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HOW DO TEACHERS' CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENT BULLYING VICTIMIZATION  
EXPERIENCES INFLUENCE THEIR RESPONSES TO BULLYING IN THE CLASSROOM?

by

KELLEY ALEXANDER

Under the Direction of Anthony Lemieux, Ph.D. and Kristen Varjas, Psy.D.

ABSTRACT

This study was designed to investigate the relationship between teachers' childhood bullying experiences and their responses to bullying in the classroom. The research explored teachers' childhood bullying victimization experiences, the coping behaviors they used during those experiences, and the ways in which they responded and reacted to bullying when they encountered it within the context of their daily teaching responsibilities. A qualitative approach grounded in the theory of transcendental phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994) was used to make meaning of specific experiences of the teachers. Each participant from the initial sample ( $N = 21$ ) completed the first of a three-interview series (Seidman, 2013), which generated

demographic data and childhood bullying experiences from each participant. The sample was then narrowed ( $N = 8$ ) to seven females and one male, ranging in age from 33 to 50 for the second and third in-depth interviews. Data were analyzed using the Modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen Method of Analysis of Phenomenological Data (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994). Results showed that the childhood coping ways of some teachers were related to their adulthood ways of coping with the long-term residual effects of their childhood bullying experiences. Some participants-as-children and participants-as-adults similarly used a problem-focused approach to cope with their bullying experiences. Furthermore, those childhood and adulthood coping ways were associated with the ways in which participants responded to classroom bullying situations. They reported developing innovative ways to provide students with emotion-focused coping strategies through modeling and teaching communication skills as indirect response methods. Additionally, participants' childhood victimization experiences triggered emotional responses (feelings of anger, sadness and frustration) during the bullying of students, which led to challenges with responding constructively to student victims and bullying in the classroom, and overlooking bullying types they had not experienced firsthand. The results of this study support a need for more resources specifically aimed at educators that encourage them to examine the complex relationships among their childhood bullying experiences, the long-term effects of those experiences, and their adult responses to bullying in the classroom context.

**INDEX WORDS:** Bullying, Teacher, Victimization, Aggression, Coping, Student, Intervention

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KELLEY ALEXANDER

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2020

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KELLEY ALEXANDER

Committee Co-Chair: Anthony Lemieux

Committee Co-Chair: Kristen Varjas

Committee: Jaye Atkinson

Patricia Davis

Electronic Version Approved:

Office of Graduate Studies

College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

May 2020

## DEDICATION

I dedicate my dissertation work to my family and many friends. A special feeling of gratitude to my loving parents, James and Shirley Alexander and Spurgeon Butler, my spiritual mentor, whose words of encouragement kept me and the work going. My sisters, Kimberley and Stephanie, and my brothers, Eric, Spurgeon, and Sheldon, held a special place in my thoughts and heart as I was working to make them proud; they are all very special. I also dedicate this dissertation to ZAMI, who supported my journey with a financial scholarship, as well as Wendy Belkin, Linda Bryant and Gretchen Ann Favors. Dr. Ayo Yetunde provided invaluable coaching early in the process. And special thanks to Dr. Miriam Phiels, friend, partner, sounding board and cheerleader extraordinaire.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Bullying has been among the top areas of education research (Espelage & Swearer, 2003) since the 1970s. More recently, other areas critical to student success, such as the impact of classroom management strategies and programs on student behavioral outcomes (Korpershoek et al., 2016), student motivation (Lin et al., 2016), the importance of teacher diversity (Cherng & Halpin, 2016), and student stress (Yeager et al., 2016) have become key topics of interest to researchers. Bullying, however, continues to be a serious public health concern that underlies many other areas that contribute to student success and teacher wellbeing (Farrington & Ttofi, 2011; Strickland, 2017).

Research has shown that close to 30% of students reported being bullied at school (Lessne & Yanez, 2016; Robers et al., 2012). Rigby and Johnson (2016) found that approximately 15% of the students surveyed reported being bullied, most commonly in verbal and covertly relational ways (ways that can be very difficult for others outside of the interpersonal relationship to observe—also known as relational bullying (Bauman & Del Rio, 2006)). Since teachers and school administrators are uniquely situated to observe students' behavior that precedes bullying and in-progress bullying behaviors in the classroom and school, it follows that teachers and other school personnel should be first responders and may be expected to assume the role of “upstander” or defender of bullied students. However, though a 2013 study (Struyven et al.) of 1,805 pre-service teachers found that “helping children” and “making a difference in the world” were primary reasons that individuals chose to become teachers, research has noted that all too often, teachers were not acting in the role of, or seen as, protectors and defenders for peer-victimized students (Duy, 2013; Rigby, 2011, 2017; Yoon et al., 2016;). Burger et al. (2015) suggested that, in some cases, when teachers became aware of bullying situations, they acted to

stop the bullying rather than ignored the bullying. But the researchers acknowledged that the actions teachers took to stop the bullying were only successful about half of the time (2015). Rigby (2017) found that students did not feel comfortable talking to teachers when they were being bullied, leading to the conclusion that the teacher was often not a helpful resource for bullied children in school. When they do not intervene at all and the bullying continues, teachers can also make things worse for victimized students (Rigby, 2017; Yoon et al., 2016). This inconsistency in teacher action/inaction speaks to why more research on teachers' responses toward victims of bullying, an area of limited research, is necessary.

Gregus et al. (2017) found that bullying rates were higher in classrooms where teachers reported either very high or very low bullying intervention self-efficacy than in classrooms where teachers reported a moderate level of bullying self-efficacy. This paradox may be due to teachers over-compensating for their lack of confidence or failure to understand the level of seriousness when faced with bullying situations. Although it seems obvious that teachers are important to anti-bullying efforts and programs, anti-bullying programs are not consistently implemented, and anti-bullying efforts are hard to sustain when a majority of school staff do not see bullying as a serious issue (Olweus & Limber, 2010). And, according to the research of Craig et al. (2011), the attitudes and beliefs of pre-service teachers around bullying and intervention can impact the effectiveness of anti-bullying initiatives once the pre-service teachers become teachers. Regardless of having a key role in bullying intervention, teachers often lack understanding and/or knowledge of many areas related to bullying. Another study reported that teachers believed the training they received in addressing bullying, especially at the pre-service level, was insufficient (Rigby & Johnson, 2016). This is, in part, because teachers perceived that a whole-school approach to bullying was necessary to positively impact bullying at the



classroom level. The pressures of other teaching responsibilities, along with inadequate resources, make it challenging for schools to focus on holistic bullying prevention efforts (Rigby & Johnson, 2016).

It is not surprising that, given the pervasiveness of and harmful effects related to peer victimization, there has been a great deal of research done in the area of bullying. But very little has been done to explore the connection between teachers' personal bullying victimization experiences and the ways in which they handle bullying situations in the classroom (Newman et al., 2010). Few studies have focused on school environmental factors influencing bullying, and even fewer have focused directly on the role of teachers and how they are impacted by their own childhood bullying victimization experiences. One important study found that differences in the beliefs and attitudes of teachers influence the ways and extent to which they address school bullying in the classroom (Veenstra et al., 2014). In a study conducted by Troop-Gordon and Ladd (2013), the researchers found that teachers who felt that peer victimization was "normal" were less likely to reprimand aggressive students and more likely to respond more passively. In essence, a relationship was found between teachers' strategies and beliefs and the levels of peer victimization and classroom aggression (Troop-Gordon & Ladd, 2013).

In an attempt to help improve the school climate for bullied students, this qualitative study explored those strategies and sought to narrow the related gaps in the literature. Of particular interest to me was teachers' descriptions of their childhood bullying victimization experiences, including recollections of how they coped with those experiences as they were occurring and the ways in which teachers responded and reacted to bullying when they encountered it in their teaching roles in the classroom setting. It is conceivable that teachers can learn to use their own past experiences with bullying victimization to assist them in responding effectively to bullying

using constructive actions and emotions. These areas of interest are briefly introduced in the following sections.

### **1.1 Coping with Childhood Bullying**

Understanding the stress and coping responses of victimized children may be important to understanding the bullying responses of (and creating anti-bullying programs for) adult educators. According to Strickland (2017), researchers have begun to pay more attention to changes that occur in the part of the brain when stress is present (which affects self-regulating emotions) as a way to understand how stress responses impact those who bully others, those who are bullied, and the actions of bystanders. Though there is limited research on the ways that children cope with bullying and coping effectiveness (Harper et al., 2012; Parris et al., 2017; Parris et al., 2019), there are various approaches that explain how individuals cope with problems in general. Assuming that adults who experienced childhood bullying victimization most likely used distinct ways during childhood to manage their victimization experiences, this study explored, as part of teachers' holistic bullying victimization experiences, the ways teachers managed or coped with those experiences.

Researchers have developed frameworks for explaining the ways in which individuals cope with stressful situations. Billings and Moos' framework (1994) focused on problem-, emotion-, and appraisal-related coping. The most widely used framework, developed by Folkman and Lazarus (1980) and Lazarus and Folkman (1984), focused on coping strategies for adults and emphasized both problem-focused and emotion-focused coping. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) conceptualized coping as an effortful response to internally or externally stressful situations and defined coping as "constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of

the person” (p. 141). Lazarus and Folkman (1984) defined “problems” as psychological stress in a person’s environment that has the potential of compromising their very well-being. They provided the following two processes people use to negotiate the environment-person relationship:

1. The cognitive appraisal, which evaluates the reason a situation is stressful
2. Coping, which is the process the individual uses to manage the stress of the environment-person relationship and related emotions that arise as a result of the stressful situation

Subsequent coping research, based on the work of Lazarus and Folkman (1985) has focused primarily on two ways that people cope: problem-focused coping (changing the relationship between the person and the environment) and emotion-focused coping (changing the person’s emotional response to the stressful situation). An example of problem-focused coping, as it relates to bullying, is brainstorming solutions with another person (Harper et al., 2012). Examples of emotion-focused coping, as it relates to bullying, include both externalizing (yelling, crying) and internalizing (blaming oneself) responses (Harper et al., 2012; Newgent et al., 2016).

Compas (1987) distinguished among coping resources (inherent qualities in a person), coping styles (a person’s tendency to respond to stress across situations or time) and coping efforts (strategies used in particular situations). This project examined the problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies teachers used during their childhood bullying victimization experiences in order to understand how those strategies related to their adult responses to bullying as teachers.

To assess adult coping efforts, Folkman and Lazarus (1980) developed the Ways of Coping Scale (WOCS) and the Ways of Coping Checklist (WCCL) questionnaire. Similar questionnaires have been developed for children (Causey & Dubow, 1992; Glyshaw et al., 1989). The WOCS is used to measure a stressful event—how a person reacted to a specific situation (as opposed to how the person thinks she/he should have reacted; Rexrode et al., 2008).

For adults, Folkman and Lazarus (1980) and Lazarus and Launier (1978) found that health contexts (for example, dealing with a serious illness or preparing to visit a dentist) elicited more emotion-focused responses than problem-focused responses, while more problem-focused responses were found to be used in work contexts. Important to this proposed study is the research that differentiates coping in adults from coping in children and adolescents, since the study will elicit qualitative retrospective data from adult teachers about the coping efforts they used during childhood to address their bullying victimization experiences. Also, important to acknowledge is research that has been done on the impact of trauma that suggests that retrospective self-reports of childhood experiences can be impacted by recall bias and individuals' subjective memories/interpretations of past events (Frissa et al., 2016). The research approach used for this current study moderated this bias.

According to Harper et al. (2012), there is limited research related to the strategies that children use to cope with bullying. Halstead et al. (1993) used a modified version of Folkman and Lazarus' WCCL (1980) to examine adolescents' responses to stressful situations. In this study, four of the five factors (Problem Focused, Seeks Social Support, Wishful Thinking, and Avoidance) were confirmed. The fifth factor, Blamed Self, was not supported by the study results. A study conducted by Hunter and Boyle (2010) found that the Revised Ways of Coping Checklist could be used with child and adolescent bullying victims to measure coping findings.

## 1.2 Teachers' Responses to Bullying

The research of Twemlow et al. (2006) and Yoon et al. (2016) examined factors that influenced teacher responses to bullying situations. Twemlow et al. (2006) found that teachers were more likely to bully students and be bullied by students if they had been childhood victims of bullying. They suggested that perhaps childhood bullying victimization experiences impacted teachers' responses (both affective and cognitive) to bullying situations, which influenced how they behaved in bullying situations as adults. Likewise, Bradshaw et al. (2007), Bradshaw et al. (2013), and Yoon et al. (2016) found that, in addition to empathy and self-efficacy, which impacted the way teachers responded to bullying, the past experiences that teachers had during childhood also significantly impacted how they responded to bullying situations as adults. More specifically, Yoon et al. (2016) concluded that, compared to other groups studied, teachers who were victims of bullying during childhood were less likely to respond as adults to victims of bullying and relatively few teachers who were bystanders to bullying during childhood intervened as adults to help the victims of bullying. These findings seemed inconsistent with research that suggested that helping others in emergencies is based on social situations and not on factors of individuality (Latane' & Darley, 1970).

Thornberg et al. (2012) presented a more nuanced view when positing that a confluence of factors impacts bystander actions (social situations *and* individuality), including the way bystanders evaluate a situation, the social context of the situation, and the bystander's own agency (and perceived competence). The childhood bullying victimization experiences of teachers is an area that merits continuous study to understand how it motivates adult anti-bullying or assisting-the-victim behavior.

Teachers are critical to bullying intervention and prevention efforts in schools (Kennedy et al., 2012; Marshall et al., 2009; Yoon et al., 2016) and are an important factor in the classroom in general. Casas et al. (2015) found that negative teacher participation (such as lack of interest, decreased involvement and negligence) was closely associated with bullying victimization and aggression. The researchers also found that negative teacher management (apathy) facilitated bullying.

As one possible explanation for teachers failing to intervene in bullying events to assist victims, Yoon et al. (2016) suggested that perhaps teachers' painful peer victimization experiences during their childhoods impacted their willingness to respond supportively toward student victims, and that perhaps guilt at having passively witnessed bullying during childhood impacted teachers' willingness to assist bullied student victims. Prior to the study of Yoon et al. (2016), support for this line of inquiry came from the research of Newman et al. (2010), which found that there were areas that need further research, including those the researchers identified as the most important. These areas were understanding why cultures transition from "bully-tolerant" to "bully resistant" and better understanding the relationship between teacher efficacy and empathy and bullying. The research also suggested that teachers are critical to bullying prevention and intervention efforts, and research related to the impact of teachers' childhood bullying victimization experiences and how they respond to bullied students merited further investigation.

Based on the findings of Twemlow et al. (2006) and Yoon et al. (2016; suggesting a possible connection between childhood bullying experiences and responses to bullying situations), this current qualitative study explored the past behaviors of teachers who were victims of childhood bullying and their adult responses toward students who are bullied. The

study used and expanded on the studies of Yoon et al. (2016) and Yoon and Bauman (2014) by focusing specifically on understanding possible contextual elements of teachers' responses to bullying victims. Importantly, those previous studies found that the general childhood experiences of teachers factored into their responses to bullying occurrences. Since it has also been found that teachers often do not notice nor respond to bullying occurrences (Yoon et al., 2016), I was interested in understanding the degree to which teachers' past experiences impacted their responses and involvement in students' bullying situations, especially since teachers' past experiences with bullying, as well as their beliefs and attitudes, are likely to influence how they assess bullying situations and, consequently, how they respond (Oldenburg et al., 2015; Yoon et al., 2016). According to Yoon (2016), this could be due, in part, to the finding that, based on past experiences and beliefs, teachers have and display various levels of self-efficacy for intervening in bullying. According to Bandura (2001), "Goals embodying self-engaging properties serve as powerful motivators of action" (p. 8). In other words, teachers' confidence in their ability to handle a bullying situation is likely to influence their response. And teachers' degree of self-confidence in handling a bullying situation may have some connection to the degree of confidence they felt while coping with their own victimization as children.

Yoon and Bauman (2014) suggested that more knowledge of bullying is important for teachers to have in order for them to be effective in acting to intervene in bullying situations. This research underscored the importance of studying the childhood bullying victimization experiences of teachers in that teachers are "key agents of change" as it relates to classroom bullying (2014). An early study of teachers' intentions to intervene in bullying situations posited that the following three variables were important in predicting the likelihood of teachers intervening in bullying occurrences:

1. Self-efficacy in managing students' behavior
2. Empathy toward victims of bullying
3. Perceived seriousness of bullying occurrences (Yoon, 2004)

The findings of Yoon's study (2004) suggested that teachers who understand the seriousness of bullying reported a higher self-efficacy in addressing bullying occurrences and report greater empathic concern toward bullying victims. These teachers also were more likely to report that they would act to intervene in a bullying occurrence (Yoon, 2004). Prior to conducting the current research, it seemed counterintuitive that teachers who have experienced the trauma of bullying during childhood would understate the seriousness of the bullying situations they observed. Instead, it seemed more likely that teachers who experienced or observed bullying during childhood may be more sensitive to the possible long-term detrimental impact of bullying based on experiencing negative effects firsthand than someone who had not experienced bullying. This dichotomy highlights the importance of understanding the complex and situational associations that exist for teachers who have experienced past victimization and the ways in which their childhood coping strategies may impact their sensitivities (or lack thereof) to the victimization of students in their classrooms.

Oldenburg et al. (2015) found that there was a higher victimization/bullying rate in classrooms where teachers attributed bullying to external factors or factors that were outside of their influence and control. These included the following, most of which could be characterized as victim blaming:

- Parents did not teach their children how to defend themselves.
- The bully came from a difficult family background.
- The victim was in the wrong place at the wrong time.



- The victim was too quiet and withdrawn from others.
- The victim provoked the bullying; and the victim made a wrong comment (p. 43).

Additionally, teachers' personal bullying history and their self-efficacy in handling bullying occurrences were associated with the bullying rates in the classroom—when teachers had a history of bullying others, there were more instances of bullying in their classrooms and more lenience toward bullying behaviors (Oldenburg et al., 2015). Teachers may have “learned,” through bullying others in school, that bullying is effective in gaining popularity or power. These beliefs may continue, for some, into adulthood and may impact their view of bullying as an acceptable behavior and even harmless. Also, according to Mishna et al. (2005), when teachers viewed bullying as a typical and harmless childhood behavior, they were less likely to intervene in bullying situations.

Teachers' likelihood to intervene may be related to a combination of complex factors, including their own childhood experiences. There are contextual and situational factors that influence teachers' responses to bullying situations, of which childhood experiences of bullying is one such factor (Yoon et al., 2016). Still, research related to teachers' childhood victimization experiences and the responses of teachers to bullying situations is scarce (Marshall et al., 2009).

According to Yoon et al. (2016), there were many ways in which teachers responded to bullying in their classrooms that fit into the following five categories:

1. Ignore
2. Discipline
3. Involve peers/class
4. Develop prosocial skills
5. Involve adult resources (2016)

This current study explored teachers' responses to victims of bullying in their classrooms by asking study participants specific open-ended bullying-response-related questions. The Yoon et al. (2016) response framework was used for the current study to develop the coding scheme for teachers' (current) responses to bullying. Examples of interview questions included: *Describe a few experiences of being a teacher and witnessing bullying in the classroom: How did you respond? What did you do to intervene? Talk about some specific responses you had or actions you took when encountering bullying.*

The study conducted by Marshall et al. (2009) proposed a framework into which teachers' responses to bullying and bullied students could be categorized—intent that is either *constructive* or *punitive* based on *direct* versus *indirect* teacher responses. The researchers also acknowledged that limited research has been conducted in the area of teachers' responses to bullying and bullied victims. This framework was used for this current study.

The following review of the literature is organized by relevant topics to exploring the past and current bullying victimization experiences of teachers.

### **1.3 Review of Related Literature**

#### ***1.3.1 Bullying***

Bullying is characterized as intentionally doing harm to another and doing so in a way that includes an imbalance of power (Olweus, 1993, 1997). Another characteristic of bullying is that it is an ongoing phenomenon in a power relationship. There are two categories of bullying: overt physical or verbal bullying (which is more identifiable and includes fighting and verbal attacks) and indirect or relational bullying (Olweus, 1994). Other paradigmatic distinctions that have evolved as a way of describing bullying are traditional bullying (offline) versus cyberbullying (online; Olweus, 2012) and physical versus non-physical bullying.

In a 2016 report, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) defined bullying as: "any unwanted aggressive behavior(s)...that involves an observed or perceived power imbalance and is repeated multiple times." By that definition, any hierarchical system or organization is likely to facilitate bullies and bullying. It may be that hierarchies are sometimes necessary for order, but some behaviors and activities that result from hierarchies can result in damage to individuals. According to Lantos and Halpern (2015), bullying is a "manifestation of the sorts of social hierarchies that are common in all human societies in which dominant members of the hierarchies are given special rights and privileges, including the right to exploit and perhaps insult those who are lower down in the hierarchy" (p. 22). In other words, bullying can be understood as another example of how those perceived as weaker, smaller, or disadvantaged have less power in a hierarchically structured organization, such as a school. And though there are benefits (such as maintaining order), aggression and bullying behaviors are often used to control others and can cause long-term harm to individuals.

### ***1.3.1.1 Bullying types***

Participants discussed the types of bullying they experienced during childhood and the types they observed while teaching in the classroom (particularly the nuances of relational bullying) during the interview portion of this project. According to Bauman and Del Rio (2006), "Relational bullying includes social exclusion...spreading rumors...or withholding friendship.... Relational aggression becomes relational bullying when it is repeated and directed toward a victim with less power" (p. 220). Relational or social bullying is distinguished from physical and verbal bullying to include cyberbullying; leaving someone out on purpose (social exclusion, ostracism and isolation); humiliation or shaming by spreading rumors, information and images

that are hurtful; harm of reputation; clandestine manipulation and intimidation; and rejecting behaviors, especially perpetrated publicly (Goldsmid & Howie, 2014; Stuart-Cassel et al., 2013).

Relational bullying causes a victim harm by the systematic destruction or manipulation of social status and relationships (Chester et al., 2017). Relational bullies aim to obtain power and social status using the exclusion (excluding someone from social groups) and manipulation of others, including spreading rumors and retracting friendship (Espelage & Swearer, 2004).

Whereas physical bullying is most often overt, relational bullying can be indirect and covert, and the related health implications of this type of bullying are less researched and understood (Chester et al, 2017). The research of Chester et al. (2017) and Chester et al. (2015) found that for students who experienced relational bullying, also associated was a negative long-term health-related quality of life (HRQL; an individual's perception of their own emotional, social and behavioral functioning). And, even though girls were more likely to report having experienced relational bullying, girls and boys showed an equal negative HRQL. Study results suggested that relational bullying impacted HRQL more than other forms of bullying (2017).

There are four main features of relational bullying:

1. Power is not just related to strength or physical size; power can be related to status (for example, in-group; Bauman & Del Rio, 2006)
2. Relational bullying often occurs between friends and is difficult to detect (American Education Research Association, 2013)
3. Considering relational bullying to be less harmful than verbal or physical bullying is erroneous (Garner et al., 2013)

4. Although much of the research has suggested that relational bullying occurs mainly among females, the phenomenon actually occurs with both male and female students, especially as boys get older (Merrell et al., 2006)

Relational bullying has many long-term detrimental effects for victims and can be even worse for students than physical bullying (Farrington & Ttofi, 2011). Since relational bullying is not as obvious as physical bullying and is more difficult to identify, teachers often consider relational bullying to be less serious, express less sympathy toward victims, and are less likely to intervene (Duy, 2013; Garner et al., 2013; Yoon et al., 2016). It is important to consider the possibility that children who experience relational bullying may grow up to be adults who find this form of bullying less harmful.

The view of bullying as “normal” may be another reason that teachers often do not notice nor respond to bullying situations (Yoon et al., 2016) and intervene less often. The same study also found that bullying situations worsened when a teacher became involved. Additionally, teachers are often more willing to use discipline in physical bullying situations, perhaps because physical bullying situations appear to be less ambiguous (2016). Teachers and other adults tend to view non-physical and relational (social) bullying as a normal experience of childhood (Loyola University Health System, 2011). In summary, teacher intervention in bullying situations can make things worse for victimized students while the lack of teacher intervention can also make things worse for students (Rigby, 2017; Yoon, 2004). This dichotomy points to the need to understand the ways in which teachers view their individual role in the management of bullying in the classroom.

### ***1.3.1.2 Bullying roles***

According to definitions provided by Olweus (1993), the “bully” is considered to be the perpetrator of the aggression or harm. The “victim” is the person at whom the bullying behavior is directed. One would be considered a “bully-victim” if he/she were bullying others and being bullied by others. A bystander is an observer to a bullying event and can be active (acting to intervene or stop the bullying) or passive (observing the bullying without acting or intervening; 1993). There are other roles, including assistants and reinforcers (active participants in the bullying), outsiders (not directly involved in the bullying but silently approving of the bullying activities), and defenders or upstanders, those who actively defend the victim (1993; Salmivalli, 2014). This research focused specifically on the roles of victim (and victim-bystander) as they related to teachers’ past bullying victimization experiences.

According to data from the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (2016), about half of all children will be bullied during their childhood or while attending school. And while bullying can lead to long-term problems for victims, bullies and bystanders, there are specific long-term effects for victims. Research confirmed that peer victimization is associated with negative emotional and physical health outcomes, which include social development, overall health quality, and academic success (Chester et al, 2015; Nakamoto & Schwartz, 2009). These problems, according to Newgent et al. (2016), presented as either externalizing and/or internalizing behaviors. Externalizing behaviors can include being outwardly verbally or physically aggressive, being unable or unwilling to control temper, and being argumentative. Internalizing behaviors include experiencing feelings of anxiety, sadness and loneliness, as well as displaying poor self-esteem (2016). According to Harper et al. (2012), both internalizing and externalizing behaviors are examples of emotion-focused coping and may be indicative of the

ways that child victims cope with their victimization experiences.

This current study explored the feelings and strategies teachers used when coping with their traumatic childhood victimization experiences. One notable reason for focusing on childhood victimization experiences is based on a recent study that found that bullied children were more likely to consider, attempt, or commit suicide (Strickland, 2017). Bullying also was found to be related to poor mental health outcomes for both children and adolescents (Harper et al., 2012). It is worth noting here that some of these bullied children and adolescents grow up to be teachers who are responsible for teaching and protecting children in the school environment. Equally dire is the statistic that victims of bullying are committing suicide at earlier ages (Strickland, 2017)—in some cases, as early as 10 years of age (Tribune Media Wire, 2017). This data supports the notion that the role of teachers in preventing and stopping bullying is critical. Assuming that teachers are one important factor in reducing bullying in the classroom, it is important to consider that teachers' childhood victimization experiences and the actualization of how those experiences are internalized and externalized may have an influence on their adult classroom responses to bullying, and that understanding the ways in which teachers coped with their own childhood victimization experiences could be an important factor in developing effective bullying programs.

### ***1.3.1.3 Bullying effects and outcomes***

Many studies have highlighted the high prevalence of peer victimization and have identified the connection (for both the bully and the victim) between bullying and increased socio-emotional and academic problems; depression at a later age; feeling less connected to classmates and teachers; increased risk of smoking and drinking behaviors; more likelihood to be convicted of a criminal offense at a later age; loneliness; diminished self-esteem and confidence;

suicide ideation; problematic relationships; overall life dissatisfaction; psychosomatic complaints; social anxiety in early adulthood; lower quality of social relationships in later life; lower labor force participation; bad temper; and anxiety (Baly et al., 2014; Cook et al., 2010; Cosma & Baban, 2013; Dempsey & Storch, 2008; Drydakis, 2014; Due et al., 2005; Gini & Pozzoli, 2013; Goldbaum et al., 2003; McDougall & Vaillancourt, 2015). Peer victimization is found to be associated with symptoms of post-traumatic stress (Storch & Esposito, 2003) and borderline personality disorder symptoms (Arseneault et al., 2010). Additionally, children who were bullied early in the school year had an increased chance of developing psychosomatic issues during the same school year (Gini & Pozzoli, 2013). This current study focused on bullying that is defined as ongoing (one school year or longer) based on research that shows the negative long-term impact of consistent bullying and peer victimization (Dempsey & Storch, 2008; Drydakis, 2014; Due et al., 2005; Gini & Pozzoli, 2013; McDougall & Vaillancourt, 2015).

Teachers are critical to the experiences of children and are the adults around whom school social practices and conduct revolve in the classroom. Kousholt and Fisker (2015) asserted that empathy training is important for bullies. Since teachers are in the oftentimes unique time and place of bullying occurrences, it can be argued that empathy training is as important for teachers as for bullies because, according to Yoon et al. (2016), teachers' empathic concern is associated with an increase in teachers' bullying prevention efforts.

The research of Sutton et al. (1999) challenged the notion that bullies lack empathy. They found a positive correlation between the degree of different forms of bullying behavior and the score for emotion, suggesting that bullies already possess high levels of cognitive empathic capabilities, which may enable them to bully others, as well as enable them to recruit others to



bully. This suggests that empathy training for bullies may not be effective to prevent bullying behavior and may also raise the question of whether seeking to impact the empathy of teachers, who presumably already possess high levels of empathic concern, is a worthwhile approach to anti-bullying intervention.

One additional factor to consider in relation to bullying outcomes is the type of victimization one has experienced. According to Finkelhor et al. (2007a), polyvictimization (experiencing more than one type of bullying) may cause more negative effects than experiencing one type of bullying (Smith, 2018; Yoder et al., 2018). It is important that teacher interventions provide an understanding of polyvictimization and its associated impact, as well as an understanding of how to recognize when a victim is experiencing more than one type of bullying.

### ***1.3.2 Victimization***

In a 2014 (Bifulco et al.) study of 160 individuals between the ages of 16 and 30, participants were asked to rate the severity of peer victimization they experienced before the age of 16. The study showed that victimization had long-term negative effects on the lives of those victimized. Researchers have identified three categories of children who are engaged in bullying in school: bullies, passive victims and bully/victims (Austin & Joseph, 1996). Victims, specifically, are often described as shy, insecure, introverted and low in self-esteem (1996). Victimized children also often have appearances that are distinct from their peers, such as being overweight, weak physically, different based on race or culture or having a disability (Eslea & Mukhtar, 2000). A child who shows, for example, weakness or submissive behavior is more likely to be a target for victimization and bullying (Olweus, 1993). According to Frizzo et al. (2013), bullied children scored low in self-esteem and high in emotional sensitivity. These

children also scored low in extraversion and conscientiousness and high in neuroticism (Slee & Rigby, 1993).

There are familial and peer factors that put children at risk of being bullied. Parental style is one such factor. Both permissive and authoritarian parental styles have been found to be associated positively with victimization (Georgiou, 2008; Georgiou et al., 2013). Also, and not surprisingly, abuse, neglect and maladaptive parenting were indicators of being victimized in school (Lereya et al., 2013). Generally, positive parenting, good communication, high parental involvement, and high parental responsiveness with appropriate supervision were found to counteract childhood victimization (2013). According to Nikiforou et al. (2013), bullied children tended to have few friends and poor relationships with peers. Since victims tended not to be popular, the likelihood of them being ostracized and isolated was high (Nikiforou et al., 2013).

Important for this current study is the research on teachers' impact on bullied victims. In terms of general school climate, a positive climate, created in part by teachers, was found to support respect among students—a factor that mitigates victimization and bullying (Ghazi, 2003). The attitudes of teachers, specifically, were found to be either inhibitive or supportive of peer victimization in the classroom. Saarento-Zaprudin et al. (2013) found that victimization was more common in classrooms where students perceived teachers to be more permissive toward bullying than in classrooms where students perceived that teachers think of bullying as normal, a fact of life, or a rite of passage. This current study explored the possible connection between teachers' feelings about their own childhood bullying victimization experiences and the permissive versus rejecting attitudes teachers exhibit toward bullying in the classroom. According to Olweus (1993), teachers should be able to identify indirect and direct bullying, as well as support victims and identify signs of early victimization. This is important because the

longer bullying victims are victimized by peers, the less likely they are to feel in control of the situation (Hunter & Boyle, 2010).

It is, perhaps, reasonable to assume that teachers who have been bullied during childhood would be able to recognize bullying and identify with victimized and bullied children. This current study explored that assumption.

### ***1.3.3 School climate***

The important role teachers play in providing classrooms and environments that are protective and supportive for students cannot be overstated (Marshall et al., 2009). Olweus (1997) suggested measures at the school class level for bullying prevention and intervention programs. These measures included focusing on rules, praising students, sanctions for negative student behaviors, class meetings, cooperative learning, and other positive activities. Classroom management has been found to be strongly associated with bullying prevalence and rates (Roland & Galloway, 2002; Yoon et al, 2016). While teachers are responsible for handling measures that prevent bullying in the classroom, they also are required to be skilled in handling bullying occurrences when they arise and to understand how the bullied student is feeling in order to act out of empathy toward victimized students, effectively serving in the role of upstander. On the importance of empathy and expertise, Bauman and Del Rio (2006) found that the empathy of pre-service teachers was correlated to the likelihood that teachers would intervene, whereas research of Bradshaw et al. (2007) and Yoon (2004) found that high self-efficacy of teachers predicted their intention to intervene in all types of bullying situations. Investigating the ways that teachers intend to handle future bullying situations was a peripheral component of this research project.

Because bullying sometimes starts in school but continues outside of school or happens via social media, research supports taking a socio-ecological approach to addressing bullying that is focused on communitywide change (Espelage & Swearer, 2003). The research of Watson et al. (2010) goes further to categorize a socio-ecological framework that includes sociocultural factors (parents, community, public policy, etc.), school-based factors (administrators, school personnel, etc.) and individual factors (personality, personal experiences, etc.), with the teacher as one school-based factor and a part of a system of barriers and/or change agents/agencies. This approach suggests that actions of the entire school-related community, which includes students, teachers, administrators and parents but also the broader family, community and society, are required to address and eliminate bullying (Miglianccio & Raskauskas, 2014; Olweus, 1997; Rigby, 2014). Though this is a valid assumption, it is also realistic to suggest that of all the community factors, the teacher is arguably the most important outside of the family. In addition to having access to individual students on a consistent basis for one school year or longer, teachers have the ability to impact the mental and emotional well-being of students constructively or negatively based on the type of participation and classroom management they use (Casas et al., 2015). Teachers also are often in a proximally good position to notice negative changes in students, which sometimes occur when students are being bullied.

The bullying literature has not adequately addressed bullying at the classroom level—specifically, the importance of the teacher. But Yoon and Bauman (2014) suggested that even though teachers' influences on bullying and bystander behaviors have not been well documented, teachers' responses to incidents of bullying are critical to the larger context of classroom climate and management (2014, p. 309). Certainly, more contextualized research could be done, and the researchers agree that the social context of the classroom is a key factor, with teachers' responses

being especially key (2014). Rigby (2014) agreed that teacher training is critical in bullying prevention efforts.

The issue is that oftentimes bullying gets worse when the teacher is engaged, especially as it relates to relational bullying (physical bullying is easier to notice and address). Teacher intervention is often unsuccessful in cases of bullying, and students are often more successful when engaging parents or peers (Rigby & Johnson, 2016). So, perhaps the actual ways in which teachers intervene are at odds with successful bullying intervention. One study suggested that it is the combination of school climate and collective self-efficacy (based on a socio-ecological perspective, which suggests that whole-school approaches are most successful; Rigby, 2011) that determines how effective bystanders are in acting to intervene in bullying situations (Banyard et al., 2016). This current research speaks to the need for a more targeted focus on the role of the bystander in the classroom, specifically the teacher, and explored whether or not teachers' own bullying victimization experiences are important to factor into developing bullying intervention approaches.

#### ***1.3.4 School policy***

According to Lee et al. (2015) and Johnson et al. (2019), an important factor of the programs that reduced bullying in schools was the institution of a school policy. However, research by Hall and Chapman (2016) reported that the implementation of policies by teachers and administrators is challenging due to a number of factors. The passage of legislation does not eliminate other individual or organizational barriers that include: financial or staffing impediments; community members or parents not supportive of the policies; policies not well written or confusing; school personnel not clear about how to implement or are unsupportive of the policies; or teachers balancing competing priorities such as lesson planning, preparing

students for academic testing, classroom management, and dealing with administrative responsibilities. Any additional responsibilities, namely adherence to bullying policies, which includes paperwork and processes, may be overwhelming for teachers (Fowler, 2013; Hall and Chapman, 2018).

Further, though policy implementation by teachers was found to be more successful at the high school level, teacher protection levels were found to be higher in elementary schools (Hall and Chapman, 2018). This suggests that perhaps teachers feel more comfortable or competent handling the bullying situations of younger students directly while feeling the need to rely on policies for older students. According to Kosciw (2017), having school policies that are comprehensive and that make it clear that bullying, harassment and assault will not be tolerated, may provide students with protections against bullying.

### ***1.3.5 Bystander behavior and victimization***

Bystander behaviors have been found to have an impact on bullying (Parris et al., 2019). Bystander responses include remaining passive and uninvolved (passive bystander) and defending the victim (active bystander or anti-bullying bystanding behavior; Kousholt & Fisker, 2015; Olweus, 1993). Other passive-aggressive bystanding behaviors include joining in the bullying, encouraging the bullying by laughing, etc. Research has shown that bystander defending behavior is related to bystanders' feelings of self-efficacy and self-confidence to act as a defender in a bullying situation (Thornberg et al., 2012).

### ***1.3.6 Teachers as bystanders***

Bystanders (people who can either intervene to stop a bullying occurrence, encourage a bully to continue the bullying, or view bullying passively) are an integral part of the "success" of bullying and make the situations more embarrassing and humiliating for the victims (Kousholt &

Fisker, 2015). But according to Burn (2016), bystanders are often not prepared to intervene, may not notice a bullying situation or misdiagnose it, believe intervention is not necessary, or are not aroused empathically to help the victim of the bullying occurrence. As it relates to teachers, those who reported that they were bystanders in their childhood also were more likely to indicate that they would act to intervene by involving an adult in a bullying occurrence but would be less likely to act to assist the victim of the bullying more directly (Yoon et al., 2016).

Batson's research on Prosocial Motivation (1995) examined complex questions related to the reasons that individuals are motivated to help others. According to Batson, much of individuals' actions are focused on benefitting others. The main reason for this is that "benefitting other people...also benefits us" (p. 335). This runs somewhat counter to the motivation of the upstander in a bullying situation. Peer and Webster (2016) distinguished bystanders from upstanders by describing the upstander as an individual who takes a "proactive role in engaging in change despite personal risks and biases" (p. 170). By contrast, the researchers defined bystanders as individuals who are typically "resistant to change and tend to disengage from the change process" (p. 170). This resistance-to-change attitude promotes bystander silence, resulting in perpetrators and victims feeling that the silence implies agreement. This perspective points to the importance of teachers being perceived by students as upstanders, as opposed to passive bystanders. According to Latane' and Darley (1970), influencing upstander behavior is more about the elimination of mostly cognitive barriers than about the activation of intrinsic personal characteristics.

There are significant negative long-term effects for bystanders to bullying (Burn, 2016; Rivers et al., 2009). Bystanders who witness bullying but do not intervene in situations can experience long-lasting negative emotions, including immense guilt. In fact, results of a study of

2,002 students between the ages of 12 and 16 suggested that being an observer of bullying in school can predict a higher mental health risk over and above the risk experienced by either the victim or the perpetrator (Rivers et al., 2009).

### ***1.3.7 The Bystander Effect***

Latane' and Darley (1968) identified a phenomenon, the Bystander Effect, and a theoretical framework (1970) to explain the behavior of bystanders and the reasons that individuals do not intervene to assist others during emergency situations. The researchers found that the more witnesses there were to an emergency, the less likely people were to intervene, described as Diffusion of Responsibility (Darley & Latane', 1968). Additionally, individuals tended to mirror the behavior of others around them, another possible barrier (or possible benefit if the behavior is appropriate to helping) to bystander intervention (1968). According to the researchers, there are four stages of bystander behavior in regards to bullying behavior, described below:

1. Notice the event
2. Interpret the event as a problem
3. Feel some responsibility for dealing with the problem
4. Determine how to intervene in the problem (1968)

#### ***1.3.7.1 Notice the event***

Even though teachers are logically in a good position to observe bullying behavior, students typically engage in bullying in contexts outside of the view of the teacher (for example, in hallways, the playground, or on the bus). Teachers recognizing this, and managing the classroom behaviors of students accordingly, is important to an intervention that is designed to reduce bullying (Kennedy et al., 2012; Marshall et al., 2009; Yoon et al., 2016).



### ***1.3.7.2 Interpret the event as a problem***

The interpretation of the event as negative is an important factor. The researchers suggested that the reactions (facial expressions, etc.) of others influenced the interpretation of the situation by the bystander (Darley & Latane', 1968). Whether or not the bullying event is serious enough to intervene is a question during this stage. Teachers' understanding of long-term bullying consequences (as opposed to taking a "boys will be boys" approach) and interpreting bullying as serious could impact the reduction of victimization in the classroom.

### ***1.3.7.3 Feel responsibility for dealing with the problem***

When bullying occurs outside of the classroom (via social media or off campus, for example) teachers may feel less of a responsibility to intervene. This could be for a combination of reasons, including feeling like a teacher's purview is limited to the school and classroom context. Additionally, they may not be aware of the extent and impact of the bullying (Bauman & Del Rio, 2006; Fekkes et al., 2005) or may consider bullying that is relational in nature (such as cyberbullying) to be less problematic (Blain-Acaro et al., 2012). Teachers also may weigh factors such as personal danger, time, and/or affinity for the student when deciding to act or not to act (Darley & Latane', 1968).

### ***1.3.7.4 Determine how to intervene in the problem***

Teachers act based on their perception of their own skill level. Yoon and Bauman (2014) suggested that knowledge and skills related to handling bullying are important for teachers to have to feel they can be effective in intervening in bullying situations. Bradshaw et al. (2007) and Yoon (2004) found that self-efficacy of teachers impacted their intention to intervene in bullying situations. In keeping with these findings, a perceived lack of efficacy may lead teachers

to ignore the bullying behavior, minimally address it, or refer a bullied student to another resource (principal or counselor, for example).

Research that correlates teacher bystanders with the bystander effect is limited. But researchers have studied this phenomenon as it relates to bullying and cyberbullying. Bullying is considered to be worse and more humiliating for the victim when there are witnesses/bystanders (Kousholt & Fisker, 2015) present. Additionally, the Bystander Effect has been found to impede the intervention of students and adults in school settings (Padgett & Notar, 2013).

Though this bystander framework was not used specifically during data collection, it is useful to understand that teachers' self-reported responses to how they address bullying in the classroom may correspond to stages of this Model.

### ***1.3.8 Bystander interventions***

In general, programs designed to prevent bullying and violence in schools have been found beneficial with moderate effect sizes (Jiminez-Barbero et al., 2016). According to the Centers for Disease Control (2016), the most effective intervention programs will address a number of causal and contributing factors, including the lack of anti-bullying skill training available for teachers and school personnel; the failure to consider socio-ecological factors that include the family and community; and the failure to focus on the role of bystanders to bullying episodes instead of solely focusing on those who bully and their victims. This suggests that adults who witness bullying occurrences (and other bystanders) are important to consider when designing an intervention. In addition to the negative long-term effects for bystanders to bullying who do not intervene (including immense guilt and negative mental health impact; Rivers et al., 2009), bystanders are often not prepared to intervene based on lacking the skills to do so (Burn 2016). According to Ttofi and Farrington (2009; 2011), teacher training that includes knowledge

and skills for bystanders is one of the most important elements of an effective intervention. And an increased emphasis on how to work with teachers in developing and implementing these interventions could be impactful.

Bullying interventions developed by Olweus (1997) have the restructuring of the social environment and group processes as primary goals. Though he discusses the importance of positive involvement of parents and teachers, Olweus' interventions are mainly focused on programming that is based on a more authoritative relationship between the teacher and child, in which the teacher takes responsibility for children's learning, as well as for their social relationships. This responsibility includes supervision, having serious talks with bullies, and support and protection for victims. What these interventions lack is a targeted focus on the teacher as upstander, based on an understanding of the effects of past victimization. Connecting the two roles (teacher and bystander), as well as the impact of teachers' childhood victimization experiences, would add depth to the education that teachers receive about how to act in a bullying occurrence and also why the specific actions they take (or do not take) are critical to the bullying moment for everyone involved (especially for the victim).

In 2010, Rigby offered a comprehensive view of interventions in schools. He provided six basic approaches to addressing school bullying but did not address teachers as key agents of change. The collective approaches included: A traditional disciplinary approach, an approach that included strengthening the victim, mediation, restorative justice, the support group method, and the method of shared concern. Rigby detailed the importance of involving the school and the community and contended that teachers have a limited understanding of how to address bullying. He suggested that this has to change in order to create new approaches to address the problem (2010). Espelage & Swearer (2003) also supported the idea of multiple bullying interventions at

the individual, family, peer group, and community/societal levels. They supported the development of strategies to reduce bullying that can be used by every school personnel, including students, parents, community members and others, based on a social-ecological framework (Espelage & Swearer, 2003). But again, this holistic view still underemphasizes the teacher as one of the most critical research units.

Even though very few interventions focus on teachers, Banyard et al. (2016) found that when teachers model anti-bullying attitudes and defending and upstanding behaviors, and when peers supported anti-bullying actions, upstanding and defending behaviors occurred at significantly higher levels than when teachers did not display anti-bullying and upstanding behaviors. Exploring teacher's anti-bullying attitudes and subsequent behaviors is important to designing interventions that target teachers.

#### **1.4 Purpose of the Study**

Despite the vast amount of research on bullying, school policies, and interventions and trainings aimed at students and teachers, bullying in school continues to be a serious public health concern (Farrington & Ttofi, 2011; Gini & Pozzoli, 2013; Strickland, 2017). According to a meta-analysis conducted by van Geel et al. (2014), there was a positive correlation between suicidal ideation (and attempts) among children and adolescents and peer victimization. A study conducted by Oaklander (2016) found that suicide for elementary school-aged children in the U.S. is the 10<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death. Based on current research, dire consequences continue to exist for children and adolescents who are victimized by their peers, as well as for those who bully.

Students who were bullies at age 14 experienced later violent convictions between the ages of 15 and 20 (Farrington & Ttofi, 2011). Other studies (e.g., Baly et al., 2014) have linked

past bullying victimization experiences to an increase in academic, social and emotional problems. Bullied students have been found to fare worse academically than non-bullied students, as well as experiencing higher levels of risk behaviors (Baly et al., 2014).

Another consideration for this study was the significant negative long-term effects that exist for bystanders to bullying (Burn, 2016; Rivers et al., 2009). Bystanders who witness bullying but do not intervene in situations can experience long-lasting negative effects. Although there is limited research on the mental health risk to adult teachers who do not intervene to assist student victims of bullying, it could be assumed that some risks may exist.

There are few studies (Newman et al., 2010; Olweus, 1993; Yoon, 2004) that have led to focusing on providing teachers with skills to intervene effectively in bullying situations for the explicit purpose of assisting the victim, and there is limited research that deeply explores teachers' childhood victimization experiences (Yoon & Bauman, 2014). This study was one of the first to focus on teachers' past bullying victimization experiences for the purpose of understanding how those experiences inform their responses toward bullying or bullied victims. The current study contributes to the bullying literature as researchers continue to understand and develop ways to design effective interventions aimed at assisting teachers in understanding the biases and/or barriers to assisting victims that could be rooted in their childhood bullying victimization experiences and equipping them with necessary and targeted bullying intervention skills.

This study also explored one of the questions raised by the findings of the research of Yoon et al. (2016); namely, the possible reason(s) childhood victimization has a negative assistive influence on adult teachers who are in a position to assist student victims in bullying

situations. Findings related to this question also are important to the development of future interventions and anti-bullying training for teachers.

Yoon and Bauman (2014) contended that the role of teachers in bullying prevention has been overlooked in bullying and bystander research. According to the researchers, very little attention has been devoted to the teachers' role in students' bullying victimization experiences, even though it is the teacher in the context of the classroom who is most often in the time, place and position to intervene in bullying situations. And, although teachers commonly referred bullying victims and perpetrators to school counselors or principals, specific strategies, steps, and processes were rarely provided to teachers when episodes of bullying came to (or were brought to) their attention (Fekkes et al., 2005; Yoon & Bauman, 2014, p. 309).

Inspired by the limited research on teacher-focused bystander interventions, I was interested in ultimately understanding how better to influence teachers' responses in bullying situations by exploring memories of their earliest experiences of peer victimization and their adult responses to bullied students. According to Cecil and Molnar-Main, (2015) a change of attitude and increase in intention was correlated with a teacher's skill confidence in responding positively and effectively in bullying situations. The findings of this study suggested that understanding whether or not these attitudes were formed as a result of coping with childhood bullying victimization experiences is important to understanding teachers' responses to bullying situations.

#### ***1.4.1 Significance of the project***

Research based on an online survey of 1,688 students in Grades 5 through 10 provided information about the number of students who are bullied and what these students do to seek help (Rigby & Johnson, 2016). One important finding was that students were more reticent to

ask for assistance from teachers than from peers and others. Of the 631 students who reported that they had been bullied at school, only 38% responded that they would seek help from teachers. Students also reported having negative views about the help they would receive (Rigby & Johnson, 2016). Additionally, teachers were not seen as protectors and helpers of victims because students were not sure about teachers' role in addressing bullying situations and felt teachers may not be taking their experiences seriously (Rigby, 2017). Perhaps the ways in which teachers have managed their own childhood victimization experiences influence their capability or motivation to assist victims of bullying as adults, which is why I explored the past coping efforts teachers used during stressful childhood bullying encounters. The results of this exploration offered some insight into how teachers might be educated to embody the role of "upstander" effectively in bullying situations in ways that make student victims aware and trusting of teachers as protectors and helpers.

According to Yoon and Bauman (2014), the impact of teachers' childhood bullying and bystander experiences was not yet well documented in the literature. Consequently, this study added to the body of knowledge related to the relationship of childhood bullying victimization experiences to adult bullying responses and to the future development of more evidence-based interventions for teachers aimed at the prevention and understanding of peer aggression.

There are a number of factors that contribute to the problem of bullying in schools (for example, unsupportive teacher-student relationships; Newman et al., 2010; teacher lack of confidence in bullying intervention skills; Gregus et al., 2017; and knowledge of how to intervene in bullying; Yoon & Bauman, 2014). This current study explored one factor—the relationship of teachers' childhood bullying victimization experiences and the ways in which they responded and reacted to bullying when they encountered it. All forms of bullying, physical,

non-physical and verbal, have detrimental short- and long-term effects for victims. These life-changing effects should be at the forefront when designing interventions aimed at teachers.

#### ***1.4.2 Research questions***

To help fill the gap in the literature as it relates to teachers' childhood victimization experiences, the following research questions (RQs) for the study were explored:

1. How do teachers describe their childhood or adolescent bullying victimization experiences?
  - a. How do teachers cope with their childhood or adolescent bullying victimization experiences?
2. In what ways do teachers respond to student victims of bullying?
3. How do teachers perceive the connection between their childhood or adolescent bullying victimization experiences and their responses to student victims of bullying?



## 2 METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Research Design

A qualitative approach was used for the study that was grounded in the theory of transcendental phenomenology (transcendental in that the ego is uncovered and phenomenological in that the world is transformed simply into phenomena; Moustakas, 1994) to explore teachers' childhood and adolescent bullying victimization experiences and their adult responses to bullying when they observe it. The choice to use a qualitative transcendental phenomenological approach was based on the objective of recognizing and making meaning of the lived experiences of teachers.

Based on my career experience working with teachers to facilitate their recounting of past bullying victimization experiences and my interest in the first-hand nature of those experiences, a transcendental phenomenological approach was determined to be appropriate for this investigation. It was my assumption that the teachers recruited for the study, similar to the teachers with whom I have worked, would remember the details of their past bullying victimization experiences, even if those experiences occurred decades prior. Consequently, the study examined, through in-depth individual interviews with teachers, the memories of their experiences of childhood bullying victimization, as well as how the teachers believed they were impacted personally and professionally by those experiences. It was presupposed that an effective way to understand the teachers' traumatic childhood bullying victimization experiences was to understand the context within which those experiences were remembered. Therefore, the details and descriptions of their bullying experiences were explored—including past bullying victimization and current responses to bullying and bullied victims.

## 2.2 Theoretical/Research Context

The research study was designed using both transcendental phenomenological and socio-constructivist approaches.

### 2.2.1 *Transcendental Phenomenological approach*

According to Moustakas (1994), the rationale for taking a transcendental phenomenological approach is to “eliminate everything that represents a pre-judgement or presupposition.” Moustakas situates the transcendental nature of phenomenology in Husserl’s proposition of the correlation between the reflection on subjective experiences or acts and objective ones (Moustakas, 1994).

This qualitative study used interviews and a phenomenological and socio-constructivist approach to prioritize exploration, through teachers’ perceptions, reflections and memories, to understand their childhood bullying victimization experiences, as well as the essence and possible meanings of those experiences. The investigation addressed the research questions by examining the coping strategies teachers used as children and the responses they described having, as adults, to bullied students. The interviews delved into teachers’ memories of their childhood bullying victimization experiences, focusing on descriptions and interpretations, as opposed to simplified explanations of events. Accordingly, these descriptions elicited thick descriptions of the human processes that impact the phenomena of coping with one’s own bullying and one’s responses to the bullying of others. The investigation incorporated delving into my own childhood bullying experiences on an ongoing basis using reflexive journaling (Ortlipp, 2008). Moustakas (1994) suggested that objects are best understood when researchers return to the notion of the self—understanding and recognizing “self” in the experience that is the subject of the inquiry.

### ***2.2.2 Socio-Constructivist approach***

I used the socio-constructivist approach, a philosophical approach to conducting qualitative research that supports open-ended inquiry as a methodology and the collection of participant-generated experiences as a practice for this study. Vygotsky's social development theory (Goldstein & Naglieri, 2011) posits that individuals learn from one another through knowledge that is co-constructed.

According to Elkind (2008), "As soon as you include human mental activity in the process of knowing reality, you have accepted constructivism." This perspective applied to both my process of learning about teachers' responses to bullying through the "lenses" and experiences of the teachers retrospectively, but also to the teachers' own learning that was constructed through the interview process based on their individual personal experiences (Weegar & Pacis, 2012).

### **2.3 Interview Approach and Methodology**

For transcendental phenomenological studies, the transcripts of in-depth interviews comprise the basis of the data and ultimate findings. I uncovered the essences of the phenomenon explored in the study using the participants' descriptions. The one-on-one interview format fit my research goals of collecting and analyzing experiences, stories and descriptions of the phenomena of interest. The individual interview method was selected over a group practice (such as focus groups) because it was more appropriate to gather the in-depth and deeply personal experiences of the participants. This choice was made based on the expectation that the study participants' sharing of past accounts of victimization would be traumatic for the. Focus groups can be less effective when participants are reluctant to share details of past traumas in a group of people who are strangers to them and are more subject to bias if individuals are impacted by the beliefs and behaviors of other group participants (Bennett & Jessani, 2011). The one-on-one

process allowed for rapport building between the interviewer and participant, which enhanced the openness and honesty of the process and added to the trustworthiness of the data collected (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Interviews conformed to the transcendental phenomenological approach, and data were collected using a three-interview model (Seidman, 2013). Interviews were conducted in participants' homes based on the assumption that they would feel more comfortable and at ease in their own surroundings. Though most of them opted to be interviewed at home, one participant preferred to be interviewed at the school in which she worked. Participants' signed consent forms were collected, which included obtaining permission to audio-record the interviews. Each interview was recorded and transcribed verbatim. Participants were compensated with a \$20 gift card for *Interview 1*, a \$25 gift card for *Interview 2*, and a \$30 gift card for *Interview 3*. The interview questions were semi-structured (more of a conversation in terms of providing the flexibility to adapt and tweak questions for subsequent interviews; Bennett & Jessani, 2011) and open-ended in order to allow participants to add additional breadth to the interviews. According to Schensul et al. (1999), "Semi-structured interviews consist of predetermined questions related to domains of interest, administered to a representative sample of respondents to confirm study domains, and identify factors, variables and items or attributes of variables for analysis..." (p. 149).

All of the interviews were conducted by the primary researcher to ensure consistency. This afforded intimate familiarity with the data and with the voices and stories of the participants. The interviews were designed and conducted following the phenomenological approach; I sought to understand and make meaning of the past experiences of teachers who were victims of bullying during childhood. Detailed and in-depth memories of experiences and

stories were explored using this design. The interviews provided the ability to gain more depth about the childhood bullying victimization experiences of the participants, as well as their more recent experiences of observing and/or intervening in bullying situations.

The interview methodology was fitting for this study in that it allowed for the examination of the “what” and “how” (not just the specific details) of participants’ bullying victimization experiences by allowing those experiences to be separated into structural and textural categories.

### ***2.3.1.1 Seidman’s Model of Interviewing***

The interview methodology for the study was based on Seidman’s Three-Interview Series Model (2013; Table 1). The Seidman Model is designed to gather data on participants’ lived experiences from their points of view. This Model fit the research goals of the study based on Seidman’s conception that the meaning that people make of their experiences directly influences the means by which those experiences are carried out—thus connecting past to present. And, according to Schultz (1967), meaningfulness is the “act of attention” that brings lived experiences into our “intentional gaze” (p. 71).

Seidman’s interview process involves using a series of three interviews—*the context of the participant’s experience, a reconstruction of the details of the experience within the context, and encouraging the participants to reflect on the meaning that the experiences hold for them in their lives* (Seidman, 2013). Accordingly, the current study included one phone interview and two face-to-face interviews, with each interview designed to address a different objective. This format provided the ability to follow up with the participants between interviews to clarify and better understand the themes that were relevant to the participants’ experiences.

During the first interview with participants (the *Context Stage*), qualitative data was gathered from 21 teachers, including demographic data; inclusion criteria data for the subsequent

interviews of the study; and data about participants' school years, childhood or adolescent bullying victimization experiences, as well as their direct bullying experiences. For the *Reconstruction of details (Interview 2)* and *Meaning-making (Interview 3)* stages, the sample was narrowed to eight teachers. In addition to strictly adhering to the inclusion criteria (based on teachers who had personally experienced childhood or adolescent peer victimization *and* personally experienced/observed the bullying of a student(s) as a teacher), factors used to narrow the sample included: the duration and intensity of the teachers' childhood victimization experiences; the duration and intensity of the teachers' adulthood classroom bullying experiences; teachers determined to have the most to contribute to the research questions, based on the richness and poignancy of their experiences and stories gathered during the first interview; and desired diversity within the small sample respective to gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, and age. Exclusion criteria included teachers who did not consider their victimization experiences to be "true" bullying. The second interviews focused on the details of bullying victimization and teaching experiences. The third and final interviews focused on the connection between the participants' bullying victimization experiences and the ways in which they described responding to bullying victimization within the context of the classroom environment.

The interview format provided for an increasingly trusting relationship between me and participants such that data collected during the third interview was qualitatively richer than that gathered during *Interview 1* and *Interview 2*; the third interview encouraged teachers to build on childhood memories they shared during the first two interviews, which led them to reveal more details about their experiences.

**Table 1***The Seidman Interview Model*

<b>Model Stages</b>	<b>Content</b>	<b>Question Types</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
Context	Childhood bullying memories, family, neighborhood, school, camp, etc.	Demographic, selection criteria, exploratory, historical	Narrow sample, stories, thick descriptions
Reconstruction of details	Details of experiences, how, what, when, why?	Specific, pointed	Narrative, stories, themes
Meaning-making	Past informing present, reflective	Impact, feeling, connections, meaning making, current responses, future intentions	Discussion and statements about future intentions, self-reflection

*Note:* The table shows the stages and components of the Seidman interview process.

### **2.3.2 Participants**

According to national statistics, 20%-30% of all students and 60% of middle school students reported being victims of bullying (Lessne & Yanez, 2016). Based on these numbers, I anticipated that a sample of participants with personal childhood victimization experience, as well as those who had experience dealing with bullied students as a teacher, would be accessible.

A total of 45 teachers were contacted, using convenience and snowball ethnographic sampling methods, and screened for the study. Initially, I reached out to colleagues and friends, who referred me to K-12 teachers (two of whom I was connected to through social media). Twenty-one teachers who met the inclusion criteria for participating in *Interview 1* were selected to participate in the first interview. This initial sample of 21 participants was interviewed using the interview protocol for *Interview 1*. One objective of this interview was to gather demographic and lived experiences from a range of different teachers. Another objective was to narrow the sample to participants who met the criteria to participate in the second and third interviews.

These criteria included participants who had been teaching for three or more years, had experienced childhood or adolescent bullying victimization first hand, and had exposure, as a teacher, to the bullying of one or more students. Two teachers who completed Interview 1 were adamant that the experiences they shared related to their childhood victimization not be called “bullying.” In these cases, those participants were excluded from the study. Another objective for the first interview was to identify a smaller sample of “information rich” (Patton, 1990, p. 169) participants. Non-random purposive sampling (Onweugbuzie & Leech, 2007) was used to identify the respondents that met the critical case inclusion criteria, which were met for narrowing to a sample of eight after interviewing the 21 teachers. The resulting sample included 7 females and 1 male (4 females identified as straight, 1 female identified as gay, 1 female identified as bi-sexual, and the male teacher identified as gay). According to the U.S. Department of Education (2019), the percentage of female public-school teachers was 77 percent in 2016. The sample for this study reflected this gap. Additionally, 4 of the teachers were African American and 4 were White. The age range was 33 to 50 ( $M = 43$ ). Years of teaching experience ranged from 5 to 20 years ( $M = 11$ ). The grades taught by teachers in the sample included: K-5 (2 teachers); 6-8 (4 teachers); and 9-12 (2 teachers).

*Interview 1* questions were designed to gather data that could stand alone and that could be analyzed and used in the selection of the focused sample of participants for the second and third interviews. The multi-purpose justification for beginning with a larger sample size and then narrowing to a smaller and more focused sample included gathering demographic data on a larger sample of teachers and gathering data important to understanding the participants’ lived experiences that informed their choice to enter the field of teaching, as well as their lived experiences of bullying. Though the data collected from the larger sample of participants was



coded but not analyzed completely, the data from the wider cross-section of teachers (the initial 21) provided the best potential for obtaining the optimum smaller sample of participants who met the study criteria for *Interview 2* and *Interview 3*. This was based on the assessment of the participants who shared the most poignant and information-rich experiences, and the notion that data gathered from the participants during the first interview can stand alone and be used to develop future research studies due to the size of the sample, the construction of the interview, and the data collected.

The sample sizes selected for the study (both the initial 21 and the subsequent 8) were consistent with suggestions for in-depth interviews that seek to gather data about meaning-making from a group of similar participants (Patton, 2001) using phenomenology (Seidman, 2006). According to Creswell (2014), phenomenological interviews (conducted for the purpose of gathering participants' lived experiences) should be conducted with up to 10 people. Further, collecting detailed data about a few individuals is appropriate—specifically, when using a phenomenological approach, 3 to 10 cases (Creswell, 2013). Since the second and third interviews were designed to be in-depth, the eight-participant sample size for this study was appropriate. Crouch and McKenzie (2006) suggested that a small sample size for interviews is appropriate (less than 20) and could enhance the validity of in-depth inquiry. Since the primary goal of the first interview was to understand the context of a larger number of teachers' lived experiences, the interview questions fit with the phenomenological nature of the approach suggested by Creswell (2013). Finally, a sample size of four to six participants is suggested when using a phenomenological approach and Seidman's Three-Interview Model (Creswell, 2013; Seidman, 2013). Based on this recommendation, the sample of eight for the current research exceeded the recommended expectations.

A total of 37 individual interviews were conducted over the course of 18.5 hours. The time duration range for *Interview 1* (the initial phone interviews) was 11 to 45 minutes ( $M = 24$ ); the range for *Interview 2* was 30 to 50 minutes ( $M = 39$ ); and the range for *Interview 3* was 40 to 60 minutes ( $M = 45$ ).

### ***2.3.3 Interview protocol***

The in-depth interviews for this study gathered stories about teachers' childhood or adolescent bullying victimization experiences. In essence, stories about experiences are one way of knowing and a way to make meaning of and understand emotional phenomena in order to understand the behaviors that arise in connection with those impactful experiences.

The questions for the face-to-face interviews with participants were open-ended and designed to elicit experiences, descriptions, and stories. The demographic and background data gathered from the first interview helped elucidate subsequent questions and probes for the remaining interviews.

The interview protocol and questions included in Appendix C are based on a review of the literature and were designed to gather teachers' personal stories about childhood bullying, with the objective of analyzing the stories using a thematizing process. All of the interviews were recorded and transcribed.

### ***2.3.4 Participant reviews/member checking***

After the transcriptions for each interview were completed, the process of member checking the data for accuracy was conducted (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), and each participant's interview transcript was shared with her/him. This process allowed each participant to review the interview transcriptions and provide responses regarding the accuracy of the interview data.

Participants were emailed interview transcripts and invited to respond to me if they noticed

inaccuracies. The process ensured trustworthiness and credibility of the data. Additionally, findings for the study were shared with participants at the conclusion of the data analysis phase of the study to affirm the accuracy and integrity of the aggregated data. None of the participants indicated that they noticed any inaccuracies after reviewing the transcripts.

#### **2.4 Data Collection and Analysis**

The data-related processes used for the study included data collection via in-depth, face-to-face interviews, inductive coding, and analyses of the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This approach allowed flexibility when new information and directions occurred throughout the process, which, according to Blumer (1999), often happens while conducting interviews.

Every effort was made to collect data from participants that was information-rich and specific to the teachers' childhood bullying victimization experiences. Interview questions were designed to elicit information about participants' lived experiences of personal childhood or adolescent bullying victimization and observations of current classroom bullying victimization experiences. Identifying themes or factors that made meaning of the teachers' bullying victimization experiences and their adult responses to bullying during the data analysis phase contributed to a deep understanding of the teachers' experiences. The data collected from the larger sample of participants was coded but not analyzed deeply, with the exception of the teachers' demographic data and the poignancy of their stories.

The analyses of the data were correlated to the research questions, with the data coded by each research question. An inductive process was used that considered themes, patterns and domains that were derived from participants' lived experiences, as well as a strict adherence to a coding scheme (Nastasi, 2009). NVivo software (Version 12) was used for analysis and coding.

### ***2.4.1 Active listening***

I used the active listening technique (listening in a non-judgmental way, which demonstrates non-bias; Weger et al., 2010) during the interviews to encourage participants to feel comfortable telling their personal stories. Making use of head nodding and open body language served to maintain rapport with the participants and provided the space for them to either remain silent as they were recalling past experiences or talk about non-related topics until they were “ready” to share difficult details.

### ***2.4.2 Reflexive journaling/audit trail***

Reflexivity has been defined as “self-awareness and agency within self-awareness” (Rennie, 2004, p. 183; Morrow, 2005). Qualitative data collection encompasses continuous self-reflection and transparency as it relates to values that guide and frame the research, and reflexive journaling keeps trustworthiness and transparency at the forefront of each stage of the research process (Levitt, et al., 2018). During the research process, I maintained a reflexive journal of all of my reactions, feelings, ideas, revelations, research decisions and data analysis activities in order to assist with the management of my subjectivities and biases and document the research process from beginning to end. This practice allowed me to revisit constantly how my values and thoughts guided the research process. Self-reflexivity was conducted throughout the investigation and used to document and examine my interpersonal interactions with the teachers and the internal responses that occurred as a result of interacting with them and with the data.

Using the journaling process also allowed reflection on the transparency necessary to provide perspective for the application of the research method and theoretical context.

### 2.4.3 Instruments

The main instrument used for the study was the Interview Protocol (which includes demographic, childhood bullying, and teacher response screening questions, as well as interview questions in three parts; see Appendix C). Also used, for coding and analysis purposes, were the four constructs related to the *Revised Ways of Coping Scale* (WOCS). The constructs of the scale used were *Problem Focused* (11 subscales), *Seeking Social Support* (7 subscales), *Wishful Thinking* (5 subscales), and *Avoidance* (6 subscales) from the Revised Ways of Coping Scale (Appendix D, Halstead et al., 1993; adapted from Folkman & Lazarus, 1980) and the five *teacher responses* constructs (*Ignore*, *Discipline*, *Involve Peer/Class*, *Develop Prosocial Skills*, and *Involve Adult Resources*), from the Yoon et al., (2016) study.

I used the four constructs of the Revised WOCS to assist with describing the “underlying and precipitating factors that account for what is being experienced” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 98) during the data analysis phase, specifically for categorization efforts. This was accomplished by first using the constructs to develop a scheme for coding participants’ interview responses related to questions about the ways they reported coping with childhood victimization experiences and then applying the codes to the responses. For example, one participant responded to the question of how she coped with being bullied by discussing the duration of her bullying experiences. She stated: “Most of my elementary school, and until I started to fight back, a year in middle school.” This response was coded as *Problem Focused (I stood my ground and fought for what I wanted)*.

The research of Rexrode et al. (2008) explored the reliability and generalizability of the WOCS constructs and found that, since the instructions for the instrument allow various types of administration (timeframe between event and administration, self-report or interview, version of the test used, and other adaptations), there was a wide variation in reliability scores for the scale.

However, the flexibility of the instrument is one of the advantages to using it (2008) or using its constructs. Important for this study, the researchers found that age was a statistically significant factor for the WOCS—there was higher reliability when the instrument was used with adults than when used with children (Rexrode et al., 2008). This factor, the instrument’s adaptability, and the use of the instrument for stressful situations that occurred years earlier (researchers recommend using a timeframe greater than one week for particular subscales), make the use of the constructs appropriate for this study.

Since previous research has validated the ways of coping and teacher responses constructs, the process of data analysis was enriched by referring to the frameworks associated with the constructs for grouping and categorization purposes.

#### ***2.4.4 Preparing and analyzing the data***

According to Moustakas (1994), the researcher is the first informant to contribute to the research. He describes the process of bracketing as “setting aside predilections, prejudices, predispositions, and allowing things, events and people to enter anew into consciousness, and to look and see them again, as if for the first time” (p. 85). The study relied on phenomenological reduction (or *epoché*; Eddles-Hirsch, 2015) to assist in the suspension of judgements about bullying. The process allowed me to understand the essences of the bullying-related phenomenon described by the participants in a holistic way and transform those experiences using analyses in order to address the research questions.

This process was important to the study as I acknowledged the material possibility of having some predilections based on previous work done with teachers, especially as it related to teachers’ bullying victimization experiences. Bracketing (approaches to subjectivity; Morrow, 2005) assisted me with exploring views and values that may have been hidden to me. Prior to

interacting with the participants, I documented my own childhood bullying experiences in April 2019 (see below for an excerpt) and revisited these experiences throughout the data collection and analyses phases of the study:

My earliest memories include trying to have at least one best friend. This was in kindergarten. I was four years old. This understanding of needing a friend was akin to feeling support, not being alone, being a part, and being accepted. My next memories of school include my experiences of being an “Air Force brat--” being a child who had to arrive at a new school mid-year, try to fit in, make new friends, only to leave again a year or so later to repeat the process all over again. It is during the “try to fit in” stage that I remember being bullied. From wherever I came, the new school was always different—culturally, geographically, and the children/kids/teens were always different. But in fact, I was the different one. If I moved from the south to the north, I took with me a southern accent that I had cultivated to fit in in the south. If I came from Europe, I brought with me a wider understanding of the world that the sometimes poor and southern children could not accept as the norm. I remember my head jerking backward as my ponytail was being tugged from behind. The 5<sup>th</sup> grade, the middle school in Illinois, was the worst. I was bullied so much relationally by the students in my class that I had hives practically every day. And, the teacher, as I recall, did nothing to assist me, though she clearly saw what was happening to me every day. I remember telling my mother that my teacher didn’t like me. After speaking with the teacher about the bullying that was occurring, my mother agreed with me. The entire 5<sup>th</sup> grade felt like a lesson in how to survive. This was also the year that my father was sent to Vietnam....

By reflecting on my own experiences of bullying and maintaining a journal of notes, thoughts and feelings throughout the study, I was able to engage in continuous reflection during each phase. This process allowed me to maintain an open mind when approaching each new interview, as well as during data coding and analysis.

#### ***2.4.4.1 Reviewing transcriptions***

The written transcriptions of the interviews were recurrently reviewed, and the phenomenological analysis methodology was used to study the interview contents (Moustakas, 1994). To accomplish this, the Modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen Method of Analysis of Phenomenological Data (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994) was used. This Model of data

analysis was selected for the study based on the notion that an open-minded approach is built into every step.

The study adhered to this method by first gathering full, detailed descriptions of the participants' childhood bullying victimization experiences in their own words and then uncovering the essences of those experiences. When reviewing the transcripts, notes were made on each transcript. On re-reads of the transcripts, I listened to the associated audio recordings of the interviews until I felt confident that a comprehensive understanding of each teacher's experiences was attained. This step served to re-established a "connection" with the participants and allowed for a concentrated focus on the participants' experiences, thus facilitating the "hearing" of those experiences in a new way, without contextual interferences. Second interviews were conducted after first interviews were transcribed, and third interviews were conducted after second interviews were transcribed, which allowed for reflection between interviews and ensuring that follow-up questions could be adjusted based on previous interviews, as needed. For example, one question that was added to the third interview after the first and second interviews were completed was: *If you could make a single statement about your credo or overall perspective about bullying, including how you want to address bullying in the future, what would that be?*

A brief description of each phase of the Modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen Method of Analysis of Phenomenological Data (1994; 1998) follows.

#### **2.4.4.2 Horizontalization**

The first step in the phenomenological reduction process (Eddles-Hirsch, 2015) is horizontalization of the data (Moustakas, 1994)—the process of ensuring that equal significance is given to all of the participants' interview responses. Horizontalization included removing



repetitive and non-relevant data and categorizing it such that the participants' (and my) responses were clustered together to create themes (Moustakas, 1994).

For example, themes from my own experience, including *the use of material objects to gain friendship* and *code switching<sup>1</sup> for survival* also occurred in the participants' interviews.

During horizontalization, I reviewed the written transcripts and my notes and made notations on the printed transcripts of statements related to teachers' bullying experiences and perspectives and also statements related to the research questions. These statements were then coded in NVivo and were considered to be horizons or segments of meaning. The coding process allowed for horizons to be explored for each participant for each coded category.

An inductive process of analysis (Nastasi, 2009; Strauss & Corbin, 1998), horizontalizing allowed for the coding of, for example, all statements related to the ways in which teachers coped with their childhood bullying experiences, not just the coping strategies defined in the literature. This allowed me to be open to the possibility of the emergence of new ways of coping. The coding of the statements was continually refined to group and regroup statements under major themes and combine and recombine statements that were similar.

Horizontalizing was conducted for each participant's second and third interviews before doing the same for the next participant's second and third interviews. Some of the childhood

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<sup>1</sup> The process of switching between languages or changing elements or dialects (codes) for the purpose of quoting someone in another language, language clarification for a specific audience, or expressing group identity, etc. (Nilep, 2006). For example, switching from an African-American dialect to a "white-sounding" voice.

bullying experiences gathered during the first interview were included in the analyses of the data and the interpretation of the findings—specifically, statements related to how participants described their bullying experiences. But it was the second and third interviews that provided the main data for the analyses, since these interviews were most relevant to the research questions of the study.

I reviewed the horizons for each participant by category and continued to group and categorize, eliminating statements that were repetitive or redundant such that what remained were data associated with the research questions of the study. The horizons that did not conform to the criteria defined by Moustakas (1994)—whether the statement “contains a moment of the experience that is a necessary and sufficient constituent for understanding it,” and “Is it possible to abstract and label it?”(the horizon; pp. 120, 121)—were un-coded. The remaining horizons were considered to be the invariant constituents (units of meaning; p. 122) for each participant. This process ensured that the voice of the participant continued to be the predominant voice for the study data, rather than my voice and perceptions as the researcher.

#### ***2.4.4.3 Clustering***

The invariant constituents of the second and third interviews were clustered (grouped and organized) and identified as main themes and sub-themes for each participant in the study (Moustakas, 1994). These themes were coded and cross-checked against the complete transcript of each participant’s interview. This process ensured that themes were explicit and/or compatible with transcript data. If they were neither explicit nor compatible, they were removed. And as new clusters were identified, they were coded. The process of comparing the clusters to previous research allowed further refinement of the cluster labeling and grouping. This process continued

inductively until all interviews had been coded/re-coded and a working coding manual was developed. Participant quotes were also coded and included in the working coding manual.

#### ***2.4.4.4 Textural descriptions***

Remaining invariant constituents (words, phrases) were used to create individual textural descriptions of the bullying victimization experiences of each teacher participant. Moustakas (1994) described this process as follows: “In this process of explicating the phenomenon, qualities are recognized and described; every perception is granted equal value, nonrepetitive constituents of the experience are linked thematically, and a full description is described” (p. 96). Moustakas (1994) suggested that the words of the participant be prioritized during this step in order to include participants’ perceptions of their experiences. To compile the descriptions, I referred to the third interviews where participants were asked to summarize their overall perspectives of their bullying experiences, their personal statements related to bullying, and the ways in which they intended to address bullying in the future.

#### ***2.4.4.5 Composite textural description***

The next stage of the analysis process was to form a composite textural description from the participants’ individual textural experiences. Moustakas (1994) suggested that a composite textural description assists with “seeing the group as a whole” (p. 180). This step in the process required a revisiting and integration of all the individual textural descriptions for each participant to allow data to emerge regarding shared and divergent themes. A summary was completed, which allowed for all of the participant descriptions to form one overarching description. This view allowed me to deepen my understanding of the participants’ shared experiences.

#### **2.4.4.6 Structural description**

A structural description, defined as “underlying and precipitating factors that account for what is being experienced” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 98), was created for each participant. Using the textural description as the basis, the description provided an account of each participant’s experience. This process examined the “how” – how the thoughts and feelings of the participants’ experiences were connected. I used imaginative variation to develop an expanded type of textural description (the analysis process that follows phenomenology by relying on the imagination of the researcher rather than on empirical data). According to Moustakas (1994):

The task of imaginative variation is to seek possible meaning through the utilization of imagination, varying the frames of reference, employing polarities and reversals, and approaching the phenomenon from divergent perspectives, different positions, roles, or functions. The aim is to arrive at structural descriptions of an experience, the underlying and precipitating factors that account for what is being experienced; in other words, the “how” that speaks to conditions that illuminate the “what” of the experience” (p. 85).

This process is intended to eliminate any factors that are superfluous by discovering the meaning of a phenomenon.

#### **2.4.4.7 Textural-structural description**

The last step in the study analysis was to compile one description for the entire group of participants from the textural-structural descriptions of each participant’s experience of bullying. This description represented the essences of all of the participants’ experiences combined in order to uncover inner domains of the participants not previously understood. The compiled version eliminated the details of their experiences and focused instead on general descriptive properties of the experiences. Likewise, the compiled descriptions provided understandings related to the research questions of the study. The descriptions of the experiences, plus the meaning applied, formed one overall description of each participant’s experience (Moustakas, 1994) and informed the development of the final coding manual.

#### ***2.4.5 Coding manual***

I developed the coding manual for the data in consultation with my committee co-chairs. The Manual provided functions of the specified codes, coding, and notes that are created during the data collection process and descriptions for coding and analysis. The coding manual was revised iteratively as redundancies were discovered, codes unrelated to research questions were removed, and refinements were made (Schensul et al., 1999).

#### ***2.4.6 Data visualization***

After the coding and analysis processes were completed, the data were organized visually by research question and by themes/sub-themes using the MindNode (IdeasOnCanvas, 2020) and Coggle (CoggleIt Limited, 2020) data mapping tools.

#### ***2.4.7 Trustworthiness***

Ensuring trustworthiness equates to presenting research in a way that demonstrates methodological integrity and ensures the reader of the study can trust that the findings are valid and credible (Levitt et al., 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To establish trustworthiness, I worked with my Co-Chairs during codebook development, built rapport with teachers over multiple contacts, conducted member checking, and engaged in reflexive journaling.

When developing the codebook, I discussed various coding approaches with my co-chairs, who assisted in the determination of the best approach for the study. Based on participant experiences and study methodology, the approach was selected based on coding by research question, participant, and by interview (for example, nodes for research questions, themes and quotes, and cases for each participant).

The one-on-one interview method was effective in building rapport with the teachers (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) and establishing trust. Additionally, using the Seidman Model

(Seidman, 2013) provided me with an opportunity to have multiple contacts with participants. Not only did this interviewing method allow participants time to remember and share important details of their experiences, it served to deepen the relationships and rapport between the teachers and me—rapport that facilitated the comfort necessary for participants to share painful details of traumatic experiences. In essence, I became less of a stranger to participants with each interview.

Mackie (2017) proposed a framework for viewing the interviewer as an *insider* or an *outsider* in the research process and detailed the pros and cons of this dichotomous relationship with research participants. The researcher suggested that striking a balance with these roles promotes openness and honesty between participants and the researcher. My process included having open conversations with participants between interviews that included confirming the permission to audio-record the interview, asking if there were any concerns from the previous interview, and reminding participants that they could stop the interview at any time (or conclude the process). Since participants were asked to recall traumatic or difficult experiences of childhood victimization, I offered them care and respect throughout the interview process and often responded to the participants by saying, “I’m sorry that happened to you,” when difficult moments arose in the interviews. The goal of listening and responding with compassion assisted me with functioning as a co-creator of knowledge with the participants of the study (Goldstein & Naglieri, 2011).

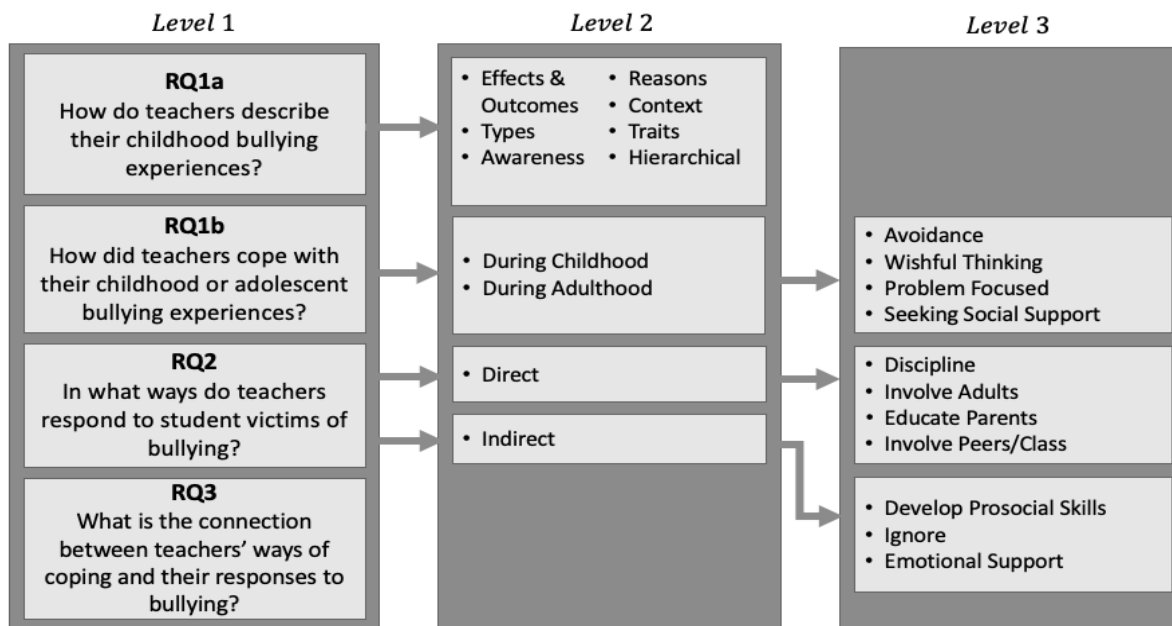
### 3 FINDINGS

The study findings are based on three interviews with eight teachers. Data analyses confirmed four main level 1 codes related to teachers' bullying experiences: *teachers' descriptions of their experiences* (research question 1a), *their ways of coping with their childhood bullying* (research question 1b), *their responses to bullying in the classroom* (research question 2) and *the connection between their childhood (and adulthood) ways of coping with their childhood bullying experiences and their responses to bullying in the classroom* (research question 3). The findings for each research question are presented in order by research question.

The criteria for weighting the significance of the data when reporting findings was based on themes coded as common to three or more teachers. Exceptions included data collected that were common to fewer than three teachers yet deemed important based on the potential interest to researchers, teachers, school administrators, and policy makers.

**Figure 3.1**

*Coded Findings by Research Question*

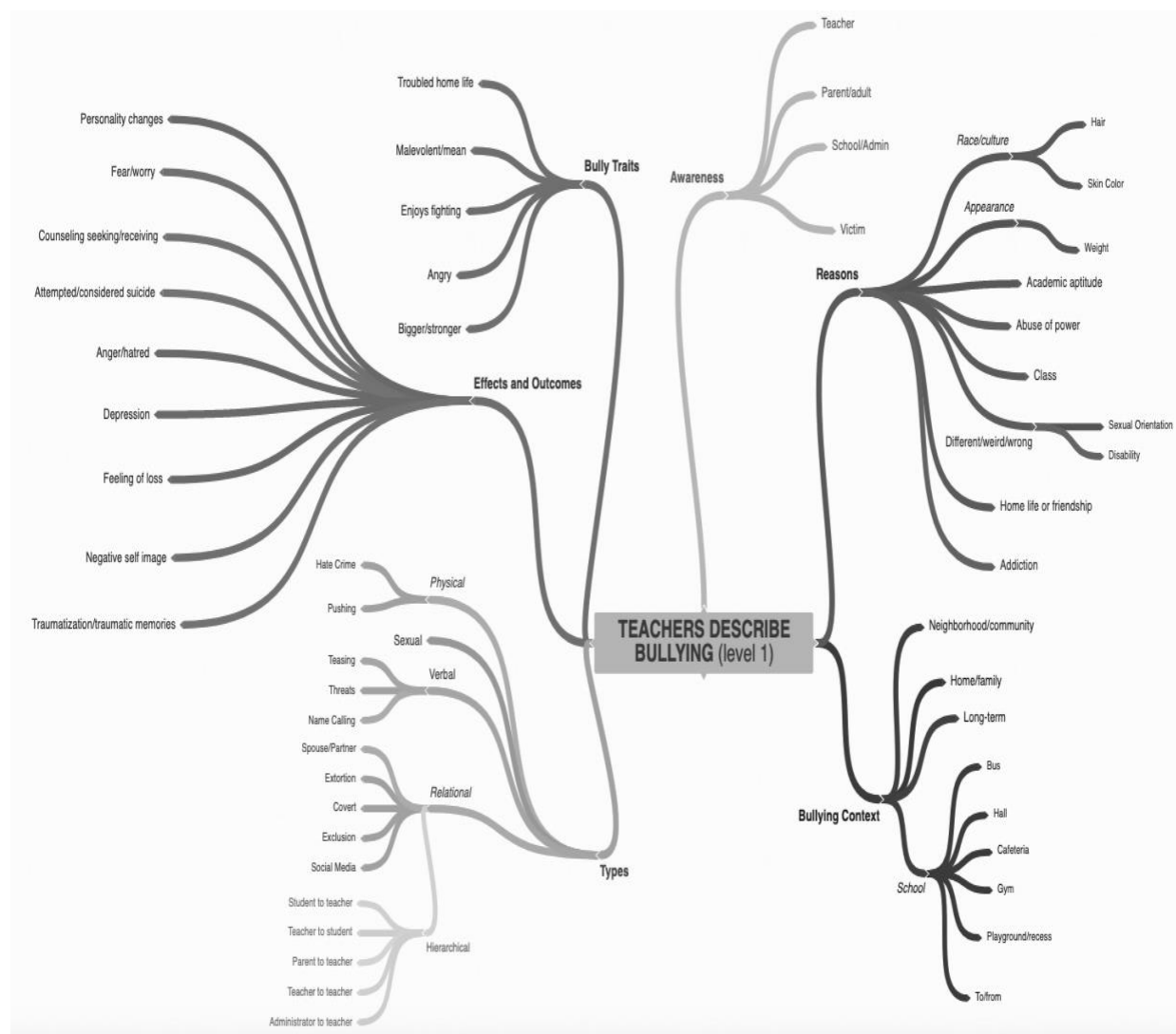


### 3.1 How did teachers describe their childhood bullying experiences? (RQ 1a)

Level 2 codes represented the ways in which teachers described their childhood bullying experiences, including *bullying awareness*, *bullying context*, *bullying types*, *traits of bullies*, *reasons for bullying*, *effects and outcomes of bullying*, and *hierarchical bullying*.

**Figure 3.2**

*How Teachers Described Their Childhood Bullying*



*Note:* Though teachers described bullying in a number of ways, this diagram shows the most frequently coded themes.

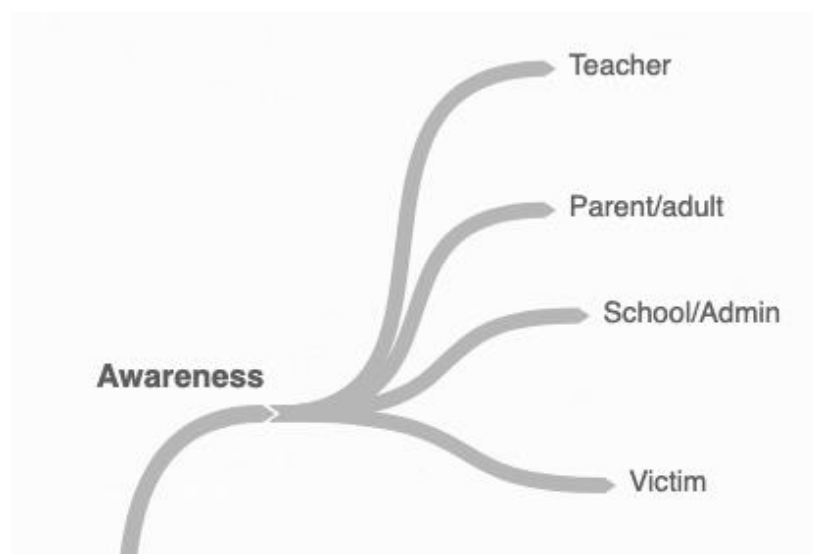


### 3.1.1 *Bullying awareness*

The *Bullying Awareness* code (level 2) represented teachers' understanding and awareness of bullying and the ways in which they perceived others' awareness of bullying. This awareness included an understanding of what teachers understood bullying to be and also noticing bullying events as they occurred. One way of describing their experiences was to discuss how much awareness they and others had relative to bullying episodes or bullying in general.

**Figure 3.3**

*Bullying Awareness*



#### 3.1.1.1 *Teacher*

Teachers ( $N = 8$ ) indicated that they thought bullying was always “wrong,” and reported noticing and recognizing bullying when it occurred. The teachers felt it would be difficult not to notice bullying. One teacher said, “It’s just, there are too many signs...”

In some cases, teachers' understanding of the bullying they observed was more in keeping with one-time events, as opposed to the repetitive nature of bullying. One teacher reported feeling angry about an incident she observed between two students. The teacher was

told by the school administrator that due to the victim's verbal response and based on the school's policy, the situation she observed did not rise to the level of bullying. Even though the teacher was aware that bullying is defined by repetitive behaviors, she still felt the episode should be considered as bullying. She recounted:

The one about the kid in the wheelchair, when the other kid was telling him to walk and stuff, the other teachers were like, "Well it's not bullying. He said something back. If they say something back, then it's not bullying." But I don't think that's (always) true. I don't know.

Another teacher offered her own definition of bullying, demonstrating her understanding of its pervasiveness. She said: "Bullying is like a roach. It's unfortunate, it happens so fast, it moves so quick. You feel like you'll never get them all...."

A teacher who identified as gay and who experienced physical bullying, as well as relational and verbal bullying, put his own experiences and those of his students in perspective. When asked how he managed to do this, he responded:

I think that comes from a perspective of how small it is in hindsight, I think I try to teach kids just to be able to laugh it off, keep it in perspective, make them realize down the road it doesn't mean anything.

Teachers also articulated an awareness that because bullying often goes on outside of the view of adults, it is, therefore, harder always have an awareness of it. One teacher said: "I don't see a lot of it in the hallways because so much of it happens behind the scenes now."

Teachers reported an awareness of the association between learning and students feeling safe. One teacher stated:

My perspective is that I need and want all of my learners open. And to be open, you need to be able to trust your environment. One of my roles is to have equal access to education and the learning... the ability to reach the material, and that would be a whole child. And so, I feel like bullying can distract my learners. Therefore, one of my roles would be to have a safe path to the learning process.

### **3.1.1.2 Parent or adult**

According to teachers ( $n = 7$ ), their parents were not aware of the bullying they were experiencing as children. For one teacher in particular, since he was bullied because he was gay, he could not disclose the bullying without also disclosing his sexual orientation. He stated:

I remember that there was a brief time that I went home every day and just cried in my room, and my parents didn't know what to do because they didn't know why I was so upset. I don't think they knew. I don't think I told them about the bullying.

Likewise, another teacher assumed her parents knew nothing about the bullying she was experiencing, while suggesting that bullying is easy to miss:

I don't think they were aware. I see that also, being an educator myself, it's one of those things that is really easy to not pay attention to because there's always so much going on and we're responsible for so much on the educator side.

### **3.1.1.3 School or administration**

Teachers ( $n = 4$ ) reported that people were aware of the bullying they were experiencing. According to one teacher, “everyone in the class knew what was going on.” However, the teacher also explained it was possible that the teacher in the class would not remember the bullying that had occurred, suggesting that teachers find these events somewhat common and unremarkable. She said, “Most teachers don't remember things like that.”

Teachers ( $n = 3$ ) indicated that the school did not use the word “bullying” during the time they were experiencing victimization in school, suggesting this as a possible reason their bullying was not taken seriously. One teacher said: “They didn't stress the word ‘bullying’ when I was in school, so when I became an adult, that's when I really realized I was being bullied as a child.”

### 3.1.1.4 Victim

Prior to middle school, teachers ( $n = 3$ ) had an awareness that what they were experiencing was painful but did not recognize it as bullying until they were in high school, where they started hearing the term being used. One teacher expressed:

It wasn't until I turned 35, I went to a counselor, I went and sat down on the couch...I didn't feel like I had low self-esteem or anything, but I was...I want to be a whole person spiritually and mentally, and you can't co-exist if everything's not cohesive. I found myself in a broken place and the counselor was the one who delved into that and it was like, "Wow, you suffered from bullying."

One teacher discussed having an awareness of bullying once she reached high school but believed she was too old and that it would be too humiliating to report the bullying. She revealed:

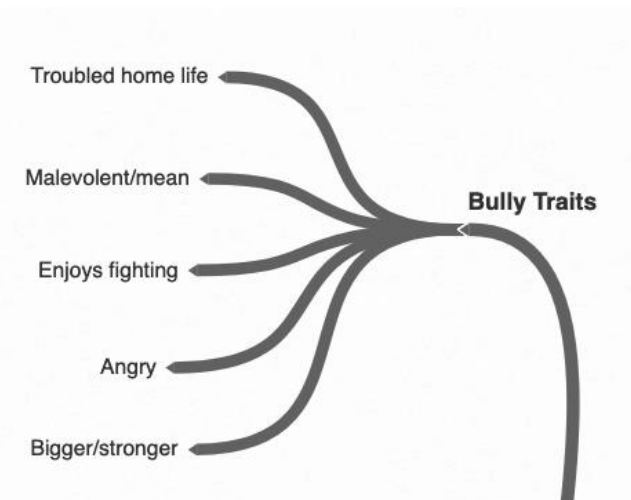
I didn't report bullying in any of the instances. I knew in high school it was bullying, but I was like, we're adults pretty much...we're old enough, like, I can handle it, I can deal with it. They're not hurting me physically, so that's fine. But hurting me physically or emotionally can be just as bad, you know?

### 3.1.1 Bully traits

Teachers ( $N = 8$ ) described the traits of the bullies as "mean," "bigger," and/or "angry."

**Figure 3.4**

Bully Traits



Teachers attributed bullying to the personality or temperament (internal behavior) of the bullies versus attributing the behavior exclusively to situational (external) factors. For example, one teacher said:

He was just mean. Always mean and bullying and somebody, even at that time, knew that he was probably in fifth grade and I was in first grade. But I just knew that he was such a jerk for anybody who would prey on a little girl like that.

And she continued:

I know I was targeted. I know that they were very mean. I don't even know the situation like why they were doing it. And then I remember they hit me in the head really hard and it just hurt. I didn't want to cry in front of them.

### 3.1.2 *Bullying context*

Teachers described their childhood victimization as occurring in a number of places and situations and over various periods of time.

**Figure 3.5**

#### *Bullying Context*



### 3.1.2.1 School

Teachers ( $N = 8$ ) reported that bullying took place for them in the school setting. Though most teachers ( $n = 7$ ) reported that bullying started for them in elementary school, they also reported they were bullied throughout middle and high school, as well. One teacher, who reported that she felt relational bullying was more prevalent among girls, said:

I think for me it was school. I was a pretty quiet and independent kid...I found it a lot more prevalent in my female relationships at that middle school at the time...There were definitely instances with boys too...I don't know, girls have a tendency to be a little cattier about things...

Another teacher described how her relational bullying evolved into repeated physical altercations:

And then, you know, that anger builds up in you, so then my whole 10<sup>th</sup> grade year and 11<sup>th</sup> grade year of high school, all I did was fought because I felt like I had to defend me, because I had no one else to defend me. So, I was fighting and getting in trouble...and back then, bullying was not...like now in school, they talk about bullying a whole lot more, but when I was in high school...they didn't talk about bullying that much.

Making the connection between what was happening in the context of family and community in the rural town in which she lived, which was impacted by factory closures and economic decline, one teacher discussed how that dynamic entered into the school setting. She explained:

My childhood was characterized by being around very anxious adults worrying about losing their blue-collar jobs. And they had reason to be anxious, 'cause it was happening. So, there was a lot of addiction and drinking, just sort of a low rumble of disaffection and an undercurrent of violence. People had deer guns, 'cause they were into hunting, so the milieu I was in ... So, it was like the community level, and in my house, it was definitely my parents' not happy marriage, and some neglect of we children. And then all of that came into the school house as well. I think the adults in the school were in the fabric of that community as well.

Teachers ( $n = 3$ ) explained that when there was bullying at home as well as at school, there was not a break from being bullied in their lives, making the bullying all the more painful.

This connection between school, family and community factors supports the notion that addressing bullying should involve the school, as well as the family and community (Miglianccio & Raskauskas, 2014; Olweus, 1997; Rigby, 2014). Another teacher discussed a similar experience and explained how she considered herself to always be the “underdog:”

There was no break between the bullying at home and the bullying at school. And then, you don't expect to receive bullying. You don't expect to put the title of bullying at home. But it was the same as in school. I was always helping an underdog, or I was an underdog.

Teachers ( $N = 8$ ) discussed the different areas of school where their bullying took place, such as hallways, the cafeteria, gym class, and the playground. The school bus (level 4 code) was seen as a particularly “scary” place for some of the teachers ( $n = 2$ ). One teacher recounted:

I hated being on the bus. The bus was the worst place to me. Oh, that was a scary place. I prayed and prayed that I could get a car. Soon as I learned how to drive, I wanted a car so badly so I wouldn't have to get on the bus. (I was) traumatized by the bus. So much happens on the bus. They (the bus drivers) have to drive the bus. They have to keep their eyes on the road. They have to keep us safe. They have no idea what's going on on that bus. I hated the bus.

Since the only adult on the bus (the driver) was acknowledged as being preoccupied with driving responsibilities, the school bus emerged as perhaps one of the first places where teachers reported being “on their own” for the first time and, therefore, easy targets for bullying. One teacher said:

So, I got off the bus and I told the bus driver that they hit me, and I remember she told me to show her which ones and I told them, and I don't know what happened after that, but I just... I felt the bus driver was safe, and she... But it was so scary because it was the first time I was ever without my parents at all, and I didn't know what to do, I didn't have that many friends to talk to or anything. I was just by myself.

### **3.1.2.2 Home or family**

Teachers ( $n = 3$ ) who described bullying that took place in the home or among family members sometimes also described bullying as a multi-contextual experience. One teacher described the bullying she experienced as primarily occurring in her family:

By early on, I mean first or second grade. I was definitely conscious of people abusing their power. In particular, adults. And adults not doing their part to keep kids safe. I witnessed that. And there was a part of me ... I always say, somewhat, my parents allowed my brother to be violent towards me. And enabled that. I remember from a very young age, in my own family, thinking ... not using the word, but the feeling of, this is total bullshit. That there's something really, profoundly wrong and unjust, but I didn't have that language of the injustice of it.

Another teacher described the bullying she experienced in her family against the backdrop of addiction and sexual abuse:

It was in my neighborhood, in my family... So, I don't know, my dad was on drugs and I do remember being younger, and I tell people, "My dad wasn't always a bad dad." He was, at one point, a great dad. But when you start to use drugs, and... I don't know. I guess you feel like you should never be afraid of your parents...

She continued by describing how she blamed herself for the sexual abuse she experienced at the hands of her father:

My dad came to the house that day, to my grandmother's house, and I was cleaning up so I could go and hang out with my cousins. And he brought me some money, and that didn't happen often, so I was excited. So, I let him in the house. But he left and came back and wanted the money back. For a long time, when things like that happen, you blame yourself, so I blamed myself for a long time because I kept saying, "My grandma told me don't open the door for anybody. I should've never let him in."

Another teacher described the bullying she experienced in her family as “academic bullying:”

Family bullied me academically. Everyone in my family is an engineer and I have learning disabilities so that didn't work out too well. I failed through school—all the time. (There was) yelling, frustrating, telling me something is wrong with my brain. Beatings. When I got Fs and Ds. To quote, "D meant you don't give a damn. F meant you said Fuck it and you're not retarded." I heard that a lot growing up.

### ***3.1.2.3 Neighborhood or community***

Bullying in the neighborhood, school and family represented blurred lines for some teachers. One in particular, when asked if her bullying experiences were primarily at school, in her family or in her neighborhood, replied, “Shoot, all of the above.” For most ( $n = 3$ ), bullying



occurred for them in their neighborhoods but could not be isolated to the neighborhood context.

By contrast, one teacher explained that, while some teachers felt unsafe at home, her home was the primary safe space for her, away from the verbal bullying she was experiencing. She said:

Well, it (bullying) was mainly in school, but then some of those kids from school lived in the neighborhood too. But I felt more of a protection at home because I could just, if I was outside playing and someone said something that was hurtful, I'd just leave and go in my house.

Conversely, one teacher described the neighborhood as a source of inevitable difficulty for her. She explained:

I was constantly in trouble. My mom was telling me she wasn't raising me this way, but they couldn't get me out of that neighborhood. Those were the neighborhoods I was in. You know, my mom did steadily move us into different neighborhoods. I will give her that. She did the best she could.

#### **3.1.2.4 Long-term**

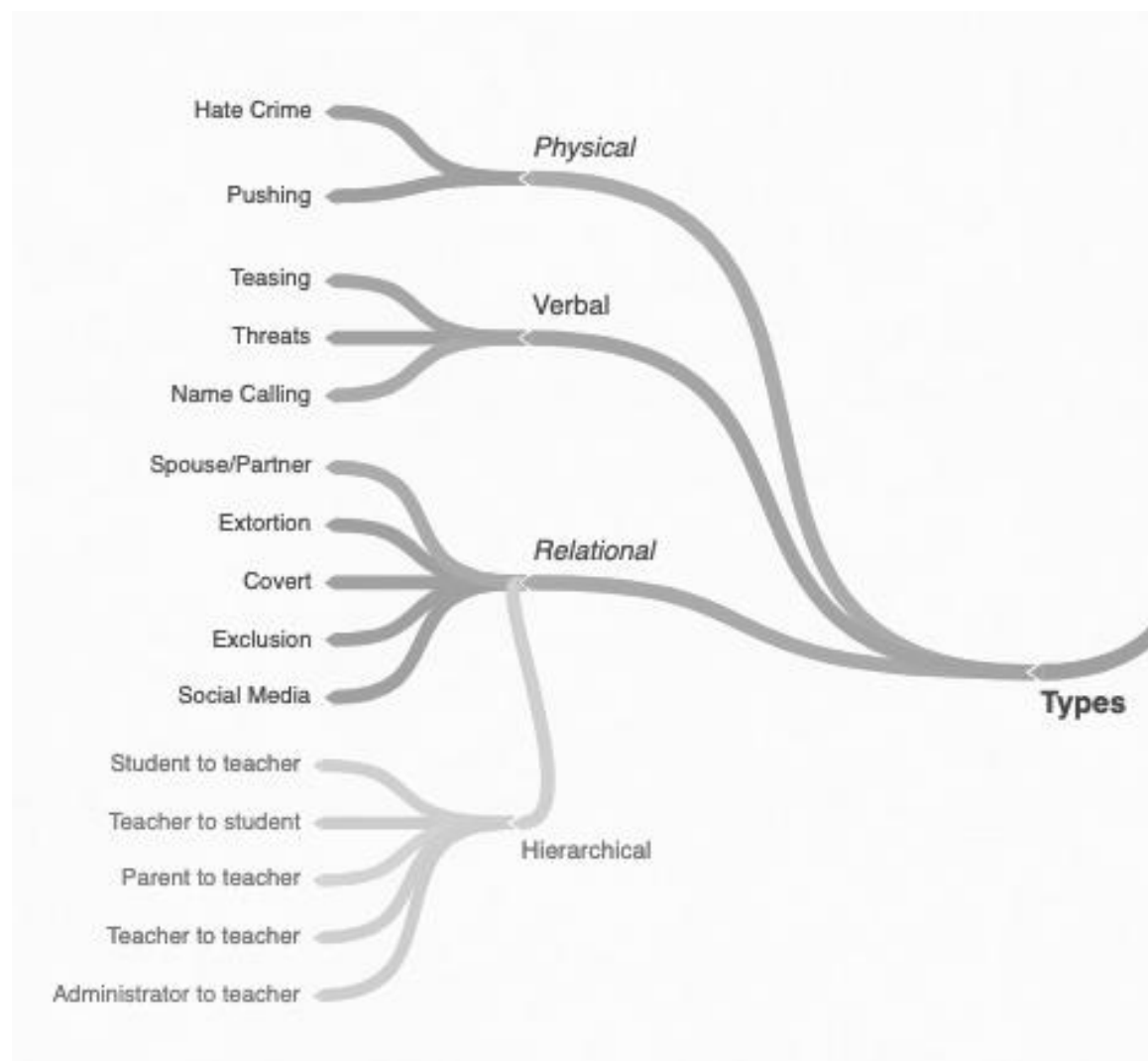
The long-term code (level 3) referred to the ongoing nature of the bullying that teachers experienced. Some described bullying taking place sporadically over a period of time; others described bullying as happening throughout their entire school years. One teacher stated:

I think it was pretty much throughout my educational experience. I mean, it let up a little bit as I got older, or maybe I just didn't notice it as much, but no, I would say it was pretty consistent.

Another teacher similarly reported: "It was repeated, basically till I got to high school. In middle school, it was very bad."

#### **3.1.3 Bullying types**

The ways in which teachers described their bullying were supported by the research on bullying types, namely physical, relational, and verbal bullying (Olweus, 1994). Other ways that teachers described bullying, including partner/spouse and sexual bullying, emerged as level 3 codes.

**Figure 3.6***Bullying Types***3.1.3.1 Physical bullying**

Teachers ( $n = 5$ ) reported experienced bullying that was physical. Some teachers recounted verbal bullying that led to physical bullying. A lot of the physical bullying was described by teachers as “pushing” and “shoving:

More was boys. Boys bullying boys. Almost a pack mentality. Where someone who was meek, different, usually smaller. It was kind of a verbal and, you know, push around. I just, I grew up in apartments with a lot of kids. And we'd go outside and play, and so I'd see a lot.

One teacher described what started out as verbal bullying and escalated to an extreme physical bullying episode, the likes of which may be considered a hate crime today. The teacher reported that he responded to verbal bullying and, ultimately, the situation culminated with the involvement of law enforcement:

And I think I yelled something back too. It was something along the lines of “suck my dick.” And the next day, or maybe two days later another friend of mine and I were walking out to her car for lunch, and he and his friends surrounded me. And I remember he pinned me up against her car and was saying something to me and I was just trying to get away. And he picked me up and he threw me on the ground, and started kicking me in the face. And his friends took off, and he took off and my friend picked me up and she's smaller than I am so I don't know how she did this, but we went back into the school. And one of the teachers found us and they thought I'd been in a car accident because it was that bad. And they called my parents and my mom came and got me and we went to the hospital. And then my dad showed up and I think a police officer came in, and we were talking about things and they asked me if I wanted to press charges. And it was interesting because my mom said, "Yes." And my dad was like, "Well, let's talk about this." And I finally just said, "No, I want to."

### **3.1.3.2 Relational bullying**

Teachers ( $N = 8$ ) reported experienced bullying that was relational. Though relational bullying includes cyberbullying, social exclusion, humiliation or shaming, intimidation; and rejecting behaviors, (Goldsmid & Howie, 2014; Stuart-Cassel et al., 2013) some teachers ( $n = 2$ ) specifically described their bullying experiences using the word “extortion.” One teacher said:

I don't know what you'd call it. More like extortion kind of bullying, more like if older kids wanted something, they would just take it from me kind of thing. It's not actually physical, and not verbal abuse, but it's taking something from you. It's their power over you, and they can take what they want.

The other teacher who used the word “extortion” to describe a bullying tactic understood the behavior as a “defense mechanism” for the bully. She said:

Kids using extortion to get what they wanted; they were the same age, and the same, similar sizes. In fact, a lot of times it was the shortest ones that had the Napoleon syndrome, and felt like they had to prove something to everyone else so they don't get messed with. It was more of that defense mechanism.

Teachers ( $N = 8$ ) described exclusion as being a part of their relational bullying experiences: “Yes, I was excluded. I was weird so I was excluded a lot.”

Another teacher said:

I remember being in a particular apartment complex and always wanting friends, and wanting to be included, and always feeling like I was excluded. I do recall one particular situation where I had thought that the particular group in the neighborhood had accepted me into the friend group, and I was following them upstairs, and when I went upstairs, and I put my hand on the rail, they had spit all on the rail. When I went, of course, my hand touched the spit, and then they just all started laughing. It was just always a constant, I didn't fit in, I didn't belong, and I was constantly teased about my weight.

Teachers ( $N = 8$ ) acknowledged that much of the relational bullying they experienced, as well as the bullying they observed, occurred outside of the gaze of the teacher or adult. One teacher explained: “I think so much bullying happens behind the scenes now. Like on social media.”

Another teacher noted the ease with which relational bullying can occur. She said: “I think a lot of it nowadays, it's behind the scenes because it can be.”

Since most of the teachers ( $n = 5$ ) were between the ages 42 and 49, they talked about how the perception and understanding of bullying have changed with the growing popularity of social media:

In our day, social media wasn't around. Bullying became more prevalent, more popular, when social media started. So, then everybody had a story about being bullied. People say, “Well, they're talking about me,” or girls who might have had a relationship with a boy and somehow or another he recorded it and it got out, and we've had to deal with all of that....

And another reported that she shared with her students how she viewed and handled bullying when she was in school and explained the danger of using social media to post personal information. She told them:

"We used to have bullying, but you all have more so because of social media, and so that's why it's a big thing." I said, "When we were bullied we dealt with it, and you moved on, but it keeps going and keeps going with you guys, that you put everything out there."

Teachers ( $N = 8$ ) discussed their emotional responses to experiencing relational bullying.

One said: "Well, the whole experience was, I was humiliated. So, I would say not too much verbal, a little physical, and yes, it was humiliating."

And another explained:

There were practical jokes a lot. There was a group of girls who were really mean. The teacher did see and didn't do something about it. I remember being left out. Like a camp that the sixth graders went on, I remember the teacher walking with me and talking. I felt alone, even with that conversation. I never heard that she called my mom, or reached out to my family to say that she noticed this happening. It was kind of... "You swim..."

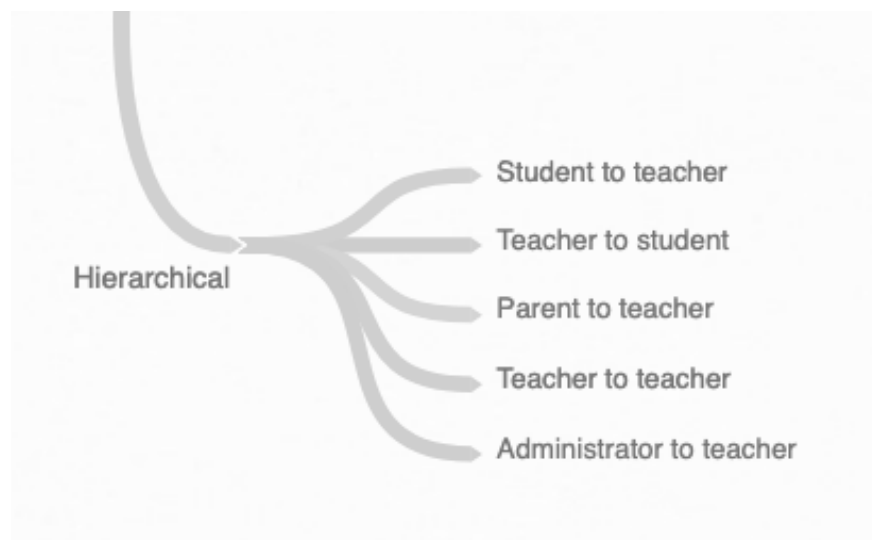
### 3.1.3.1 Hierarchical bullying

Level 3 codes emerged from the hierarchical bullying code (level 2) to include:

*administrator bullying teacher; parent bullying teacher; student bullying teacher; teacher bullying student; and teacher bullying teacher.*

#### Figure 3.7

##### *Hierarchical Bullying*



### 3.1.3.1.1 Teacher bullying student

Teachers ( $n = 3$ ) reported being bullied by a teacher (during childhood). One explained: “I remember my second-grade teacher was, herself, a bully. She bullied children. She really did abuse her power over children in peculiar ways.”

Another revealed: “I mean, I was getting jumped a lot in school and in my neighborhood...and I felt my teachers were bullies.”

Another recounted being bullied throughout kindergarten by a teacher because of her weight. She detailed one of many incidents:

My teacher bullied me, throughout kindergarten. I wasn't a skinny kid, I wasn't small, I was on the thick side, but in kindergarten we were allowed to bring in snacks and we had a snack time where we could eat a snack that we brought from home. And my mom would always allow me to bring in a honey bun because that was my favorite snack. A honey bun or an oatmeal pie, it was between those two. Those were my two favorite snacks. And my teacher was like, "Yeah, that's enough. You can't have this." So, she replaced my honey bun with wheat crackers and she said, "You don't need to be eating this."

### 3.1.3.2 Verbal bullying

Teachers ( $N = 8$ ) reported some form of verbal bullying, either in concert with the other types of bullying they experienced or in isolation. The level 4 codes that emerged were *name calling*, *teasing* and *threats*. In some cases, the teachers did not remember exactly what was said to them but still remembered how the verbal bullying felt. One Jewish teacher recounted verbal bullying that bordered on veiled racism. She recounted:

In high school, I can't tell you if my biology teacher knew what was going on, but I came home, ... I have very long, curly hair, and I came home with tape stuck in my hair. They drew pictures of me emphasizing my nose and my double chin. They would ask me if I owned an iron, ironed my clothes, washed my clothes, things like that. I just sat up front and tried to mind my own business.

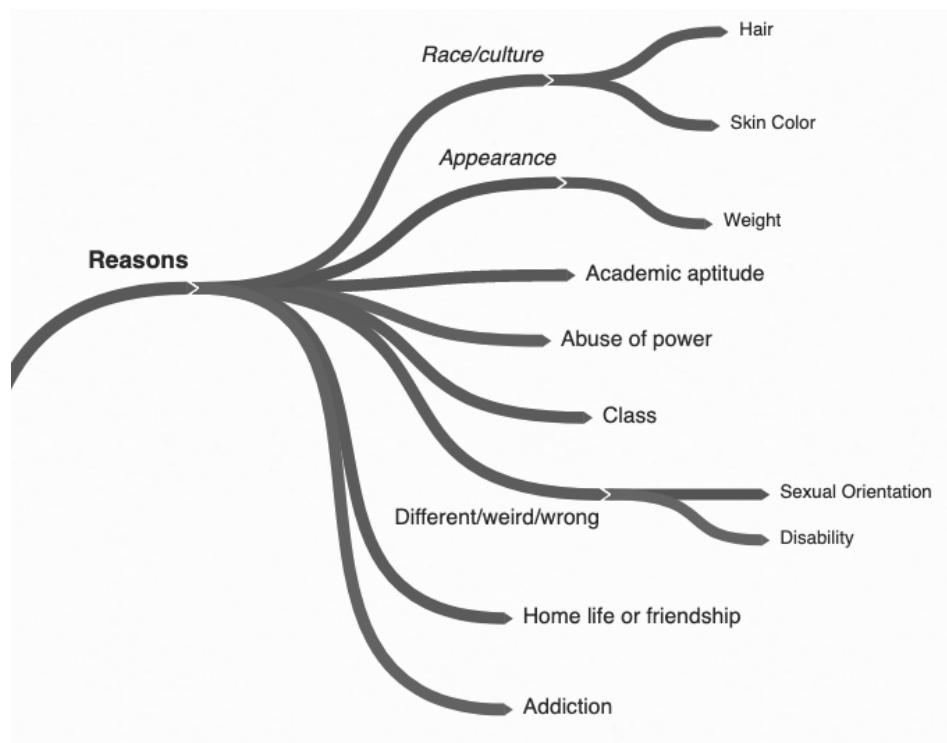
There were other verbal bullying events reported that were also based on physical characteristics. One teacher said: “I have a mole on my face, so that was one of the primary things that was targeted in the bullying.”

And another reported: “I don't want to say body dysmorphia, but I definitely have a skewed perception of what I look like now. But, anyway, I was fat. I was overweight, and I was also pretty quiet. You know, just mean kids would say things in passing, as I'm passing. You know, laugh with each other at school. Call me ‘moose.’”

One teacher pointed out that she felt that physical bullying was less impactful than her verbal bullying experiences because, as she said, “Words are everlasting; it sticks with you.”

#### ***3.1.4 Bullying reasons***

Teachers ( $N = 8$ ) described a number of reasons that they were bullied; reasons ranged from *traits and characteristics of the bullies* to *traits and characteristics the teachers themselves reported having*. The most significant reported reasons for bullying were teachers feeling *weird or different* (which included appearance and weight, poor social skills, sexual orientation and disability); *race and culture*; *academic aptitude*; and *class*.

**Figure 3.8***Bullying Reasons*

*Note:* Though teachers described a number of bullying reasons, this diagram shows reasons discussed most frequently.

**3.1.4.1 Abuse of power**

One teacher articulated an early understanding of power as intrinsic to the bullying relationship between bully and victim and reported:

Fairly early on. And by early on, I mean first or second grade. I was definitely conscious of people abusing their power. In particular, adults. And adults not doing their part to keep kids safe. I witnessed that. My parents allowed my brother to be violent towards me. And enabled that.

**3.1.4.2 Academic aptitude**

Teachers ( $n = 3$ ) noted both being highly intelligent and having academic challenges as reasons for being bullied.



Some teachers who reported being bullied for academic reasons reported having challenges academically. One teacher remembered: "I have learning disabilities so that didn't work out too well."

### **3.1.4.3 Addiction**

Teachers ( $n = 2$ ) talked about how addiction was an underlying factor for the bullying they experienced. One teacher explained: "There was a lot of addiction and drinking (in the family)."

### **3.1.4.4 Appearance**

Teachers ( $n = 5$ ) reported that physical appearance was one of the most common reasons teachers reported being bullied. *Weight* (level 4 code) was the most frequently reported appearance-based reason for bullying. According to one teacher:

It was kind of physical... At first, it was just verbal, because I've always been overweight and my mom is really big. So, it started off in that capacity, and then I never defended myself, so then you would have people who would just push and shove you because they know that you're not going to fight back. Because I had the kind of parents to where you didn't fight back.

Another teacher said:

I was 13, and then that incident happened... I thought I was over it, but then when I got in high school, with the girl saying I was too fat to ride in her car so I couldn't go to the talent show with them, I was 16 when that happened.

She continued:

They laugh(ed) or they point(ed), or it was something for them to say in the middle of class. So, they will say stuff like, "You can't sit in that chair, it's about to break." Even when I was at school those slide-in desks, I couldn't fit in them, so I had to sit at the desk in front of the teacher, which singled me out. So that hurt me even more.

Another teacher discussed how she changed as a result of being bullied about her weight. She said: “It hurt, but it changed me to more of an introvert, but if you called me fat that would make me fight.”

#### **3.1.4.5 Class**

Teachers ( $n = 2$ ) reported *class* as a reason that they felt they were bullied. One teacher remarked: “It all has to do with the money. If you don't have any money, you get made fun of. Or if you don't get dressed like you have money.”

Another similarly said:

A lot of times it comes down to, once again, the environment in which you're in, so if you're not in these neighborhoods, and if your mom can afford to take you to the camp during the summer, and you're not at home by yourself all day long, then you may not experience some of the things that I've experienced.

Along with class and economic issues, one teacher felt that she was bullied because she had opportunities others did not have, inspiring jealousy and, thus, bullying. She said:

My mom was a fashion connoisseur, so she just dressed my brother, sister, and I, in the latest fashions and she dressed me preppy. And of course, I had cousins who, like I said earlier, the term for me was jealousy, they would pull my hair, they would try to talk about my clothes and laugh and get all the other kids to make jokes about the things that I wore.

#### **3.1.4.6 Home life or friendship**

Though one teacher reported desperately feeling the need for friendship and behaving in ways she otherwise would not have in order to get it, often having, losing, or desiring friendship was at the heart of bystander behavior. She said:

I really feel that because, as a child, my family unit was so isolated, I felt isolated. I felt separate from everyone else. There was no loving support around me outside of my family. And then the bullying happening, I think I got bullied and I ended up in a lot of situations because I was craving friendship. I was craving someone outside of my parents to communicate with.

### 3.1.4.7 *Feeling different*

Teachers ( $n = 4$ ) reported feeling “different,” “weird” or “wrong” as reasons they experienced bullying treatment from peers:

I was just very different from the other kids. They knew I was different, bullied because not only just I looked different but I definitely acted different. So, they would just kind of like, it felt like a, "What's wrong with you? Why are you, why are you like that?" They would scare me, like my brothers would scare me a lot and the other kids would scare me a lot 'cause I couldn't do sound. So, they would like make the sounds to scare me or I'd pee on myself or I'd cry.

Another reported: “I have always been described as “offbeat.” I've never followed to everybody else's drummer. I've always been a little weird and I'm fine with that. But growing into that.” She continued: “I didn't even realize I had that, and I always felt really different, because I'm like, "Nobody understands me.”

### 3.1.4.8 *Disability*

One teacher reported having a disability as the reason for her bullying experiences. She said:

They (teachers) would call me “slow.” I had a teacher call me slow, a daydreamer. I started acting out. So, then I started pissing them (teachers) off by that point. When kids are having issues learning, sometimes it results in behavior (issues). So, then you'll overlook my learning disabilities.

She continued:

I moved here when I was 22. Still didn't have diagnosis by that point. Well, I started getting diagnosed in college. I started getting like processing disorder or dyslexia or all the diagnoses under the sun, but a professor noticed me. Then I dropped out of at a class. Then he called me. He was like, "What happened?" I told him. He did not look at me like I was crazy. He got me help to get diagnoses for my learning disability.

### 3.1.4.9 *Race and culture*

Teachers ( $n = 3$ ) talked about race and/or culture as reasons for experiencing bullying.

One teacher reported that she was bullied by her African-American peers because she was smart and had White friends:

You could hear them in the hallway talking about you, like they're always, "Oh, she's stiff, that's a white girl." Because by this time I fell in love with academics and a lot of my friends, 'cause I am, I'm still nerdy, a lot of my friends tended to be Caucasians, because like I read novels with them and we hung out, and my parents did shelter me. I got the bullying from the aspect, "Damn girl, you a white girl."

Another teacher spoke about being bullied as an African-American as if it were inevitable. She said: "I experienced all of the above (physical, verbal, and relational bullying). Like I said, "I'm African-American."

One teacher discussed she was bullied in school by another teacher and shared a painful experience, which she perceived to have happened because of her racial identity. She also discussed how, as a child, a teacher did not believe she was capable of high-level classwork and accused her of cheating on an assignment and lying about it. She recounted:

I remember being in 4th grade, I had a teacher who was very prejudiced because she was what America deemed as beautiful. She was tall, she had blonde hair, so here I am, intelligent Black girl in her class and I think that gave her a little discomfort. We had a writing assignment and my mom was busy cooking. On this particular day, I just didn't want her to check my paper because she would make me take that word out, and change this, put quotation marks around that, so I just didn't show her my work at all. I can't remember what the paper was on but, the teacher, as she was checking my homework, said to me, "Who did this homework?" I said, "I did." (Then she said) "You didn't do this."

One White teacher shared how she was bullied by African-American children:

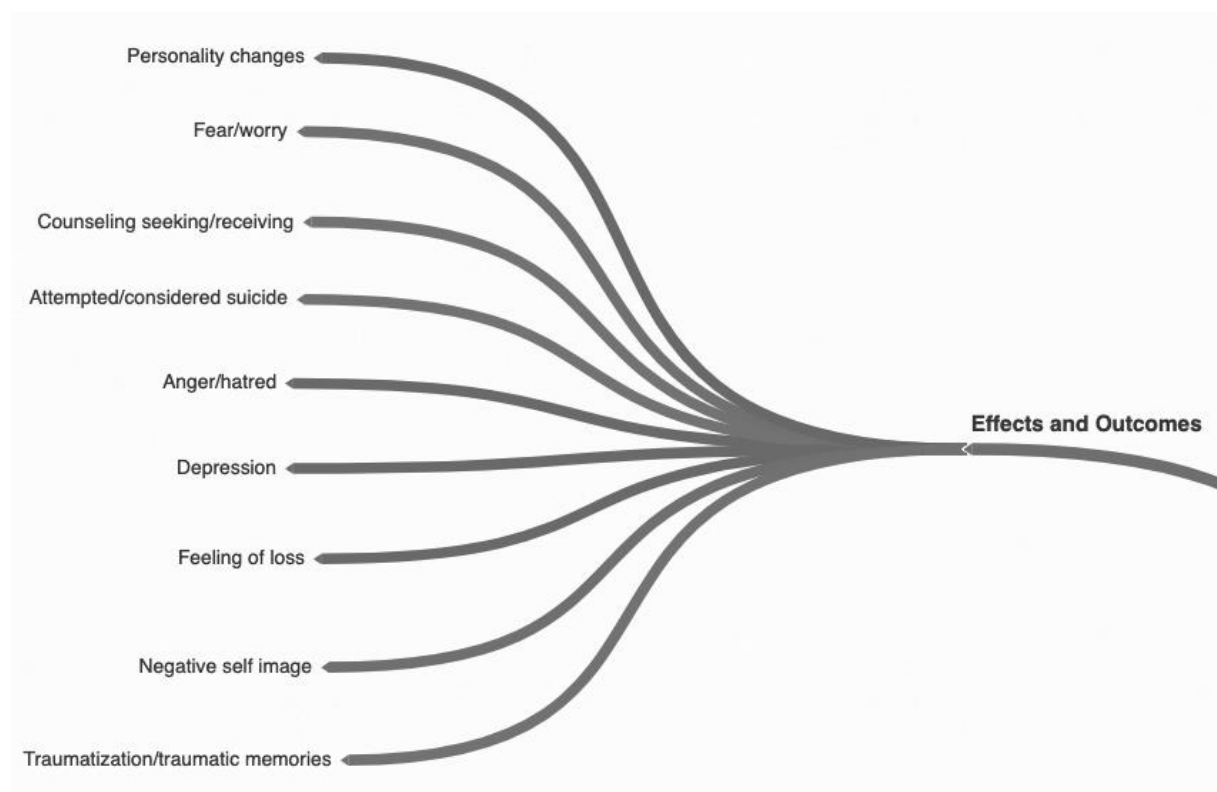
I didn't know what else to do because they actually hurt me. It was black people, black kids. They were being mean to me and they very well may have been being mean to me because I'm White.

### 3.1.5 Bullying effects and outcomes

Teachers ( $N = 8$ ) reported long-term effects they experienced as a result of their childhood bullying experiences. Among the level 3 codes that emerged were: *traumatization/traumatic memories; personality changes; negative self-image; fear or worry; attempted or considered suicide; anger or hatred; counseling seeking or receiving; and depression.*

**Figure 3.9**

#### *Bullying Effects and Outcomes*



*Note:* Though teachers described a number of effects and outcomes of their bullying experiences, this diagram shows the effects and outcomes discussed most frequently.

### 3.1.5.1 *Traumatization or traumatic memories*

Teachers ( $N = 8$ ) remembered their childhood bullying experiences and some ( $n = 3$ ) reported being traumatized by the memories of those experiences. One teacher recalled:

It wasn't until I turned 35, I went to a counselor, I went and sat down on the couch. I didn't feel like I had low self-esteem or anything, but I was...I want to be a whole person spiritually and mentally, and you can't co-exist if everything's not cohesive. I just found myself in a broken place and she (the counselor) was the one who delved into that and it was like "Wow, you suffered from bullying."

Another teacher shared a similar account of remembering and feeling traumatized by her experiences:

I remember where he lives and it's just, you're an asshole. I just totally steered clear of him. That I just knew that he was such a jerk. And that never ever left me. Like never ever, ever...

### 3.1.5.2 *Personality changes*

Teachers ( $n = 4$ ) reported experiencing personality changes as a result of being bullied:

I loved being out. But then I just became like, even now my friend will call me. "What are you doing?" "Nothing." "Let's go here." And I'm like, "No." I don't know, because I don't like to get out. Like before, I didn't care.

Another recalled becoming aggressive as a result of being bullied as a child and feeling forced to defend herself. She said:

As an adult now, I think about those were learned behaviors. But then, now thinking about it, I acted those ways because I felt like you have to defend yourself. And when you really don't have anybody that in the beginning that has your back and you feel like I have to defend myself, then that's not good. Because when you grow up now you feel like you have to defend yourself all the time instead of allowing some things to just be. Oh, you think back, I let this happen to me as a child, I'm not 'gonna let it happen to me as an adult. So honestly, you become a very aggressive adult.

Another teacher said:

Based on our last conversation, I started thinking about how people who were in their eighties and remember their bullying. And I also started thinking about how it shaped my personality. And I never, until this research, thought about, I think my personality is shaped off of the bullying. The last interview was emotional for me. I didn't realize,

literally, the way that I function in the world as a 43-year-old is because of the way I was bullied.

And another teacher explained:

I really *became* like this. I was introverted in that I felt like I had to deal with everything internally, but extroverted because socially, I just I wanted a community. I wanted friends. I wanted to go. I wanted to do things and trying to be extra to sort of forge some common interest with people. And that didn't go well. I would end up in situations where they were opposite of what I feel like my parents were trying to instill in me, but I didn't know what else to do to make friends.

Another teacher shared how the bullying she experienced caused her to retreat and, as a result, her personality changed. She said:

I was really talkative and didn't meet any strangers and then when I got maybe in the 4th, 5th grade, my personality changed because... I don't want to say I was picked on, but because I was the heavy child my view of myself became different and because it started being a source of, I guess, ridicule.

She continued:

It hurt. It changed me to more of an introvert. I think that made me more a stay-at-home person. I would come home and for the most part go to my room and read a book, so maybe I did more of that because I didn't want to go outside and play, so whenever I got a chance at school I'd rather read a book than go out on the playground.

### 3.1.5.3 *Negative self-image*

Teachers ( $n = 4$ ) discussed having a negative image of themselves, which, in some cases, started with the onset of the childhood bullying and was, in some cases, exacerbated by the bullying:

I felt, again, I don't know how else that I can tell you this, that I just felt like I didn't belong. I felt out of place. I felt like something was wrong with me. To me, when I looked around at people ... in my child head, not in my adult head, but in my child head no one looked like me, you know? In my adult head, I look at my students, you know, there's a little bit of everybody around. But in my child head, no one was as fat as me. No one had breasts like me. I remember it being very ... "Why do I have my cycle now? Why are my breasts this developed? Why do I have this?"

The teacher explained in another interview how she was able to mask her lack of confidence and poor self-esteem:

If I had been exposed to different things, that would have created a different way for me and my future, in regards to feeling more confident, even though when I'm out in the world, I present as a very confident, got-it-going-on person, and not that my self-esteem is down in the dumps, but I don't always feel inside as confident as people perceive me, and I do feel that in some way, that a lot of times, I'm still that same little girl who was amped up.

Another teacher explained that she believed most of a child's self-esteem develops as a result of relationships with peers. She said:

It was my self-esteem. And no matter what people say, I think most of your self-esteem and those things, even though you might have a very supportive family, peers play a big part, peers and the outside world plays a big part in your self-esteem and the way you act...

One teacher recounted: "And then it was negative self-image... It (bullying) defined it for me. It was that feeling of being an outcast, and uncertainty and just feeling negative about myself..."

#### **3.1.5.4 *Fear or worry***

Teachers ( $n = 3$ ) discussed feeling fear associated with their bullying. One recalled:

I don't really remember too much which grade. But at that point, I was just very different from the other kids. They knew I was different, bullied because not only just I looked different but I definitely acted different. So, they would just kind of like, it felt like a, "What's wrong with you? Why are you, why are you like that?"

One teacher discussed feeling fear and worry based on the ongoing threat of being physically attacked by a bully, which was not bettered by telling an adult:

...the bully telling me he was going to fight me when I got off the bus, and I remember that fear and telling an adult, it was the lunch lady who lived across the street. And her response was, don't worry, but I did worry, she did not put me at ease.



### **3.1.5.5 *Attempted or considered suicide***

Teachers ( $n = 2$ ) reported either attempting or considering suicide as a result of the bullying they were experiencing or had experienced, indicating this made them more aware of when their students may have been struggling with similar ideations. One teacher said:

I was feeling just depressed. Not wanting to live, and not wanting to be there, so those are flags for me (as a teacher), so those type of things, I get really kind of like we need to make some phone call home. This child needs to walk with me.

Another teacher discussed the ways in which his own experiences of being bullied for being gay made him hypersensitive to the bullying experiences of other gay teens. He rationalized his thoughts of suicide by inferring that it is not unusual to be gay and depressed and contemplate suicide. He reasoned:

I remember, like any depressed gay kid growing up, I had thoughts of suicide. But that was my outlet where I'm like, "No, I got to stick around because this is not going to be my existence forever."

He continued to discuss the reason he was more impacted by the type of bullying that he experienced as a child:

I think lately the thing that's affected me the most is, and I don't want to say that this is something new, but I think it's come to the forefront is the amount of gay teen suicides that we've had. And I understand why... Well, it's that weird dynamic where it's like, is it happening more or are we just aware of it and covering it more?

### **3.1.5.6 *Seeking or receiving counseling***

Teachers ( $n = 2$ ) reported seeking and/or receiving counseling as a result of being bullied:

So, I remember they referred me to an outside counselor because I was crying a lot and I was having nightmares in school, like going to sleep in class, waking up just screaming. So, they referred me to this lady and I was talking to her. She used to come in and talk to a lot of the girls in the school about good touch, bad touch, things like that. And one day she pulled me aside because they were trying to send me to a teen psychiatric center because of the nightmares I was having.

### **3.1.5.7 Depression**

Teachers ( $n = 4$ ) reported that they experienced depression, recognized it as such much later, either through counseling or depression into adulthood as a result of their childhood bullying experiences. One teacher detailed:

It hurts a lot when someone calls you fat. And then when you get older, it tends to allow you to just shut down. Like, I used this for a long time, because I didn't want people to know it bothered me. So, my thing was, "I'm fat, and I'm cute, but you can't do anything about your face," and stuff like that. But then it really hurts because I started making myself throw up like when I was younger. Once I started getting in middle school and I seen that the boys like the real little skinny girls, and here I am with these big old hips and big thighs and they not coming to me. So, it was like, I suffered. I was making myself throw up what I was eating and then throwing it right back up. And that's the reality of it when people call you that. And then when they used to push me, and they were like "weebles wobble but they don't fall down." They push you and just to see if you can get back up.

She continued: "Because once you go through all those things, depression, suicide, binging... Like now, I don't even like to throw up."

Another teacher said that he wished his parents had gotten him counseling for his depression. He shared:

Earlier in my childhood, I kept it bottled up and I would consider myself depressed. Went through a lot of depression at a younger age because I didn't know how to talk about it. I didn't know how to talk to my parents, and like I said, I remember there was a long time when I just came home and cried every day after school. And my parents didn't know what to do or say to make me feel better and they even talked about sending me to talk to someone professionally, and they never went through with it. And I wish that they had.

He concluded by saying: "So, you know, it was interesting. I'm sure that (the bullying) contributed to the sense of depression I had throughout my educational career."

### **3.1.5.8 Anger or hatred**

Teachers ( $n = 3$ ) reported experiencing residual anger or hatred as a result of the bullying they experienced. One teacher explained:

And then, you know that anger builds up in you, so then my whole 10th grade year and 11th grade year of high school, all I did was I fought. Because I felt like I had to defend me, because I had no one else to defend me. So, I was fighting and getting in trouble, and fighting and getting in trouble.

She continued:

You got to go back to see what it is that gets you to this point. So, then I just became angry, and then I started drinking a lot. And I didn't work for two years, when my husband passed. So, then you started thinking about all the old things and everything's gone. So, I was drinking to get up and I was drinking to go to bed. And then I had to start a whole other counseling thing. It's just sometimes people don't realize the things (bullying) and how they affect you when you're younger and now ...

One teacher admitted that she sometimes responds in anger to co-workers who tease her for behaving in ways they perceive as “different.” She shared: “But then sometimes I'll snap at them (my co-workers). I know I have my strengths but they do it (tease me) and it pisses me off.”

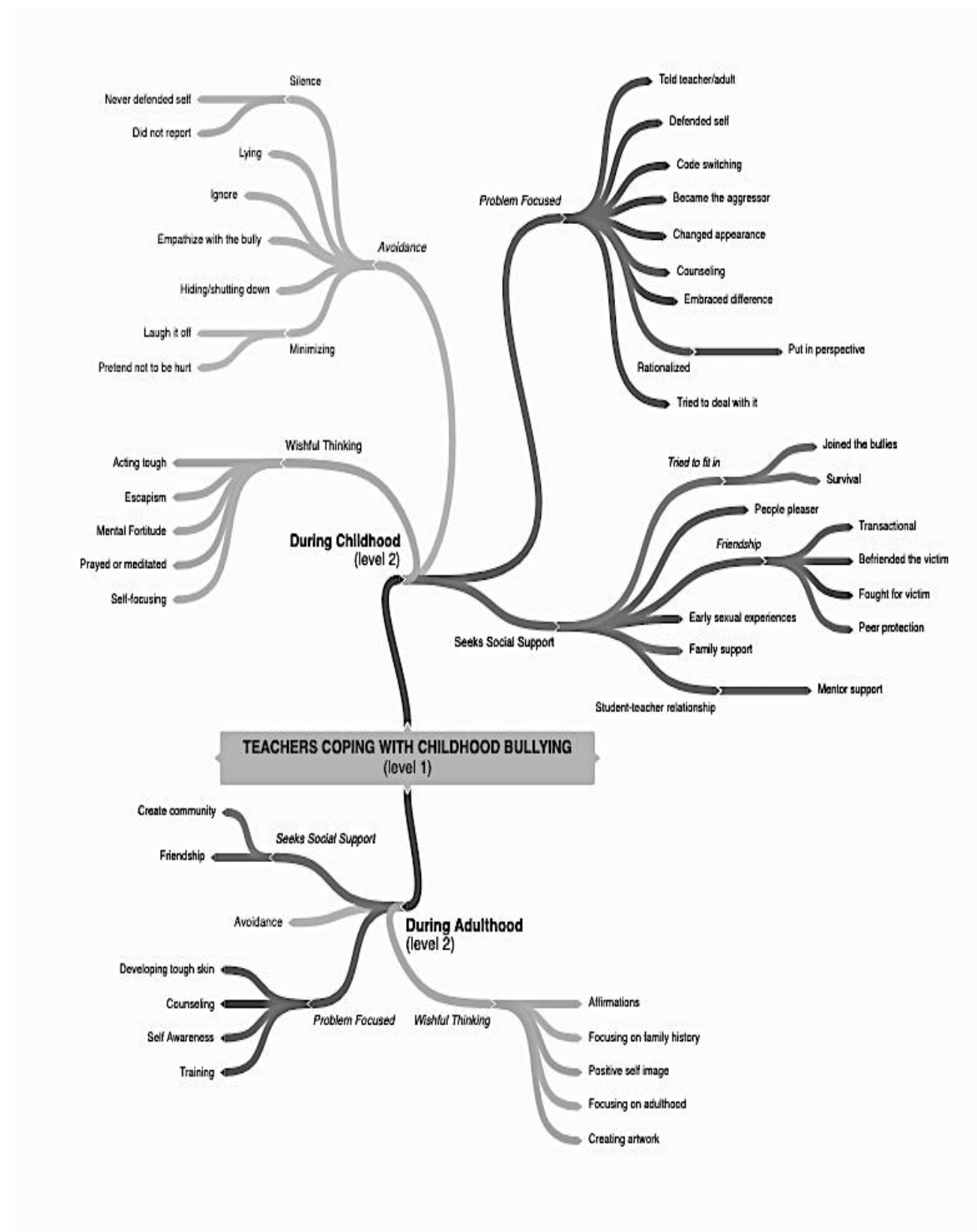
Another teacher discussed the hopelessness she felt at being bullied by a child who was bigger and stronger than she. In responding to whether she understood at the age of five that the bullying she experienced was wrong, she said: “I knew, but I also knew there wasn't really anything I could do about it. I just knew he was a jerk and I always was like “ew, I hate him!””

### **3.2 How did teachers cope with their childhood or adolescent bullying victimization experiences? (RQ 1b)**

Two main codes emerged related to the ways in which teachers coped with their childhood bullying experiences: *during childhood* and *in adulthood*. The additional theme (adulthood coping) emerged during coding, which allowed for the schema to encompass the coping strategies that teachers reported having during adulthood and to allow for additional analyses.

Figure 3.10

*How did teachers cope with bullying?*



### 3.2.1 Childhood coping

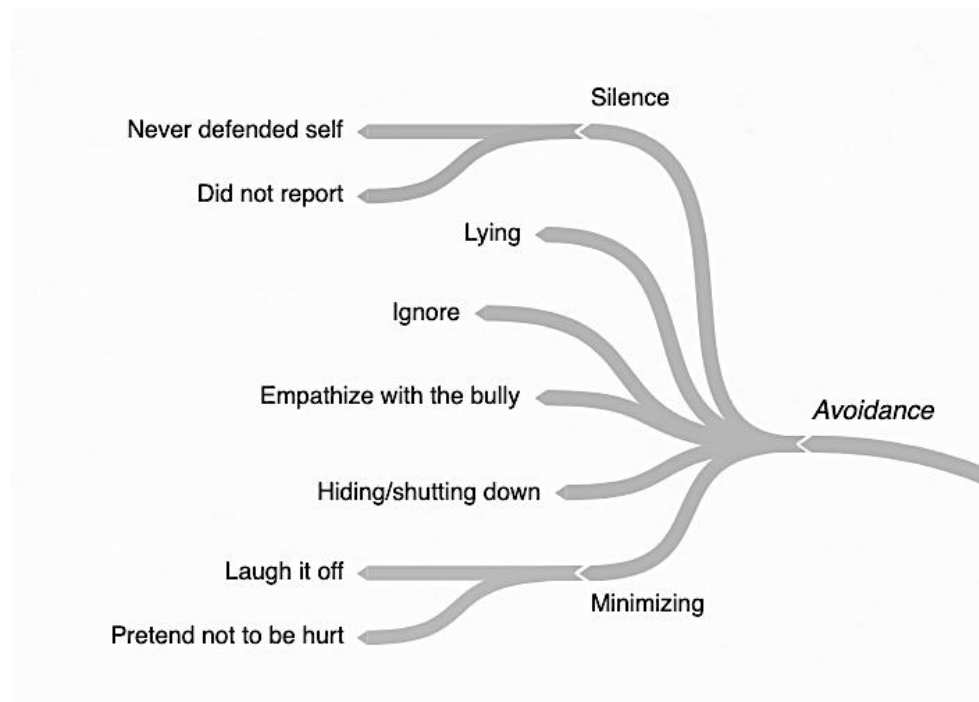
Level 3 codes were defined using the framework of Lazarus and Folkman (1984) (*avoidance, problem focused, seeking social support, and wishful thinking*), and level 4 codes subsequently emerged.

#### 3.2.1.1 Avoidance

One of the ways in which teachers reported coping with childhood bullying is to avoid the bullying using a number of strategies (level 3 codes), which included: *silence, lying, ignoring, empathizing with the bully, hiding or shutting down, and minimizing the bullying*.

**Figure 3.11**

*Avoidance (During Childhood)*



The level 3 codes that emerged as most significant were *silence, hiding or shutting down, and lying*. Teachers ( $n = 3$ ) reported that they used silence as a way to cope with the bullying they experienced and observed. For instance, one teacher stated: “I didn't step in. I just didn't. I

wasn't the person bullying, but I also didn't report it." Another teacher indicated, "Now that I talked to my parents about it, as an adult, they wish they would have intervened in some way because I kept a lot of it to myself." And another spoke of silence in ways that she connected to her Jewish culture and upbringing. She discussed how her grandmother, who survived the holocaust, used silence as a way to deal with painful family memories. She said: "When I went through the bullying experiences, I believed even though we didn't talk about it, it was kind of already there in my family and in my DNA. Just growing up and hearing ...We didn't talk, she (my grandmother) never talked about her situation."

For the male teacher, silence was discussed in the same vein as depression: "Earlier in my childhood, I kept it bottled up and I would consider myself depressed. I went through a lot of depression at a younger age because I didn't know how to talk about it. I didn't know how to talk to my parents, and like I said, I remember there was a long time when I just came home and cried every day after school. And my parents didn't know what to do or say to make me feel better."

Teachers ( $n = 3$ ) reported that hiding or shutting down helped them to cope with the bullying. For instance, one teacher stated:

I shut down a lot but then it was like, I don't want to talk to anybody. I volunteer on Wednesdays with the youth group and the last person talked about teamwork, and that was the hardest thing for me. I really broke down, because you're always afraid that I'm working with these groups of people. Are they secretly talking about me behind my back? Even though I'm 41 years old. And I have a problem with people being behind me because I always feel like somebody is talking about me, even now.

Another teacher, an artist, stated: "The bullying made me hide, so I would look for escape." And she continued, drawing a connection between hiding as a child and her artwork: "I still do it today and I was doing it then, the hiding, the way it came out in my artwork. I never even...I was talking to you about it and then I picked up that paper and I was like, "Wow, this is neat!"

Another teacher indicated that he considered suppression of the smaller bullying instances as a way of dealing with the larger ones and as a way to “survive the bullying.” He said: “But you know, it's like as a survival technique, you learn to suppress the smaller ones, in order just to get through the day.”

Teachers ( $n = 2$ ) reported that they using lying as a coping mechanism to mitigate bullying situations. For instance, one teacher reported that after trying coping strategies like “buying friends” as a young child, she found lying to be the way of coping that served her best and lasted into adulthood. She stated:

I lied a lot. I made up an imaginary sister, said I had a twin. Oh God. Sadly, I did that until my early 20s, 21, 22 because I had my hair a certain way that was dyed. So, when you pulled it back, you didn't see the color 'cause I always put with afro puffs. They hid the color and then I would have it out and you would see this Auburn color. People would be like, "I saw your sister." I was like, "Yeah, she's back in town." So, I've pretty much literally made up an entire sister. That was because my family kind of bullied me too.

She continued:

I said she played basketball overseas and sometimes she came here. But by that point, there was so much stuff. There was molestation, there was everything. By that point, I was full blown. But I would just make up lies. I lied about everything. Lied, lied, lied. My sister protected me. That I know for sure. I never wanted people to know I was alone.

Another teacher similarly said that her lying took the form of adopting a persona that was not hers and trying coping strategies like “buying friends” as a young child. Her lying lasted into adulthood. She recounted:

I think I tried different things. One thing I know I did to cope, I lied a lot. I told a lot of lies just trying to make myself look like I was somebody that I wasn't. So, I did lie a lot. That was a coping mechanism for me. Sort of trying to dress differently, because I would sneak my mom's clothes out of the house. I would sneak her makeup out of the house and just go and put things on so I could fit in more.

Another coping strategy that teachers ( $n = 4$ ) used was not reporting the bullying they experienced. For instance, one teacher stated that she did not tell anyone about her victimization due to embarrassment. She shared: “I didn't say anything. And when I tried to tell my family about it, they didn't think it (the bullying) was serious. They just thought it was teasing. And now that I talked to my parents about it, as an adult, they wish they would have intervened in some way because I kept a lot of it to myself because it's kind of embarrassing.”

Another teacher said:

I did not report. I didn't report the bullying until after, when it came to a head. I didn't report the bullying in eighth grade. By that point, I was just really isolated. I didn't know who to report a bully to. I had no idea. In eighth grade, if you report the bullying, you're going to get bullied more. So, I did not report the bullying.

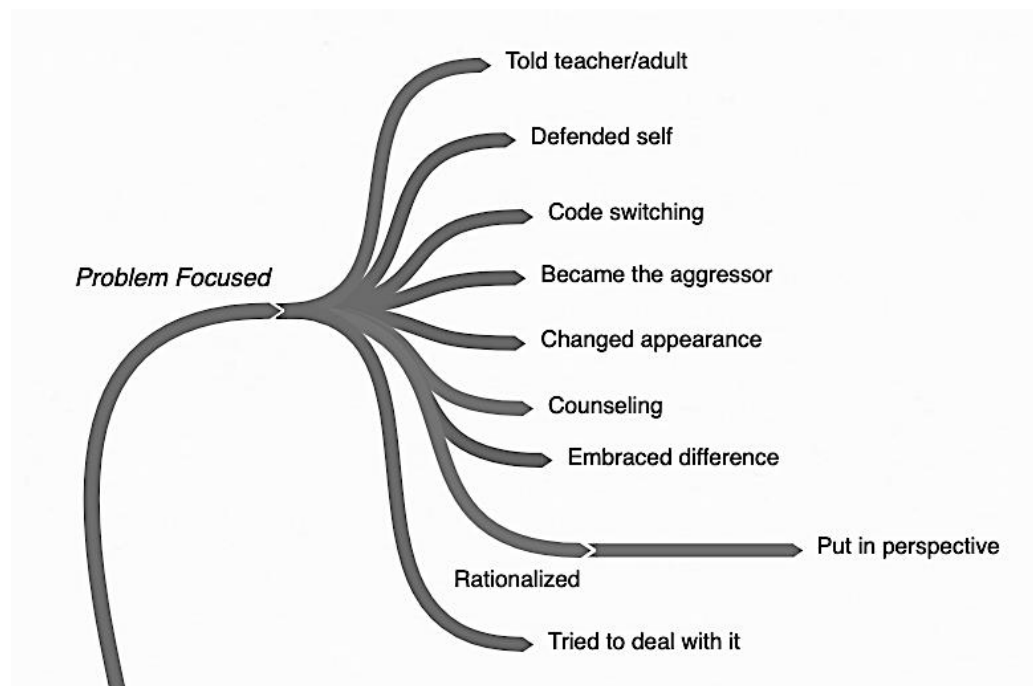
Another teacher discussed the code of “not telling.” She said: “I don't know where it came from, but I didn't believe in telling. I didn't believe in telling on people.”

And another said: “I didn't take action. I didn't tell or anything like that. But I was just, it was just more of a feeling of loss or something that you loved and I knew I couldn't get it back.”

### **3.2.1.2 Problem focused**

One of the ways in which teachers reported coping with childhood bullying was to take a problem-focused approach to the bullying experiences using a number of strategies (level 3 codes), which included: *told a teacher or adult, defended self, code switching, became the aggressor, changed appearance, counseling, embraced difference, rationalized the bullying, and tried to deal with it.*



**Figure 3.12***Problem Focused (During Childhood)*

The most significant level 3 codes in how teachers used a problem-focused approach to cope with their childhood bullying were *defended self*, *tried to deal*, *told teacher or adult* and *counseling*.

Teachers ( $n = 3$ ) reported that they attempted to defend themselves against the bullying. For instance, one teacher stated that she started to fight back after the bullying had gone on throughout elementary school. She recounted: “(The bullying occurred throughout) most of my elementary school, and until I started to fight back, a year in middle school.”

And another teacher said: “The person that stepped in is that my dad taught me how to fight back then. So, I do remember, it was like, “You know what then? You can kick his ass back.” So, it was like one of those... an empowerment. It doesn't matter that I'm female. And I'm just as strong. So that was a great positive message.”

Teachers ( $n = 4$ ) reported that they did not tell a parent or teacher about their bullying experiences. For instance, one teacher stated: “They (my parents) had no idea what I dealt with in high school the first couple of years. My mom still, I talk to her, she still doesn't believe that it was as bad as it was.

One teacher reported having two good experiences with telling an adult about her bullying. She said:

Some teachers would ignore it, but I remember one time, a student on my bus threatened me. I went to my administration and talked about it, and they were very supportive. I don't remember what exactly happened to him... I don't remember if they just pulled him in the office and talked to him, or if he was suspended, but it stopped after that.”

And she reported that on another occasion:

There was one time in fourth grade. I told my fourth-grade teacher, and he addressed it in the hallway with me and the other student who was calling me names. I guess the times that I brought it up, it was addressed by supportive teachers.

Teachers ( $n = 3$ ) reported that they tried to “deal” with their bullying experiences in a number of ways. For instance, one teacher stated: “There was a long time that I didn't bring it up because it was embarrassing, so I guess I took a lot of it just on myself and just tried to deal with it as best as I could.”

Another teacher judged her coping by how she felt she should be handling her bullying in high school. She said: “We're old enough like I can handle it, I can deal with it. They're not hurting me physically, so that's fine.”

And another said: “I remember this one kid picking me up by my ears in my neighborhood, and it hurt so bad I wanted to cry. I just held it in, I ran away and just cried because I didn't want him to see me cry. But I still remember that, too, just being one of the meanest things that was ever done to me.”

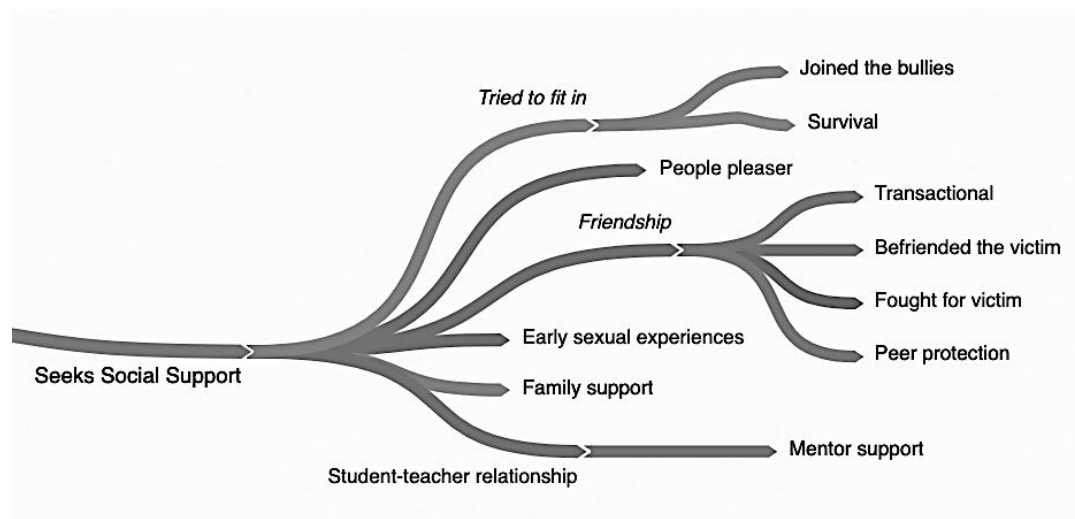
Teachers ( $n = 3$ ) reported receiving counseling to deal with their bullying. For example, one teacher discussed how a school counselor treated her bullying with sensitivity by addressing her situation in a public forum without identifying her. She said:

So, I was talking to her, and she came the PTA meeting, and she never called my name, but she was talking to the staff and everybody that was at PTA, and I can remember her saying, "A student was referred to me and they wanted to send her outside when it really wasn't her. It's things going on inside the school that's not being addressed...And I remember that evening, it was a Tuesday night, and I remember it. And then I remember within a few weeks they started talking about doing different things to help students who have personal things going on at home but are also having issues inside the school. I really appreciate her for that.

Another teacher, who was, in addition to being bullied by children at school, was also bullied by her brother. She stated: "There was (individual) counseling and family counseling and all this kind of stuff..."

### ***3.2.1.3 Seeks social support***

One of the ways in which teachers reported coping with childhood bullying was to *seek social support* for the bullying experiences using a number of strategies (level 3 codes), which included: *trying to fit in, being a people pleaser, friendship, having early sexual experiences, family support, and student-teacher relationships.*

**Figure 3.13***Seeks Social Support (During Childhood)*

Significant level 3 *seeks social support* codes that emerged were *friendship*, *trying to fit in*, *student-teacher relationship*, and *being a people pleaser*.

Teachers ( $n = 4$ ) reported that they used friendship to cope—either seeking or maintaining friendships, cultivating friendships with other victims, or giving “gifts” in exchange for friendship. For example, one teacher stated: “Mostly, I wanted friends. I think I had some friends, but it was because I was creative so I would always have the art supplies. So that's how I would get the friends. But socially, I didn't have the skills.”

Another teacher indicated:

A lot of times my friends just stood by. A lot of times because I was just like, “Just ignore them. Let's go.” I remember one particular time I was with a friend in the hallway and she and I were close. She knew I was gay. And a group of guys were saying things and she just turned around and told them to fuck off...

And another spoke fondly about the importance of having her best friend support her during the times she experienced bullying. She remembered: “I felt protection from her because she did not leave my side.”

Teachers ( $n = 3$ ) reported that they tried to fit in to avoid being bullied. One teacher stated: “I remember witnessing my friends making fun of other people. I didn't step in. I just didn't. I wasn't the person bullying, but I also didn't report it.” She continued: “To be honest, I was just glad it wasn't me--better that person than me. I might as well have this person on my side so that I don't have to deal with it. It was like a survival.”

Other teachers ( $n = 4$ ) mentioned “survival” in association with trying to fit in. One said:

For the most part, I can recall victim situations. I think those stand out. I feel like there were probably groups of friends that maybe did some things that were bullying that maybe I didn't have a part of, but probably could have done more to stop those groups of friends. I typically didn't hang out with people that did that. I was typically with the group that was bullied.

She continued:

Individuality is not stressed as much as it should be, because I think for at least my generation, you want to fit in and you just want to be the norm, and you just want to ... Your body's changing, you already feel weird in your body, and you don't need everyone else to point it out.

Another teacher said: “At my school it was the snobby, rich white kids and they would just ... Like in the cafeteria, even, somebody would walk by and they might have braces, or they might have a limp, or something, and they just make fun of people as they would walk by. For me, that put up a flag, like okay, let me not go over there. I don't know, in hindsight, yes, you probably should have got up and said something or done something, but at the same time you also don't want to get caught in the ridicule either.”

Teachers ( $n = 2$ ) reported that they cultivated relationships with teachers as a way of protecting themselves from bullies. For instance, one teacher stated:

My third-grade teacher, well, she was actually my second and third grade teacher. I think having her for two years ... I was at a very small, private school. There was only one second-grade class and one third-grade class, and so I had her for both grades and I remember her always being there to talk to. I was a big, tall kid and I had big feet or whatever, and we wore the same size shoes so she let me trade shoes for a day, it was

really amazing. I don't know, stuff that little kids are super intrigued by. But I remember she was always really friendly... I could talk to her about anything if I needed to.

Another teacher remembered that she had a teacher who she considered to be a mentor who provided her some indirect support. She said:

I remember a lady who took an interest in me, and wanted to be my mentor when I was in middle school. I remember asking her why me, and she said that she just saw God in me. She would talk about God all the time, and I didn't want her to be my mentor, because I didn't personally... Even though my mom and my dad spoke of God, I didn't personally, at that young of an age, even though I couldn't articulate it, I didn't resonate with the Christian God. She made me uncomfortable, but I do remember that woman in particular trying to help me. I think she may have saw that I was in a place I didn't belong.

Teachers ( $n = 4$ ) used the words “people pleaser” when describing how they coped with their childhood bullying experiences. For example, one teacher stated:

The thing that I've had to learn as an adult, it's (to) not bend backwards for people and to set boundaries. Because people take advantage of my niceness. And I've had to learn. I've actually recently learned in the past two years that I have codependent behaviors and so it's like I took my niceness to a whole 'nother level to the point where it took on my personal health at that point.

Another teacher said:

I guess later in life I can reflect. At the time I did not feel okay. So, the coping mechanisms, I had low self-esteem. I remember being like, “well why?” So, I felt like I didn't look right. I grew up with the gap between the teeth. I felt like I just never matched everybody else and I felt like I was getting taken out of groups so I felt left out. So, confidence lowered, feelings of being left out, always trying to please people as a result so that I didn't have to have anyone really, really know me. So, then they would not leave or hurt me. And my mom's a people pleaser.

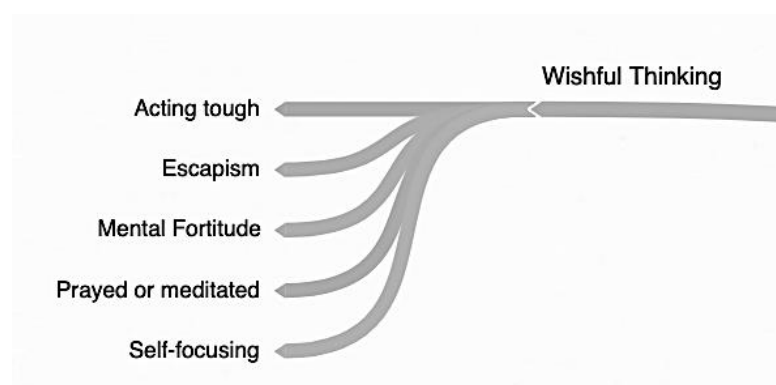
One teacher reasoned that she was less fearful when it came to protecting others. She said, “Maybe I'm a pleaser, but I didn't want to rock the boat. And the thing is, is I'm not scared to rock the boat and I'm not scared to speak out, but I guess I would speak out more for other people than (for) myself.”

### 3.2.1.4 *Wishful thinking*

One of the ways in which teachers reported coping with childhood bullying was to take a *wishful-thinking* approach to the bullying experiences using a number of strategies (level 3 codes), which included: *acting tough*, *escapism*, *mental fortitude*, *prayed or meditated*, and *self-focusing*.

**Figure 3.14**

*Wishful Thinking (During Childhood)*



The level 3 codes that emerged as most significant were *mental fortitude*, *prayed or meditated*, *self-focused*, and *escapism*. Teachers ( $n = 2$ ) described efforts of building themselves up mentally in order to cope with the bullying they were experiencing. For instance, one teacher stated: “I guess by that time, I was tired of them doing it to me, and I decided it wasn't going to happen again.”

Another teacher indicated that she used her academic excellence to mentally build herself up to handle the bullying. She said, “I really wanted to do really well, because it was competitive, so I was like, “Okay, I'm not as pretty as you all.” Or, “You all think my teeth have a gap and I'm ugly.” I was like, “Well, we can compare ourselves physically, but we can't compare ourselves intellectually.”

Teachers ( $n = 3$ ) reported that they prayed or meditated to cope with their bullying experiences. For instance, the teacher who spoke about her grandmother being a survivor of the holocaust indicated that this family history put her bullying in perspective for her. She stated:

It's like you're too blessed to be stressed. My grandmother was ripped of her dignity, and physically and mentally stripped down, head shaved, was treated like an animal. But every time she (my mom) wanted to complain about my dad, my grandmother's response was to say, "It's still a blessing." And so again, very hard to complain about things...

Another teacher indicated: I prayed and prayed that I could get a car. Soon as I learned how to drive I wanted a car so badly so I wouldn't have to get on the bus." The bus, she explained, was where some of the bullying that she experienced took place.

One teacher discussed how having a parent who taught her to meditate influenced her perception of the bullying that was happening to her. She said:

When I was young, my mom meditated with me. I've always thought about things in a different way I guess. And so, I've never been the type of person that's like, like the whole blame game. I mean, there's consequences for everything, but I guess I see things on a more wholistic level. And so, I think that's where it comes from. It's not just because you don't like me. It's like there's so many other things that are involved in it (the bullying).

Teachers ( $n = 3$ ) stated that they became self-focused in order to cope with their bullying. For example, one teacher said: "I think I was so self-absorbed in what was going on in my life, that I never paid attention to what was happening with other kids who may have been bullied."

Another teacher said:

I journaled a lot and then I would glue and tape these articles that I would cut out of magazines and the newspaper. We had a Waldenbooks at the local mall, and I would go in every once in a while, I would buy like a book if I thought it was gay related and I would hide it under my coat and sneak it home and then read it late at night after everyone had gone to bed."

Another teacher, when discussing how the bullying she experienced from her brother impacted the entire family, admitted: "I did internalize it."



Teachers ( $n = 2$ ) discussed the ways in which they used various things as escape mechanisms to cope with the bullying they experienced. For instance, one teacher said: “I would read a lot, I guess escapism. Luckily it never turned into anything self-destructive. But yeah, it was just a lot of escaping.”

He continued: “Luckily, I dealt with it in more positive ways. I got creative, I wrote poetry, I read a lot. I have a scrapbook of things that I collected when I was in middle school and high school. Like anything that was gay related because I needed that outlet. I needed to connect with something that was bigger than me.”

Another teacher stated: “I would come home and go to my room and read a book, so maybe I did more of that because I didn't want to go outside and play, so whenever I got a chance, I'd rather read a book than go out on the playground.”

### ***3.2.2 Adulthood coping***

In addition to teachers reporting the ways they coped with bullying during childhood, data emerged that suggested they continued to use coping strategies as adults to address past or current bullying. These strategies were coded using the same framework and the coding for Childhood Coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

#### ***3.2.2.1 Avoidance***

One of the ways in which teachers reported coping with their childhood bullying as adults was to use avoidance strategies. Teachers ( $n = 2$ ) discussed the ways *avoidance* helped them to cope with bullying as adults. For instance, one teacher said:

As an adult, you get so caught up in all the adult things that we're dealing with. You forget how big these were when you were experiencing them in our youth. But yeah, they were big things that I kind of brushed aside as I got older. But yeah, it made me feel proud and kind of good and confident that wow, okay, I'm still around. I survived that.

Another teacher said:

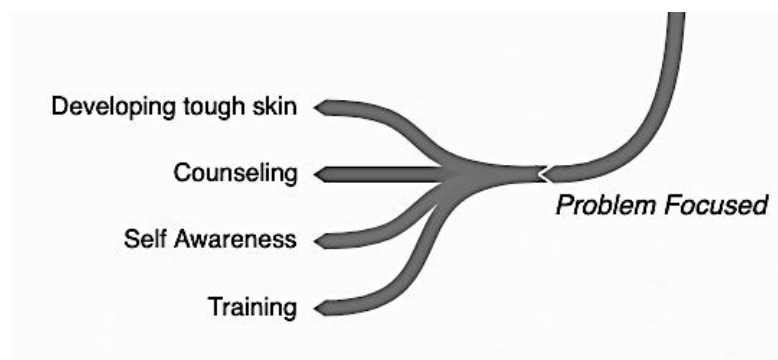
And I guess, you know, that ignoring, I even did that as a kid too. It's just like, and I've learned ... I mean, I don't know if I just innately knew, but sometimes when you ignore, like if you give back what they're giving you, that just gives them more fuel because they know that they're getting you right where it hurts. And so, if you just kind of like put that wall up and like, that's not going to hurt me. That's what they're trying to do is hurt you, so the more you show hurt, the more they're going to hurt you.

### 3.2.2.2 *Problem focused*

One of the ways in which teachers reported coping with their childhood bullying as adults was to use a *problem-focused approach*, which included: *developing tough skin, counseling, self-awareness* and *receiving training*.

**Figure 3.15**

*Problem Focused (In Adulthood)*



Teachers ( $n = 6$ ) reported that they used a problem focused approach to deal with their childhood bullying as adults. The level 3 codes that emerged as most significant were *self-awareness* and *counseling*.

Teachers ( $n = 3$ ) reported that they used *self-awareness* to help them to cope. For instance, one teacher stated:

The good thing about being self-aware is, on some levels, and then of course I discovered even more, is that whenever I'm compelled to exaggerate or lie now as an adult, I immediately stop and I look around and I go, "Okay, what has made me feel bad about myself that I need to feel like I need to change something?" And this is behavioral

cognitive therapy. You just learn when you look at these ways, and you're like, "Well, these aren't ways I need to really live in my life," and you just try to make connections. Where did this come from? It came from when I was a kid and everything, everyone just told me I was wrong.

Another teacher said:

I don't lie anymore. I'm more of my divine self. I'm still growing, and I'm more alive with my true self, and yet, as things are, sometimes I feel like I'm still that littler girl, amped up, trying to find her place, and trying to fit in in this world that she doesn't necessarily fit in to, so I still feel that, and so the interviews bring back the surface for me, or still feeling that, and as I take that on into teaching, just trying to always put myself into that timeframe, even though times have changed...

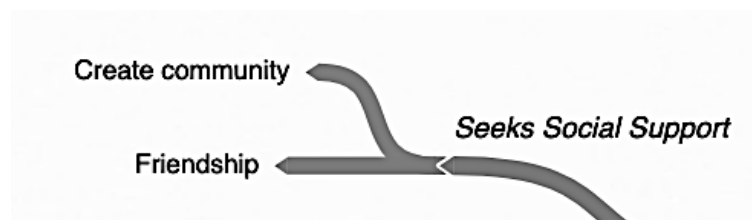
Teachers ( $n = 2$ ) reported that counseling helped them to cope as adults. One teacher stated: "I've actually recently learned in the past two years that I have, like, codependent behaviors and so I started therapy two years ago." She continued: "...and I had to let my coworkers know; I told them, "Listen, I've started therapy. This is something that I'm trying to work on."

### 3.2.2.3 *Seeks social support*

One of the ways in which teachers reported coping with their childhood bullying as adults was to *seek social support*, which included friendship and creating community for themselves and their families.

#### **Figure 3.16**

*Seeks Social Support (In Adulthood)*



Teachers ( $n = 4$ ) reported that they used a *seeking social support* approach to deal with their childhood bullying as adults. For instance, one teacher said:

And I had to work with a group of people. And my best friend was like, "you can do it." And I was like, "are you going to be on my team?" And she's like, "no, you're going to have to do it." And she's always putting me through different tests to try to help me out. She went to school for counseling. She's a counselor at the elementary school and she said, "you have to do it." And I was like, "I can't." And like I've made it through the first one, but after the second one I was just like, it was hard for me. And she was like, "I'm not gonna let you give up."

Another discussed how building community and relationships with family and neighbors was her way of having the support system that she did not have as a child, which she feels is important for her son to have. She explained: "My life now is very different from my life (growing up). We didn't celebrate holidays. Her (my spouse's) family celebrates holidays."

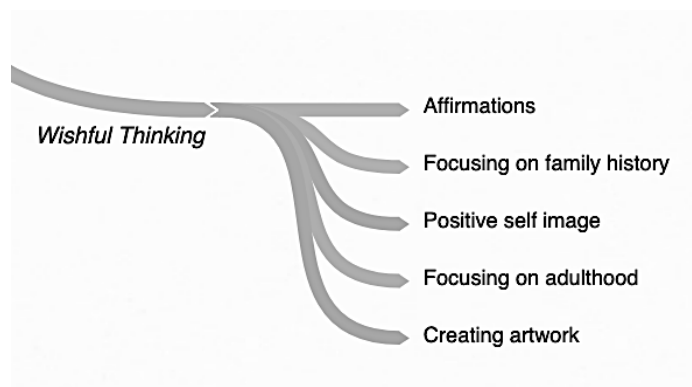
And another teacher said: "Actually, I find that this is funny because this is a kind of a theme that's been coming up a lot about pleasing. So, I feel like I will often work to please that other person and possibly put their needs ahead of my own and not get my own oxygen. And I know there's that feeling of wanting to be included and liked."

#### 3.2.2.4 *Wishful thinking*

One of the ways in which teachers reported coping with their childhood bullying as adults was to use a *wishful-thinking* approach, which included *doing affirmations, focusing on family history, positive self-image strategies, focusing on adulthood, and creating artwork.*

**Figure 3.17**

Wishful Thinking (In Adulthood)



Teachers ( $n = 7$ ) reported that they used a *wishful thinking* approach in dealing with their childhood bullying as adults. The level 3 code that emerged as most significant was *survival*.

Teachers ( $n = 3$ ) used the word “survival” to describe the tools they developed as a result of their childhood bullying experiences. One teacher said:

It's survival. I mean, I think I have an anxiety disorder. I wasn't diagnosed until I was an adult. But I'm pretty sure I've had it my entire life, which is why I'm so type A, and I think the disorder itself, the positive part of having that disorder prepares you for survival. And I think that to avoid conflict and making things worse, that's my survival tool.

And one teacher explained how she reacted to bullies as an adult and recalled wishing someone had come to her aid when she was bullied as a child. She explained this connection: I would think, “You think that you are bigger and badder than this other person, you are more significant than this other person. Let me let you know you're not and let me belittle you. Let me bring you down so that you feel what it feels like to be this kid.” And I'm sure it came from my childhood. It came from feeling a lot of times powerless and wishing somebody did something. And so that was my way of doing something.”

One teacher stated that she used affirmations to keep her thoughts positive. She explained: “I start my day off with my affirmations and I protect my peace. My peace, at this point in my life, is so important.”

Another teacher spoke about turning negative into positive using mental tenacity: “I just did whatever I could to ignore the behaviors and use that negativity to channel my positive energy and my goals. And I've taken that, strangely enough, in my adulthood with the principal that had bullied me. I almost wanted to quit teaching in my first three years, and I have devoted the last 10 years of my career to proving her wrong.” She continued: “In my mind, I automatically want to come out on top. I don't want to stoop to their level.”

### 3.2.3 *Ways of Coping results*

After analyzing the qualitative data related to the ways in which teachers coped with their childhood bullying experiences, the data was further coded using a combination of the Revised Ways of Coping framework's constructs and subscales (Halstead et al., 1993). This coding was based on the statements made by the teachers that directly or very closely fit with the subscale items. In some cases, teachers reported ways of coping that did not fit neatly into the framework. For example, one teacher spoke of bringing art supplies to school as a way of engendering friendship in order to have an impact on the bullying she was experiencing. Though this may have been coded within the *Problem Focused* construct (*I came up with a couple of different solutions to the problem*), the teacher was very specific that her actions were intended to seek the support of other students and gain friends, and there is no subscale item of the *Seeking Social Support* construct that is a direct fit with the teacher's experience. Another teacher spoke of seeking to build community for herself and her family as a way of coping with her childhood victimization as an adult. Similar to the previous example, there was no sufficient fit to the subscales of the framework. Table 3 shows the subscale-related results.

Teachers ( $n = 6$ ) used a *problem focused* coping approach as adults, and teachers ( $n = 4$ ) used this approach to cope with bullying as children. Teachers ( $n = 4$ ) reported that they *tried to forget the whole thing* (subscale item of the *avoidance* construct) when dealing with their childhood or adulthood bullying. Teachers ( $n = 3$ ) reported that they *accepted sympathy and understanding from someone* (subscale item of the *seeking social support* construct) when dealing with their childhood or adult bullying. Teachers ( $n = 3$ ) reported that they *had fantasies or wishes about how things might turn out* (subscale item of the *wishful thinking* construct) when dealing with their childhood or adulthood bullying. Teachers ( $n = 2$ ) reported that they *changed*

*something so things would turn out all right* (subscale item of the *problem focused* construct) when dealing with their childhood bullying.

**Table 2**

*Ways of Coping Scale Analysis*

Teacher ID	Childhood	Adulthood
8	A – Tried to forget the whole thing. W – I daydreamed or imagined a better time or place than the one I was in.	P – I stood my ground and fought for what I wanted.
11	A – Went along with fate; sometimes I just had bad luck. P – I changed something so things would turn out all right. S – I prayed.	P – I came up with a couple of different solutions to the problem. S – I let my feelings out somehow.
12	A – Tried to forget the whole thing. S – I accepted sympathy and understanding from someone. <b>W – Had fantasies or wishes about how things might turn out.</b>	P – I tried not to act too hastily or follow my first hunch. <b>W – Had fantasies or wishes about how things might turn out.</b>
14	<b>A – Tried to forget the whole thing.</b> P – I changed something so things would turn out all right. S – I accepted sympathy and understanding from someone. W – Had fantasies or wishes about how things might turn out.	<b>A – Tried to forget the whole thing.</b>
16	A – Accepted it since nothing could be done.	W – I wished that I could change what was happening or how I felt.
17	P – I stood my ground and fought for what I wanted. S – I accepted sympathy and understanding from someone.	P – I tried to analyze the problem in order to understand it better.
20	A – Accepted it since nothing could be done. <b>W – Wished that the situation would go away or somehow be over with.</b>	P – I tried to see things from the other person's point of view. <b>W – Wished that the situation would go away or somehow be over with.</b>
21	A – Went along with fate; sometimes I just had bad luck. P – I tried to keep my feelings from interfering with other things too much.	S – I talked to someone about how I was feeling. S – I prayed. P – I stood my ground and fought for what I wanted.

*Note:* This table shows the childhood and adulthood coping ways of teachers by Teacher ID based on the constructs of the Revised Ways of Coping Scale (Halstead, et al., 1993): A (*Avoidance*); P (*Problem Focused*); S (*Seeks Social Support*); W (*Wishful Thinking*). The shaded areas of the table highlight teachers ( $n = 3$ ) who used the same coping ways as children as they used as adults.

The approach of *avoidance* emerged as the most frequently occurring theme for ways teachers coped with childhood bullying, while a *problem-focused* approach emerged as the most frequently occurring theme for how they coped with their childhood bullying in adulthood. The table below shows the teachers' summarized reported coping strategies.

**Table 3**

*Ways of Coping Summarized Results*

	<b>Childhood Coping Instances Coded</b>	<b>Adulthood Coping Instances Coded</b>
<b>Avoidance</b>	7	1
<b>Problem Focused</b>	4	6
<b>Seeking Social Support</b>	4	3
<b>Wishful Thinking</b>	4	3

*Note:* The *Childhood and Adulthood Instances Coded* columns reflect that, in some cases, teachers reported using more than one way of coping.

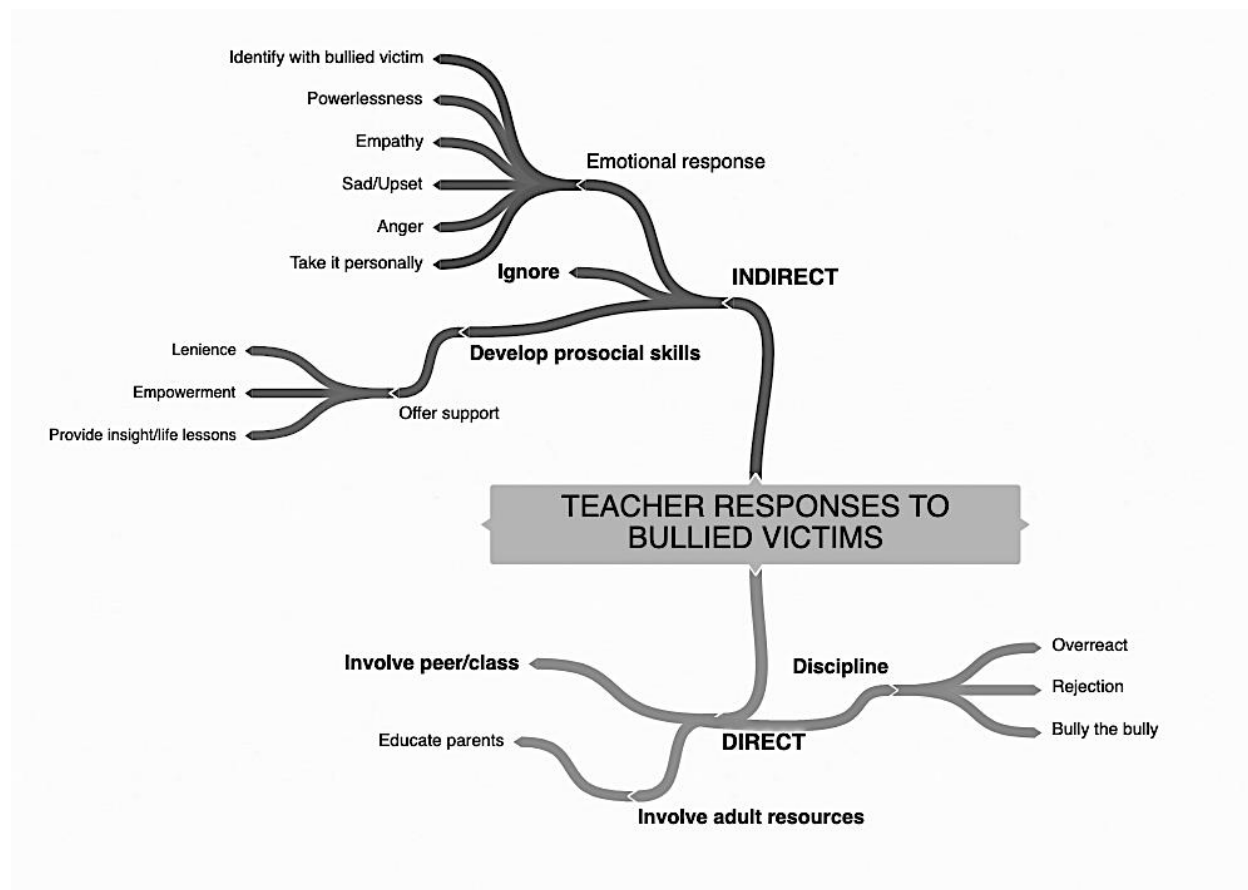
### **3.3 In what ways do teachers respond to student victims of bullying? (RQ 2)**

Two primary codes emerged (level 2) for how teachers respond to bullying in the classroom: *direct responses* and *indirect responses*.



**Figure 3.18**

*Teacher Responses to Bullied Victims*



### 3.3.1 Direct responses

Of the *direct* responses to bullying that teachers ( $n = 4$ ) reported, the code *involving adult resources* (level 3) emerged as most significant. For example, one teacher stated that when she observed bullying perpetrated by another teacher, she informed administrators:

I sent a long email. And I told them. And I was like, this is not right. And I had a meeting with them, and I'm not afraid at this point. I'm older so I'm not afraid of anybody. My voice was taken away from me. And I don't want to feel my kids, any kids that I come across, to feel like their voice has been taken away from them.

She continued:

So, I had a meeting with the principals and her (the teacher) and I talked to them. And I let them know in front of her face, "we are here to encourage kids and our goal is doing

what's best for kids.” And my thing will always, I don't know what those kids deal with when they're at home. How can a kid fully come in this classroom and be educated if they don't have everything they need to be educated? And then they got a mean teacher who's in front of them versus someone who is kind and loving. I'm not saying that we supposed to baby them, but we're not supposed to be mean to them. They have to know they have somewhere they can come where they feel like this is my safe place.

Another teacher took the same approach when he observed an incident in the hallway between two students and highlighted the complexities and policies that come into play when reporting bullying to administrators at his school. He recounted an incident that he observed firsthand:

The kid who got his books knocked down, he punched the other kid in the face. It was assault. It hurt and it was interesting because the kid who picked up his books and took off, and it was during class change so I didn't really follow him. But I was talking to the kid who got hit and he didn't want to report it. But I got his name and I went to my assistant principal...she's a lesbian and I said, "This was where it happened. This is when it happened. This is who it involved." And she knew the kids. I'd say, "Can you check it out on the camera?" I go, "I couldn't get them to come into your office." And luckily, she investigated. Oftentimes, in these cases, there's a whole behind-the-scenes story where yeah, the kid shouldn't have hit him, but there was stuff that happened before that incident that was building up to it. So, I'm glad that I reported it. I'm glad she investigated. I think they ended up both getting in trouble.

Some teachers reported that they referred bullying situations to the school counselor, noting that the school policies sometimes discourage teachers from addressing the bullying themselves directly. For example, one teacher reported:

If it's a situation that I can kind of... diffuse, then I will. If it's something I think that is more than... because you're limited with what you can say and do, so in that case, I have to defer them to the counselor.

And another discussed how in teaching middle school, she feels less confident to address bullying than when she taught elementary school children. She said: “And seeing that my (bullying) skillset—addressing it is a little outside of my skillset. I'm quicker to call in a counselor an administrator at this point, than I was at fourth and fifth grade.”

Other reported direct responses to bullying were more punitive. For example, one teacher stated that she has taken bullying personally in the past, had expressed anger toward the bullying student, but was attempting to be more understanding of the bully's personal story:

I would be more patient with it, and have to understand the 'why' behind the behavior more, rather than being so reactive and take it so personally. Because as a teacher it's like, "Why are you here to disrupt my class?"

Another teacher described how she used to "bully the bully," understanding that this tendency came from her own history of being bullied. She indicated that, as an adult, she recognized that she had the power to give bullies a "taste of their own medicine." She explained:

I do think in a lot of ways... 'cause it does set a precedent in your class in front of everybody that this is not allowed, right? And that's what I used to do, like this is not allowed. I guess I have switched away from that, because even though it sets a precedent that this isn't allowed in my classroom, I just try to be mindful that I don't become that bully to the kid, because I feel like I can just lose it. It won't be about the kid anymore. It's about me, and my trauma, and what I'm going through, and I can just take all of that out on the kids.

Likewise, another teacher described how he overreacted to bullying, based on his own history of childhood bullying, pointing out the balance needed between reacting to bullying and responding to bullying by intervening and/or teaching appropriate behavior:

I will say that there are some times that I think I may have overreacted to some situations that I may have seen because my own personal experiences, and luckily, I got the administration involved and afterwards realized that there was a whole story behind what I'd actually witnessed. So, it's like a dynamic between like my initial reaction and how I want to teach the kids to actually be able to respond to it.

Teachers ( $n = 3$ ) reported using *discipline*, which emerged as a level 3 code. For example, one teacher stated:

Instead of being a reasonable person, my initial reaction is "uh-huh, he's got to go, or she's got to go. She can't be in our program at all. She shouldn't have been doing X, Y, and Z." Parents get upset when their kids are ... We had mean girls last year, and they were offended that their kids were even called mean girls. And I'm like, "Well, they're not nice girls. This is not acceptable. I know you don't condone it as a parent, but you've got to have conversations with your children about things like this."

Another teacher explained that the environment she was in made it difficult to do anything other than apply discipline in bullying situations. She said: “Most of the teachers that I’m around, they’re addressing bullying by doing what I used to do, and instantly get on the kid.”

### 3.3.2 *Indirect responses*

Teachers ( $N = 8$ ) reported that they responded to bullying in their classroom environments by implementing some form of informal intervention or strategy designed to *develop the prosocial skills* of their students (level 3), which included: *student skill-building activities, empowerment, teacher learning and growth, assignments, and perspective giving*. For example, one teacher stated that she spends time learning about and focusing on social and emotional learning:

I am one of those teachers that spends the first two weeks of school on social emotional for that reason. So, I know this is coming up into my classes this year. So, I started researching social emotional skills. I was actually thinking about approaching it in this way. We’re giving them a mission at the beginning of the week, like sit next to somebody you wouldn’t normally sit next to, and have a conversation with them. Giving them those weekly challenges and then on Friday ending the week with talking to them about how that went for them.

Another teacher discussed the importance of connecting with the students by getting “on the students’ level.” She stated: “It’s a respect thing. And mastering management. They’re more willing to listen if they know that you have their best interests at heart.”

And another teacher stated:

All of those experiences have molded my classroom today. Every year and every time I learn something new, my classroom changes just a little bit each year. I always try something different. To see what my classroom was and now what it has become, I probably wouldn’t recognize myself, the 22-year-old self versus the 33-year-old.

She continued:

It is sad that I’m already starting a folder and prep just to be careful. But there are a few that I already know are not going to do their work. I already know I have one that has

anger issues. I would say the culture of my school, we really try to hone in on those kids because art is an outlet for them.

Other teachers talked about the importance of having good relationships with their students. One said:

...What I talk to them about is, "We're all friends." And I even tell them they're my little friends. That's how I call them: "Come on, friends, let's line up." Because being in education, you educating as a whole. You educating them about everything. Sometimes you're educating parents too. But those students, they need that. Relationships are number one, important.

And another explained how she made sure students understood the expectations she had for her classroom in terms of appropriate behavior. She stated:

My relationship with my students is like personal growth. Breaking it down to just the smallest goal. And at the end of the day, I want our students to be able to think and express themselves better, and to have some sort of empowerment when they leave. So, bullying in my classroom, I used to put up signs in my room. "Oh, this is a no bully zone," or things like that. I don't put those signs up anymore. It's from day one. I explain. My reaction to it is not okay. And then, by the end of the year, you'll see a lot of my students, they gel to each other, more protective of each other.

A few teachers talked about how important it is for teachers to continue to learn and grow in order to be able to offer support to bullied students. One, in particular, stated:

(Bullying) makes me want to learn more. Because I can't handle it from the way that they're teaching you online. But it had me even looking at some of the bullying videos. It's true when they say people block things out of their minds, they really don't want to remember it. But then it was like with this it just really made me think about things that I can do that's different this year. Like, I made a list like I even want to have like a little bullying area in my room to where when I see those things, I can send the kids to the back, the two kids that are having the issues. And then I could either talk to them and they can have a little five-minute conversation.

Other teachers talked about how they consistently created assignments for students at the beginning of the year to set the tone for the classroom. One teacher explained:

There's an assignment that I give them and in it, they talk about their life story and I was just shocked that how many talked about being bullied. And so, then that would start a class discussion about bullying and how do you handle it and asking the students, "If you saw somebody bullied would you interfere?" And that kind of thing. It's a book we read called Siddhartha, and Siddhartha goes on a personal journey...a physical, emotional,

social, spiritual journey and in it, the assignment tells them to compare their lives to Siddhartha and they have to choose one of the journeys that they went on.

Another teacher described an interactive exercise that she facilitates with her students that allows them to express their feelings and resolve conflict in a positive way:

On Fridays we would have a reflection tool called rolls. R-O-L-L-S. And what we would do is each of us, and there was, let's say 20 kids. We'd sit in a circle and we would start our morning in a community circle and bonding, and then we would, on Friday's we would end our day with this reflection tool. And this was ways that you could talk about things that were positive and things that may have hurt you.

Similarly, another teacher described an exercise she facilitates with students to help them learn to resolve conflicts constructively:

I do what are called 'philosophical cheers.' And I introduced the first one, but I teach children how to argue without arguing. So, to get your point across, but I said, "In order for you to get people to be persuaded, or to think like you think, or even to understand your point of view, you need to be able to talk to them.

One teacher described how he challenges the common language that students use with each other, even if that language is generally accepted and seemingly innocuous to them. He said:

With middle schoolers sometimes, you can go there a little bit, and I was just like, "Well, what do you mean they're gay?" "That's gay?" I'm like, "Well, what does that have to do with two men being in love? Nothing." You know? And so, they're like, "Okay, I go ...". So, you can't really use that word to mean that. You can't use the word gay to mean stupid, or maybe if it's something that they're making fun of like a gesture or something and like ... And I'm very lucky. I work in a very progressive school system.

Another reported that she reminds students to think about and focus on their strengths:

That's why I push, "What else are we good at?" Let's find what we're good at. That's why, in a class, when they're getting so many negative messages, even from their peers, because everybody wants to be on the hierarchy. So, if I have a student who reads on fifth grade level, and they want to bully the kid that reads on third, I'm like, "Wait a minute, we're in eighth grade." You know, everybody's trying to put the other student down. And so, I'm trying to understand that the reason you're doing that is because someone is making you feel bad for your deficits. And so, we are underdogs. We have to believe that on some level. When the bullying happens in the classroom, it is cut short. You have to be real slick. And my class is small. So, I kind of see everything.

Teachers ( $n = 3$ ) reported ways in which they attempt to empower their students. One teacher recalled: “I would just tell kids to stay strong. Stay true to yourself, live your authentic life and just remember, it's cliché’, but it gets better.”

And another talked about how he uses humor and encourages students to take a lighter approach to bullying as a way of minimizing its emotional impact:

I think that coming from a perspective of how small it is in hindsight, I think I try and teach kids just to be able to laugh it off, keep it in perspective, make them realize down the road it doesn't mean anything. I don't know, I deal with a lot of stuff with humor with my students, just crack jokes and help them learn to laugh it off.

Teachers ( $n = 6$ ) reported that they had *emotional responses* (level 2) to bullying in their classroom environments, which included: *identifying with the student victim* (based on their own history of experiencing childhood bullying) *feeling powerless, empathy, feeling sad or upset, anger, and taking the bullying personally* (based on their own history of childhood bullying).

Teachers ( $n = 6$ ) reported empathy as their predominant emotional response. For example, one teacher reported relating to the feelings of the bullies. She stated: “I don't want to dismiss their feelings.”

Another teacher also reported understanding and sympathizing with the bullies. She indicated that she felt the victims of bullying remain powerless until their underlying issues are addressed. She said:

When people bully... they're hurting. So, to me it's like you have to get at the hurt of the bully. It's like until you can actually address what is causing the bully to be a bully, I don't think there's anything that you can do as the victim of that. It's not going to change the bully until they're able to deal with whatever it is that they're dealing with that causes them to bully.

One teacher explained the actions of students who bullied her when she was a child by discussing the bullying she experienced as an adult teacher by her students. She retrospectively looked back at her childhood and contemplated:

That was my epiphany about my current situation with bullying, and I guess now that I'm an adult and knowing that the people bullying me, it comes from a place maybe that they don't know better or it comes from a place of anger, and I can understand that anger, you know? But at the same time, it doesn't feel good when you're on the other end of it, and it's very targeted and it's very consistent and it's very...Being like who I am and my stature and even my race, it's hard to be like, "I'm being bullied by these students," you know?

Some teachers ( $n = 4$ ) expressed that they felt sad or upset as a response to bullying in the classroom. For example, one teacher expressed:

Sometimes, for me, it's emotional. But then sometimes it's like, I have to set aside certain feelings because I'm still an educator. So even though I'm like, "You're being mean and that's not nice," I have to think when I meet the parents of the student that's bullying the other student, and then sometimes things come full circle. I understand why you're a bully. But then it's like, "Would you like it if somebody did you like that?" And their first answer is always, "No." But then I found out with the fifth graders, they always say, "I don't care." But deep down inside, you (they) really do care.

And another became upset recounting the way she felt when she observed students being bullied in her classroom. She shared: "So that is what I'm super-sensitive about... That it's a safe zone. But then I know when it isn't a safe zone, it's... oh my gosh, this is so upsetting..."

Likewise, another teacher described the frustration she felt when she saw bullying or understood that it was happening to her students. She said:

As a teacher now, and having to deal with bullying, it feels really frustrating to me that we deal with bullying a lot, and I've filled out a lot of different bullying forms with different people bullying each other, and some have specifications of what bullying is and how you deem it as bullying, and there are some things that happen that I think are bullying, but aren't encompassed by the definition of it.

### **3.4 How do teachers perceive the connection between their childhood or adolescent bullying victimization experiences and their responses to student victims of bullying?**

#### **(RQ 3)**

Teachers ( $N = 8$ ) reported that they were more sensitive to bullying as a result of their own childhood bullying experiences. One teacher, acknowledging the ways in which bullying can fly under the radar at times, stated that she "knows when low-key bullying is going on." This teacher



also discussed specifically how her own experiences of being “different” and oftentimes misunderstood helped her to notice and then respond to bullying by helping her students to develop empathy and compassion with one another, particularly students who are also perceived as “different.” She said:

Like, the kids will take something that's true. I had a boy and he had halitosis, it was really bad. I know he did, but like I would nip it at the time. Then I'll also nip it when he's not there. I would just try to get my kids not to make them upset but go, "It could be a financial thing. You guys may have a blessing that you have the dental care. He may not. So, give him some gum." Then, they would think differently. Because I watch my students like, "Yo, man, here's some gum."

This teacher reported that the bullying that she experienced led her to want to become a teacher, and she described feeling a deep connection to her students. She also reported feeling that being bullied herself made the word “retarded” a “super triggering” word for her. Consequently, she reported being very attuned to the word and quick to respond to it with her students when she hears it being used.

Another teacher explained how her own bullying experiences, in concert with having family members who perished in the holocaust, made her both more aware of bullying but also more responsible to act:

When I think back on my bullying experiences, I'm still a little bitter that it even happened. But like I said in the last interview, they don't necessarily go away. It's not that you don't ever forget that it ever happened. But like I said, I'm just one that kind of uses it as a motivator to teach my students right from wrong. From that experience and being bullied because also being Jewish and all of that, it's just kind of made me a bit more aware of thinking, what can I do to make sure this doesn't happen in the future ultimately?

Another teacher revealed that she is “harder” on 5<sup>th</sup> graders specifically, and older children who, she feels, “know what they are doing” when they bully others. This teacher also reported that she feels less compassion for these students and uses more of a firm, disciplinary approach.

She explained:

I'm calmer now with the kids. Except for when I'm with fifth grade. I am a little bit more aggressive because they are older and I do feel like they know what they're doing. But when I see it with my kindergartners who are learning stuff from older siblings or even parents, I find myself trying to pull them away and talk to them. And you know, "This is your friend. You just met them. What could they have possibly done to you?"

She continued to describe how she understands the long-term effects of bullying because of the residual impact of her own bullying experiences. She said:

And that's my biggest thing because once a person feel like their voice is taken away, then they tend to shut down. And that's when all those demons attack their mind. And they start doing stuff like I was doing, because you feel like you don't have anybody. And that's so hurtful.

Some teachers stated that they believed being bullied as a child made them “more empathic” and more responsible for educating students about the impact of their words. One teacher stated:

I think it made me more sensitive to kids who struggle in school and that's whether it's bullying or learning challenges or what have you. I make sure that kids realize what impact their words have because I went through it and it's hard. You know, as children we don't have the tools that we've gained as adults to deal with stuff like that.

Another teacher said: “I feel like (based on) my empathy... and my understanding, I can see or read it (bullying)...”

One teacher stated that she believed being bullied as a child made him more empathic and more responsible to educating students about the impact of their words:

Once you experience it, it becomes a conscious thing that you have to make sure that you are kind to other people, because you don't want anybody treated or feeling the way you felt when it happened to you.

Teachers ( $n = 2$ ) acknowledged the ways in which their own bullying memories are triggered when observing it being perpetrated against others and reported an understanding of the need to temper their reactions to ensure they are constructive for the bullies and, especially, for the victims. One teacher explained:

There are some times that I think I may have overreacted to some situations that I may have seen because my own personal experiences. So, it's like a dynamic between like my initial reaction and how I want to teach the kids to actually be able to respond to it.

Another teacher discussed her own challenges with maintaining her professionalism when it came to responding to bullying. She admitted: "I just try to be mindful that I don't become that bully to the kid, because I feel like I can just lose it. I can just... It won't be about the kid anymore. It's about me, and my trauma, and what I'm going through, and I can just take all of that out on the kids."

One teacher described her bullying experiences as "minimal," even though she recounted an experience where an older, larger child picked her up by her ears. She was also provided with tools very early by her mother (meditation), which she reported helped her in dealing with the bullying she experienced. This teacher discussed how she believed the experience of bullying impacts people's lives. But she also suggested that two children with similar childhood bullying experiences can be impacted differently by those experiences. She said:

So, I think a lot of it is like where you come from, and definitely your bullying experiences do shape the way you deal with it. Mine were more minimal, so maybe that's why I'm able to be more compassionate about bullying. We are the way we are because of our experiences. I mean, you could even equate it to pain tolerance, you know? It's kind of like, on a scale of one to 10, I feel a five and you feel a nine...

#### 4 DISCUSSION

In keeping with the ideal of one day eradicating childhood bullying or, at least, educating teachers in the recognition and successful management of bullying in the school setting, this current study contributes to the literature on the ways in which teachers' past childhood bullying experiences inform their responses to bullying. It is the understanding of how teachers' childhood bullying experiences impact their behaviors, emotions, and motivations to engage with bullies and bullied students that will continue to inform bullying interventions aimed at addressing the gaps in teachers' knowledge and skills related to handling bullying situations. This study adds to the literature that explores these gaps.

It is also important that researchers, school administrators and policy makers understand the need to provide teachers with adequate resources, which include training programs that assist them in understanding their possible limitations and strengths that evolve from their own past victimization experiences—experiences that could get in the way of handling all types of bullying and understanding the long-term impacts and effects.

The research methodology for this study contributed to the study outcome in a number of important ways. Though the three-interview Seidman model proved to be more time consuming than a traditional single-informant interview model, this methodological choice, combined with taking a transcendental phenomenological approach, allowed me to build rapport with the teachers in the study and provide a comfortable and trusting space for the teachers to share their most painful bullying memories—memories that some teachers had not shared with anyone else previously. In fact, some teachers indicated they had not thought about these painful events for many years. According to Murray (2003), interviewing people about topics that are sensitive makes it all the more important to establish trust between the researcher and participant. In the

journal entry below, I reflected on my impressions of using the Seidman model (2013) for interviews with the teachers:

*Some of the interviews went a little deeper than others, though my questions were essentially the same. This might be explained by rapport. Some teachers seemed to feel an affinity with me, the interviewer. I wonder if the questions are organically evolving? I wonder if race or gender plays a part? Also, it could be that teachers were so relieved to have someone to listen to their traumatic experiences. ~ March 22, 2019*

According to the research of Murray (2003; which also used a three-interview model), the third interview was significant, and analysis revealed that the perspectives of the participants had shifted by the third interview. I made a similar observation about the third interview of my study and noted it in my journal:

*The third interview is where I got the most value from Seidman's interview model. I was anticipating the meaning making and expected to gather rich data at this stage, but I was most surprised by the trust building that occurred. I was unprepared for the level of commitment and partnership from the teachers who agreed to participate in Interviews 2 and 3. ~ August 17, 2019*

Taking an approach that combined transcendental phenomenology and socio-constructivism allowed me to investigate the ways in which teachers had come to know about bullying and understand how their present experiences were informed by their childhood bullying experiences, and how those bullying experiences inform who they perceive themselves to be. Eliminating my own assumptions by using a transcendental approach instead of a hermeneutical one encouraged me to continue to allow the stories of the teachers to guide the interview questions, as well as the analysis of the data. In other words, the teachers generated all of the data while I, as the researcher, listened, queried, probed and, in the end, categorized and coded.

In the process of making meaning of the experiences of the teachers, new knowledge was created in the form of forgotten stories and moments of the past connecting to the present for the

teachers. One example was a teacher who realized her current artwork was linked to her experiences of coping with her childhood bullying experiences. Birch and Miller (2000) described this as a process by which “an individual reflects on and comes to understand previous experiences in different ways...” (p. 190).

One challenge to note was in starting with a larger sample and then narrowing down to the sample of eight teachers, an abundance of coding and analyses were required. Also, using the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen Method of Analysis of Phenomenological Data (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994), a model with numerous stages and steps, was organizationally challenging. Maintaining the reflexive journal helped to address this challenge, as I documented the details of each step, which allowed me to revisit and apply the steps to each teacher’s interview transcript.

One important contribution to the literature was the use of validated coping and response frameworks to assist in addressing the research questions of the study. The Revised Ways of Coping scale (Halstead, et al., 1993), in combination with the Teacher Response framework (Yoon et al., 2016), were used to understand the relationship between teachers’ childhood coping to their childhood victimization and their adulthood responses to bullying.

Based on the interviews, major themes that emerged corresponded to the study research questions. For the first, *Teachers’ descriptions of their childhood bullying experiences*, teachers described their bullying experiences in ways that supported previous research findings. According to Darley & Latane’ (1968), there are four stages of bystander behavior: *notice the event, interpret the event as a problem, feel some responsibility for dealing with the problem, and determine how to intervene in the problem*. Based on the research of Yoon et al. (2016), teachers often reported not noticing bullying occurrences. In contrast, teachers in this study reported that they noticed bullying events but acknowledged that bullying is harder to recognize due to the

increasing volume of bullying that occurs through the use of social media—bullying that occurs outside of a teacher’s gaze. Teachers in the study acknowledged that there will always be bullying they do not see for this reason. In terms of being aware of traditional bullying, contradictory findings emerged. One teacher in the study said she noticed bullying but also indicated that her teachers did not notice her childhood bullying because “It is easy not to pay attention” as a teacher. Another reported that she tries to be acutely aware of “low-key bullying,” suggesting that those who bully are often adept at hiding bullying behaviors. Another stated that she is very sensitive to the bullying of students but, in a separate interview when speculating about her childhood teacher’s memory of her bullying, said: “Most teachers do not remember things like that.” In essence, some teachers saw themselves as always aware of bullying but doubted their childhood teachers’ ability or desire to pay attention to and remember bullying incidents.

The research on the impact of trauma suggests that retrospective self-reports of childhood experiences can be impacted by recall bias and memories and interpretations of past events, which are subjective (Frissa et al., 2016). Based on the teachers’ responses, it is perhaps realistic to assume that teachers have the desire more than the time and resources to always notice all of bullying that happens in school; and/or perhaps some level of attribution or recall bias was at play as teachers reconstructed traumatic events from childhood.

According to the research of Darley and Latane’ (1968), the more witnesses there were to an emergency or event, the less likely people were to intervene. Contrarily, the teachers in this study saw bullying as serious, and most felt some personal responsibility for dealing with the problem. None of the teachers indicated a reluctance to intervene based on the presence of witnesses. Based on the findings of this current study, there was little to suggest that the

Bystander Effect was operating to impede teachers from intervening in bullying events in school, contrary to the research of Padgett and Notar (2013). Determining how to intervene was where the findings both diverged from and supported the literature. Rather than hesitancy to act based on a perceived lack of their own skillsets, only one teacher reported an instance where her lack of confidence in her skills led her to route students elsewhere (to a school counselor).

According to Lee et al. (2015) and Johnson et al. (2019), an important factor of the programs that reduced bullying in schools was the institution of a school policy. Most teachers in this study reported either feeling constrained by administrative policies or feeling the need to develop their own strategies to address or prevent bullying. The findings were consistent with the research of Hall and Chapman (2018), which found that the implementation of policies by teachers and administrators was challenging due to a number of factors, including resources, training, school climate, and competing priorities and needs. Teachers expressed frustration that school policies narrowly interpreted bullying such that any victim response nullified an event from being defined as “bullying.”

According to the research of Craig et al. (2011) and Mishna et al. (2005), teachers with previous experience with bullying were more sensitive to bullying, watched for signs of surreptitious bullying, and supported students in reporting instances of bullying in the classroom. Likewise, the findings of this current study suggested teachers were acutely aware of bullying but, in addition, had a heightened sense of awareness when faced with the particular type of bullying that they experienced firsthand during childhood—whether personally or by observation. And further, teachers reported identifying with the bullied students, sometimes to the point of experiencing an anger or frustration similar to emotions they experienced during their own victimization. The study confirmed the assumption that teachers bullied during



childhood had no problem recognizing bullying and identifying with victimized and bullied children (Latane' & Darley, 1970). Likewise, for the bullying that teachers observed that was not the type they experienced, there was a tendency to see that bullying type as less serious. For example, one teacher who identified as gay reported being extremely attuned and empathic about gay teen bullying and teen and pre-teen suicide but encouraged students to “shake it off” while singing the Taylor Swift song when he observed relational bullying being perpetrated on some of his female students.

Consistent with previous research (Olweus, 1994) were the types of bullying teachers reported experiencing as children, as well as observing as teachers. A few notable exceptions were sexual bullying, made easier through social media, and extortion, which two teachers mentioned as the type of bullying they experienced as children. While extortion can be related to relational bullying, the teachers described it more specifically as “abuse of power” and “theft of property.”

The context for bullying seen as most “scary” by teachers was the school bus. One teacher indicated that it was the bus driver’s responsibility to “keep kids safe” while driving the bus. However, the teacher did not identify any part of the bus driver’s responsibility to keep riders safe by making sure the school bus was free from bullying.

For the second research question: *How did teachers cope with their childhood bullying experiences*, teachers described how they managed the stress of their bullying experiences and related emotions that arose as a result of the stressful situations to which they were exposed (Lazarus & Folkman, 1985). Responses were coded using the four validated constructs of the *Revised Ways of Coping Scale* framework (Halstead et al. (1993)—*problem focused, seeks social support, wishful thinking, and avoidance*. In addition to examining how teachers-as-children

coped, this study's findings suggested that teachers-as-adults were still coping and those coping ways were categorized using the same framework (1993).

For childhood problem-focused coping, teachers reported *defending themselves, telling a teacher or adult about the bullying, and simply trying to deal with the bullying*. Whereas in adulthood, teachers reported *seeking counseling and engaging in self-awareness-type activities* to cope with the bullying from their childhoods. This suggests that children and their adult selves may share some similar ways of coping with stressful situations. Additionally, teachers reported seeking more social support to deal with their bullying during childhood than during adulthood.

Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) transactional model of coping theorized that coping is either emotion- or problem-focused (Parris et al., 2017). One example of a problem-focused coping response is *avoidance*. Teachers reported not telling a teacher or adult about the childhood bullying they experienced during childhood. A few teachers mentioned embarrassment as a reason they did not report the bullying. One teacher, who identified as gay, reported that he could not tell his parents about the bullying he was experiencing due to embarrassment and not wanting them to know that his sexual orientation was the reason he was being bullied, leaving him in a no-win situation—either come out to his parents or endure the bullying. This teacher also described a bullying incident that led to him be physically attacked, after which his mother wanted to press charges while his father was hesitant to do so. This embarrassment (experienced by the child and also, presumably, by his father) may exemplify a major challenge with addressing the bullying of gay or gay appearing students. According to the findings of Watson, et al. (2010), parents were reported to be one barrier to gay youth accessing necessary resources and support.

Parris et al. (2017) cited research that suggested that *seeking social support* is not a way of coping that youth find effective (Tenenbaum et al., 2012), and the researchers (2017) posited that "...peer victimization represents a unique stressor that may not result in the same appraisal and subsequent coping process posited by previous models;" pp. 11-12; Lazarus & Folkman's (1984) transactional model, for example). However, Batanova et al. (2014) found students who reported seeking social support as a way that they coped with bullying displayed an increase in willingness to intervene or defend to help a victim. Likewise, in this current study, teachers did report *seeking social support* as a way that they coped with bullying during childhood, which also may have been connected to their willingness to help bullied students as adults.

The responses that teachers reported having to bullying in the classroom were coded using two frameworks in an effort to understand possible contextual elements of teachers' responses to bullied victims. According to Yoon et al. (2016), there were several ways in which teachers responded to bullying that fit into five categories: *ignore*, *discipline*, *involve peers/class*, *develop prosocial skills*, and *involve adult resources*. This project explored teachers' responses to victims of bullying by asking specific open-ended questions. For example: *Describe a few experiences of being a teacher and witnessing bullying in the classroom: How did you respond? What did you do to intervene? Talk about some specific responses you had or actions you took when encountering bullying.*

The other framework used for coding was based on the research conducted by Marshall et al. (2009), which proposed a framework into which teachers' responses to bullying and bullied students were categorized as intent that was either *constructive* or *punitive* based on *direct* versus *indirect* teacher responses. For this current study, teachers' responses were coded as *direct* or *indirect*, and generally fit within the framework (2009). A key finding from this study that was

inconsistent with the response schema proposed by Marshall et al. (2009) was *emotional response*, which was coded as an *indirect* response. This included teachers' reports of: identifying with the bullied victim; feeling powerless to assist, empathy for the bullied student, sad or upset, or angry; and taking the bullying personally based on being reminded of their own past childhood victimization.

Key response findings from this project also were inconsistent with those of Burn (2016), who reported that bystanders are often not prepared to intervene, may not notice a bullying situation or misdiagnose it, believe intervention is not necessary, or are not aroused empathically to help the victim of a bullying occurrence. Teachers in this study reported noticing bullying and experiencing frustration, anger or sadness. But perhaps more in keeping with Burn's research (2016), one teacher shared that over time, she had observed that some teachers ultimately disconnect from those emotions. She explained: "Teachers are kind of sick and tired of dealing with it (bullying). So, you see some that are just kind of done. They get desensitized, and they're just done."

Yoon et al. (2016) found that teachers who reported that they were bystanders in their childhood were also more likely to indicate they would act to intervene by involving an adult in a bullying occurrence but would be less likely to act to assist the victim of the bullying directly. Teachers in this study, conversely, reported a desire to address bullying directly and, in some cases, reported frustration at being prevented from doing so due to school policy. Though teachers in this study were not asked directly about school policies, they reported individual and organizational barriers to implementing bullying policies. One teacher shared:

You have to be careful with the word "bullying" nowadays. And if I say anything, I feel like it is frowned upon because the second you say the word "bully," it's a 10-day investigation. It's a whole ordeal. And you've also got to be careful about using that word

when addressing it with parents that are involved because no parent wants their child to be the bully, or the bystander. They usually don't believe it. They don't see it.

Another teacher shared her frustration with her school's bullying policy. She stated:

Bullying, nowadays, is one of those things where, as teachers, we have to be very careful. What I experience in my eyesight, is I see students sort of teasing other kids, like they may call them a faggot, or they'll call them gay, or they'll call them stupid, or they'll call them a retard. Where, I have to then intervene, but those type of situations aren't considered bullying in the school system. It has to be something that is repeatedly happening to someone and they're not asking for it. When I say ask for it, I mean they're not participating in it. I will say that majority of the time when I do report something, it comes back as it's not bullying. That is difficult to prove. Yeah, the whole school system is a whole bunch of policies, and a whole bunch of systems, and politics.

She continued by explaining the resistance of the school in which she teaches to implementing a Gay-Straight Alliance Organization as a bullying prevention measure. She explained:

I have been back at this school for three years now, and each year, I've had a group of students try to start a gay-straight alliance at the school. Our principal won't approve it. However, we have kids at our school who are a part of the LGBTQ community. We have students who have same sex parents, but our principal won't allow it, because she, in her words, doesn't "want to open up those can of worms."

According to Watson et al. (2010), schools are traditionally hostile to students of the LGBTQ community. But when GSAs (Gay-Straight Alliance organizations) exist within schools, LGBTQ students are less likely to hear homophobic remarks, skip school, and experience harassment (Kosciw et al., 2008).

Peer and Webster (2016) described upstanders as people who take a "proactive role in engaging in change despite personal risks and biases" (p. 170). In contrast, the researchers defined bystanders as individuals who are typically "resistant to change and tend to disengage from the change process" (p. 170). Teachers in this study suggested that being a bystander as a child was one way they survived or deflected bullying—most described this as a form of self-preservation.

Notwithstanding the self-protective nature of their bystanding during bullying, teachers still vividly remembered those events. One teacher recounted:

I was thinking about how things were on the playground, I remember some other children being bullied on the playground because there was not enough teachers finding out... a lot of times it was, I think that I didn't speak up because the majority of children were afraid of the bullies, you know? So, if you say something, then you're next.

According to Casas et al. (2015) negative teacher participation and negative teacher management (apathy) facilitates bullying. The current study results did not confirm this, with the exception of one teacher who indicated that she dreaded the beginning of each school year and wondered why she continued to teach. Others reported feeling exasperated by the administration and school policies that prevented them from interacting to stop bullying directly. Moreover, teachers reported developing their own tools, including class exercises or assignments in an attempt to positively influence or prevent bullying indirectly.

The studies of Yoon et al. (2016) found that the general childhood experiences of teachers factor into their responses to bullying occurrences. The research suggested that perhaps teachers' painful peer victimization experiences during their childhoods impact their willingness to respond assistively toward student victims, and that perhaps guilt at having passively witnessed bullying during childhood impacts teachers' willingness to assist bullied student victims. This current study confirms quite the opposite. Teachers reported a greater likelihood of intervening based on relating to victimized students. Although guilt was mentioned when teachers responded passively when witnessing bullying during childhood, no connection was found between bystanding as children and willingness to assist victims as adults. In fact, teachers acknowledged that this passive witnessing was their way of surviving and coping. And, in these cases, teachers reported being keenly determined to act as adults as a result of standing by as children.

The most frequently occurring theme for teachers responding to bullying was using strategies to indirectly address bullying. This included creating coursework, developing conflict resolution games, assigning readings and class discussions, and classroom management-related activities. The impact of these activities (which may be considered as modeling anti-bullying attitudes, according to the research of Banyard et al. (2016) and were found to be positively associated with upstanding behaviors in the classroom) was not explored for this study. However, these strategies or class activities, developed by teachers, quite possibly enhance student-teacher relations but moreover, may instill in students the belief that teachers care about them, the student-teacher relationships and class harmony—so much so that they spend time developing activities that fall outside of the regular class curriculum. According to the CDC (2015), the most effective intervention programs address the lack of anti-bullying skill training available for teachers and school personnel, as well as the role of teachers as bystanders. But perhaps interventions that aim to strengthen the student-teacher relationship, with a focus on trust building, may be important to an effective bullying intervention program. This is perhaps exemplified by the fact that all teachers in the study remembered the names of the teachers who did not assist them during their childhood bullying, even years later. Though relatively few by comparison, they also vividly remembered the names of those who stepped in to help.

In 2016, Yoon found that, based on past experiences and beliefs, teachers have and display various levels of self-efficacy. According to Bandura (2001), “Goals embodying self-engaging properties serve as powerful motivators of action” (p. 8). One teacher in the study discussed lacking the confidence to address bullying while teaching middle school but felt confident addressing bullying as an elementary school teacher. This may be because bullying in middle school is often complex relationally and more prevalent. There was no finding that suggested this

lack of confidence was related to her past victimization experiences or beliefs. But it is likely, similar to what the research of Bandura (2001) suggested, that the teacher's reported lack of confidence in her ability to handle middle school bullying influenced her response to the bullying. Perhaps there is also a connection between her describing herself as a "people pleaser" and feeling less confident with older, savvier bullies. It is more likely that teachers' degree of self-confidence in handling a bullying situation may have some connection to the degree of confidence they felt while coping with their own victimization as children.

Yoon and Bauman (2014) suggested that more knowledge of bullying is important for teachers to have in order for them to be effective in acting to intervene in bullying situations. It also is reasonable to suggest that schools bear some responsibility for making sure that policies support teachers feeling responsible for the safety of the students and for building relationships of trust where students believe teachers will step in to stop their victimization. Administrative support is critical for teachers to feel empowered and confident in this space of bullying prevention and intervention.

None of the teachers discussed using any formal school intervention strategies to address bullying directly. Each discussed using their own approaches and strategies in more of an indirect, preventive manner. After strategies, empathy emerged as a predominant response theme, which was consistent with the Yoon and Bauman (2004) study, where empathy towards victims of bullying was found to be an important variable in predicting the likelihood of teachers intervening in bullying occurrences.

Also, data emerged to support the notion that perceived seriousness of bullying occurrences impacted the way that at least one teacher reported responding (the "shake it off"



example, p. 122). Otherwise, most of the teachers perceived bullying to be serious, particularly the type of bullying they reported experiencing during childhood.

Where the Yoon (2004) study findings were not supported at all by this study was in the finding that suggested that teachers who understand the seriousness of bullying report a higher self-efficacy in addressing bullying occurrences. The self-efficacy that teachers reported had more to do with emotional self-efficacy based on empathy. For example, teachers expressed anger, frustration and outrage at seeing students bullied. These emotional responses led to teachers feeling responsible for taking some action in bullying situations. Likewise, teachers did not describe their responses as formal interventions as much as they described using upstanding and protecting-type behaviors.

Teachers who reported feeling angry or relating to the victim were more likely to report they would act to intervene in a bullying occurrence. It was not confirmed by this study that teachers who have experienced the trauma of bullying during childhood understate the seriousness of bullying situations, as reported by Yoon (2004) or are more likely to engage in “pro-bullying bystander behavior (girls, specifically), as reported by Troop-Gordon (2019). Instead, teachers in this study who experienced or observed bullying during childhood reported being hypersensitive to bullying and understood, based on their own experiences, the long-term detrimental impacts. This is more in line with the research of Ma et al. (2019; a meta-analytic review of 60 studies); though acknowledging that the studies that have found associations between anti-bullying bystanding behavior and past peer victimization are limited and mixed, the review found a positive association between children and adolescents who identified as having been victimized and the likelihood of engaging in anti-bullying bystanding behavior. The researchers posed some possible reasons for the association to include empathy and the notion

that victims may be more inclined to support other victims. Another possible factor could be that children and adolescents who engage in anti-bullying bystander behavior believe that bullying leads to negative outcomes, while defending bullying victims leads to positive outcome (Rigby & Johnson, 2006).

In addition to discussing the connections between their childhood bullying and the ways in which they respond to bullying in the classroom, teachers also discussed using more indirect approaches such as motivation, encouragement, understanding and modeling compassion. Three teachers spoke of having to be mindful of the balance between being a protector of victims and overreacting or becoming a bully to the bullies based on their own childhood bullying experiences that are triggered when they see bullying happening to others. One overreacting teacher described how self-awareness and therapy made her more aware of the difference between her own personal experiences and the bullying she observed, indicating that she now understood when to get the administration or counselor involved.

Balancing visceral responses to bullying and the positive behaviors they aspire to teach and model for the students emerged as a concern for teachers. One teacher reported being harsher with 5<sup>th</sup> graders, not making a connection between that and her own 5<sup>th</sup>-grade victimization, which she reporting during the first of her three interviews. In essence, teachers referenced a constant teetering on responding to the bullying emotionally and responding professionally. One teacher reported moving away from a “bullying is not allowed” model of classroom management because this model brought her own bullying back to the forefront of her mind, making it challenging to handle the bullying professionally.

Another teacher discussed taking the approach with her students of explaining the “true thing” of a victimized student to the bully, in hopes of evoking some empathy from the bully.

She also discussed how it was her own bullying experiences that inspired her to attempt to understand the bullying behavior of others. The teacher went on to explain how she had handled bullies in her class by telling them, “I’m trying to understand that the reason you’re doing that is because someone is making you feel bad for your deficits.” And, while the teacher discussed responding to student bullies with understanding, she also reported responding to co-workers who bullied her as an adult by “going off” on the people who bullied her. In essence, though the teacher did not report *an understanding of bullies* as one of her childhood coping mechanisms, she described empathy for students who bully while also responding to her adult bullying more aggressively.

The study results suggested that teachers see a connection between being bullied as children and having more empathy toward bullied students as teachers. One teacher summed up this finding by saying: “I think it (my bullying) made me more sensitive to kids who struggle. I make sure that kids realize what impact their words have because I went through it and it’s hard. You know, as children we don’t have the tools that we’ve gained as adults to deal with stuff like that.” Additionally, results showed that teachers’ past victimization experiences rendered them emotionally motivated while also emotionally challenged to respond to bullying in the classroom objectively.

These findings support a need for programs that encourage teachers to examine the long-term impact of their victimization experiences and the development of strategies that help them channel those experiences in positive ways—ways that contribute to intervening in bullying successfully and teaching students appropriate behaviors by modeling compassion and empathy.

#### 4.1 Conclusions

There are a number of factors that contribute to the problem of bullying in schools. This study explored one factor—teachers' childhood bullying victimization experiences and the ways in which they responded and reacted to bullying and bullied students. All forms of bullying, physical, non-physical and verbal, have detrimental short- and long-term effects for victims. These life-changing effects should be at the forefront when designing anti-bullying programs for teachers.

Based on a review of past and current bullying literature and the goals of this study, findings suggest that teachers' past bullying victimization experiences elicit strong emotions that may negatively impact their responses to the peer victimization of their students in the classroom and school setting. Some teachers in the study stated that they “bully the bully” or overact based on their own childhood victimization experiences.

The study findings were consistent with those of Yoon et al. (2016), which found that there are contextual and situational factors that influence teachers' responses to bullying situations, of which past (childhood) experiences of bullying is one such factor.

According to Latane' and Darley (1970), influencing upstander behavior is more about the elimination of cognitive barriers than about activating personal characteristics. This current study suggests that understanding and then moderating the emotions related to past victimization experiences, should be explored.

Programming that integrates the roles of teacher and upstander, along with exploring the long-term impact of teachers' childhood victimization experiences, would add depth to the education that teachers receive about how to respond to a bullying occurrence.

## 4.2 Limitations

This investigation was designed to anticipate possible limitations. Worth noting is that although the study was primarily conducted using a focused number of study participants (eight), this sample size meets qualitative suggested methodology guidelines (Creswell, 2013; Crouch & McKenzie, 2006; Seidman 2013). Additionally, the first interview (of three) of the study produced a wide array of data from 21 teachers (which was coded but not analyzed in depth). It is important to note that the data gathered for this exploration during the second and third interviews from the eight participants was not intended to be generalized to other teachers with a history of childhood or adolescent bullying victimization. The intent of this investigation was to explore the experiences of a sample of teachers in an in-depth manner. The findings, consequently, were used to describe the experiences of the particular study participants.

Additionally, the sample for the study included seven females and one male. Although the percentage of female public-school teachers was reported as disproportionately female in 2017 (U.S. Department of Education, 2019) and the study sample is representative of this disproportion, compared with male teachers, female teachers are more likely to respond to the bullying of others, according to Duy (2013). Based on the research of Harper et al. (2012) and Parris et al. (2019), differences in individual characteristics (such as gender) may impact coping effectiveness. Future research could take an intersectional approach and consider varying genders and races to provide information on the impact of gender, race, and cultural context on the relationship between childhood coping with victimization and adulthood responses to bullying.

For some teachers, details of past bullying memories were more difficult to recall than for other teachers. Retrospective study literature and research done on the impact of trauma suggests

that self-reports of childhood experiences can be impacted by recall bias and individuals' subjective memories/interpretations of past events (Frissa et al., 2016). According to Pinion (2018), "As we grow, it is easy to forget what life was actually like as a younger, smaller person." The research approach used for this current study moderated this limitation in a few ways. Transcriptions were sent to the teachers after each interview to allow them to review interview content for accuracy but also to encourage them to remember additional details and allow reflection on and discussion of those memories during subsequent interviews when they chose to do so. Based on the three-interview study design (Seidman, 2013) and the reflection period and review of the verbatim transcripts between interviews, teachers did remember more details about their experiences with each subsequent interview.

The teachers in the study were asked to self-report the ways in which they handled bullying when they saw it in their classrooms. Building rapport with the teachers over a prolonged engagement of the three interviews (Seidman, 2013) helped to create an open and non-judgmental space for the teachers to share.

Lastly, as the only person conducting the interviews and analyzing the data, I was conscious of the possibility of researcher bias based on my prior work with teachers in the area of bullying. To mitigate bias, I maintained and continuously referred to my reflexive journal throughout the interview, data collection and analysis processes. According to Ortlipp (2008), reflexive journaling is a way ensure transparency and acknowledge researcher values in order to continuously examine the assumptions, beliefs, and areas of objectivities and subjectivities.

In summary, this study represented one researcher's perspective during a particular time, in a particular place, and with particular participants.

### 4.3 Future Research and Practice

There is limited research related to teachers who were victims of childhood bullying. Since the current study results suggest a connection between teachers' experiences of childhood bullying and their bullying responses, specific interventions can be developed that encourage teachers to examine their past experiences, thus contributing to the literature that supports intervention research and design that is targeted and, consequently, more effective (Fraser et al., 2009). Future efforts could include educating teachers about how their own experiences of being childhood victims of peer bullying can impact their views of the bullying of others and assisting them with balancing their personal and professional responses to bullying.

This study was not designed to generalize teachers' past or current victimization/bullying experiences. However, the study design and findings could be used to guide future research that investigates associations between the childhood victimization experiences of teachers and their current bullying behaviors using larger sample sizes.

Additionally, this study focused on teachers who were purely victims of bullying as children or adolescents. Using the same research design, future research could investigate the research questions posed in this current study to investigate teachers who were bully/victims, bullies, or bystanders only. These future studies could be conducted with larger samples and use a mixed-method or quantitative approach.

According to Oldenburg et al. (2015), there was a higher victimization/bullying rate in classrooms where teachers attributed bullying to external factors or factors that were outside of their influence and control. One factor that emerged in this current study was teachers reporting an understanding of bullies who had difficult family backgrounds – noting this during childhood and also during adulthood. Though this came up in the analysis of the data, this study did not

investigate how this factor could be associated with bullying rates in the classroom. Isolating this response to bullying may be a topic for future research.

Future research may also examine the possible connection between teachers' perceived self-confidence in handling a bullying situation and the confidence they felt while coping with their own victimization as children. Additionally, though it is not surprising that empathy emerged as a predominant teacher response to bullied victims, further investigation of the ways in which empathy impacts teachers or motivates their specific responses to bullying may be important.

Data emerged from this study that suggested that gay, gay-appearing or transgender students may require different reporting avenues—the complexities of not being “out” to parents, fear and embarrassment may make it especially difficult for these students to report bullying to a teacher or adult. Further study could be important to teachers' understanding the nuances related to bullying intervention for this population of students.

Research can be conducted using the data and findings from this current study. The Latane' and Darley (1968) model could be used as an interview protocol for further analysis of the data from this study. Also, the data diagrams developed to display the findings of this study could be used to develop ethnographic survey items to “test” the findings with larger samples and using a quantitative methodology.

Over the course of the study, it became evident that teachers were innovative and imaginative when it came to developing their own classroom anti-bullying tools. Future research could focus on collecting these “home-grown” interventions and developing and implementing an intervention that draws upon and shares this approach with teachers who would benefit from the creative strategies the teachers in this study have developed.



Another important practical area to which this research can be applied is in working with children and adolescents on building esteem and resilience designed to positively impact their ways of coping and coping skills when faced with bullying and bystanding situations.

When screening the teachers for the study, ones who felt that their experiences were not bullying were excluded from the study. Future research on coping with childhood bullying could include participants who experienced bullying (by definition) but did not feel they were bullied and whether this “disconnect” was a way of coping with their victimization.

Educators are often challenged with receiving the bullying training that they need due to resources and time constraints (Rigby & Johnson, 2016). An approach that considers the constraints on schools’ resources and teachers’ time may allow schools to, at the very least, provide spaces for teachers to share their past victimization experiences with peers, which may be a start for teachers who have buried childhood victimization experiences and may not realize how those experiences impact their classroom bullying responses. This type of training may be less resource-intensive than the whole-school approach and, consequently, would be an important contribution to holistic bullying prevention programs and approaches. Hopefully, the findings of this study will be of interest to school administrators as they seek to justify more dedicated resources for teachers, most of whom would benefit from ongoing anti-bullying skills and training combined with bullying-specific interpersonal communication skills training to enable them to respond successfully in the midst of critical bullying moments. In keeping with this approach, working with teachers in a small-group setting could be a valuable offering. For this current study, talking with teachers one-on-one about a sensitive and embarrassing part of their lives was effective, while a larger-scale process may not engender the same level of trust.

One unexpected result of the study was that teachers reported being positively impacted by the research process. They discussed the connections they perceived between their childhood victimization experiences and their responses to bullying in the classroom. One teacher said:

It would really have to be through this interview process to be honest, because otherwise I would've just gone on and not really thought things through as much. Because you're asking these thought-provoking questions that people don't discuss very often. And through your questioning, that's when I did realize. Like when you asked me the question about being a bystander, if I ever was, and that's the first time that I realized that I was doing that for survival, and that was the first realization that I had that people bully to survive. I really didn't have that realization before having these conversations with you actually.

And another stated:

And I also started thinking about how it shaped my personality. And I never, until this research, thought about, I think my personality is shaped off of the bullying. The last interview was emotional for me. I didn't realize, literally, the way that I function in the world as a 43-year-old is because of the way I was bullied.

A notable implication of using the Seidman (2013) interviewing model was that teachers responded to the research process as if it were an intervention. Teachers shared how the research process and reflecting on past bullying experiences were transformative. In some cases, teachers' childhood victimization experiences had evolved by the end of the study to an understanding of how the childhood victimization was visible in their adult lives; understanding, retrospectively, the reason for the bully's behavior; or generally finding "closure" due to sharing memories not previously shared and the cathartic nature of the communication. A follow-up study may be warranted with the eight teachers to understand if the positive immediate effects they experienced from participating in the study have any long-term implications.

This study's findings suggested that providing space for people to have a voice, along with an active and engaged listener can have transformative or therapeutic effects (Holloway & Wheeler, 1995). According to Black (2002; as cited in Murray, 2003) one part of recovering

from trauma is talking about it. Highlighting the importance of having a voice, one teacher described how her childhood experiences were connected to her commitment to her students. She explained: “My voice was taken away from me. And I don't want my kids to feel like their voice has been taken away from them.”

The teachers in the study, in contrast to feeling voiceless as victimized children, felt empowered by the research process. Following the interviews, one teacher wrote: “It was such an amazing experience! Thank you so much for allowing me to be a part of it” (M.O, personal communication, August 27, 2019).

Another wrote: “I adored our time together. I felt heard and honored” (S.P, personal communication, August 28, 2019).

Based on the positive responses from teachers after the conclusion of the study, it seems important for there to be a space where teachers are allowed to remember, talk about and heal from their childhood bullying victimization experiences. The findings of my study underscored the need to create this space for teachers and to include them at the ground level whenever programs aimed at reducing bullying are being developed. Ideally, teachers play a most vital role in the school environment—that of the anti-bullying bystander.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A – Participant Communications

#### *Appendix A.1 – Teacher Recruitment Email*

Dear Public-School Teacher:

My name is Kelley Alexander and I am a researcher working with Drs. Anthony Lemieux and Kristen Varjas at Georgia State University. We are conducting a research study to increase our understanding of bullying, victimization and the childhood coping experiences of teachers. As a teacher in the public-school system, you are in an ideal position to provide valuable first-hand information. I am emailing to ask if you would be willing to take part in phone or video-conference, and (possibly) two face-to-face interviews for this research project. Participation is completely voluntary, and your answers will be anonymous and confidential. Each of the confidential interviews, should you choose to participate, will take between one hour and about 90 minutes and will be scheduled at a date and time of your convenience. Each interview will be assigned a number code to help ensure that personal identifiers are not revealed during the analysis and write up of findings.

If you agree to participate in Stage 1 of the research study, you will receive a \$25 gift card for your participation. If you are subsequently selected to participate in Stages 2 and 3, you will receive a \$75 gift card. More importantly, your participation will be invaluable to my research, and findings could lead to greater public awareness of bullying and add to the training and professional development that teachers receive.

If you think you may be interested in participating in this research project, please contact me by email at [kdalexander@student.gsu.edu](mailto:kdalexander@student.gsu.edu) or by phone at 404-234-7776. We can then schedule a time for a phone or video call at a time that is convenient for you.

Thank you, in advance, for your time and assistance with this important research.

Kelley Alexander, PhD Candidate  
Georgia State University

*Appendix A.2 – Teacher Follow-Up Email*

Dear [Name of Public-School Teacher]:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my study: *How do Teachers' Childhood and Adolescent Bullying Victimization Experiences Influence Their Responses to Bullying in the Classroom?*

The next steps are scheduling a date, time and location that is convenient for you, either by phone or video-conference. I will give you a call to set up the logistics for the interview.

I also want to remind you that you will receive a \$25 gift card for participating in the first stage of the study. I am grateful, in advance, for the invaluable contribution that your participation will provide to bullying research and to my research specifically.

Feel free to contact me by email at [kdalexander@student.gsu.edu](mailto:kdalexander@student.gsu.edu) or by phone at 404-234-7776 if you have any questions prior to me reaching out to you to schedule the interview. Thanks again for agreeing to participate in the study.

Kelley Alexander, PhD Candidate  
Georgia State University

*Appendix A.3 – Teacher Acceptance Email*

Dear [Name of Public-School Teacher]:

Thank you, again, for taking the time to share your experiences with me, which helped me to determine that your continued participation would be important to the next phases of my study: *How do Teachers' Childhood and Adolescent Bullying Victimization Experiences Influence Their Responses to Bullying in the Classroom?*

The next steps are scheduling a date, time and location for face-to-face interviews. I will give you a call to set up the meetings. I want to remind you that you will receive a \$75 gift card for participating in the next two interviews.

If you have any questions prior to me reaching out to you, please contact me by email at [kdalexander@student.gsu.edu](mailto:kdalexander@student.gsu.edu) or by phone at 404-234-7776.

Again, thank you so much for speaking with me and for offering your assistance with this important research.

Kelley Alexander, PhD Candidate  
Georgia State University

***Appendix A.4 – Non-Participant (Thank You) Email***

Dear [Name of Public-School Teacher]

Thank you, again, for taking the time to share your experiences with me for my study: *How Do Teachers' Childhood and Adolescent Bullying Victimization Experiences Influence Their Responses to Bullying in the Classroom?* The feedback I received from you will be invaluable to my project and to future research related to teachers and bullying in the classroom.

I received a great response, and, as we discussed, my study supports narrowing down from 20 teachers in the first phase to 6 to 10 teachers for subsequent phases. Based on your childhood bullying victimization experiences and the selection criteria, you did not fit the narrow criteria for the subsequent interviews.

If you have any questions about the screening process, please contact me by email at [kdalexander@student.gsu.edu](mailto:kdalexander@student.gsu.edu) or by phone at 404-234-7776.

Again, thank you so much for speaking with me and for offering your assistance with this important research.

Kelley Alexander, PhD Candidate  
Georgia State University

## **Appendix B – Informed Consent Form**

Georgia State University

### **Informed Consent**

Title: How Do Teachers' Childhood and Adolescent Bullying Victimization Experiences Influence Their Responses to Bullying?

Principal Investigator: Dr. Anthony Lemieux

Co-Investigator: Dr. Kristen Varjas

Student Principal Investigator: Kelley Alexander

### **Introduction and Key Information**

You are invited to take part in a research study. It is up to you to decide if you would like to take part in the study. The purpose of this study is to investigate how the childhood and adolescent bullying victimization experiences of teachers influence their adult responses to bullied students in the classroom. Your role in the study will last no more than 5 hours over a 45- to 60-day span of time.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of the study is to investigate how the childhood and adolescent bullying victimization experiences of teachers influence their adult responses to bullied students in the classroom. You are invited to participate in this research study because you are a public-school teacher who teaches in grades K-12, with childhood or adolescent bullying victimization experience and experience observing bullying as a teacher in the classroom. At least 26 and as many as 40 teachers will be recruited to take part in this study based on the number of teachers who meet the specific selection criteria.

### **Procedures**

The study includes a 3-part interview process. If you decide to take part, you will be asked to complete one 1-hour to 90-minute phone or web-based video interview, and you may be asked to complete two subsequent 90-minute, face-to-face interviews. You will also be asked to review transcripts of your interview(s), should you wish to do so; since there will be one researcher conducting all of the interviews, you will have the opportunity to review your written transcribed interviews to ensure accuracy of the data, limit the impact of any potential bias, and allow for your follow-up questions or concerns. As part of the selection criteria, you must agree for your interview to be audiotaped and/or videotaped (for web-based video interviews only) to ensure the integrity of the transcription process. Face-to-face Interviews will be conducted at a time and location that is convenient for you. Interviews will take place in January and February of 2019. If you participate in the first interview, the total time involved is between one hour and 90 minutes. If you participate in the two subsequent interviews in addition to the first, the total time commitment is five hours over the course of a 45- to 60-day period, which includes a 10-minute screening call and the 15- to 30-minute transcription reviews. You will interact only with the primary researcher, starting with receiving and responding to email correspondence requesting

your participation. This email interaction should take you no more than 15 minutes over the course of the study.

### **Future Research**

Researchers will remove information that may identify you and may use your data for future research. If we do this, we will not ask for any additional consent from you.

### **Risks**

There is the possibility that participation in this study may cause you to have an emotional reaction based on your memories of childhood bullying victimization experiences. You will not have any more risks than you would encounter seeing or hearing about victims of aggression shown on television. Based on the design of the study and the interview questions, risks have been minimized as much as possible for you and other participants in the study. However, to prevent any undue emotional stress, you will be encouraged to express any concerns you have during the interview process. You will also be instructed that you can stop the interview at any time. No injury is expected from this study, but if the interview questions in any way re-traumatize or upset you by evoking emotions from childhood victimization experiences, you will be provided with a list of resources if you need additional emotional or psychological support. If you believe you have been harmed, contact the research team as soon as possible. Georgia State University and the research team have not set aside funds to compensate for any participant support or resources.

### **Benefits**

This study is designed to benefit you personally by allowing you the opportunity to process and talk about past experiences. Another possible benefit is that by the end of the study, you may experience a renewed interest in seeking out anti-bullying resources. Overall, we hope to gain information that will provide the Student PI and others guidance on how to assist you in understanding how to respond when you observe signs of bullying in the classroom. The information you and other teacher participants provide will be used to help address the public health concern of bullying victimization in schools.

### **Alternatives**

The alternative to taking part in this study is to not take part in the study.

### **Compensation**

You will receive a \$20 gift card for participating in Stage 1 of the study, a \$25 gift card for participating in Stage 2, and a \$30 gift card for participating in Stage 3 interviews. The 6 to 10 participants who complete the second and third interviews will each receive a total of \$55 for completing both Stages 2 and 3 interviews. Your gift cards will be distributed immediately after the conclusion of each interview.

You will not receive compensation for participating in the 10-minute screening call to determine whether or not you qualify for participation in the study.

### **Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal**

You do not have to be in this study. If you decide to be in the study and change your mind, you have the right to drop out at any time. You may skip interview questions if any question is too upsetting to you, or you can stop participating at any time. Whatever you decide, as long as you complete any interview of the study, this will not cause you to lose any benefits or compensation in which you are otherwise entitled.

### **Confidentiality**

We will keep your records private to the extent allowed by law. Only the following people, including those who make sure that the study is done correctly (GSU Institutional Review Board and the Office for Human Research Protection (OHRP)) will have access to the information you provide:

Dr. Anthony Lemieux, Principal Investigator  
Dr. Kristen Varjas, Co-Principal Investigator  
Kelley Alexander, Student Principal Investigator  
GSU Institutional Review Board  
Office of Human Resource Protection (OHRP)

If you are selected and agree to participate in the interview, you will be reminded not to share any identifying information about yourself or others, and you will be randomly assigned unique identifying numbers (study number plus participant number), rather than your name on study records, which will be used to track you through data analysis and project completion. This number assignment protocol will provide anonymity for you in the participant database and throughout the study. All participant identifying information will be stored separately from the database in a locked cabinet, and all files, including audio and video files, will be stored using secure passwords on firewall-protected computers. Only the principal investigators will have access to this information. A key code sheet may be used to identify the research participants; the sheet will be stored separately from your data to protect privacy. If a key code sheet is used, it and all participant identifying information, will be destroyed after the study has been completed, data has been analyzed, and the student principal investigator's dissertation has been completed. When we present or publish the results of this study, we will not use your name or other information that may identify you. The findings will be summarized and reported in group form. You will not be identified personally.

### **Contact Information**

Contact Dr. Anthony Lemieux (at 404-413-5883 or [alemieux@gsu.edu](mailto:alemieux@gsu.edu)); Dr. Kris Varjas (at 404-413-8190 or [kvarjas@gsu.edu](mailto:kvarjas@gsu.edu)) and Kelley Alexander (at 404-234-7776 or [kdalexander@student.gsu.edu](mailto:kdalexander@student.gsu.edu)):

- If you have questions about the study or your part in it



- If you have questions, concerns, or complaints about the study
- If you think you have been harmed by the study

The IRB at Georgia State University reviews all research that involves human participants. You can contact the IRB if you would like to speak to someone who is not involved directly with the study. You can contact the IRB for questions, concerns, problems, information, input, or questions about your rights as a research participant. Contact the IRB at 404-413-3500 or [irb@gsu.edu](mailto:irb@gsu.edu).

### **Consent**

We will give you a copy of this consent form to keep.  
If you are willing to volunteer for this research, please sign below.

---

Printed Name of Participant

---

Signature of Participant Date

---

Principal Investigator or Researcher Obtaining Consent Date

## Appendix C – Interview Protocol

Time of Interview \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Interview \_\_\_\_\_

Location \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewee \_\_\_\_\_

### *Script Prior to Interview #1:*

I'd like to thank you once again for being willing to participate in Phase 1 of my study. As I have mentioned to you before, my study seeks to understand teachers' childhood bullying victimization experiences, as well as more recent experiences of bullying in the classroom. The purpose of this research is to understand the possible connections between the ways that you handled your own bullying victimization experiences and the ways that you perceive and handle the bullying of others. Our interview today will last approximately one hour, during which I will be asking you about yourself, your upbringing, family, school experiences and other things you may remember from your childhood. [I will go over confidentiality and other parts of the consent form at this point.]

You've already completed a consent form indicating that I have your permission to video or audio record our conversation. Are you still ok with me recording our conversation today?  
 \_\_\_Yes \_\_\_No

[If yes]

Thank you! Please let me know if at any point you want me to turn off the recorder or keep something you said off the record. I will be happy to do so.

[If no]

Thank you for letting me know. I will only take hand-written notes of our conversation.

Before we start, do you have any questions I can answer?

[Discuss questions]

If any questions come up for you at any point in this study, feel free to stop the interview and ask them at any time. I will be more than happy to answer all of your questions.

### **Questions and Probes** (*First Interview of Three*)

After Interview #1, an email will be sent to all teachers to indicate that either they are invited to participate in Interviews #2 and #3 or they did not meet the specific criteria for participation in subsequent interviews (Appendices C and D).

*First, I'd like to ask you a few demographic questions if that's OK.*

1. How many years have you been teaching?
  - a. 1 to 2 years (screen out)
  - b. 3 to 5 years
  - c. 6 to 15 years
  - d. 16 years or over
  
2. What is your race/ethnicity?
  - a. White
  - b. Hispanic or Latino
  - c. Black or African American
  - d. Native American or American Indian
  - e. Asian / Pacific Islander
  - f. Other/Specify
  
3. What is your age?
  - a. 18-24 years old
  - b. 25-34 years old
  - c. 35-44 years old
  - d. 45-54 years old
  - e. 55-64 years old
  - f. 65 or older
  
4. What grade do you teach?
  - a. K-5
  - b. 6-9
  - c. 10-12
  
5. What is your gender?
  - a. F
  - b. M
  - c. T/F
  - d. T/M
  - e. Other/Specify
  
6. What is sexual orientation? (If you are comfortable answering this question)
  - a. Gay
  - b. Straight
  - c. Bi-Sexual
  - d. Other/Specify
  
7. Can you briefly describe your childhood experiences of bullying?
  - a. None (screen out)
  - b. Bully (screen out)

- c. Bully-Victim (screen out)
  - d. Victim
  - e. Victim and bystander
  - f. Bystander only (screen out)
8. (If you had experiences as a victim or victim-bystander) How long did this bullying go on?
    - a. Once (screen out)
    - b. Repeated a few times (screen out)
    - c. Ongoing (defined as one school year or longer)
    - d. None of the above (screen out)
  9. What types of bullying did you experience?
    - a. Physical
    - b. Relational (social, humiliation, excluding, etc.)
    - c. Verbal
    - d. None of the above
  10. What about as a teacher in the classroom; how would you describe your experiences of observing students being bullied?
    - a. None
    - b. Observed one student being bullied once
    - c. Have observed students(s) being bullied repeatedly (for one school year or longer)
  11. What type of bullying have you observed most as a teacher in the classroom?
    - a. Physical
    - b. Relational (social, humiliation, excluding, etc.)
    - c. Verbal
    - d. None of the above

*This next set of questions focus on your childhood, your earliest memories of bullying, and deciding to become a teacher.*

1. Talk to me about what led you to want to be a teacher?
2. When did you first become aware of bullying (not the word but the phenomenon)?
  - a. Go as far back as you can remember.
  - b. What about in school? Family? Neighborhood?
    - i. Please say more about the school/family/neighborhood?
3. Describe times when you witnessed the bullying of others?
  - a. How did it feel to see others bullied?
4. What role did teachers or other adults have in both your experiences and the experiences of others you observed?

*At the end of the first interview, thank participants and let them know they will be hearing by email about the study's next steps and potential participation.*

*Script Prior to Interview #2:*

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the remainder of my study. Our interview today will last approximately 90 minutes, during which time I will be asking you to go into more detail about your bullying victimization experiences [I will go over confidentiality again and other parts of the consent form at this point.]

Are you still OK with recording our conversation today? \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No

[If yes]

Thank you! Please let me know if at any point you want me to turn off the recorder or keep something you said off the record. I will be happy to do so.

[If no]

Thank you for letting me know. I will only take hand-written notes of our conversation. Before we start, do you have any questions I can answer?

[Discuss questions]

If any questions come up for you at any point in this study, feel free to stop the interview and ask them at any time. I will be more than happy to answer all of your questions.

### **Questions and Probes** (*Second Interview of Three*)

#### Reconstruct Details

1. Describe your childhood.
  - a. Describe yourself as a child.
2. What (where, how) was the bullying you experienced perpetrated?
  - a. How did it feel for you to experience bullying as a child?
  - b. Were there bystanders?
  - c. What were the bystanders doing?
  - d. What was the role of the teacher (or other adult) if the bullying occurred in school?
  - e. What was the role of the adult if the bullying occurred at home?
3. What did you do to cope with your bullying victimization experiences?
  - a. Think back to your childhood self and try not to judge your childhood actions.
  - b. Talk about some specific responses you had or actions you took when you were bullied (classroom, school, playground, etc.).
  - c. How did being bullied affect your behavior in school?
    - i. At home?
    - ii. Toward other students
  - d. Do you consider yourself to be still coping with those childhood experiences in any way? If so, how?

4. What did you do to report the bullying?
  - a. What were the actions of the adults to whom you reported?
  - b. How did you respond to the response of the adult(s)? What did you do?
  - c. How did your personality change as a result of the bullying victimization experiences?
  
5. Describe a few experiences of being a teacher and witnessing bullying in the classroom.
  - a. How did you respond?
  - b. Why did you respond or why did you not respond?
  - c. Talk about some specific responses you've had or actions you've taken when encountering bullying (classroom, school, playground, etc.).

*Script Prior to Interview #3:*

This is the last interview and I'd like to thank you once again for being willing to participate. Our interview today will last approximately 90 minutes, during which time I will be asking you to reflect on the meaning of your past and more recent bullying victimization experiences. [I will go over confidentiality and other parts of the consent form at this point.]

Are you still OK with recording our conversation today? \_\_\_Yes \_\_\_No

[If yes]

Thank you! Please let me know if at any point you want me to turn off the recorder or keep something you said off the record. I will be happy to do so.

[If no]

Thank you for letting me know. I will only take hand-written notes of our conversation. Before we start, do you have any questions I can answer?

[Discuss questions]

If any questions come up for you at any point in this study, feel free to stop the interview and ask them at any time. I will be more than happy to answer all of your questions.

**Questions and Probes** (*Third Interview of Three*)

Meaning Making/Reflection

1. Now that you've shared your experiences with me, how do you feel now as you think back on your own bullying victimization experiences or those you witnessed?
  
2. Why do you think you behaved in the ways that you did as a child as a result of being bullied?
  - a. Given your early experiences of being bullied and the things you said about the bullying you see as a teacher in the classroom, please talk about the influence of early childhood bullying on your life.
  - b. How do you see the bullying you experienced affecting your response to bullying when you see it?

3. Reflect on your current relationship to your students.
  - a. How might you describe those relationships?
4. What would you say has been the single most significant event that has led to your current view/perspective/understanding of bullying?
5. Talk about observing other teachers (peers) intervening in bullying situations.
  - a. Did they address the bully (with discipline, etc.) or protect the victim in some way?
  - b. Why do you think this was the case?
6. How has this interview or revisiting your childhood experiences impacted how you intend to handle bullying in the future?
  - a. If you could make single a statement about how you intend to act when you encounter bullying in the future, what would you say?

## Appendix D – Revised Ways of Coping Scale Constructs

### *Construct 1 – Problem Focused*

1. I tried to analyze the problem in order to understand it better.
2. I made a plan of action and followed it.
3. I tried not to act too hastily or follow my first hunch.
4. I changed something so things would turn out all right.
5. I stood my ground and fought for what I wanted.
6. I drew on my past experiences; I had been in a similar situation before.
7. I knew what had to be done, so I doubled my efforts to make things work.
8. I came up with a couple of different solutions to the problem.
9. I tried to keep my feelings from interfering with other things too much.
10. I went over in my mind what I would say or do.
11. I tried to see things from the other person's point of view.

### *Construct 2 – Seeking Social Support*

1. I talked to someone to find out more about the situation.
2. I accepted sympathy and understanding from someone.
3. I let my feelings out somehow.
4. I talked to someone who could do something concrete about the problem.
5. I asked a relative or friend I respected for advice.
6. I talked to someone about how I was feeling.
7. I prayed.

### *Construct 3 – Wishful Thinking*

1. I hoped a miracle would happen.
2. I wished that I could change what was happening or how I felt.
3. I daydreamed or imagined a better time or place than the one I was in.
4. Wished that the situation would go away or somehow be over with.
5. Had fantasies or wishes about how things might turn out.

### *Construct 4 – Avoidance*

1. I felt that time would make a difference – the only thing to do was to wait.
2. Went along with fate; sometimes I just had bad luck.
3. Went on as if nothing was happening.
4. Tried to forget the whole thing.
5. I waited to see what was going to happen before doing anything.
6. Accepted it since nothing could be done.



## Appendix E – Codebook

### Nodes

Name	Description	Files	References
Interview as Intervention		6	16
Non-Teacher Response to Bullying	The response of teachers, adults and schools to bullying.	18	66
Counselor		3	3
Mentor	People who stand up for victims of bullying	3	4
Parent of family		11	20
Ignored		1	1
Protective or supportive		6	9
Unaware		2	2
School or administration		15	35
Anti-bullying	Ways that bullying is handled or prevented in schools	1	1
Strategies or policies		10	25
RQ1 - How do teachers describe their experiences of bullying		38	488
Bully Traits		6	11
Angry		1	1
Bigger or stronger		3	4
Malevolent or mean		5	6
Bullying Awareness	Awareness of active bullying behaviors while they are happening.	26	55
Parent or adult		3	3
School		3	4
Teacher		22	35
Victim		7	10
Bullying Context	Bullying occurs in multiple places and environments. These include school, home, the neighborhood, the school bus,	28	83

Name	Description	Files	References
	and hallways.		
Home or Family		9	14
Long Term		4	4
Neighborhood or community		10	15
School		26	50
Cafeteria		0	0
Gym class		1	1
Hall		4	4
Playground or recess		2	2
School bus		6	7
To or from		2	3
Bullying Effects and Outcomes	The long- and short-term effects of bullying on childhood victims.	26	136
Academic challenges		2	5
Dropped out		1	2
Failed class		1	1
Poor grades		0	0
Skipped school		0	0
Sleeping in class		0	0
Acted out		1	1
Aggressive or mean		1	3
Always something to prove		1	1
Anger or hatred		5	6
Anxiety		3	3
Attempted or considered suicide		6	10
Belonging		1	2
Binging		2	5
Bitterness		1	1
Bullied at work		1	1

Name	Description	Files	References
Co-dependence		1	2
Counseling seeking or receiving		3	3
Cover up by adult		0	0
Crave community		1	1
Depression		4	7
Drinking		1	1
Embarrassment		4	6
Fear or worry		6	8
Feeling of loss		2	3
Feeling voiceless		1	2
Fighting or fighting back		3	4
Frequent crying		3	5
Hate teaching		1	1
Hospitalization		1	1
Isolation		3	6
Negative self-image		6	7
Nightmares		1	1
Paranoia		1	2
Parental lack of protection		1	1
Pee on self		1	1
Personality changes		7	11
Rape or molestation		2	2
Rejection		0	0
Resilience		3	7
Sadness		2	2
Socially insecure		1	1
Stigmatized		1	1
Traumatization or traumatic memories		8	10

Name	Description	Files	References
Troublemaking		1	2
Bullying Reasons	The reasons victims report being bullied.	26	83
Abuse of Power		1	1
Academic aptitude		4	4
Addiction		1	1
Class		4	9
Jealousy		1	2
Different, Weird or Wrong		19	44
Appearance		12	25
Weight		9	22
Disability		3	5
Poor social skills		1	1
Sexual Orientation or LGBTG		1	5
Home life		4	8
Craving friendship		1	1
Isolation		1	1
Race and Culture		8	16
Hair texture		2	2
Skin color		3	4
Bullying Types	The types of bullying experienced by childhood victims. These types include: relational, physical, and verbal bullying.	35	120
Hierarchical Bullying		16	24
Administrator bullying teacher		1	1
Parent bullying teacher		3	4
Student bullying teacher		4	7
Teacher bullying student		8	8
Race		2	2

Name	Description	Files	References
Teacher bullying teacher		1	1
Physical		13	19
Hate crime		1	1
Pushing		2	2
Relational		20	32
Covert		4	4
Exclusion		4	4
Extortion		3	6
Social Media		7	11
Sexual		3	4
Spouse or partner		1	1
Verbal		20	40
Name calling		7	11
Teasing		10	12
Threats		5	9
RQ2 - How do teachers cope with their childhood bullying experiences		34	201
During Childhood		34	168
Avoidance		18	55
Did not report		4	10
Empathy		3	3
Hiding or shutting down		5	8
Ignore		2	5
Laugh it off		1	1
Lying		4	6
Minimize		1	2
Never defended oneself		1	1
Pretended not to be hurt		1	1

Name	Description	Files	References
Silence		9	15
Problem Focused		22	44
Became the aggressor		2	3
Changed appearance		2	2
Code switching		1	1
Counseling		3	4
Defended self		9	11
Embrace difference		2	5
Put in perspective		1	1
Rationalized		2	3
Told the teacher or adult		7	9
Tried to deal with it		5	5
Seeks Social Support		19	43
Early sexual experiences		1	3
Family support		3	3
Friendship		9	14
Befriended the victim		4	4
Fight for victim		2	4
Peer protector		2	4
Transactional		2	4
People pleaser		5	6
Student-teacher relationship		6	6
Mentor support		1	1
Tried to fit in		6	9
Joined the bullies		5	6
Survival	Teachers mention survival as a motivating factor for victims, bystanders and those who bully.	13	33
Bully		1	2

Name	Description	Files	References
Bystander		5	13
Victim		8	13
Wishful Thinking		15	26
Acting tough		3	3
Escapism		3	5
Fortitude	Inner Strength	4	7
Prayed or meditated		3	4
Self-focused		3	3
In Adulthood		13	33
Avoidance		3	4
Problem Focused		8	14
Counseling		3	6
Received training		1	1
Self-Awareness		3	3
Teaching tough skin		1	1
Seeks Social Support		4	4
Create community		1	1
Wishful Thinking		8	10
Do affirmations		1	1
Memory		1	1
Positive self-image		1	2
Survival		3	3
Unconsciously		1	1
RQ3 - How do teachers respond to student victims		31	133
Anger		4	7
Bully the bully		2	2
Discipline		3	4
Educating parents		1	1
Empathy		11	16
Get rid of the child		1	2

Name	Description	Files	References
Identify with the bullied student		2	2
Overreacted		1	2
Powerlessness		1	1
Report to administration or counselor		5	6
Sad or upset		10	14
Strategies		16	69
Empowerment		2	3
Insightful		1	1
Lenience		1	4
Support		1	1
Take it personally		1	2
RQ4 - How do teachers perceive the connection between childhood victimization experiences and adult responses		10	18
Teaching Motivation		30	57
Advocate		1	1
Family member		3	4
Help students		11	11
Students with learning challenges		4	4
Support the underdog		2	2
Identify with the underdog		2	3
Knack for it		1	1
Leadership or mentorship		1	1
Love for children		2	2
Love teaching the grades I was bullied		1	1
Negative experience with teacher		1	1



Name	Description	Files	References
Parental role		1	1
Passion or purpose		7	7
Positive influence or making a difference		6	7
Promise to God or calling		2	2
Teacher-student relationship		9	15