriptive: Adults often use their own biases as a guide for responding. Children benefit from the freedom "to settle disputes in their own way" (p. 260)	Individual characteristic of children
Liebert, Poulos & Strauss	1974	No	Encourage the target to fight back	Focuses on the effect of television viewing
Gesell, Ilg & Ames	1977[23]	Yes	Equip targets to deal with this rite of passage	Normative developmental pathway
Baldwin	1980	Yes (very brief)	Punish and/or be sure not to reinforce	Learned behavior
Dworetzky	1981	No	Frame aggression as undesirable	Learned behavior
Mussen, Conger, Kagan & Huston	1990	No	Ignore it, since attention (either positive or negative) can reinforce aggressive behavior	Masculine stereotype
Bee	1992	Yes (very brief)	None	Environmental factors
Vasta, Haith & Miller	1992	Yes	Change children's beliefs and attitudes about interpersonal violence	Children's beliefs and attitudes about interpersonal violence
Berk	2006	Yes	Improve targets' social skills and self esteem; engage school and wider	Boys' socialization

[23] Sections that reference bullying are unchanged from 1949 edition.

			community in systemic change	
Lightfoot, Cole & Cole	2009	No	None	Levels of violent behavior that is socially accepted

Anti-bullying training

It is, however, interesting to note that almost half of the current respondents reported having received some type of training in bullying prevention, and that more respondents reported having received in-service training than other types of training. One caveat to these findings is that they do not address the quality of anti-bullying training, and that the mere existence of training does not ensure that teachers will be well equipped to handle bullying when it occurs. In fact, a recent survey of NYC teachers found that only 14% of respondents believed that the NYCDOE's Respect for All trainings were effective in addressing bullying (New York Civil Liberties Union, 2011). Finally, the fact that one third of the current respondents reported being unsure of whether or not their schools had an anti-bullying policy is important to note.

Table 4

Experience with Anti-Bullying Training and Policy

Training in Bullying Prevention		Current Sample (n=40)	Bauman, Rigby, & Hoppa (2008) (n=735)
	Yes	47%	14%
	No	53%	86%
Type of Training			
	Pre- Service	13%	2%
	In-Service	73%	35%
	Graduate	0%	12%
	Workshop/conference	47%	47%
	Other	3%	4%
School has anti-bullying policy			
	Yes	57%	58%
	No	10%	42%
	Unsure	33%	0%

Legal responses to bullying: On paper

In the wake of deadly attacks in our schools by young people who have been bullied, the most visible and developed responses to the problem in the United States have come from federal, state, and local governments in the form of laws intended to stop such behavior, and mandates to force schools to address it. Not only does this focus attention on the individual players in the bullying drama (individual bullies, targets, administrators), the legislative approach has, until very recently, also conflated bullying with school violence in general. Weapons, metal detectors, gangs, drugs, violent crimes like rape and robbery, homicides – and bullying – are woven together as one concept. In a fact sheet on school safety under *No Child Left Behind*, the answer to the challenge of ensuring a safe environment for all students is described as “implementing programs

that protect students and teachers, encourage discipline and personal responsibility, and combat illegal drugs" (http://www2.ed.gov/nclb/freedom/safety/keepingkids.html). September 11 is invoked as a reminder that "we must be prepared for the worst" and that "the first job of government is to protect its citizens – whether the threat is terrorists abroad, criminals at home, or predators or drug dealers in or near schools." Conspicuously absent from the recommendations is any kind of analysis of how all these ideas are practically related, especially when it comes to addressing them in schools. Instead, a groundwork of fear and crisis is laid to justify extreme responses to everything from terrorism to drugs in the schools to general questions of discipline and personal responsibility.

The broad and often confusing jumble of terms gathered under the umbrella of "school violence" is changing. The U.S. Department of Education recently held the first national summit on bullying (attended by President Obama and the First Lady) and, in October of 2010, put schools on notice that they are responsible for addressing bullying under federal civil rights law. New York State's recent anti-bullying legislation (the Dignity for All Students Act, passed in June, 2010) refined and expanded previous legislation regulating school violence to explicitly address bullying. And New York City's Department of Education (DOE) recently added a separate regulation focused specifically on bullying and harassment to its Chancellor's Regulations – the guidelines that govern all aspects of school operations. Even with these recent changes, however, the focus on individuals (bullies, targets, bystanders, and teachers) remains in place.

Federal law

The Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act (SDFSCA) is part of the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001. It provides federal support to promote school safety but does not specifically address bullying and harassment in schools. Schools that receive SDFSCA funds are required to have a plan for keeping their schools safe and drug-free that includes appropriate and effective discipline policies, security procedures, prevention activities, a student code of conduct, and a crisis management plan for responding to violent or traumatic incidents on school grounds. In the spring of 2010, an amendment (H.R.5184) was introduced that would include bullying and harassment prevention programs in the SDFSCA. In the 112th Congress, this amendment is known as H.R. 975. It defines bullying as "conduct, including conduct that is based on a student's actual or perceived identity with regard to race, color, national origin, gender identity, disability, sexual orientation, religion, or any other distinguishing characteristics that may be defined by a State or local educational agency that (i) is directed at one or more students, (ii) substantially interferes with educational opportunities or educational programs of such students and(iii) adversely affects the ability of a student to participate in or benefit from the school's educational programs of activities by placing the student in reasonable fear of physical harm." (http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/z?c112:H.R.975, accessed 8/4/2011). The changes it seeks are: to include bullying and harassment within the Act's definition of violence; require states that use grants for safe and drug-free schools to collect and report information on the incidence of bullying and harassment; require schools to notify parents and students annually of conduct prohibited in their school discipline policies; and establish complaint procedures for students and parents to register complaints regarding such conduct. The

amendment is supported by the National Safe Schools Partnership, an organization of 30 leading education, health, civil rights, law enforcement, and youth development, from the NEA to GLSEN.

Currently, the amendment is under review by the Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act[24] comes up for another round of reauthorization. Previous efforts to have this act amended have not made it beyond the committee review process, but given that it is part of the reauthorization of an extremely extensive statute that has been the subject of much controversy, it is not surprising that it is a long and arduous process (A. Gil, personal communication, April 7, 2011). But the critical role that this amendment could play once it is passed should not be overlooked. With the recent severe budget cuts that have caused everything from teacher layoffs, ballooning class sizes, and shortages of supplies and materials, bully prevention programs will be hard pressed to be included as a top priority – if at all – by administrators and school districts. Even without the dire economic situation that is squeezing schools everywhere, professional development is expensive, and it can seem financially expedient to streamline bullying prevention programs by taking a do-it-yourself approach to implementation. But professional development is essential to prepare teachers for the "messy, on-the-ground" community-specific work – perhaps one of the most important ways to begin to undo bullying's history as a rite of passage for young people

[24] Emphasizing equal access to education, high standards and accountability, this law was passed in 1965 as part of President Johnson's "War on Poverty." It governs federally funded education programs that are administered by the states, and was reauthorized in 2001 by the Bush administration as *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB).

Although some federal agencies have focused considerable attention on bullying (most notably the Department of Justice and the Department of Health and Human Services), until the fall of 2010, funding guidelines for school safety were as close as the federal government came to a legal response to bullying. But on October 26, 2010, shortly after Tyler Clementi's suicide, the Department of Education sent a letter to school districts and colleges across the country to notify them of their obligation to respond to bias-based bullying (whether or not a target reports it). In particular, the letter focuses on potential civil rights violations and distinguishes between "discriminatory harassment" and other types of bullying, noting that harassment based on race, color, national origin, sex, or disability that is encouraged, tolerated, or not adequately addressed by school employees can create a hostile environment that is a violation of the targeted students' civil rights. Despite this notice requiring increased vigilance, the directive continues previous legislation's reluctance to make schools liable for bullying that did they know about or that they could "reasonably" argue that they should not have known about. [25] (It remains to be seen what courts will make of this standard given that research has consistently demonstrated that bullying is both an underground phenomenon, and one that exists in all schools).

Although not a legal mandate related to bullying, the "It Gets Better Project" (2011) includes an official White House video on the subject, and has become part of the national conversation about bullying since shortly after its launch in September of

[25] The examples used in the letter to explain this recent directive clearly indicate that being unaware of bullying is sufficient to release a school from liability.

2010. In response to a rash of suicides of young people harassed for being gay (or being perceived as gay), columnist Dan Savage and his partner Terry Miller created an online campaign that, as of March, 2011, included over 10,000 user-created videos (by politicians, celebrities, activists, and ordinary citizens). Viewed over 40 million times, these videos have been posted with the purpose of "show[ing] young LGBT people the levels of happiness, potential, and positivity their lives will reach – if they can just get through their teen years" (http://www.itgetsbetter.org/pages/about-it-gets-better-project/, accessed March 1, 2011).

In his video for this project, President Obama told the nation that bullying is not "an inevitable part of growing up," and that "we've got to dispel the myth that bullying is just a normal rite of passage." He assured young people – particularly LGBT young people – that any harassment they might experience is not their fault, they are not alone, and they need to stay strong through the struggles of being bullied – that "it gets better" (the theme of the project). He added that, "with time you're going to see that your differences are a source of pride and a source of strength. You'll look back on the struggles you've faced with compassion and wisdom." At no point during the video does the president make it clear that anything can be done to reduce bullying itself – only that there are resources upon which bullied teens can draw, and that they will be free to be themselves if they can just make it through adolescence. According to the creators of the project, they wanted to challenge the usual "deal" that the culture offered to LGBT youth, which they describe as:

> you're ours to torture until you're eighteen. You will be bullied and tormented at school, at home, at church – until you're eighteen. Then, you can do what you want. You can come out, you can move away, and maybe, if the damage we've

> done isn't too severe, you can recover and build a life for yourself. There's just one thing you can't do after you turn eighteen: you can't talk to the kids we're still torturing, the LGBT teenagers being assaulted emotionally, physically, and spiritually in the same cities, schools, and churches you escaped from. And, if you do attempt to talk to the kids we're still torturing, we'll impugn your motives, we'll accuse you of being a pedophile or pederast, we'll claim you're trying to recruit children into 'the gay lifestyle.' (Savage & Miller, 2011, pp. 5-6)

Savage describes the central goal of the "It Gets Better Project" (2011) as defying this edict by encouraging adults (both LGBT and straight) to talk to these young people and offer them hope.

Even though Savage and Miller acknowledge that letting these young people know that it gets better does not free us from the responsibility to *make* it better, the title of the project seems itself to take the misery for granted. The absence of any active language describing how adults will actually make this period of time better is telling. In an interview on CNN, Savage responded to the White House video with gratitude and a desire not to discount the symbolic importance of the president's words (Ward, 2010). But he also noted that "the president of the United States has the power to do more than assure LGBT kids that it will get better; [he and his administration] have the power to make it better – to match his words with actions and make the changes President Obama made when he was candidate Obama" (Ward, 2010).

<u>New York State law</u>

In January of 1999 (four months prior to Columbine), New York State created a task force on school violence "to ensure that students are focused on meeting the high academic standards rather than on personal safety"

(http://nyscenterforschoolsafety.org/save.html, accessed March 4, 2011). Project Save (Safe Schools Against Violence in Education) was signed into law in July, 2000. SAVE legislation (Article 55 "Regulation by Boards of Education of Conduct on School District Property") governs disciplinary measures to be taken in incidents involving school violence, from the possession or use of illegal weapons, to the use of physical force, to the violation of another student's civil rights. School districts were directed to develop codes of conduct that specified acceptable behavior, as well as acceptable responses to violations of these standards,[26] and protocol for reporting violations of this code. In both the summary description and actual language of the legislation, bullying is not mentioned except in an example of a strategy for reporting potentially violent incidents.[27] Ironically, the examples of "appropriate prevention and intervention strategies" to be employed include conflict resolution and peer mediation programs – both approaches listed as "Common Misdirections in Bullying Prevention" on the federal Health Resources and Services Administration "Stop Bullying Now!" website[28] (www.stopbullyingnow.org, accessed March 1, 2010), since conflict resolution programs are seen as fine for "normal" conflicts but not as effective in dealing with bullying since "bullying is not about resolving problems, but about having power and control over another" (Pepler, Connolly, & Craig, 1997)

[26] A notable legacy of this legislation is the requirement for all schools to designate a "SAVE room" to which violent or disruptive students can be removed. In elementary schools, the SAVE room houses students who have suspended from "buddy" schools.

[27] "Such comprehensive district-wide safety plan shall be developed by the district-wide school safety team and shall include at a minimum…strategies for improving communication among students and between students and staff and reporting of potentially violent incidents, such as …creating a forum or designating a mentor for students concerned with bullying or violence" (Article 55, Section 2801-s, 2(j), Regulation by Boards of Education of Conduct on School District Property).

[28] Stop Bullying Now has recently been moved from www.stopbullyingnow.org to www.stopbullying.gov. It is managed by the Department of Health and Human Services in partnership with the Department of Education and the Department of Justice, and is much less comprehensive than the original site.

In addition, since February, 2001, SAVE legislation requires that all teachers certified in New York State complete two hours of coursework or training in school violence prevention and intervention. The New York State Department of Education approves service providers of these workshops, and no teacher certification is granted without completion of this workshop,

> that includes, but is not limited to, study in the warning signs within a developmental and social context that relate to violence and other troubling behaviors in children; the statutes, regulations and policies relating to a safe nonviolent school climate; effective classroom management techniques and other academic supports that promote a nonviolent school climate and enhance learning; the integration of social and problem solving skill development for students within the regular curriculum; intervention techniques designed to address a school violence situation; and how to participate in an effective school/community referral process for students exhibiting violent behavior. (http://nyscenterforschoolsafety.org/savesummary.pdf, accessed March 4, 2011).

In addition, school violence prevention training is required to be included in school's yearly professional development program. School violence is broadly defined, with an emphasis on crisis situations involving lethal violence, fighting, and drug use. Finally, this legislation requires that school districts "include a civility, citizenship, and character education component in the K-12 course of instruction concerning the principles of honesty, tolerance, personal responsibility, respect for others, observance of laws and rules, courtesy, dignity, and other positive traits." (http://nyscenterforschoolsafety.org/savesummary.pdf, accessed March 4, 2011)

On June 22, 2010, ten years after the passage of SAVE legislation, and after several unsuccessful attempts to pass anti-bullying legislation, New York became the 44th state to have a law restricting bullying. The Dignity for All Students Act "prohibits"

discrimination and harassment and requires school districts and departments of education to develop and implement clear anti-harassment policies and guidelines, as well as include instruction in civility, citizenship and character education. This act is to take effect in July, 2012. It also calls for professional development for teachers on how best to respond to harassment, although with $270,000 budgeted for this purpose for the entire state (as of June, 2010), it is not clear how much of a priority teacher education is. This is unfortunate, given the overwhelming evidence that teachers miss the majority of bullying incidents (Craig & Pepler, 1997), and that students are reluctant to report bullying to teachers (Stephenson & Smith, 1989; Maunder, Harrop & Tattersall, 2010), believing that they will not intervene (Atlas & Pepler, 1998; Espelage & Asidao, 2001; Garfalo, Siegel & Laub, 1987; Olweus, 1991), or that their intervention will make the bullying worse (Banks, 1997; Smith & Shu, 2000; Rigby & Barnes, 2002).

This legislation is also consistent with the recent emphasis on bias-based bullying, amending State Education Law to protect public school students from severe and pervasive harassment and discrimination, including "verbal threats, intimidation or abuse," based on race, color, national origin, ethnicity, religion, religious practice, weight, disability, sexual orientation, gender or sex.[29] In addition, there is a companion bill that will establish a school violence hotline and require schools to follow the state's human rights law against discrimination. At the bill's signing on September 7, 2010, Governor David Paterson congratulated his legislative colleagues for "taking bullying out of the schools and putting it where it belongs: in the legislature."

New York City law

[29] It should be noted that protections offered by the bill are not limited to these categories.

It is on the local level where the most finely drawn portrait of the bullying dilemma is visible. New York City's Department of Education has included guidelines for teasing and bullying in its Discipline Code[30] since 2001. In 2004, the New York City Council passed the Dignity in All Schools Act (DASA) designed to: protect all New York City public school students, teachers, volunteers and visitors from bullying, harassment, and discrimination on the basis of real or perceived race, national origin, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity or disability; provide training for teachers and other school staff; and require the DOE to collect information about bullying and harassment incidents in its schools. Unlike federal and state mandates on bullying, the goal of this legislation was to provide schools with the resources necessary to prevent bullying from happening in the first place, rather than defining the legal recourses students and parents have once it has occurred. Training for all teachers and school staff was at the heart of this act.

Mayor Bloomberg vetoed this legislation, and when the City Council overrode his veto, he refused to implement it. The Mayor's (and the DOE's) stated objections to this legislation centered on concerns that its enactment exceeded the City Council's jurisdiction (since, according to the DOE, safety and discipline were already regulated by state law and the Chancellor). This, the DOE claimed, made the legislation "illegal," and they refused to even attend an oversight hearing in 2005. They testified only when subpoenaed, reiterating their position that the legislation was preempted by both the Chancellor and State Education Law, and thus was unenforceable, and that the Chancellor had already "adopted and implemented policies to prevent harassment"

[30] Citywide standards of discipline and intervention that include a bill of students' rights and responsibilities.

(New York Civil Liberties Union, 2007) This was despite the fact that, at the time, no Chancellor's regulation existed that addressed bullying and harassment in particular, and that the DOE's own School Environment Survey report for 2006-07[31] found that ¾ of student respondents said that they had seen students threaten or bully other students (New York City Department of Education, 2007).

The centerpiece of the policies that the Chancellor had "adopted and implemented" was an anti-bullying program called "Respect for All." But, at the time, few people knew about it, and it included no trainings for teachers. Under community pressure, in 2008 the DOE formally banned bullying, and began offering Respect for All trainings for teachers. In the 2009-10 academic year, materials for the Respect for All initiative were distributed to schools, and information about the initiative appeared on the DOE's website. A key part of this program was offering training to all elementary school teachers and counselors. The trainings were voluntary, however, and in the academic year 2007-08, only 1% of DOE teachers attended the free trainings. According to a recent survey, only 14% of teachers and staff surveyed believed that the Respect for All program has been effective in addressing bullying and bigotry in their schools (New York Civil Liberties Union, 2011). In addition, only about 30% of respondents said teachers at their school were offered Respect for All training, with an even smaller percentage attending such training. Finally, only about 31% of respondents said students in their schools received diversity or Respect for All training.

[31] The first year of this assessment.

Anecdotally, it is interesting to note varying degrees of compliance with the DOE's goals for the Respect for All program in three public schools in the 2010-11 school year.[32] One school had no Respect for All posters on display.[33] When queried, the person designated as the contact for any concerns or reports of bullying said she had been unable to locate the posters in the school building, and that her principal had told her not to worry, because the students had made their own posters about respect. In another school, posters were up, but the space intended for the contact person's name was blank. In the third school, posters were on display, but the contact person (the guidance counselor) split her time between two schools, and was in the building only two days each week.

The only assessment of the effectiveness of the Respect for All program is the collection of officially reported incidents of harassment and bullying. In its first iteration, this initiative prohibited only bullying or harassment based on bias. This was not simply a matter of semantics: in its first release of statistics related to bullying, only bias-related bullying was included. The language in the Respect for All initiative has been amended for the 2010-11 school year, however. The guidelines now state that "bullying …*for any reason, including* taunting and/or intimidation through the use of epithets or slurs involving race, color, ethnicity, national origin, religion, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation of disability [is prohibited] " [emphasis added]. Despite this change, the focus on bias-based harassment and bullying

[32] Schools visited for professional reasons unrelated to this research.

[33] These posters detailed Respect for All protocol, especially for reporting harassment or bullying. Each school is required to write in the name of the staff member designated as the person to whom reports can be made.

remains, with only one of the six examples of prohibited behavior listed on the Respect for All flyers describing bullying not based on some kind of bias.[34]

In 2008, Mayor Bloomberg and then Chancellor Joel Klein finally included bullying and harassment in the Chancellor's Regulations that govern student behavior. But Chancellor's Regulation A-832 was created without a hearing or allowance for public comment and, according to a report by the NYCLU, did not fulfill the requirements of DASA in five important ways: it only addressed student-student harassment and bullying, leaving out bullying by other individuals such as adults in the school; it regulated a narrower group of categories of bias and harassment than required by DASA, which included "any other characteristic or reason that has or would reasonably have the effect of substantially interfering with a student's educational performance" (85 N.Y.C. Admin. Code § 10-137 (a)(3) (Consol. 2009)); it did not include any specific requirements for public reporting of incidents of bullying and harassment; it did not mandate staff trainings; and it used an overbroad definition of harassment that was not legally tenable.

Clearly, since Columbine, the legislative response to bullying has become much more developed and nuanced. Schools have been mandated to develop anti-bullying policies and implement anti-bullying programs. Teacher education programs have been mandated to include violence and bullying prevention in their curriculum, and directives

[34] The reliance on legal definitions and boundaries to address a complicated, socially embedded problem can have frustrating results. Last May, a parent of a chronically harassed 4th grader contacted me for advice. In reading the carefully crafted DOE regulations addressing bullying and harassment, it was unclear whether the garden variety (but emotionally devastating) bullying that her daughter was experiencing was, in fact, prohibited. Without any specific language in the regulations to prohibit bullying not based on bias, the parents were left with a principal's advice that "this is part of life that we learn to live with; we can't stop wars and we can't stop bullying" (personal communication, April, 2010).

have been established that make administrators, teachers, and students responsible for knowing that bullying is not tolerated and must be addressed. Bystanders are also included, since a cornerstone of many well-respected bullying prevention programs is a focus on encouraging witnesses and targets alike to “tell an adult.”

Before exploring how this legislative response to bullying is experienced in teachers’ lives in the classroom, it is important to take note of participants’ general attitudes towards bullying, as well as their sense of the prevalence of bullying in their schools.

Attitudes towards bullying

As can be seen in Table 4, Participants’ survey responses indicate that they are in tune with the new national tone of ending our complacency about bullying and refusing to consider it an inevitable rite of passage that strengthens character. At least in theory – and for the bullying they are aware of – these teachers know that ignoring it and/or leaving it for students or another adult to deal with – will not work. At the same time, their approach to the bully is a nuanced one. Instead of short term, individualistic solutions (e.g., distract the bully; increase the bully’s self esteem), they describe themselves as favoring more complex and contextual responses, such as engaging with other adults in the school community (administrators, colleagues, and/or school counselors), talking with the bully about alternative approaches, and working on ways to develop the bully’s sense of empathy. None of these solutions are simple, and all are easier said than done, requiring at the very least time – and support – that is in very short supply as teachers juggle the demands of the recent emphasis on data-driven

instruction and high stakes assessment. And yet these approaches are the ones that teachers intuitively turn to when asked to respond to a hypothetical bullying situation.

Table 5

Means of Statement Responses[35]

Statement	Mean score (Current study)	Standard Deviation	Mean score (Bauman, Rigby & Hoppa, 2008)	Standard Deviation
Treat it lightly	1.19	.47	1.27	1.146
Ignore it	1.19	.65	1.18	.611
Tell students to "grow up"	1.22	.49	1.31	.688
Leave it for someone else	1.43	.73	1.42	.726
Let students sort it out	1.53	.76	1.51	.712
Tell victim to tell bully to back off	2.78	1.24	2.92	1.16
Encourage victim to show bully they cannot be intimidated	2.81	1.2	3.38	1.153
Support victim to be more assertive	2.9	1.16	3.49	1.129
Tell victim to stand up to the bully	2.91	1.06	2.92	1.16
Distract bully	3.0	1.03	3.0	1.07
Increase the bully's self esteem	3.53	.76	3.44	1.147
Reach out to victim's parents	3.67	.88	3.66	1.053
Punish bully	3.72	1.08	3.99	1.044
Tell bully to "cut it out"	3.88	1.39	4.32	1.146
Tell bully's parents behavior must stop	3.88	1.07	3.67	1.092
Have a conversation with students	3.91	.89	3.49	1.209
Refer matter to administration	3.97	1.05	4.11	.956
Discuss with bully options to improve situation	4.1	.7	4.14	.913
Include school	4.25	.62	4.48	.828

[35] Respondents were asked to read a hypothetical bullying scenario, and to check the responses that were closest to what they thought they would do in response.

counselor				
Encourage bully to be more empathetic	4.31	.9	4.1	1.002
Discuss matter with colleagues	4.5	.57	4.41	.852
Make it clear to bully that their behavior will not be tolerated	4.78	.42	4.79	.562

Perceptions of the prevalence of bullying

In their responses to the open-ended question on the HBQ that asked them to assess the level of bullying at their schools, participants indicated that they took bullying seriously, but there was a tendency to discount the problem at their schools. Half the respondents reported that it was minimal, and/or when it happened, it was quickly and easily resolved. Twenty-five percent of the respondents categorized bullying as "somewhat" of a problem, with certain times and places singled out as "hot spots" for bullying – such as the lunch room and unsupervised areas. Overall, only 19% of respondents considered bullying to be a serious problem at their school, despite the widely reported statistic that at least one quarter of all schools reported daily or weekly bullying incidents (Dinkes, Cataldi, & Lin-Kelly, 2009).[36] This is not surprising, given the research that shows that adults – teachers, administrators and parents – vastly underestimate the extent of bullying (Smith & Sharp, 1994; Stockdale, Hangaduambo, Duys, Larson & Sarvela, 2002). Many of the respondents who identified it as a problem noted bullying's elusive nature: "I think it's a problem everywhere, whether it's addressed or not. When it's addressed, it's less of a problem." Another teacher

[36] This includes only incidents reported by schools, which leaves out both the incidents they know about and do not report, as well as those incidents that they are not aware of.

commented that, although s/he rarely observed peer/peer bullying, s/he assumed that it occurred and "imagine[d] that so much more bullying occurred that was not brought to my attention."

Legal responses to bullying: On the ground

Despite the flood of legislative and media attention on bullying, the majority of teachers interviewed were unaware of any of the mandates that govern their responses to bullying, and those who did were either teachers turned administrators, or those with personal experience with bullying in their classroom. The two administrators'[37] knowledge was limited to familiarity with the DOE's provisions for bullying in its Discipline Code.[38] They were also familiar with the DOE's Respect for All program, but understood its focus to be on "Respect for All Week" in February, during which schools are required to highlight the work they have done to address bullying and promote tolerance and responsibility. Their school had not participated in this week because, as they explained, they already had a character education program in place that had focused on respect for the first few months of the school year, and thus were considered exempt. According to Alison (a public school principal and former second grade teacher), other than this week established by the DOE, "there are no mandates that come down on us." In addition, neither administrator had heard anything about the existence or content of the "Dear Colleague" letter sent in October of 2010 to all school

[37] A principal and assistant principal from the same school, both former teachers.

[38] This guide covers infractions and the range of possible disciplinary and other responses for grades K-5. The guidelines for bullying functioned more as rules to govern punitive measures for students once they are determined to have engaged in such behaviors, and less of a guide for what qualifies as bullying in the first place.

districts and colleges putting them on notice that certain categories of bullying and harassment constituted civil rights violations of the targeted students.

Sonia, a third grade special education teacher with 10 years experience (and the only other respondent with any knowledge of mandates or laws related to bullying beyond the Discipline Code), had educated herself about bullying because her own child was being bullied in another school (with an entirely unsatisfactory response from the administration). Not only did she have to seek out the information herself, she also found that she "was educating the principal. They flat out told me, 'we don't know what to do.'" In addition, one of Sonia's students was the target of a serious bullying situation in her classroom last year. Although her principal was concerned, Sonia still

> had to do the legwork. I was getting resources outside of school, contacting people who could help me, and actually bringing that information to my principal. At least they had some information – like what you get in a 2-3 day workshop. It was a pamphlet, [but] it was pretty dry. It defined the roles and it defined the difference between conflict and bullying but what was missing was 'what do we do with it.' No one knew; no one knew! That's where it just fell apart.

Through her research, she learned that the Chancellor had put an anti-bullying program (Respect for All) in place, but in her opinion,

> it's a lot of lip service, [there] tends to be a lot of rhetoric behind it. Even though it said, 'this will not be tolerated; this is unacceptable behavior,' there weren't the consequences and the routines set into place to implement consequences when bullying does happen. As far as the national level, I know there's [also] a lot of rhetoric, but I couldn't tell you what the law is other than after Columbine there seemed to be a lot more put into place around bullying behavior, but it's pretty vague and it's not put out there for us teachers [as in] 'Okay, you need to know this; make sure you understand how this law works.'

Each of the other teachers interviewed had an almost identical, response when asked if they had any knowledge of laws or mandates related to bullying – a simple, flat "no" without embellishment or elaboration.

Erica was a dance teacher in her mid 30's, who had recently decided to leave teaching in schools and focus on other aspects of dance education. She explained the vacuum she experienced around the "official" response to bullying by comparing teachers' awareness of the mandate that requires them to report suspected child abuse to the sense that they are left to their own conscience and judgment when it came to bullying. She explained, "when you take the child abuse workshop that's mandated for your certification, if you suspect a child is being abused… if you don't report it, you're liable. I'm not aware of something like that for bullying so if I saw child bullying another child and I didn't report it, I wouldn't think I would lose my job. I think morally [bullying] doesn't make sense, but legally I'm not aware of anything. I was definitely not given any training about that; it's just common sense."

Melissa, a teacher in her 50's and a nine year veteran of teaching fourth grade in public schools, described how the work of addressing bullying takes more than well-meaning words. She explained,

> you've got people saying these things and doesn't it sound nice when everyone's saying it but that's not what's actually happening. Because on the other hand they're also saying you need to spend this many hours teaching this, this, this, and this…. It's very hard for kids to learn to read and write if they don't feel safe in their environment. And one way they're not feeling safe is because there are people who are bullies, and in order to teach people how to live in a social world you have to spend time on it and it can't just be five minutes here and there. Or any time something arises 'let's have a little conversation about that' and then it goes away.

There is a sense of longing and frustration in her words – not only does she name an infuriating disconnect between official words and actions, she also puts forward a plea to be allowed to do her job (in her words, "to teach kids to read and write").

Just as teachers had not been informed of the laws related to bullying, neither had the DOE's official ban of bullying had not been communicated to them. When told about the ban, Michael, a public school fifth grade teacher in his 40's with 11 years of experience, was incredulous: "What does that mean! What does that mean! What happens if you do it?" Stacy, a fourth grade public school teacher in her 60's with 20 years experience in both public and Catholic schools noted "so it's banned … but no one's telling them how to do something instead. That's the difference." According to Melissa, the problem with so many of the "lofty pronouncements" about bullying is that

> it needs to be more than just them saying it because how many people heard him [the Chancellor] say that? And where does it go from there? What are the channels that take it down from there? You know, the mayor and chancellor said that bullying is banned in the New York City public school system. Well, you know, that's nice. That's the first time I've heard about that. How can you say that and not provide some way for it to actually happen in the places that it's happening?"

According to respondents, practical questions like the one Stacy raised are often left undefined – or even unasked in favor of dramatic and optimistic rhetoric.

Teachers' reactions to President Obama's "It Gets Better" video were similarly skeptical. According to Melissa, "he's saying all the right things. You want people to start feeling more positive about things. That's a part of it; that's a big step. But then the kids actually need to see that things *are* changing." Stacy remarked "if you set up a kid

to believe it's going to be better then you have to do something to make it get better.… All of the good talk doesn't do us anything. Unless we show them in our actions, then it doesn't mean anything to these kids. Then you're giving them a hope with nothing." For Anita, a first grade public school teacher in her early 50's, the problem of well-intentioned words with little action to back them up was not limited to bullying: "these laws are akin to a lot of things that go on on an official level in our society and our schools and our government – lip service is paid towards some kind of social issue which bullying is, you know, and I think it has huge repercussions. Lip service can be paid but really there's just not a whole lot of will behind getting it done. Our leaders may say they're concerned but really *nothing gets done*." She also implicated the presence of bullying in the legislative process: "I feel like the whole political rhetoric of today has a huge element of bullying in it and kids think that this is normal and I think it's a huge devolution in our civil behavior."

Teachers' responses to bullying

With little or no guidance from their own education or mandates, teachers' approaches to bullying varied widely – and from situation to situation. Often there was a marked difference between what they said they wanted to do and what was possible given the overload they experienced each day. But in all cases they first had to contend with the challenges that face bullying researchers and policy-makers outlined in the literature review: the forces that normalize bullying; the difficulty in defining and identifying bullying; and, finally, the current educational climate.

The official silence around bullying in pre-service education and teachers' knowledge of legal mandates meant that teachers worked in an almost complete vacuum in terms of bullying. They often defined behavior as teasing rather than bullying, almost as if to lighten their load of potential bullying situations waiting to be assessed. Responses to any bullying situations that remained were cobbled together using their personal experience with bullying (as a child and/or an adult) and their personal attitudes about aggression and bullying as a guide. They described this as an often arduous and solitary process, bereft of clear guidance and prone to encountering resistance from some surprising quarters. Notwithstanding these challenges, however, teachers displayed a commitment to addressing bullying in the most optimal manner, as well as a facility for keeping the full range of children's needs front and center even when current educational policy has not.

Definitions: Drawing the line

Just as previous work has found, these teachers described bullying as a difficult concept to define. Is it bullying, harassment, teasing, or fighting? In their view, each potential bullying situation is different because the phenomenon itself is so contextual. Bullying was described as "watery" and "spontaneous and fluid" – qualities that made it hard to pin down, and difficult – if not impossible – to fit neatly into a one-size-fits-all definition. Even though teachers were familiar with the slippery nature of the construct, there was disagreement about where teasing ends and bullying begins. Anita and Edwin, in his 40's and teaching at a progressive private school, held very different opinions about the harmful effects of teasing, as well as the likelihood of successfully addressing bullying (to be discussed later):

> Anita: I'm thinking is it the content or the perniciousness of it? And I think one of the differences between teasing and bullying is the frequency of it.
>
> Edwin: I don't know if I differentiate between the two [garden variety teasing and bullying].
>
> *Interviewer: How do you identify it? If there is intent to harm? Is teasing ever okay? Is joking around ever okay?*
>
> Anita: I think so.
>
> Edwin [incredulous]: Really?

Sometimes, respondents had difficulty settling on one position themselves. In her late 30's, Maria was a relatively new administrator and former first grade teacher at a public school. After cautioning about over-identifying behavior as bullying, she refined her position later in the interview: "actually I think it doesn't really matter how it impacts the victim. Because I think there's an issue no matter what. It's not okay. I don't think you can't just say they're okay with it so it's okay." Deciding what is – and is not – bullying is a critically important first step in addressing bullying. But when it is so shifting and hard to pin down, it is a challenging task.

Teachers also had to contend with stereotypes – sometimes deeply held but always present in their minds – of bullies and bullying. When asked how prevalent bullying was at her school, Anita used the image of "kids getting beaten up on their way home from school for being different" as a frame of reference:

> I could be very wrong, but my sense is that, at least here in New York City, the incidents of bullying that my kids have either witnessed or been a party to really have more to do with kids who don't go to their school – who are harassing them for money and that crosses a line into potential dangerous situation."

The teasing and social exclusion she saw in her classroom almost daily did not fit that description, and therefore did not qualify in her mind as bullying. Jennifer observed that her students also held stereotypes about the bully. During a class conversation,

> we came up with the conclusion that it doesn't matter who you are or what you look like, if you're doing these actions over time to another person – it doesn't matter if you're black, white, brown, an "A" student or not, a boy or a girl – then it's bullying. It's a beginning, students are becoming more aware. There are still students who don't realize what they're doing.

These stereotypes were like chameleons, blending in with respondents' outrage at and opposition to bullying, and making their presence felt in ways that were not always so obvious, but always challenging.[39]

Erica shed some light on the difficulty most teachers had recognizing something other than the stereotypical physical type of bullying as problematic:

> If it was physical it's a lot easier to deal with it. It's a lot easier to say it's not at all acceptable to put your hands on somebody else. It's harder to say it's not acceptable to speak meanly to other people. It should be but I wonder why I feel that way? *[Interviewer: You're talking about two things: one is what is actually acceptable or not; what's possible to address or not. But you were also talking about how easy different things are to deal with. Does it help to think of them as separate?]* Well, yeah. I think both are unacceptable but it's easier to deal with the physical behavior. People in positions of power – teachers, administrators, parents – I think we all have similar views about physical abuse. I think the margin of difference is greater for verbal abuse. Both are unacceptable but one is a lot harder to deal with because people have different opinions about what is unacceptable.

[39] Interestingly, this was the closest any participant came to addressing the question of race, even though race itself is not explicitly mentioned.

According to participants, these “different opinions” made it difficult to come up with a coherent, user-friendly definition of bullying. Without such a framework, much bullying often fell unnoticed by the wayside.

In their interviews, teachers described looking for clear lines to simplify the process of identifying – and responding to – bullying. But often these attempts only muddied the water further – either discounting the problem (which inadvertently let the consequences of abusive behavior run unchecked), or diluting its original meaning by using the definition so freely that *too* many behaviors came under its umbrella. Teachers explained that they considered several factors when determining if a behavior qualified as bullying: whether it is part of a pattern of behavior or an isolated incident (although some respondents thought that certain behavior can be considered bullying even if it happens only once); whether or not it is intended to intimidate; and even the response of the target. Melissa described that,

> I rarely think about it from the bully’s perspective. I think about it from the victim’s perspective – how they’re perceiving the situation. I often think that sometimes kids don’t realize that they’re being a bully, because they don’t think what they’re doing is at all hurtful or harmful because they may think that if someone said this or did this to me I’d be fine…. You always have to think about the people you are dealing with because everyone has different levels of comfort with different things.

Thinking about bullying in this way requires careful attention on the teacher’s part. As Maria explained,

> if they’re both laughing, [it’s okay]. But if you see their reactions and it doesn’t feel good [and] they’re not happy about it, that’s the line for me…. It’s what motivated the first child to do it in the first place and then the reaction of the other child…. In general teachers are pretty observant and they know – based on their

> experience – whether it's teasing versus bullying. Because there is a certain amount of teasing that will go on but it always reaches that point where it's not funny.

Not only does this require careful attention, but such a determination will also vary from teacher to teacher, or even from moment to moment for an individual teachers, depending on how much attention they have at a given time.

Understanding the contextual nature of bullying can create some interesting dilemmas. When the defining factor is a target's reaction, there can be a tendency to focus remedies almost exclusively on the target to help them "react better," either by becoming more assertive or better at ignoring the attacks. Some teachers also exercised judgment about whether or not the target "deserved it." Michael described this as "run[ning] into some grey area because a kid may say he or she is bullied and then you find out later that it was something they did to instigate it and then it's like is this really a bullying situation or retaliation from something that you did?" In both approaches, attention is shifted away from the bullying behavior itself and toward the target – either to "improve" their response, or to blame them for previous behavior that brought the bullying on.

Where and how to draw the line between teasing and bullying is a difficult and shifting question. Five of the ten teachers interviewed simply equated the two, and indicated that they intervened in any teasing that they observed. For example, as Stacy explained, "I don't think there is a difference between teasing and bullying… there really isn't a stage of teasing… if you really think about it the teasing is really bullying. It's verbal bullying." When Erica was teaching, she did away with any ambiguity by

employing a no tolerance policy that began with the first sign of teasing. She called it "being on the safe side" and explained that, with young children, teasing always requires adult intervention. In her opinion,

> my job is not to encourage someone to toughen it up. That's not my role. My job is to minimize as much risk as I possibly can and focus on the work at hand. In such a small time frame I'm not willing to take the risk that the child will not be able to 'toughen it up.'

The other five teachers expressed varying degrees of tolerance for teasing, and some teachers who decried bullying also normalized teasing. Anita was the most comfortable with a certain degree of teasing:

> I feel like partly it's just a fact --that people are kind of wired this way – to tease a little bit. It's not great to be on the receiving end of teasing but on the other hand if it doesn't go further… I wouldn't call it bullying. It could be the precursor to bullying but not necessarily. I don't know; maybe we're culturally conditioned to accept bullying in some kind of way…people have always teased each other; does that make it okay?

The cultural acceptance of bullying was not just a tacit process. At a middle school open house that Sonia attended as a prospective parent, the principal advised parents not to expect special provisions for bullying at his school. According to Sonia, he said, "that's what kids do; it's not bullying, it's teasing" and kids need to be able to "toughen up" and deal with it. This angered her, especially since her daughter had spent the past year at a high-achieving and well-respected public elementary school as the target of a bully, dealing with torn clothing, sprained wrists, and a terror of returning to school after vacation. All of this had been discounted by the principal of the elementary

school, and the only resolution came in June when the year ended and she no longer had to go to school – hardly a resolution. As Sonia explained, the middle school's principal's comments "feed the fire of the bully. It's almost like we're set up for that. To call it … just teasing. Kids feel like they have to be strong and stand up and take it. So we think they're taking it and it's okay but not really. So where is that line?"

Teachers who patrolled the boundaries of teasing were also cognizant of the pitfalls that came with this approach. Maria worried that "you have to be careful because everything is going to end up as bullying and it's not." Alison explained that our growing awareness of (and therefore likelihood of identifying behavior as bullying) can have unintended consequences:

> I feel like kids are much more aware of bullying because of what schools are doing and I also think kids are more aware of bullying because of what their parents talk about because of what they see on the news. They often come in and say they've been bullied because they were bothered yesterday…. A lot of times I'll get calls from parents saying that their child is being bullied when it's usually a child who has participated in some form of bullying in the past. Those are the parents that are more irate at the fact that their child is being bullied.

Becoming more aware of bullying was, however, a view expressed only by administrators. As will be discussed shortly, the teachers who were interviewed described their students as being mostly in the dark about the exact nature of bullying.

Over and over, teachers expressed their sense that students did not know that what they might be doing or witnessing was bullying – or even wrong. Michael described it as

> an at-the-moment kind of thing. They see other kids doing it and they see how powerful it is and if it doesn't get addressed then it's okay.… They don't know

> what they're doing because maybe sometimes their parents are doing it and they're modeling after them or their older brother.

Melissa suggested that it is difficult for many students to imagine how another person might be responding to their actions: "I think it goes from joking to teasing often. And I don't know that it always happens intentionally…. I tell [kids], 'you might think you're being funny … but the other person does not think it's funny.'" Michael agreed that empathy was an undeveloped skill:

> the biggest excuse is 'I was just playing' and 'I don't know why – or that – I did it.' Obviously you're not! That's not playing! You're being nasty; you're being rude. They would just stand there dumbfounded; like 'what do I do now?' It always has to be brought down to them: 'would this be okay if it was done to you?' It takes about half an hour to an hour [for them to realize they shouldn't have done this] but if I don't deal with it, I'm going to have one kid who can't function at all and another kid who has a green light to continue.

In making the distinction between a singular act of bullying and being a bully, Maria said,

> some of the conversations I have with kids, they're not really bullies but I have to explain to them that what they did was bullying…. I really do think many of our students don't really understand what it means to bully. They don't know where that line is and I think it's up to us to show them.

If adults find this line hard to define, solutions will necessarily be more complex than simply expecting – or telling – teachers to explain it to their students, or decreeing that it is wrong.

<u>Bullying beyond the school walls</u>

Participants were well aware of the inclination to normalize bullying – in the culture at large, by administrators, families, and even themselves. As delineated in child development textbooks used in pre-service teaching, but also visible in such disparate – and ubiquitous – places as popular culture and national and international politics, bullying has long been viewed as a normal part of growing up.[40] As Jennifer remarked, changing this approach is "like changing a whole way of thinking." Michael expanded on the enormity of the task: "it's like you're re-programming because you have generations of people before you who have done it or have experienced it and have just said, 'well, I grew up with it I had to deal with up, and you should too.' Bullying has been seen as a rite of passage -- just something that kids do as they're growing up. Everybody does it so it's not a big deal. So we don't need to address it." Even the parents of targets are not exempt from this tendency to minimize bullying. One boy in Edwin's class the previous year had been mercilessly bullied not only by his class but the entire grade over the course of a year. His parents "were concerned enough to come into the school [to meet with the principal, school psychologist, and Edwin], but I think they also thought of it as part of growing up and 'unfortunately our boy is the one and he'll get through it and he'll be fine.'" At the end of this exhausting year, they told Edwin that they were hoping that it would be forgotten over the summer, and that September would be the start of a new year. But just the day before our interview, Edwin had found out that they would not be returning, after all. As he asked, "what do you when it's so many people involved and it actually becomes part of the culture of the community to have that one village idiot?" Or when a school psychologist agreed with Edwin's principal's

[40] It is not uncommon in the adult world, as well (e.g., Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2010; Naimie & Naimie, 2010; Randall, 1997).

observation that bullying is not something we can get rid of? Edwin's response to his decree of inevitability captures the frustration of many respondents: "And maybe it is but it doesn't mean it's okay."

In anonymous responses to the open-ended questions on the HBQ, one participant identified teacher/teacher and administrator/teacher bullying as more problematic (if not more frequent) because these types of bullying are "never addressed in a proactive way and are the most difficult to talk about because they implicate adults that have to work with each other." In fact, survey respondents reported feeling most comfortable talking with colleagues about peer/peer bullying (97%) and teacher/student bullying (89%). Only 67% said they would be comfortable talking to colleagues about teacher/teacher bullying (24% were unsure; 12% said they would be uncomfortable), and 64% said they would be comfortable talking to colleagues about administrator/teacher bullying (24% were unsure; 12% said they would be uncomfortable). As Stacy pointed out, "I think bullying occurs on all levels … from teacher to student, supervisor to teacher, and teacher to teacher. Because it's the nature of the people. I shouldn't say this but especially in New York State, people tend to be very aggressive. It's like the nature of this beast that grows here." Her metaphor of a living thing is telling – as a natural process it has a powerful force behind it that is not easy to subvert.

Wherever bullying occurs, children are careful observers of how adults react. And when adults bully each other, children add to their repertoire of possible responses to frustration, feelings of powerlessness, and desire for revenge. As Michael explained,

"they're just doing what they see." Maria connected this influence with the intractability of the problem:

> It's difficult though because – well, this is a much bigger issue – but there's a lot of breakdown with the family and I think that's a big piece of it. They're not really taught to interact. They're not really taught that certain behaviors that are wrong. Instead, they see it [in the world and at home]! They see it! What can you possibly do to address that when we have them during the day but when they're home [it is condoned]? We can only work with what we have. We can't change everything.

When teachers and administrators are unable to recognize and address bullying amongst themselves, it is not surprising to find them at a loss when faced with bullying among their students. Erica described how her thinking changed when she realized (in the course of completing the online survey for this study) that "it's not just children who bully each other." In her words:

> A whole world just opened up. I definitely felt bullied [by administrators] at my school. I wouldn't call it bullying though, I would call it harassment. The fact I wouldn't even call it bullying shows that I didn't know how to deal with it except gossip with my friends about it and have them reassure me. If I thought about it as bullying my thinking would be completely different because I would think, 'oh I could say something.' Not that I would… [But without that] I'm not going to say anything because it's just stupid; it's just girls being girls, pissy people being pissy people…. [Calling it bullying] would just clarify things for me. It would take it out of being a personal thing and [move it towards] thinking about what's happening here in the system that allows that behavior to occur and in what ways is that behavior is being sanctioned. I would have a more holistic, less internalized, view of it which might have helped me deal with it better.

Her reflection speaks to the power contained in the act of defining and naming behavior, as well as offering a glimpse into the limitations of an individual analysis of bullying. Bringing it out of the personal level changed everything about the experience,

giving her power both to identify and critique it. It also gave her a glimpse of the deep and tangled roots of bullying behavior and how they might be responsible for her difficulty in dealing with the problem: “I am really interested in this idea of adult bullying and how it contributes to bullying among children and/or how bullying among children and adult bullying doesn’t get addressed because addressing bullying among children would implicate adults that are bullying each other. I’m wondering if those two things have anything to do with each other.”

The time crunch

Other, perhaps more mundane but equally powerful, factors also got in the way of paying attention to bullying. All teachers described having impossibly crowded days that left them with next to no time to pay attention to the social and emotional climate of the classroom – at least in a way that felt satisfying to them. As Michael said, “a typical day definitely adds up to more than 100%. There’s completely not enough time.… The day is completely packed; it’s completely packed.” Sonia likened the day to a circus: “it’s a whirlwind.… It’s crazy. It’s a three ring circus. And on a good day no one falls off the high wire, and the elephant climbs up on its little pedestal and circles around the room, and everyone claps and it’s all good. But it doesn’t always work that way. And it is a circus.”

Without exception, all respondents felt that it was next to impossible to successfully address bullying in such an environment. As Michael noted,

> in extreme cases, [dealing with bullying] can take a long time….It’s very difficult to [make room for a student who has come to tell me about bullying] because we have to juggle all of that in the course of the day. I’ll be honest with you, one of the last things that’s going to be on the plate is addressing bullying issues. A

> student telling me about bullying is going to be the cherry on the top, or the straw that breaks the camel's back.

At the same time, their stories invariably included accounts of effective interventions that were even more striking given the challenges they faced. In Sonia's classroom, a serious, long-term bullying situation in her room that peaked when the perpetrator forced the target to "mark" herself with a bite that drew blood. Her description of a typical afternoon paints a vivid portrait of the challenges teachers face on a daily basis:

> [There are] the footsteps always coming in and out. It's a busy time after lunch. Unfortunately, at our school we don't have recess or PE [physical education] – it's a kind of pressure cooker atmosphere. I need to bring them down after lunch – I'm trying to do that as they're all popcorning out of their skin. At the same time, they're packing up. The kids all want to talk to you when they come back. And you've got the girl with her hand [a rash due to a bite mark that hasn't been addressed yet because the nurse is at lunch] and the kids bumping into each other. Usually the phone is ringing because someone forgot something in the lunchroom, or you forgot your copies. Or whatever. [It's] a very crazy time. And [the girl with the rash] is holding her hand, and some other girls have their back to you nudging each other. You can't quite see what's going on. You send this one to the nurse, and some kids are on the carpet waiting. Other ones are at the table looking at their comic book or finishing their drawing from lunch and you're trying to get them to go. 'No we're not getting the crayons right now, we're packing up'; 'okay, honey, you've got that on your arm. Go see the nurse and then come right back.' 'Okay, you guys need to stop drawing at the table. Put that stuff away.' And at the same time you're trying not to have it this be this crazy thing because they're bringing that energy in. Meanwhile, your head is exploding. [Finally 10 minutes later everyone is ready] but that's 10 minutes with the girl with the rash and the biting, and the one that told the other to bite and her little cohort in the corner with their backs to you. And you see it and you say, 'stop!' but it's not all pieced together. And the other one with her paper [students were encouraged to write notes to Sonia if telling her in person was difficult for any reason] because lunch was hard for her because she saw her friend bite. I don't know that those are all related, and that doesn't become clear until the end of the day and then they're leaving so it's not addressed until the next day. And that's the circus.

Even Edwin, who was working at a private school and was not as constrained by the high stakes assessment and data-driven instruction prescribed by extensive state and national standards, described how social and emotional issues got pushed to the wayside in the face of everything else he had to attend to:

> I think bullying is a very serious issue and …every once in a while you get those headlines as a reminder. It's sad to see even in a progressive environment how they really don't know how to deal with it. And we can all feel better by attending workshops but unless those workshops really are run in a way that's going to give us the information and tools…. You can have the information and tools and still not be a person who just cannot deal with it. I'm guilty of that too. There [are] plenty of things that come up in day [that] I know I should deal with but I just don't have the energy. And I know [the students] will get through it. [*Interviewer: Even something that falls under the umbrella of bullying?*] No, no, I hope I wouldn't let that go. But the emotional stuff, feelings get[ting] hurt – that kind of stuff would slide by.

The lack of time also makes it difficult to step back and connect the dots, as Maria explained:

> I think [bullying] is a problem a lot more than people are aware of or recognize. I think people know about it -- they take each case as an isolated case. I don't know that anyone really…you know people are busy and they address things right away but I don't know if they stop to think about how many there really are. I think it's a big problem; I really do.

In this way, the lack of time serves both to constrain teachers' ability to respond to bullying as it happens, but also (in some cases) to limit their awareness of the scope of the problem in the first place.

Listening to teachers describe their work, it is clear that there is not, in fact, enough time in their day for much other than getting through "the circus." Part of the

time problem can simply be attributed to the nature of a teacher's day – being responsible for 20-30 young people whose agendas rarely match your own. But many teachers are much more specific: they describe the time shortage as connected to the recent – and dramatic -- increase in curricular and assessment related dictates resulting from *No Child Left Behind*. Anita decried the decontextualized skills-focused curriculum that she was responsible for covering in first grade, and offered an incisive solution:

> My real belief is that the happier a person is, the less likely they are to be a bully. And a lot of times we don't know as teachers where that unhappiness is coming from. That said, just saying 'well there's no excuse for bullying because bullying is bad' [is not enough]. Well, yeah, bullying is bad and it makes people feel terrible, but punishment is not the answer usually either. There has to be a deeper addressing. I would say even giving kids work that is meaningful to them [would be more effective]. I have a strong sense that a lot of crap would not happen if kids had more of a chance to engage their bodies and their hands as well as their minds.

Her words gave voice to a desire for relief from the malaise that has seeped into the emotional lives of both teachers and children in disturbing ways. She elaborated:

> for a lot kids this [first grade] is the year that they learn that school sucks. It's heartbreaking to me. [My] magic wand would be at this age to get rid of the standards. I feel like that is a really radical thing to say. That's not to say that teachers [wouldn't] teach; that's not my point. I feel like measuring kids at the age of five and six against standards is very detrimental. There needs to be more play-based learning. My mental and emotional energies have been taken by the Frankies – the ones that I felt like 'I've gotta find a way to reach these kids; I've gotta find a way to move them along but in a way that's appropriate to them and doesn't make them feel like they're losers.' And I do feel like that's embedded in the system. And they know. They look and they know they're not doing what other kids are doing so at the end of the day my exhaustion comes from maybe my feeling of failure. And I hate it. And I feel like, 'oh, maybe this year is going to be different.' We'll see….The system needs to change away from the drive towards goal-oriented learning. That's not to say that I'm a complete disbeliever in standardized tests as a measure of where kids are…but we have strong sense in our society now of judgment and a rush to address these issues and I think a

> lot of times it bites us in the foot because it starts to demoralize the kids and parents, not to mention the teachers.

Sonia was more specific about what was missing, and how it impacted teachers' responses:

> to be honest, it's not the kids' fault; it's an adult issue that needs to be addressed. [In schools] today, it's academic. We've got the test prep… and social development [is the thing that] gets cut. It's okay to tell Pre-K and K what community means, but past that there's no room for it within the schedule. A lot of teachers are good and they know how important it is so they weave it in but there's no support for social development and that's where bullying stems from.

"The schedule" loomed large in participants' conversations about bullying, but they did not always focus on the importance of lightening up on the load of curricular prescriptions that teachers must follow. Michael lamented the loss of having room to use curriculum to specifically address bullying:

> Curriculum should drive the instruction. [It should] weed out potential for bullying and it should create critical thinking for enough of them to be able to think, 'that sounds like something that happened to me and maybe I shouldn't be doing that.' If they make strong enough connections, they start to think better to see the world as a different place. If they don't make those connections, they'll get stuck in their box and that is it. And that box may be full of bullies…. But there's not enough time to do this because the [prescribed] curriculum takes so much time…. Bullying gets pushed to the back burner.

Clearly, teachers have many ideas about how to address bullying but are hampered by what stands in the way of paying attention to the problem in the first place.

It is not, however, only teachers with a sensitive radar for bullying who chafe at the lack of time available for social and emotional issues in the classroom, and the high

stakes that impose this. Anita, who was comfortable with a certain level of teasing, was also adamant that bullying awareness could – and should – be made more of a priority:

> I feel like there's been a lot of emphasis on record-keeping and data-keeping which is antithetical to a lot of teachers' styles, mine included. But because it is such a mandate -- it is *so* heavily emphasized from the top down – from Arne Duncan down – that I feel like it is a big part of my job to do it and it gets done even though I hate, hate, hate it because -- you know what? I know that my job rides on it! [pounds the table for emphasis]. I'm getting a lot of pressure to be this kind of teacher. I feel like if this [bullying] were really taken seriously, then there could be that same kind of trickle down effect *[Interviewer: You're describing not trickle but a push]*. The culture from the top down – it almost has to be imposed…. I hate to set it up as a hierarchy, but let's face it, that's what it is. If bullying were truly *really* on top of the radar, it would be given as much emphasis from administrators and districts and teachers as testing."

Putting her finger on the tension between assessment-related and curricular mandates as well as the rhetoric about the importance of social and emotional learning put forth by local, state, and federal departments of education, she also gave voice to the bind in which this places teachers, and suggests a clear way out of this dilemma.

Discounting

As described earlier, many teachers equated any kind of teasing with bullying, and worked hard to address even mild teasing that came to their attention. Since so much teasing and bullying was out of their view – either overlooked in the press of their crowded days or deliberately hidden by students, it was, however, often difficult to live up to their ideals. But teachers did not always have a "no tolerance" policy for teasing. In fact, they sometimes chose to err on the side of (an interesting kind of) caution when it came to identifying behavior as bullying. In these situations, they would simply

consider the label too extreme for the behavior in question, thereby exempting themselves from the responsibility to intervene.

When so pressed for time to address such a complex, fluid phenomenon, and in the dark about a clear, concise collectively determined sense of "best practices" when it came to bullying, it is not surprising to learn that some of their responses reflected the cultural acceptance of – or discounting of – bullying, so clearly seen in the textbook analysis. If it is too hard to a) know where it falls and b) what to do if it is serious enough to require their attention, it may be easier for teachers to push it into teasing territory where it is seen as less serious, and requires less of a response. But if it really did need attention in the first place, ignoring it does not make it disappear, and it is likely to surface in unintended – though, if clearly thought through, not unexpected – ways.

Discounting bullying took many forms. Alison described a "no tolerance" policy for any incident of bullying that was brought to her attention. But just as her definition of bullying focused on the target,[41] her remedies were directed squarely at the target, as well: "I will sit down and have a lengthy conversation: who, what, how, when. 'Have you done anything to this person in the past, how does it make you feel, have you stood up to this person?' We always have a conversation about how to react when you feel like you're being bullied or someone is insulting you or trying to make you feel bad. Usually the child will tell me whether or not they feel like it's a situation they want to try to handle on their own or if it's something they need help with. Sometimes I'm just the judge of it – depending on the severity of it." When the remedy is designed to "fix" the target, the

[41] "When one person makes another person feel bad about themselves in any way.…[but] to define it as actual bullying it has to happen more than once…The same action might be bullying in one case and not another depending on the effect it has on them…or if on the receiving end they handle it in a way that doesn't make them feel bad."

bullying behavior itself has a tendency to slide quietly into the margins, undisturbed and unquestioned.

In describing one of the more serious cases of bullying she had dealt with as a principal (with a fourth grade girl as a target), Alison explained more about accepting the status quo:

> One of the pieces of advice I gave to her is you need to defend yourself in a positive way…. I also talked about when to get an adult involved because of her age. I felt like her first line of defense shouldn't be telling an adult at this age because it's the kind of thing you'll start to get teased for when you're in middle school if you run and tattle the first time someone bothers you.

Later, she described a similar target-based approach with four year old son in a chronic bullying situation with an older cousin:

> I'll tell him, 'you can't let someone talk to you like that!' There are times when I've been standing there and I've said to him 'use your words.' And he'll say 'stop!' And I'll say 'use your words even stronger.' And he'll say, 'I said, stop!' And I'll say, 'did he listen?' And he'll say, 'no.' And I'll say 'you're not strong enough.' And my nephew will keep antagonizing and I'm trying not jump in and defend [my son]… trying to get him to use his voice.

Rather than addressing the bullying itself, the problem is defined as her son's lack of strength and voice, and implicitly places the responsibility for change on him.

Although some teachers did, at times, define bullying behavior away as "just teasing" or not being serious enough to merit attention, others described feeling unsupported and alone when trying to address what they *did* believe was bullying. Edwin observed that

> I think adults often don't know what to do about it so it's easy to try to marginalize it as a problem – [to] look the other way or say it's a natural part of adolescence. Like hotels don't want to say they have bedbugs.… Very quickly – and this is a problem – [the adults in charge] run through their short list of what they know to do. And then they don't know what to do anymore so they don't want to deal with it: 'I'm done. It's not done but I'm done. I don't know what else to do.' And I think that's what we all think emotionally or internally: 'I'm done and I don't know what else to do. I can't deal with this and I'm not going to because you're pushing me in places I'm not comfortable going.'

<u>"Tell an adult"</u>

Clearly, bullying behavior has a long history of being overlooked. But even when teachers *are* motivated to notice it, much bullying takes place beyond adults' gaze, often intentionally so (Craig & Pepler,1997). Respondents were well aware of this. Sonia explained that

> what we see is different than what is out there. I tend to see bullying behavior when it's not my time on the clock – recess, lunchtime, before school, after school, bussing. In the classroom…I don't see it. Not to say that it doesn't happen. I think it happens more often that adults are aware of.

In describing his year dealing with a bullying wildfire that started in his classroom and spread unchecked throughout the entire grade, Edwin observed: "I came away from that year believing that the bullying happens without the teacher knowing. The kids are very good at pulling it off." If it is difficult to address even when you see it, it is even more of a challenge to uncover it when it is hidden in the margins.

When Michael was asked how much of a problem bullying was at his school, he answered,

> that's hard for me to say because it's obvious that the kids won't do it in front of me so whatever I hear it's all kind of hearsay….I don't really see it, period. It's

> always someone who tells me either in desperation or because it's the first thing that came up after recess and it's still fresh in their minds….There's so much stuff I'm not hearing about and not seeing and there's this undertone of bullying that's happening but because we're so caught up in the day-to-day stuff it's so difficult to just squash it.

The perception that teachers don't care about – or don't have enough time to address – bullying might explain why targets and bystanders are reluctant to tell adults in the first place.

In a strange way, the discounting of bullying might also be connected to powerful prohibitions against such telling. If bullying is "normal" behavior, complaining about it is indicative of one's inability to handle mundane reality and a fatal sign of weakness. Michael described how

> when you go to an adult it's looked down upon by your peers. Because you're giving up someone else and you're going outside of your peer group. It's a form of weakness and you're ostracized. It's a vicious cycle. That's why I'm saying I really don't know how to go about it because it is a vicious cycle because you tell kids, 'go tell a teacher' who can or cannot be effective in quelling the situation. At the same time it's fodder for other kids to say 'oh why did you do that? You can't deal with it yourself?' And the kid who was a victim is even a bigger victim because it's coming from all sides.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the reluctance to ask for help or bring bullying to someone else's attention does not apply only to children. Maria explained that, in her previous school where she taught first grade, "it was the type of school where you didn't go to the administration for support. It was thought of as a weakness" and so she got used to dealing with bullying on her own. The veils of ignorance leave no realm uncovered,

ensuring that change in one area will be virtually impossible without addressing the dynamic on whatever level it exists.

Personal experience with bullying

Discounting bullying, seeing it as a normal part of childhood, blaming the target, and just generally staying out of it were all approaches respondents were familiar with from their childhood. In fact, almost all teachers interviewed had some experience as a target of bullying as a child, even if the memories were not easily accessible. In her individual interview, Anita said she had never been bullied, but in the pair interview, she suddenly remembered "very painful" teasing in elementary school -- completely forgotten until that moment and never mentioned before to anyone.

In many cases, this early experience became the touchstone of a promise to themselves to somehow address bullying as a teacher. Although Jennifer could not recall the term bullying being used during her childhood, she was harassed for years in elementary school by the same girl, with no adult intervention. It ended inexplicably and unceremoniously, leaving lifelong scars and a commitment to "call out" any type of violence she witnessed. Maria was also bullied in elementary and middle school, but never told an adult.

> I just would say I didn't like school. And I didn't -- it took me until college for me to like school…I felt like this is the way it is. I knew I wasn't the type of person who was going to fight back. I knew it was going to be really difficult so I just kind of went with it. It is what it is. Which is why when I speak to the kids, I have a different approach with the bully and victim. I want them to understand that it's not okay. No one has a right to do that.… I wanted to be the teacher I didn't have and be the voice of kids who are really shy.

Michael was also motivated by his childhood experience, but in a different way. He explained: “When I was growing up if you got bullied, it was like, you fight back! It was like … hunter and prey. If you didn’t fight back you were just the target. If you showed any weakness –if one person was able to get into you then there would be several others waiting.” He continued, “it made me want to make a difference in terms of kids who get bullied. It made me aware of it but I realized I didn’t have many resources. I had to rely on other people, prior experience. Honestly, sometimes the way they do interrogation on these TV shows.” Without clear guidelines for intervening, teachers’ commitments to themselves and their students were as notable in their tenacity as they were varied in their approaches. It is worth considering how children might make sense of this variability as they navigate through their experiences of bullying.

Just as children have told researchers time and time again (Atlas & Pepler, 1998; Espelage & Asidao, 2001; Garfalo, Siegel & Laub, 1987; Olweus, 1991), adults were noticeably absent in these stories. Although Michael said he felt protected by his teachers because he was a good student, for the most part teachers did not notice or step in, and parents were not told. During adolescence, Edwin was harassed relentlessly during which he was called “very demeaning names,” chained to his locker, and locked inside his locker. When asked if adults intervened with his experience, Edwin replied vehemently, “Never!!! No! No way!” *(Interviewer: And teachers saw it?)* “Oh, come on! Adults saw it! And they would just say ‘come on guys, stop it.’ Or not even.” Edwin did raise it with his father, but his response was “very traditional: ‘beat ’em up.’ [He said], ‘I guess you had it coming to you.’” Given his father’s reaction, coupled

with teachers' responses when they saw him being bullied, it is no wonder he chose to remain silent and "tough it out."

The one adult who played a pivotal role in helping a participant navigate through some painful bullying as a child still maintained the cloak of invisibility around the phenomenon. Sonia described being "extremely shy" as a child. She was the new kid in town, and overweight, as well. Other children made constant fun of her; she

> just hid behind the hood on my sweatshirt and spent a lot of time in the nurse's office. The nurse [for me] was there as the nurse. I had to say my head hurt or I was sick to my stomach to get my needs addressed. She knew what I needed because she was insightful but it wasn't as if [it was out in the open]. [That] marginalizes the need for it; [it's] not really important. If you need a band aid that warrants [the official status of "injury"] but if you need some emotional support, we don't have time for it. So we learn those lessons that that's not important and that's probably why we don't see 75% of [bullying] because we don't have time for it in the circus.

Learning from adults that they "don't have time" to address bullying sends a powerful message to young people. As Maria said, "I think a lot of people when they know they're not being watched in their minds it justifies it" – for targets, perpetrators, and bystanders alike.

The fact that so much of respondents' childhood experience of bullying happened under the radar did not mean that it did not elicit strong reactions, even from bystanders. Alison remembered "a lot of bullying on the school bus in middle school and I remember just watching. [Neither kids nor adults intervened or spoke up]. I remember feeling bad for the victim and a lot of hatred and anger toward the person that was

bullying but would never even dream about doing anything."[42] These early experiences were often formative – as the roots of a commitment to address bullying as a teacher (as Maria and Michael described), or of a certain measure of hopelessness, as Edwin described: "I don't think you can change people. If I grew up and my dad was tough on me am I going to be this empathetic teacher who's going to be very sensitive to my kids? Maybe not. I might be a good teacher knowing my curriculum, but…" In any case, most teachers described feeling overwhelmed by the task, with few guidelines to help them navigate.

With little existing in the school community or their professional knowledge upon which to draw, teachers cobbled together their best response, most often feeling like one lone voice, swimming against the current. When they did intervene, there was often a sense of carrying the whole load – figuring it out, managing the stigma of being the one to disrupt the carefully cultivated continuum of violence – on their back, with the constant reminder that, as Sonia described, "there's other people watching and there's that whole social dance that's involved."

It was often as much of a solitary process for the teacher who chooses to intervene as it can be for the targeted student. This is not to equate the two experiences, but rather to point out that the layers of silence veil all players and settings. Edwin described his student who had been bullied as "very outgoing and charismatic" at the beginning of the year, but

[42] Interestingly, what heartened her (in the absence of adult intervention) comes straight from the pages of the traditional approach to bullying: kids need to learn to stand up to bullies, and find the strength to do so is a rite of passage.

> his sense of self and popularity was not received by his peers in a way that worked well for him. He was always the one who would get picked on, be the butt of jokes. He became the 'it' kid. Lunch – it was vicious. His property was getting defaced… things written on his locker that were inappropriate. And then he sort of woke up to it – 'this isn't funny anymore.' But then it had gained so much momentum that it was spreading like wildfire. It happened over time. It's a pretty simple linear thing when you look at it: child likes attention, child seeks attention, kids give him attention, the attention somehow turns negative and maintains negative and continues its trajectory forward and gains momentum, and then it spread outside of the classroom.

Edwin was worried enough about the child's emotional and developmental health that he called a meeting with school psychologist, which led to a discussion with the child's parents, the principal, and other second grade teachers. He had class discussions about bullying in general (to "try and create a positive community without highlighting anyone or any particular incidents"), spoke with the target and made sure he knew he could come and talk with him at any time, and continued to press the issue with the school psychologist and principal. But ultimately, he felt like no one else took it as seriously as he did, including the parents of the target. All the adults "talked about it but unfortunately he was isolated. He didn't have one friend. I learned yesterday that he left the school [over the summer, and would not be returning in September]." Not only did he shoulder the burden of pushing the problem to the forefront of everyone's attention, he also worried in isolation: "I did everything I thought I could do for this kid and I just felt I didn't have enough in my toolbox. I really worry about him."[43] Ironically, even though Edwin's response to the situation was remarkably comprehensive and

[43] In a casual conversation later in the year at a citywide training session, Edwin told me that he was worried about the security of his job for the next year. In a seemingly unrelated incident, he had been called into the director's office and told he was not being a "team player" – for something completely unrelated to his response to the bullying situation. It was made very clear that his actions were under close scrutiny for evidence of his commitment to "the team." While it is entirely speculative to connect his tenacity with addressing the bullying situation with this surveillance, it is interesting to note.

empathetic, he perceived it as inadequate because the child left the school without a successful resolution to the problem.

Sonia also described a sense of working alone, even as she drew in other adults to address the problem. The mother of the girl who had been bitten by a classmate in the context of a chronic bullying situation told Sonia that her daughter had become fearful of coming to school because she was being "picked on" by other girls. Although Sonia had not seen it in the classroom, she discovered that another student had been forcing this girl to give her money to work on the computers in the classroom, and to give her dessert at lunch. Sonia, the principal, and the guidance counselor met with the bully, both sets of parents, and the target. The mother of the bully was "very offended" because her daughter was being bullied by someone in an older grade, and she felt that that behavior had not been addressed. As Sonia described, "it opened up the hierarchy of bullying." She started "teaching all around it – I had all kinds of conversations, lunch clubs with the girls, went to the lunch room." The situation seemed to be resolving,

> and then one day the victim came to me after lunch rubbing her arm with a rash all over her arm. And I was busy; it was my circus time … The nurse was at lunch so she came back and it was really red and kind of traveling up her arm. I told her to set the timer and go back in 45 minutes. It continues to be crazy; the timer goes off; I don't even hear the timer; she hears the timer and goes to the nurse. I didn't even know until she came back with the nurse. The nurse pulled me aside and said 'that's a bite mark.' Apparently the bully wanted those four girls to bite themselves to "mark themselves" to show they were part of the group. The other three did not actually bite but this girl did bite so hard it bled. The rash was a reaction to her saliva getting into her bloodstream. And it seemed to me that people thought it was an issue but no one seemed to take it as seriously as the nurse and myself. I found myself being really nasty to the bully and then I realized she needed help too.... I had weekly conversations with both sets of parents. I had to set consequences but first had to develop them myself. I had to make time for open conversation. It was not easy.

Skillfully negotiating the barriers to effectively addressing bullying, Sonia managed to craft an impressive counterweight to the cultural momentum that discounts, disguises, and sometimes even supports bullying. Still, it is poignant to hear that the only sense of community that teachers described came from piecing together (on stolen time) a sense of what others (from such disparate sources as colleagues to crime shows on television) might do to address bullying. Michael explains, "you scrape your way through it. If you're a teacher, you *have* to figure it out because obviously the template that you have is not good for everybody. That's how you develop your bag of tricks – it takes time and learning from other, more experienced teachers." It should be noted, however, that this is far from a formalized process. Teachers caught glimpses of their colleagues in passing – and absorbed whatever else caught their attention to create the approaches that they thought might work for them – all with virtually no guidance from administrators or other sources, and always in the shadow of cultural cautionary tales about "speaking up."

What teachers need and want to address bullying

Some responses to the open-ended survey question that asked for suggestions of other ways of dealing with bullying addressed the individual level: support for both the target and bully, since "they are both struggling to have positive relationships"; praising a bully's positive behavior to boost their low self esteem[44]; zero tolerance; and avoiding or distracting bullies. Others focused on the classroom: empathy training; "social thinking" lessons; ongoing group discussions, conflict resolution, building communities

[44] This common perception has been called into question with recent (and consistent) findings that bullies, in fact, do not have low self esteem. On the contrary, they have been found to have average or above average self esteem (Rigby, 1996; Seals & Young, 2003).

within classrooms and the school building; and classes in socialization. Approaches that had a wider reach were rarely mentioned (with the exception of suggesting assembly programs), although one respondent noted that “we need to talk and listen to our students – they are not listened to and heard enough.”

On the most basic level, the necessary changes in how we address bullying have to actually make sense and be workable for teachers -- the professionals in charge of students during the school day. This is no small task. Michael observed that teachers “don’t have time to ingest what’s out there in terms of help for us or how we can figure it out because we’re so caught up in curriculum [that adds up to more than 100% of our available time].” As Sonia noted, “you can have rules and regulations slapped up anywhere but if they’re not breathing, they’re just paint on the walls…. It’s that disconnect between policy and action. Actually, you know policy protects you because ‘it’s all here on paper. Oh see, here, it’s all dated. The posters are up; everything’s been distributed.’ When we assess if it’s working or not – what does it really look like?” She asked “how do we take these rigid rules and regulations and structure on paper and infuse that in a way that supports the needs of the classroom environment, the school environment?” She explained that it is difficult to “fully convey what it really looks like. You’re missing the auditory piece, the smell. There’s just a lot going on. And the clock…. Time isn’t given to reflect. I’m reflecting on my bike ride home. Something needs to be done – that’s all I can say. It’s not going to help itself.” In the same way, the rules and regulations are one-dimensional, and somehow need to become “multi-media” to encompass and address the complexities of a classroom, with all the players, stakeholders, history, and hope fully accounted for.

When asked in the individual interviews about what they would need to be able to respond most effectively to bullying, most teachers referred vaguely to a hope that increasing levels of awareness with tragedies like Columbine and the Tyler Clementi case would help. They stressed that since there are many possible approaches, and that a "magic elixir" does not exist, it is difficult to know how to proceed. But when responding to existing mandates and laws in the pair interviews, they were much more articulate and resourceful in describing what they needed to successfully respond to bullying.

In the first place, they asked for clarity. Anita noted,

> if it is a mandate, the first step is to make teachers aware of this mandate…. No teacher in their right mind would want bullying going on in their class. But if it's the law, I do feel there has to be some kind of way to educate teachers to try to stop it or at least curtail it.

As Jennifer asked, "who brings the information to us? There's supposed to be a flow from the administration. It's not flowing now." In order to put these directives into practice, teachers said they needed carefully considered descriptions of steps to take – something that is currently lacking. In responding to the information contained in the "Dear Colleague" letter sent to school districts and colleges from the U.S. Department of Education, Michael noted that such guidelines do not significantly impact his ability to address the bullying he encounters as a teacher because

> I don't know how that affects how we can treat it. I'd have to know – let's say if this kid's civil liberties were violated, who do I go to? Do I treat it as just a bullying thing and just go to [my principal] or do I go to Civil Liberties Union? Where do they go with it from there? I think they're trying to make it easier but they're opening it up a little too broadly for us to be able to figure out which area to go to. What are we supposed to do? I don't know.

Clearly communicating expectations to teachers is just the tip of the iceberg, however. According to teachers interviewed, this guidance also needs to be informed by teachers' experience. As Jennifer explained, "I have mixed feelings. We want the federal government to be more involved and lay out more specifics for us and we're upset that they're not. And they don't give enough money to support it. But at the same time, they're not the ones who are with the kids every day in school. We are the ones. I can understand why they left things kind of broad. They're not working with the kids, they're the lawmakers." In her collaborative research with teachers, Miller (1990) observed that teachers have not "been prepared, either as students or … as educators, to consider [themselves] as participants or creators in teaching, research and curriculum processes and constructions" (p. 3). In her words, Jennifer speaks back to this construction of teachers as "transmitters and receivers of others' constructions of knowledge" (Miller, p. 3).

Teachers also spoke of the need for consistent, school-wide definitions and boundaries. As Michael described, at the present time "there's no textbook. There's no one particular script to use." In some ways, this allows for the flexibility needed to account for teacher's individuality (currently under siege in the standardized model of data and assessment-driven education in this country). But if it is so ill-defined so as to be a vacuum, then anything – even blatant ignorance – goes. Maria was clear in her belief that each school needed an approach that "is not necessarily based on teacher tolerance. I think we have to have a consistent definition and a consistent plan in place."

At the same time, the problem itself is extremely nuanced. Respondents suggest that, depending on the response of the target, the same behavior could be either extremely damaging, or nothing to worry about. This does not mean that the focus of our efforts should be on the target alone, however. As Maria explained, the first step is "to be careful to really watch and observe what the kids are doing because there are some kids that will laugh along because they're afraid…you have to look and really see is this kid just doing this [laughing] for another reason." But identifying bullying is just the first step – and hardly a simple one. After that, teachers need to know *how* to intervene. Flexibility is key here, as well. Both Maria and Alison agreed that "giving a bunch of resources to administrators and suggestions on how to implement it would be really helpful" but that it would be "good if there would be a selection of programs and school can choose."

Flexibility to adapt a general approach to a particular setting is important, but if the guidelines are so broad as to be essentially empty rhetoric, they are of little use. And if they have been created without teachers' input (the "ones who are with the kids every day in school") they often miss the mark in the first place. Jennifer also recommended that the information be shared through professional development rather than through written directives. Specifically, she said "we need professionals who have worked with kids in a proven program to come and do some training – for us to really learn from people who have been in the trenches." But this is an intensive process that must be well-funded, and if bullying is high on the rhetoric list but low on the list of priorities that are backed by practical support, the best-intentioned efforts are likely to founder.

As they indicated in their survey responses, teachers also wanted to take a strong stand against bullying once it could be identified. A leading bullying expert visited Edwin's school to help manage the bullying crisis in second grade. As he described it, "her thing was very much, 'let's nail it.' [She said], 'I'll be out in public -- I don't even know the kids and I'll be in the subway and I'll see it, I'll just nail it. If I see somebody being nasty to somebody else -- manipulative, mean intent, I just say, 'stop. You're being mean and stop now.' In the classroom, you target it in front of everybody so everybody sees it happen and you just close it down and you move on. And you just do it. None of this, 'let's get together and talk.' None of this, 'let's go out of the room and talk.' In front of everyone you address it. It's a public thing." In other words, bring it out of the shadows and both name and prohibit it – not in the principal's office or a corner of the classroom or in the hallway, but as a statement to everyone who is involved (target, bully and bystanders).

At the same time, they point to the importance of further steps that dig more deeply into the problem. Maria explained,

> yes, there should be consequences. [But] I discount that. I mean, I think they need to have one, but why are they doing that and how are we going to try to change that? And I don't think we really have that information and a plan in place to really deal with the kids that just a [disciplinary action] isn't enough. I know as a teacher I felt that way. I didn't really know what to do…. We really approach bullying with band aids. I feel like [our approach has been] more about the consequence than actually looking at the behavior. Teachers really need a lot more support in findings ways to deal with it and dealing with it -- especially when it's not really happening. That's a really good time to have those kinds of conversations.

But addressing the origins of the behavior and working to prevent it before it happens takes time – something that is clearly in very short supply in classrooms at the moment.

After having heard about the laws and mandates currently in place to address bullying, Edwin and Anita were asked, “are we done dealing with bullying?” Edwin responded, “it sounds like we haven’t even started. Really! *[Interviewer: What’s missing?]* What’s missing is bringing it into the classroom in an organic way, making it part of the culture of the school, the culture of your classroom.” Obviously, this is not a simple process. He continues, “I think that’s really up to the teachers [and] their style.” Balancing the need for a strong stance against bullying with an understanding of teachers’ individual tolerance levels and approaches is challenging, to say the least. But the whole enterprise – from start to finish – is challenging. In Alison’s words, “it’s just so hard because you can’t be the eyes and ears of kids 24/7. It’s more about teaching a way of life – a virtue.” Such a process does not happen overnight with the issuing of a simple decree. Michael explained, “it takes time. We need a group of people in a school who are dedicated to it…. This is not voluntary. This isn’t like, ‘I’m going to donate some of my time.’ This needs to be funded. It’s a big undertaking. It’s not just something one person can do and it’s a process. I think in the past it wasn’t addressed because no one knows how to deal with it.” To move forward –to create a longer list than the one Edwin described adults as running through so quickly before they give up – we need to figure out, with “groups of people in school” how to “deal with” bullying – the messy, on the ground work to which Brown (2008) refers in her discussion of best practices in bullying prevention.

Erica, who had actually experienced some severe workplace bullying (at her previous school) believed that a team approach is the only way to successfully address bullying:

> By whole team I mean every single member in the school -- whether it's the custodian, the aide, the lunchroom lady, the principal, the security guard, the teacher, the kid. This is the responsibility of everybody who is a part of this community and this is what it means. If you see somebody who's saying something that's not okay, it's your responsibility to say 'that's not okay.' It's that whole passing the responsibility [thing] – 'oh well that's their job, oh, she's responsible.' No! It's everybody's responsibility.

But she did not hold out much hope for the possibility of this happening: "the problem is the system...there's the school system and the system in the building but there's also the familial situation and the community situation where these kids were coming from. [We need] teachers, administrators and parents all to decide this is enough of an issue to address...That child would have to see every single person in their world working on it – their peers, their teachers, their parents, their administrators and I guess I have doubts about the possibility of that happening." Interestingly, her doubts stemmed from her acknowledgment that she herself questioned how bad bullying really was for children. Michael had similar doubts about the feasibility of change in the current climate: "I don't think they make it clear enough for us. I think again it's the priority thing because we're so curriculum-oriented that stuff like this falls to the wayside unless it's made a priority."

Some respondents pointed to a need for even deeper change that must take place even before teachers step into the classroom before the first time. Even in the academic realm, teaching requires close attention to complicated processes. Teachers

make judgment calls all the time about where a student is in terms of a particular skill or behavior (identification), and then how best to meet their needs given where they stand at the moment (intervention). As Alison pointed out, they learn these nuanced skills in their teacher education classes and student teaching practice. If we are to have the best chance at dealing with bullying, she recommended that mandates be focused at that level. Just as our students need to learn (through deep reflective practice) where to draw the line between normative behavior and bullying that is unacceptable, so too do our teachers.

When teachers talked about incidents in which they did not get involved, they most often described not having a sense of efficacy or control. One teacher taught in a room that faced a courtyard where students from both the elementary and middle school played at recess.

> I would hear a lot of stuff happening during especially with the middle school kids – how they would talk to each other. All kinds of curse words, and a lot of teasing, and a lot of making fun of each other. I would be too scared to go out there and say something because they're older. I would think if they were upset they would retaliate, not physically or verbally against me but subconsciously I would think maybe they would come into the studio and trash it. Part of the other reason that I wouldn't say anything is that I wouldn't think it would be very effective because I don't know them. If I heard something really bad, I would say something. But what's really bad and what's not so bad? That's an interesting question. I would need to go to the teachers of these students and I wouldn't even know who these teachers were. Would they even do anything? [There are] lots of question marks. If I would confront misbehavior it would be because I felt in control. Like I knew the kids, I knew their parents, I knew their other teachers. I knew something would get done. With kids who weren't under my supervision there's fear and there was also a sense of futility.[45]

[45] Other teachers echoed this fear of retaliation, even with their own elementary students. Anita had a 4th grade student who threw chairs when provoked, and another 4th grader who targeted both students and teachers and would simply storm out of the room when confronted. In both cases, the situation was resolved only when the students left the school (one by graduating; one by being to a moved to a more restrictive setting).

Most of the other cases of non-intervention involved students who were not "their own." Sonia was riding her bike home from work when she saw a group of high school students surrounding two kids.

> The crowd was shouting 'Do it! Do it!' I'm riding my bike and I know it's not okay but I kept riding by. Part of me was afraid, there was this kind of mob mentality. I didn't intervene and I should have. *[Interviewer: Was there was anything other than fear that stopped you?]* Tired. I was tired. It was a long day and it was that whole thing of I'm off the clock I'm just trying to get home. I just want to go home and do homework with my kids and get dinner going so I can have my evening and fuel for the next day. I don't know if it was fear or being completely drained and wondering, 'where are the adults for these kids? Why do I have to do this? Where are they?' Had I had more energy I probably would have intervened … you can't be on all the time."

Sonia's story captures so many of the challenges that teachers described as they wrestled with how best to respond to bullying. Fatigue, a sense of being almost insurmountably over-extended, a sense of responsibility that extends beyond the reach afforded to them by the current educational climate – all these factors sapped their energy and left them ill-equipped to take on what the legislators have decreed, or what teachers themselves would wish. At the same time, they displayed a remarkable tenacity in their commitment to address any bullying that *did* come to their attention, and their desire for a comprehensive approach that would both support their efforts in the classroom and work on levels that could extend beyond their reach.

Chapter 5. Discussion

In many ways, the intractability of the bullying problem is a policy-induced dilemma that reflects a deep and unacknowledged social and cultural ambivalence about the intersection of aggression, race, class, and gender, along with assumptions about the role of public education and a troubling habit to place responsibility for these dynamics on the shoulders of individuals rather than explore their tangled roots. Decried by political leaders, normalized in teachers' pedagogical training and the larger world around them, and buried under current educational policy, bullying places individual teachers and students center stage in an over-determined drama not of their making. Everyone has a role – bullies who choose settings beyond adults' gaze to enact their prescribed cultural scripts; targets who don't tell; teachers who have their own history of toughing it out and whose attention is consumed by standards and assessments and the threat of losing their jobs; and bystanders who take it all in. It has an almost daily familiarity until it finally explodes into a kind of resistance more detrimental than anyone could have imagined. The array of solutions for this state of affairs is, unfortunately, in step with a national punitive tone that is palpable far beyond the classroom, and seems unable to successfully address the violence that we decry.

In the present study, teachers' stories revealed that, despite mandates that bullying be addressed in teacher education programs, teachers receive little – if any – guidance in their pre-service training. A similar lack of attention to the topic was found in this study's brief survey of a selection of readings used in foundational Child Development classes at a progressive graduate school of education over the past 50 years. In addition, despite the flood of anti-bullying laws in the past 13 years, teachers

were unanimous in their reports of not having been informed of them, and their lack of awareness of the implications of these laws for their practice. This is particularly troubling since the legal arena is where we have placed the most attention in our anti-bullying efforts. Participants' experience clearly demonstrates that, at least in terms of official commitments to – and guidelines for – addressing bullying, they are working in the dark. This leaves them vulnerable to other cultural forces that have the effect of thwarting rather than supporting efforts to address bullying, such as the current educational climate and the cultural constructions of masculinity and race.

Even though both *No Child Left Behind* and *Race to the Top* present simple (though enormous and urgent) problems and simple (also enormous and urgent) solutions to the very complex problem of "our failing schools" (Keiser, 2005), the casualties of the imposition of this framework are anything but simple. Listening to the teachers in this study describe their struggles to address bullying, it seems clear that the dissonance between policies like *No Child Left Behind* and *Race to the Top* and the United States Department of Education's recent focus on ending bullying has left teachers in an impossible bind, with little support or even acknowledgment of the difficulty of the situation to begin with. Leading bullying researchers Pepler and Craig (2007) have underscored the need to address bullying in the moment. When the adults in charge of the classroom and playground environment do not intervene in bullying incidents, everyone involved – those who bully, those who are bullied, and those who witness it – learns a powerful – although perhaps unintended – lesson that bullying does not merit enough attention to be addressed, ultimately indicating that the problematic behavior is itself acceptable. If Pepler and Craig are right, then teachers (and students)

need these moments, which teachers describe as becoming harder and harder to carve out from the dictates of *No Child Left Behind* and *Race to the Top*. This is not to suggest that these policies are responsible for bullying, but that the fallout from them may have exacerbated an already deeply rooted problem, and effectively blocked efforts to address it, despite our professed desires to eliminate it.

On the one hand, the disconnect between policy and practice demands a public response. As committees work in Albany (the New York state capital) to give shape to the first anti-bullying law in the state's history, they have an extraordinary opportunity in their hands. If the culture of bullying occurs in large part because we have not had the capacity to talk about it, now is the time to open up all the conversations raging in the margins – about what data-driven instruction and high stakes assessment have done to the capacity and ability of teachers to teach – and children to learn; about how this imperative leaves no room for social and emotional issues, let alone engaging, content-rich curriculum that fosters critical thinking, independence and curiosity; about how masculinity is enacted on and policed by boys and everyone around them; about how aggression is simultaneously ignored, accepted, decried and sensationalized; and about how easily and dangerously we criminalize behavior that is, in fact, inevitable given our actions as well as our collective inaction.

Currently occupied with dealing with demoralized, disengaged and angry students, as well as their own demoralization, disengagement and anger; and surrounded by mountains of rubrics and assessments that never seem to make it out of the binder once they are completed (except to put their jobs in jeopardy), the words of the teachers in this study implore us to begin these conversations in their stead – at

least for now. Rather than vilifying teachers in a race to punish, legislators might understand bullying as a complex problem that will require teachers' time, energy and expertise to address, and ensure that these critically important resources are not consumed by the collection of data that is poised to be used against them (in the case of time and energy), or publicly discredited (in the case of their expertise and professional status). In stark opposition to the view that teachers are to blame for the current crisis in student achievement and behavior, teachers in the current study presented cogent and comprehensive analyses of what it would take to successfully address bullying, as well as a call for bringing their experience to bear on the problem. If we could heed their call, all of us might then be able to shift our focus from stemming the tide of students' rage fueled by the intersection of a set of impossible cultural scripts, toward beginning to understand and redirect the forces that give rise to bullying in the first place. But maybe that's too good to be possible. Maybe our addiction to the headlines and discomfort with the truth is just too strong. In that case, the ongoing parade of headlines announcing more bullying-related violence should come as no surprise.

But the story doesn't end here. Participants' words raise critically important questions of why so much of our collective energy has been taken up with creating dictates for teachers to follow while at the same time failing to inform them of these expectations. But, especially in the pair interviews, their words begin to, in Maxine Greene's (1995) words, "crack the codes…, uncover that in which they are embedded…, [and] appropriate visions and perspectives legitimately theirs" (p. 48). In these interviews, it was especially evident that "interstices can be found in the

structures; communities can be created; desires can be released" (Greene, p. 56) even as schools seem structured to silence teachers (Gitlin & Russell, 1994). In these spaces, teachers were able to locate, name and imagine possibilities that could counter "the nameless, the odorless, the ubiquitous" (Greene, p. 45) status quo that values the pronouncements of experts working at a great remove from daily life in classrooms over teachers' experiential knowledge. Noticing how the wisdom of this knowledge rushed in to fill the space provided by the pair interviews is a critical lifeline. Creating and nurturing such spaces, even against "the cloud of givenness" (Greene, p. 47) connects teachers to a sense of possibility and hope (Giroux, 1988) that is urgently needed by everyone affected by bullying. Twemlow, Fonagy, & Sacco (2010) remind us that "dissociation is a violent process, and the goal of any intervention is the transformation of brute power into passionate statement and respectful communication" (p. 75). If there is a way to name and hold accountable the institutional practices that both create and deny the dynamics that give rise to the problem in the first place, while at the same time intentionally and tenaciously creating space – where none seems to exist – for teachers to deeply reflect on their individual practices, perhaps there is hope to "recover our own possibilities" (Grumet, 1988, p. xv), after all.

Limitations and directions for future research

Several limitations of this study should be mentioned, and have implications for future research. Teachers' responses to the hypothetical vignette on the HBQ describe their attitudes towards bullying rather than their actual behavior when faced with bullying in their classrooms or schools (Craig, Henderson, & Murphy, 2000). Social desirability and a number of other contextual factors such as teachers' focus of attention at a given

time; their degree of knowledge of the situation that they witness; and whether they witness bullying firsthand or hear about it from someone else can interfere with this method's ability to access what a teacher would do in practice. But the point of asking participants to respond to a hypothetical vignette was not to "create" a bullying situation in the absence of an opportunity for naturalistic observation. In fact, the use of vignettes has been shown to provide important information about people's cognitive resources and affective tendencies as they make decisions about how to interpret what they witness and hear about (Poulou, 2001).

In addition, although bullying was intentionally left undefined in order to allow participants to provide their own definitions, it is an enormous topic, varying by gender, ethnicity, and type (which now includes cyberbullying, an entirely new category with its own complications). As discussed in the literature review, this is a problem that is present in all research on bullying. It has become clear, for example, that bullying is experienced by boys and girls very differently, and a whole body of research exists that explores girls' bullying in particular (e.g., Besag, 2006; Simmons, 2002). This study's focus was, however, on the *process* by which teachers define, identify and respond to bullying, which meant that the slipperiness of the concept was itself a topic of concern rather than an assumed entity. It also meant that the default setting for many of the participants – and this study's focus – was bullying behavior in boys, even when bullying behavior in general was being discussed. Even though this is, in fact, an incomplete model of the construct, in some ways it was helpful since it mirrors the default setting in official responses to bullying – a central focus of this study. Work that unpacks this

definitional challenge might go far in understanding why so many of our efforts to address bullying do not yield the results we desire.

It would also have been interesting to have included children's perspectives on the experiences that teachers describe. In many cases, teachers in this study made assumptions about children's understandings of and motives relating to bullying that may or may not have been accurate. Future work that focuses on whether and *how* students understand the dissonance between their experience and teachers' responses – perhaps even through direct conversations between these two differently situated groups – might also illuminate the intractability of the problem.

Finally, it is important to point out that this study's small sample size limits its ability to offer definitive answers, as does the fact that participants taught at different schools, and were educated in different pre-service programs. Even with the small sample size, however, results showed that very differently situated teachers had almost identical responses in terms of their knowledge of mandates and exposure to anti-bullying training and pedagogy, which suggests that this is a subject to be explored more fully. In addition, given that so much of the official response to bullying has been crafted out of teachers' view, without their input, and that teachers' subjective experience that provides the context for bullying incidents is mostly uncharted territory, exploratory work is a significant area of interest at this point.

Conclusion

At the very least, teachers need to be fully informed of any bullying-related mandates or laws. It is also of critical importance to provide the resources teachers

need to comply with these directives. In the case of bullying, perhaps one of the most essential – and scarce – resources is time. It is incumbent on legislators to understand if – and how – they place competing demands on teachers with the various directives they hand down. Without such consideration, key elements of the original goals are bound to get lost in the translation and, in the case of bullying, everyone loses.

Simply informing teachers of directives that have been fashioned without their input – even if we ensure that the resources they need are in their hands – is unlikely to effect significant change. As the largest group of adults in charge of the classrooms, hallways and schoolyards in which bullying takes place, teachers experience – from their perspectives – must be front and center as solutions are designed if they are to have any chance of being effective. This may be a messier process that we would wish for, but neglecting this factor gives a green light to the status quo which, it seems we all agree, is a situation that cannot continue.

Appendix A

Teacher Survey

Even though there has been a recent flood of attention on bullying[46], rates of teacher intervention are still low. This study seeks to broaden existing work on bullying to include information about how teachers conceptualize, respond to, and educate through bullying in an effort to improve bullying intervention programs.

Before answering this survey, please take a few minutes to describe your definition of bullying:

How much of a problem do you think bullying is at your school?

How comfortable would you feel talking to colleagues about different types of bullying?

Peer/peer bullying:

Teacher/Teacher bullying:

Administrator/teacher bullying:

Teacher/student bullying:

[46] Although they are qualitatively different, the term bullying includes both physical (direct) and verbal (indirect) bullying.

Handling Bullying[1]

Teachers have alternative ways of dealing with incidents of bullying in a school.

To some extent, what is done depends on the circumstances in which the bullying takes place, and the severity of the bullying. It is, of course, sometimes difficult to generalize, but in answering the following questions, indicate what you think you ***might*** do.

Imagine the following scenario:

> **A 12-year-old student is being repeatedly teased and called unpleasant names by another, more powerful, student who has successfully persuaded other students to avoid the targeted person as much as possible. As a result, the victim of this behavior is feeling angry, miserable, and often isolated.**

Check the response that is closest to what you think you would do.

	I definitely would	I probably would	I am unsure	I probably would not	I definitely would not
1. I would insist that the bully "cut it out."	○	○	○	○	○
2. I would treat the matter lightly.	○	○	○	○	○
3. I would make sure the bully was suitably punished.	○	○	○	○	○
4. I would discuss the matter with my colleagues at school.	○	○	○	○	○
5. I would convene a meeting of students, including the bully or bullies, tell them what was happening, and ask them to suggest ways they could help improve the situation.	○	○	○	○	○
6. I would tell the victim to stand up to the bully.	○	○	○	○	○
7. I would make it clear to the bully that his or her behavior would not be tolerated.	○	○	○	○	○
8. I would leave it for someone else to sort out.	○	○	○	○	○
9. I would share my concern with the bully about what happened to the victim, and seek to get the bully to behave in a more caring and responsible manner.	○	○	○	○	○
10. I would let the students sort it out themselves.	○	○	○	○	○

	I definitely would	I probably would	I'm unsure	I probably would not	I definitely would not
11. I would suggest that the victim act more assertively.	○	○	○	○	○
12. I would discuss with the bully options from which he or she could make a choice in order to improve the situation.	○	○	○	○	○
13. I would ask the school counselor to intervene.	○	○	○	○	○
14. I would refer the matter to an administrator (e.g., principal, vice-principal, dean).	○	○	○	○	○
15. I would contact the victim's parents or guardians to express my concern about their child's well-being.	○	○	○	○	○
16. I would just tell the kids to "grow up."	○	○	○	○	○
17. I would encourage the victim to show that he or she could not be intimidated.	○	○	○	○	○
18. I would ignore it.	○	○	○	○	○
19. I would help the bully achieve greater self-esteem so that he or she would no longer want to bully anyone.	○	○	○	○	○
20. I would insist to the parents(s) or guardian(s) of the bully that the behavior must stop.	○	○	○	○	○
21. I would find the bully something more interesting to do.	○	○	○	○	○
22. I would advise the victim to	○	○	○	○	○

tell the bully to "back off."					

Please provide the following information about yourself. It will be used in addition to your responses about bullying to help understand how school teachers react to bullying. This information will remain confidential and will not be used for any other purposes. However, if you do not wish to answer any of the questions, feel free to omit. Thank you for sharing this personal information.

Gender: ○ Male ○ Female

Age: ○ 18-20 ○ 21-30 ○ 31-40 ○ 41- 50 ○ 51-60 ○ 60+

Years of experience as a teacher ○ 0 - 5 ○ 6 - 10 ○ 11-15 ○ 16 - 20 ○ 21 - 25 ○ 26+

Race/ethnic group ○ African American ○ Asian/Pacific Islander ○ Caucasian/White ○ Hispanic/Latino ○ Native American ○ Other

Does your school currently have an explicit anti-bullying policy? ○ Yes ○ No

Does your school currently use a specific anti-bullying program? ○ Yes ○ No

Have you had any training in bullying prevention/intervention? ○ Yes ○ No

If yes, please identify the type of training: ○ Pre-service training ○ In-service/Staff Development ○ Graduate Training ○ Professional Workshop/Conference ○ Other

After considering these questions about bullying, what other ways, if any, of dealing with the incident do you think <u>should</u> be included in dealing with the bullying problem?

[1] Used with Permission: Dr. Ken Rigby, University of South Australia

Appendix B

Individual Interview Guidelines

Introduction:

My name is Susan Weseen and I am a graduate student at the Graduate School and University Center at CUNY. I am studying teachers' understandings of, and responses to, bullying, and am spending time this year speaking with staff members at this school about these questions. I am pleased that you have agreed to participate in this study.

This interview will take approximately one hour. Your participation is completely voluntary. If you should change your mind, you do not have to do the interview, nor do you have to answer any questions that you do not wish to. You should also know that everything that you tell me here today is confidential.

Guiding questions for teachers:

The open ended interviews with key teachers will be used to gain an understanding of how different teachers understand, and respond to, bullying. In semi-structured interviews I will ask questions such as:

1. What is your definition of bullying?

2. How much of a problem is bullying at your school? Explain.

3. How serious of a problem is bullying for schools in general? Please elaborate.

4. Please draw a picture or a map of all the things in a classroom that you have to attend to in the course of a day.

5. Can you remember an incident of bullying in which you got involved? Please describe. I'm particularly interested in

- what informed your thinking and actions
- whether or not you discussed the incident with other teachers
- if you would change anything about what you did
- how it might fit into the map you just drew

6. Can you remember an incident of bullying in which you did not get involved? Please describe. Again, I'm particularly interested in

- what informed your thinking and actions
- whether or not you discussed the incident with other teachers
- if you would change anything about what you did
- how it might fit into the map you just drew

7. Do you have any personal stories of experiencing and/or witnessing bullying that you would like to share?

- In particular, did you ever experience bullying as a child? (as a target, bully, and/or bystander)

8. Take a minute to go back to your drawing/map; is there anything you would like to add or change?

Appendix C

Group Interview Guidelines

Introduction:

My name is Susan Weseen and I am a graduate student at the Graduate School and University Center at CUNY. I am studying teachers' understandings of, and responses to, bullying, and am spending time this year speaking with staff members at this school about these questions. I am pleased that you have agreed to participate in this study.

This interview will take approximately one hour. Your participation is completely voluntary. If you should change your mind, you do not have to do the interview, nor do you have to answer any questions that you do not wish to. You should also know that everything that you tell me here today is confidential.

Guiding structure for the focus group interview:

1. Can you recall bullying being addressed during your teacher education courses? If so, how?

2. Please take a few minutes to think about how you would complete these two sentences:

    a. Joking around becomes teasing when….
    b. Teasing becomes bullying when…

[based on the Social Inclusion Approach (Payne, 2008)]

3. I would like to share with you the mandates about bullying that do exist for New York City schools (from the federal, state, and city governments).
    - What does this mean for your work as a teacher?
    - Are you familiar with any of these mandates and/or responses?
    - Do these mandates and/or responses adequately address the problems (if any) posed by bullying?
    - What do schools need to fulfill these mandates and/or effectively deal with bullying?
    - What do you as a teacher need to fulfill these mandates and/or effectively deal with bullying?

4. Recently, the U.S Department of Education sent a letter to all school districts and colleges concerning bullying. I am going to read excerpts of the letter. Please respond in terms of what this means for you as an educator.

5. Recently, columnist Dan Savage launched something called the “It Gets Better” project, an online resource intended to support LGBT young people who are experiencing harassment based on their sexual identity or expression. President Obama posted an official White House video on this site. I am going to play his video. Please respond in terms of what this means for you as an educator.

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