Let's Talk about our Pictures: Exploring Parents' and Children's Perspectives about Family Life, Parent-Child Communication, and Bullying

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Abstract

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about Family Life, Parent-Child Communication, and Bullying

Kelly Anastasiadis

This exploratory project worked with families of children who struggled with learning difficulties and were involved in bullying. Children's experiences at home with their family, were discussed to understand their perceptions during adversity. To facilitate and overcome communication barriers between parent's and children's experiences, photo-elicitation (e.g., Einarsdottir, Dockett, & Perry, 2009), was used to capture how children and parents discuss their thoughts and ideas about family communication, bullying, and home-school life experiences. Through the use of photo elicitation, a visual word game, semi-structured interviews, and a board game, the families shared their experiences, discussed how they communicated, and considered possible ways to improve communication about difficult topics. Children and parents discussed home and school as two entirely separate spheres of their lives. Parents liked having a relationship with the school, mainly when the school was able to accommodate the needs of the families and their preferred method of communication. Children described the positive and negative experiences at school. They pointed to specific courses, teachers, types of difficulties that they had experienced. Furthermore, home was perceived as a safe place and a source of comfort for both parents and children. Parents and children seemed to approach the topic of bullying a little differently. For some parents, bullying was seen as a "part of being a child" while other parents saw it as something they needed to be "proactive about". When parents spoke about how they communicated and supported their children, they focused on methods and

strategies they used to speak to them. As per the children, they seemed to always go to their mothers if they needed help. When parents were not available children would seek assistance from other people such as a close relative or a friend. The information from this project was valuable to better understand family communication and how it related to the home and school relationship and bullying

Keywords: *bullying, children***,** *communication, home-school relationship, resiliency, parent*

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Review of The Literature

The scholastic environment goes far beyond academic achievements for children (Lawson, 2003). It is a place where they learn to get along with other people and develop social skills (Lawson, 2003). For some children, school can be a positive experience. For others it can be a negative experience (Lawson, 2003). Bullying in school is one such negative experience.

Bullying is unwanted verbal, physical, social or psychological behavior that is harmful and involves the misuse of power by a student or group of students toward another student (Educational & Communities, 2014). It can be repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time (Educational & Communities, 2014). Bullying has become a universal problem that is increasing within the school system (Mishna, Pepler, Wiener, 2006). It can affect children in all grades. Children with learning disabilities are at greater risk of being bullied (Mishna, 2003). They are particularly more vulnerable to experiences of aggression, since they are perceived as different, and usually have fewer supportive friendly relationships (Kokkinos & Antoniadou, 2013). Additionally, they may have limitations in their cognitive, emotional or social abilities (Kokkinos & Antoniadou, 2013). These weaknesses make them more likely to be rejected by their peers (Mishna, 2003). Furthermore, children who bully and children who are victims of bullying are at greater risk of developing social, emotional and psychological problems (Mishna, 2003).

It is important to study bullying because it affects those who are bullied, those who bully and those who witness bullying (Monks & Smith, 2006). When bullying does occur, there are ramifications not only for the child but also for the parents (Humphrey & Crisp, 2008). Parents

report feeling a variety of emotions when learning that their child is being bullied at school

(Sawyer, Mishna, Pepler, & Wiener, 2011). Parents report feeling angry, helpless, frustrated,

guilty, worried and stressed in response to their child's experience of bullying (Harcourt,

Jasperse & Green, 2014). Many parents feel that it is up to them to keep their child safe (Brown,

Aalsma, & Ott, 2013). Especially, when parents see that their child's school is being

unresponsive (Humphrey & Crisp, 2008). Brown et al. (2013) have discovered a three-stage

pattern that parents experience when they find out their child is being bullied. This idea will be

discussed in detail in a later section.

What is Bullying?

It is important to note that there is no universal agreement on the definition of bullying

(Monks & Peters, 2006). However, Olweus defines bullying as a behavior that hurts or harms

another student, with intent to do so; the hurt or harm may be physical, verbal or psychological

and could be repeated; there is a power imbalance, which could be social, psychological or

physical (Olweus, 1997). This power imbalance makes it difficult for the victim to defend him or

herself (Olweus, 1997).

A victim can also experience different forms of bullying. Farrington (1993) noted that

bullying could take three different forms. The first form is physical bullying; it involves hurting a

person's body or possessions (Farrington, 1993). Some examples of physical bullying include

hitting, kicking, pinching, spitting, tripping, pushing, taking or breaking someone's things and

making mean or rude hand gestures. The second form of bullying is verbal bullying; it involves

saying or writing mean things (Farrington, 1993). Some examples of verbal bullying include

teasing, name-calling, saying inappropriate comments, and threatening to cause harm. The third

form of bullying is social bullying sometimes referred to as relational bullying; it is aimed at

damaging the peer relationships of the victim (Farrington, 1993). This form of bullying can be either direct or indirect. An example of a direct form of social bullying would be telling someone that they couldn't play or join in with another group. An indirect form of social bullying can include spreading nasty rumors or telling a group to ignore a particular individual. Bullying involves multiple players: bullies, victims, bully victims and bystanders.

Bullies are characterized as students who are impulsive and who have a strong desire to dominate others (M.Omizo, S.Omizo, Baxa, & Miyose, 2006). They also tend to be physically bigger and stronger than their classmates (Omizo et al., 2006). They have a positive attitude toward violence and use violent means to get what they want (Olweus, 1997). They hold a positive regard of themselves despite their negative behaviors (Omizo et al., 2006). However, evidence has shown that these students are anxious and insecure under the surface (Olweus, 1997).

Victims are physically weaker and appear to be lonely in school; they lack appropriate skills to get along with others (Omizo et al., 2006). They have low self-esteem, appear to be maladjusted, and view their peer relationships negatively (Omizo et al., 2006). They seem to send out a message to other students that they are insecure children who will not fight back (Omizo et al., 2006). Furthermore, Besag (1989) noted that victims could be grouped in several categories. The first category is the passive victim, which is a student who is fearful, physically weaker than his/her peers, is cautious, withdrawn, and often finds it difficult to make friends (Besag, 1989). The second category of victim is the provocative victim (Besag, 1989). This is an individual who intentionally provokes the behaviors of others. They tease and insult and yet are quick to complain. The third category of victim is the colluding victim (Besag, 1989). This is a person that takes on the role of the victim to gain acceptance and popularity. The fourth category

of victim is the false victim (Besag, 1989). This is an individual who seeks attention and is sometimes referred to as bully/victim.

Bully/victims are individuals who bully in one situation but are victims in another (Omizo et al., 2006). They are characterized as students who have an increased obsession with their own self (Bowers, Smith & Binney, 1994). They are said to be anxious, depressed, lonely and high-strung (Dewar, 2008). Perren and Alsaker (2006) reported that students that were identified as bully-victims are less cooperative and less social than others. They are more likely to be avoided by their peers (Dewar, 2008). They have been found to exhibit higher levels of arousal in their environments (Dewar, 2008). In addition, these students are more likely to feel unsafe and feel that they do not belong at school (Dewar, 2008).

Bystanders are students who witness the acts of bullying (Cranham & Carroll, 2003). These individuals have been identified as passive bystanders (Cranham & Carroll, 2003). Passive bystanders do not take an active part in bullying; they simply witness the bullying behavior as it occurs (Cranham & Carroll, 2003). However, some bystanders directly intervene. They do this by discouraging the bully, defending the victim, or redirecting the situation away from the bullying (Cranham & Carroll, 2003). Other bystanders get help. They get peers to stand up to the bully or they report the bully to an adult (Cranham & Carroll, 2003). Consequently, a student who does nothing to help the victim may feel bad or guilty about it later (Education Development Center, 2013). Bystanders who laugh or join in on the bullying are at risk of becoming bullies themselves (Education Development Center, 2013).

Gender and Bullying

Boys and girls approach bullying very differently (Gordon, 2014). Each gender has its own aggressive style (Monks & Smith, 2006). This is because boys and girls socialize differently

(Silva, Pereira, Mendonca, Nunes, & Oliveira, 2013). Boys tend to socialize in larger, less defined groups where physical ability is valued above all else (Omizo et al., 2006). Boys' play consists of physical activities such as sports and games (Beran, 2012). These activities reinforce aggressive behaviors and sometimes violence (Monks & Smith, 2006). In addition, boys are more likely than girls to both bully and be bullied (Athanasiadis & Deliyanni-kouimtzis, 2010). Girls tend to socialize in smaller intimate circles that have clearly defined rules (Silva et al., 2013). For example, a girl may say, 'if you don't do this, you won't be my friend, or we don't want you.'" (Athanasiadis & Deliyanni-Kouimtzis, 2010). They spend more of their time talking and giving advice to each other in more friendly-based activities such as fixing each other's hair, painting their nails, running and dancing together (Beran, 2012). These activities are passive in nature and do not involve being physically aggressive with one another (Monks & Smith, 2006). Therefore, girls are more likely to use and experience relational aggression. This can include spreading rumors, and isolating victims. Boys are more likely to use and experience physical aggression (Monks & Smith, 2006). The most common form of bullying used by sexes is verbal aggression. This is usually in the form of name-calling (Omizo et al., 2006).

Girls and boys also respond differently to peer aggression (Cowie, 2000). Girls are more likely to tell a teacher or friend about someone being victimized (Cowie, 2000). Boys are less likely to use their school's peer support system. They're also less likely to volunteer as a peer supporter to help the victim (Cowie, 2000). Even though boys are capable of showing care for the victim, they choose not to (Cowie, 2000). Boys prefer to hide their empathy and caring abilities (Cowie, 2000). This is especially true when boys find themselves in a situation where displaying empathy or caring may be perceived as gender inappropriate (Cowie, 2000).

Children with Learning Disabilities and Bullying

A meta-analysis conducted by Thornberg (2011) investigated the cause of bullying in schools. The most common explanation given by students was that the victims are seen as being different or deviant in some way (Thornberg, 2011). Additionally, they are seen as individuals who do not fit in (Thornberg, 2011). They may not fit in for various reasons. These reasons can include having different clothing, not behaving like other students, speaking differently, and appearing different (Thornberg, 2011). Thus, the students being bullied are regarded as social misfits.

A social misfit is generally described as a person who is different from others and who does not seem to belong to a particular social group (Thornberg, 2011). Children that have learning disabilities are at greater risk of experiencing peer victimization (Mishan, 2003). Children with learning disabilities have a variety of disorders that affect the acquisition, retention, understanding, organization or use of verbal and/or non-verbal information (Kokkinos & Antoniadou, 2013). Students with learning disabilities have difficulties with organizational skills, social perception, social interaction, and acquiring knowledge (Kokkinos & Antoniadou, 2013). When their classmates become aware of their disabilities, they may become targets for bullies (Mishna, 2003). Their classmates may perceive them as deviant children because they are less competent than their peers (Mishna, 2003). Once students with learning disabilities become victims, they are stigmatized with negative labels and are rejected by their peers (Thornberg, 2011). The bullying is usually in direct relation to their impairments (Bourke & Bourgman, 2010). This makes it impossible for these students to change their status and improve their situation (Thornberg, 2011). Even children who do not actively participate in bullying do not want to socialize with these victims because of social pressures (Thornberg, 2011).

Consequently, these children become so overwhelmed that they cry easily, manifest signs of depression and anxiety, and develop a negative self-concept (Kokkinos & Antoniadou, 2013). This significantly impacts their emotional well-being (Bourke & Burgman, 2010).

A study conducted by Bourke and Burgman (2010) aimed to explore how children with disabilities experience physical and emotional support when they are bullied at school. The findings suggested that when these children get bullied, they use a variety of different coping tactics. These tactics can include: ignoring the bully, talking to a person they trust, or talking to their pets (Bourke & Burgman, 2010). Talking to a pet provided unconditional friendship and security for these children (Bourke & Burgman, 2010). Friends provided assistance to help them stand up to the bully and made the victims feel safe and protected (Bourke & Burgman, 2010). In addition, it was found that children with disabilities felt that teachers were not responding appropriately when bullying was reported (Bourke & Burgman, 2010). They would agree to have teachers involved, but only if they were able to respond to the bullying in an effective manner (Bourke & Burgman, 2010). Furthermore, children with learning disabilities did not disclose that they were being bullied at school to their parents (Bourke & Burgman, 2010). The victims did not inform their parents of the problem because they felt embarrassed and they didn't want to worry, upset or burden them (Bourke & Burgman, 2010). They also feared that their parents' intervention would only make the bullying worse (Bourke & Burgman, 2010).

This brings us to the section pertaining to children with learning disabilities who are at an increased risk for being victimized and for victimizing others, because they cannot process social cues.

Children with Learning Disabilities and Social Cues

Social cues are social symbols expressed through body language, tone or words that are

intended to send a message from one person to another (Wright, 2016). Social cues can be either verbal or non-verbal. They include things such as facial expressions, tone of voice, body language, posture, gestures and proximity (Wright, 2016). Social cues help guide children in their relationships and interactions with others (Wright, 2016). They give them an idea of how they are being accepted or rejected in any given situation (Wright, 2016). Therefore, if children have difficulties reading social cues, it could be challenging to form relationships with others (Wright, 2016).

Children who have learning and attention issues are more likely to have social skill deficits (Lavoie, 2015). Their challenges may interfere with their ability to accurately process social situations, as well as respond appropriately within them (Lehman, 2016). This could be because they are less likely to predict consequences for their social behavior (Lavoie, 2015). During conversations these children are less likely to change their speech to the needs of their listeners (Lavoie, 2015). Which may cause the individual involved in the conversation to become frustrated (Lavoie, 2015). Furthermore, when children with disabilities communicate with their classmates, they tend to use language that is short and less meaningful (Lavoie, 2015). Which poses the risk of them being misunderstood (Lehman, 2016).

Additionally, these children have difficulty understanding the language of others (Lavoie, 2015). They struggle with comprehending indirect exchanges such as those involved in sarcasm, humor and reading in between the lines (Lavoie, 2015). As well as, picking up on persuasion, negotiation, and criticism etc (Lavoie, 2015). Which could be a possible reason, as to why they are less likely to solve social problems with their friends (Lavoie, 2015).

A study found that children who scored low in learning also tended to score low in social intelligence (Kaukainen, Salmivalli, Lagerspetz, Tamminen, Vauras, Maki, & Poskiparta, 2002).

Additionally, these children scored high on bullying, and also tended to be victimized by others (Kaukainen et al., 2002). It is important to remember that a learning disability is a malfunctioning part of a child's neurological system (Lehman, 2016). Thus, both children could be receiving the same stimuli during an interaction, but a different behavior will be projected by an atypically child versus a typical child (Lehman, 2016).

When children are involved in some form of bullying, it affects their parents. This is an affect that deserves closer examination.

Parents and Bullying

A study conducted by Brown et al. (2013) aimed to identify what the parents' lived-experiences are, when they report to the school that their child is being bullied. Eleven parents were interviewed to discuss what they experienced when they found out that their child was being victimized (Brown et al., 2013). A three-stage pattern emerged for each of the parents. This pattern included the discovery, the reporting, and the aftermath (Brown et al., 2013). In the discovery phase, parents noticed signs of behavioral change in their child (Brown et al., 2013). These discoveries often led to parents trying to intervene (Brown et al., 2013). They did so by providing their child with advice and strategies. The advice given consisted of encouraging the child to ignore it, or to walk away (Brown et al., 2013). When parents saw that their advice was not helping, they decided to report the victimization to the school (Brown et al., 2013). However, 10 out of 11 parents stated that the school officials did not want to intervene in the situation (Brown et al., 2013). Only 1 of the 11 parents reported that their principal staged a full intervention (Brown et al., 2013). This intervention included a meeting with all the parties involved. An agreement was made to ensure that it would never happen again (Brown et al., 2013). The aftermath stage happened when school officials do not provide support to prevent the

bullying. Thus, the parents felt that it was up to them to help their child feel safe (Brown et al., 2013). They removed their child from the bullying environment by enrolling their child in a different school (Brown et al., 2013). This option was not available to parents with financial constraints (Brown et al., 2013). As such, these parents felt that they were simply not able to help their children (Brown et al., 2013).

Other researchers have tried to identify how parents are affected when their child is exposed to bullying (Humphrey & Crisp, 2008). A systematic review interviewed four parents whose children were victims of bullying (Humphrey & Crisp, 2008). Parents reported that the school staff was unaware that their child was being victimized (Humphrey & Crisp, 2008). The parents felt that the staff needed to take more responsibility. They felt staff should be trained to identify and prevent incidents of victimization (Humphrey & Crisp, 2008). Parents also wanted teachers to talk to children about violence (Humphrey & Crisp, 2008). Parents reported higher levels of stress and anxiety when finding out that their child was being bullied (Humphrey & Crisp, 2008). They felt isolated because they lacked the ability to support their child (Humphrey & Crisp, 2008). They also supported the idea of having parent meetings in order to discuss and share resources about bullying (Humphrey & Crisp, 2008). Parents tried to support their children by trying to build their self-esteem, helping them overcome their fears and improve their social skills (Humphrey & Crisp, 2008).

Harcourt, Jasper and Green (2014) conducted a systematic review that examined 13 studies, which looked at parents' perceptions of bullying. It also investigated how parents experience and react to bullying. In order to be included in the review, the articles had to explore parents' perspectives on bullying using a type of qualitative methodology (Harcourt et al., 2014). The qualitative methodology included: grounded theory, phenomenology and mixed methods

(Harcourt et al., 2014). The review looked at articles that involved participants other than parents such as children and teachers (Harcourt et al., 2014). However, it focused predominantly on the information that was given by the parents (Harcourt et al., 2014). The studies did not focus on a particular form of bullying (e.g., relational, physical or cyber) but bullying in general (Harcourt et al., 2014). Furthermore, the parents' children could have been the victims, bullies, or uninvolved students (Harcourt et al., 2014). Participants' children could have been of any age (Harcourt et al., 2014).

The review revealed that certain parents regarded bullying as a normal part of growing up. These parents felt that childhood bullying was an unavoidable experience (Harcourt et al., 2014). In order to help reduce their child's stress, parents provided their children with emotional support, taught them pro-social behavior, attempted to increase their self-esteem and tried to help them overcome their fears (Harcourt et al., 2014). They also instructed their children to ignore the bullying and tried to teach their children to feel compassion for the bully (Harcourt et al., 2014). Additionally, some parents advised their child to retaliate. Some parents also enrolled their child in self-defense classes (Harcourt et al., 2014). Interestingly enough, certain parents felt that it was the responsibility of the victim to fix the situation (Harcourt et al., 2014). Parents were often not fully aware of the extent of their child's bullying experience until their child started to show signs that something was wrong (Harcourt et al., 2014). For example, children who were bullied exhibited a loss of self-esteem, were scared, wet the bed, refused to go to school, showed physical and psychological signs of anxiety and depression, tried running away from home, and expressed suicidal tendencies (Harcourt et al., 2014). When the child disclosed being victimized, their parents expressed a strong desire to learn ways to remedy the situation (Harcourt et al., 2014). However, when parents informed their respective schools of the problem,

they often felt alone in their struggle (Harcourt et al., 2014). The schools did nothing to prevent the bullying from occurring again (Harcourt et al., 2014). This made the parents feel confused, angry, frustrated, and vulnerable. They felt unable to protect their child from the bullying (Harcourt et al., 2014). Parents reported that they felt that the schools were primarily responsible for monitoring bullying (Harcourt et al., 2014). They felt it was important for the staff to be approachable (Harcourt et al., 2014). They also felt it was imperative for the staff to encourage and foster positive relationships among the children in order to prevent bullying (Harcourt et al., 2014). Simply put, parents wanted the school to take a greater responsibility in addressing and preventing bullying.

A similar study conducted by Sawyer, Mishna, Pepler and Wiener (2011) examined the views of the parents of children who self-identified as experiencing bullying at school. Twenty parents were given semi-structured interviews (Sawyer et al., 2011). The interviews focused on parents' perceptions and reactions to bullying in general. They also examined the parents' reactions to having their own child being a victim of bullying (Sawyer et al., 2011). Half of the participants had been previously aware of the fact that their child was being bullied (Sawyer et al., 2011). The other half of the parents first learned that their child was being bullied through their participation in the study (Sawyer et al., 2011). The parents who were unaware of their child's victimization seemed to react in one of two ways (Sawyer et al., 2011). Some parents reported feeling very surprised (Sawyer et al., 2011). They never considered their child was vulnerable to bullying (Sawyer et al., 2011). Other parents stated they were not surprised (Sawyer et al., 2011). This is because they assumed that bullying was a normal part of childhood (Sawyer et al., 2011). However, most parents described feeling a mixture of emotions (Sawyer et al., 2011). The parents felt anger, frustration, concern, anxiety and worry (Sawyer et al., 2011).

Certain parents outlined how bullying had psychological and emotional consequences on their child (Sawyer et al., 2011). Furthermore, their child avoided school because of it (Sawyer et al., 2011). The parents also had the opportunity to discuss coping strategies with their children (Sawyer et al., 2011). Such strategies included telling an adult, retaliating, promoting pro-social behavior or even ignoring the child who bullied them (Sawyer et al., 2011). Even though half of the parents said that their child had told them about being bullied, evidence showed that a significant percentage of children are not confiding in their parents about their victimization (Sawyer et al., 2011). When parents were asked why they thought their children might not have disclosed being victimized, they gave the following reasons: children might fear that the victimization would get worse if they told, or fear that they might lose a friend if it was a friend who bullied them (Sawyer et al., 2011).

While other researchers such as Delara (2012) asked students directly "why they would not confide in their parents about being bullied?". Delara (2012) found the following reasons: the ubiquitous nature of bullying, a sense of helplessness, concerns over inappropriate adult action, self-reliance, shame, parental omniscience and children having a different definition of bullying than their parents.

The ubiquitous nature of bullying came from children thinking, "it's the norm to become bullied at school" (Delara, 2012). As a result, students accept bullying as part of their everyday routine (Delara, 2012). Children also experience a sense of helplessness (Delara, 2012). They feel that there is not much they can do about being bullied, no matter what they say or do (Delara, 2012). Additionally, children feel that no one will listen or understand (Delara, 2012). As a result, they do not tell anyone because they feel it will not help the situation (Delara, 2012). Another reason why children do not confide about being bullied is the concern over adult

reactions (Delara, 2012). For example, parents might overreact and intervene or under react and not take them seriously (Delara, 2012). Also, children express the need to be self-reliant (Delara, 2012). They feel a strong sense of personal responsibility (Delara, 2012). For, example, they believe they should be able to handle being bullied by themselves, that they are old enough to figure it out, and/or that they have to learn to fight their own battles (Delara 2012). Some children also feel shame (Delara, 2012). They feel embarrassed, confused and hurt (Delara, 2012). They think they did something wrong and begin to doubt themselves (Delara, 2012). They feel that people might think they are a loser (Delara, 2012). They feel bad about themselves (Delara, 2012). Children also feel that parents should have omniscience (Delara, 2012). Which means, that children expect their parents to know when something is wrong or someone is mistreating them, without being explicitly told (Delara, 2012). Furthermore, the bullying definition seems to differ between children and adults (Delara, 2012). Adult's seems to define bullying in terms of something that happens over time and repeatedly (Delara, 2012). While children define bullying in more generally terms such as "someone is being mean to them" (Delara, 2012). Thus, there is a difference between parent's perception of bullying and a child's perception of bullying (Delara, 2012). This poses a problem when children are trying to explain a situation to their parents, and the parent's do not recognize it as bullying (Delara, 2012).

When children decided to confide in their parents about being bullied at school, parents suggested different kinds of strategies to their children (Sawyer et al., 2011). The strategies include the following: telling an adult, retaliating, promoting pro-social behaviors or ignoring the child who bullied them (Sawyer et al., 2011). When parents suggested telling an adult it usually meant telling a teacher (Sawyer et al., 2011). When parents recommended retaliation, it meant to fight back either physically or verbally, depending on the situation (Sawyer et al., 2011). A few

parents even enrolled their children in activities that promoted self-defense such as, karate, or activities that enlarged their children's social networks, for example by enrolling them in group sports such as soccer, hockey, or football etc (Sawyer et al., 2011). Furthermore, parents who talked about focusing on teaching their children pro-social behaviors advised their children how to be "strong" and to "be yourself" (Sawyer et al., 2011). Many of the parents described trying to give assurances to their child as a way to improve their self-esteem, with such statements as "you are okay," "you are smart," "you are bright," "you are fun," "you are a good friend to people that you are friends with," and "I love you no matter what." (Sawyer et al., 2011). Also, there were some parents that insisted on directing their child to "simply ignore" the child who was bullying (Sawyer et al., 2011).

Parents play a vital role in their children's lives. It is important to consider intact versus non-intact family structures. This is to ascertain if family structures can be a predictor of bullying (Dunn, Deater-Dekard, Pickering & O' Connor, 1998).

Family Structure and its Relation to Bullying

Family structure has changed over the last couple of decades (Sharma, 2013). According to Statistics Canada "Stepmom" or "stepdad," "stepbrother" or "half-sister," "my mom's boyfriend" or "my dad's place" are words that many Canadian children use daily at home or at school (Statistics Canada, 2017). Therefore, there has been a rapid emergence of the "alternative family structures" versus the "traditional family" that consisted of two married parents living with their children in the same house (Sharma, 2013). Among the different family variations identified in society, today include children who are either living in an intact family or a non-intact family (Statistics Canada, 2017).

Children who live with two biological or adoptive parents are considered to be an intact two parent family (Statistics Canada, 2017). However, they could also be categorized as a complex stepfamily who is intact (Statistics Canada, 2017). A complex stepfamily is when a child lives with their two biological or adoptive parents and half-siblings (Statistics Canada, 2017).

The family situations that are not intact two-parent families include children who live in a complex stepfamily with half-siblings, children living with one biological or adoptive parent and one step-parent (Statistics Canada, 2017). It also includes children who live with one parent in a lone parent family who are either living with their mother or their father (Statistics Canada, 2017). Children who are not living with their parents may be living with their grandparents, living with other relatives (such as aunts, uncles, or siblings), or they may be foster children living in a household (Statistics Canada, 2017).

The literature shows mixed findings as to whether or not children who come from intact versus non-intact families are at higher risk for being involved in bullying. A study conducted by Jablonska and Lindberg (2007) investigated the relationship between family structure (i.e., single mother, single father and shared physical custody) and children's potential risk factors. One of the risk factors that was looked at was victimization (Jablonska & Lindberg, 2007). Victimization was measured by the experience of exposure to bullying and physical violence (Jablonska & Lindberg, 2007). The findings suggested that adolescents in single mother/father families were at higher risk of experiencing victimization and mental distress than adolescents in two-parent families (Jablonska & Lindberg, 2007). Another study investigated student-level and school-level characteristics of children who become involved in bullying and cyberbullying behaviors (Bevilacqua, Shakleton, Hale, Bond, Christie, Elboune, Fitzgerald-Yau, Fletcher,

Jones, Miners, Scott, Wiggings, Bonell & Viner, 2017). The study found that children who came

from single headed families were more likely to struggle with bullying and behavioral issues

(Bevilacqua et al., 2007).

Some studies show that lone parenthood is detrimental to children's outcomes (Dodge,

Petit & Bates, 1994; Hilton & Devall, 1998). They suggested that the absence of one parent may

negatively influence the children (Dodge, Petit & Bates, 1994; Hilton & Devall, 1998). Single

parents, especially mothers had less education, less prestigious jobs, lower incomes, and more

economic strain than the other parents (Hilton & Devall, 1998). They also had fewer social

resources and more difficulty than married parents with parenting roles (Hilton & Devall, 1998).

However, other studies have failed to confirm this (Dunn et al, 1998; McMunn, Nazroo, Marmot,

Boreham & Goodman, 2001).

McMunn et al. (2001) found that children of single fathers, as opposed to those of single

mothers, were not at higher risk for emotional or behavioral problems compared to children in

two-parent families. This study showed that single motherhood per se was not detrimental to

children's psychological well-being (McMunn et al., 2001). Rather, it was the poverty and the

low educational attainment of the single mothers that was associated with it, which increased the

risk of behavioral and emotional problems among children (McMunn et al., (2001).

On the contrary, a study done by Cassidy (2009) considered the role of social identity and

family composition in school victimization. The findings in the study suggested that the

prevalence of victimization was actually higher among those from intact (63%) homes than those

from non-intact (37%) homes (Cassidy, 2009). Children from non-intact families reported better

family relations and a more positive problem-solving style than those from intact families

(Cassidy, 2009).

More research is needed to understand the relationship between family structure and children's well-being (Pearce, Hope, Lewis, & Law, 2014; Bibou-Nakou, Tsinatis, Assimopoulos, & Chatilambou, 2013). It is possible that children living in non-intact families are more likely to be involved in bullying than children living in intact families possibly due to limited support system, and encouragement (Cassidy, 2009). However, this requires further investigation.

Each household is unique, and regardless of being from an intact or non-intact family, there are other factors besides family structure that could contribute to a child's involvement in bullying (Baldry & Farrington, 2005; Bibou-Nakou et al., 2013). These factors include: (a) family functioning (b) parenting styles (c) parent-child relationships and, (d) conflicts between parents (Baldry & Farrington, 2005; Bibou-Nakou et al., 2013). Therefore, it is important to examine the family environment of children who are involved in bullying to better understand what is happening in their homes (Rigby, 2013).

Family Risk Factors for Bullying

The family is undeniably the number one social system in which children are embedded (Rigby, 2013). Children's caregivers provide them with structure and nurturance (Berk & Roberts, 2009). The nurturance promotes closeness and responsiveness during parent-child interactions and sets the stage for future social interactions (Berk & Roberts, 2009). This structure promotes behavior regulation, and the development of a positive sense of self (Berk & Roberts, 2009). Additionally, structure supports the learning of important skills, teaches boundaries and provides a sense of safety and security for children (Berk & Roberts, 2009). As such, much research has focused on parenting approaches, the quality of relationships between parents and children and, more broadly, family functioning as important factors related to

children being involved in bullying (Berk & Roberts, 2009).

Parenting has been extensively researched as a correlate of bullying and victimization (Berk & Roberts, 2009). Parenting styles refer to the strategy's parents use to raise their children (Berk & Roberts, 2009). They are based upon the degree in which parents are responsive and supportive of their children's needs and demands (Berk & Roberts, 2009). Parental styles also measure parental control, nurturance, and clarity of communication as well as maturity demands (Berk & Roberts, 2009). They have been found to predict children's well-being in a number of areas, which include social competence, self-esteem, behavior, emotional and academic performance (Berk & Roberts, 2009). These parenting styles fall into four broad categories: authoritative, authoritarian, permissive and uninvolved (Berk & Roberts, 2009).

Research has shown that an authoritative parenting style achieves the most positive results with children (Ballantine, 2001). Authoritative parents respond to the emotional needs of their children while setting limits and boundaries (Ballantine, 2001). They are warm, nurturing and involved in their children's life (Ballantine, 2001). They allow their children to seek autonomy and independence (Ballantine, 2001). They let their children participate in decision-making concerning family matters (Ballantine, 2001). They encourage bidirectional communication (Ballantine, 2001). They discuss and explain rules to their children. They are open to give-and-take discussions and will modify rules if appropriate (Ballantine, 2001). These parents are extremely consistent in their disciplining methods, using non-punitive measures such as time or natural consequences (Ballantine, 2001). They also utilize positive reinforcement with their children (Ballantine, 2001). Furthermore, parents who use this style focus on teaching correct behavior to their children (Ballantine, 2001).

Many studies show that when parents are authoritative and engaged, children thrive in

their environment and develop secure attachments to their parents (Ballantine, 2001; Berk & Roberts, 2009). This emotional bond allows children to trust that their physical and emotional needs will be met (Berk & Roberts, 2009). As such, attachment has been found to be a powerful predictor of a child's future ability to relate positively to others (Berk & Roberts, 2009; Rigby, 2013). Studies have shown that babies who fail to establish a close emotional relationship with their caregivers are likely to be involved in bullying in their school years (Rigby, 2013). In fact, the quality of attachment with parents was found to be related to children's involvement in bullying incidents (Nikiforou, Georgiou, & Stavrinides, 2013). Children that did not form secure attachments to their caregivers tended to mistrust people and have a lack of concern for others (Nikiforou, Georgiou, & Stavrinides, 2013). Additionally, children who were involved in bullying either as bullies or as bully/victims showed higher scores on negative aspects of quality of attachment to their parents, while uninvolved children showed higher scores on positive aspects of quality of attachment to their parents (Nikiforou, Georgiou, & Stavrinides, 2013). Thus, attachment theory suggests that children with low-quality parental attachment may be more likely to be bullied or be the victims of bullying than children with high-quality parental attachment (Kokkinos, 2013; Georgiou, 2008).

A key factor of attachment theory is the internal working model (Berk & Roberts, 2009). The internal working model can be defined as a thinking process, which is built on past experiences and helps children consider responses and actions (Berk & Roberts, 2009). As infants interact with their caregivers and the world, they begin to internalize those experiences and form schemas, or thoughts (Berk & Roberts, 2009). The more the child experiences, the more thoughts are created and built upon (Berk & Roberts, 2009). As children develop, their internal working model continues to evolve and is applied when they socialize with their peers.

This influences the way children interact within their social relationships (Berk & Roberts, 2009).

According to research, securely attached children who hold positive and beneficial expectations about social relationships are unlikely to engage in or become victims of bullying (Troy & Sroufe, 1987). This could be due to that fact that these children witness their parent's model pro-social behaviors such as empathy, kindness, and compassion (Troy & Sroufe, 1987; Berk & Roberts, 2009). As a consequence, children with high-quality attachments are likely to model similar behaviors in their interactions with their peers (Troy & Sroufe, 1987; Berk & Roberts, 2009). When children behave pro-socially it increases the likelihood of being socially accepted and decreases the likelihood of being excluded from their peer groups (Georgiou, 2008). Therefore, securely attached children are unlikely to be bullied by others (Georgiou, 2008).

Children with insecure attachment styles, carry with them the expectation that others are unavailable and that social exchanges are not positive or rewarding (Renken, Egeland, Marvinney, Mangelsdorf, & Sroufe, 1982). Children that have a parent who is unresponsive or inconsistently responsive to their needs can cause feelings of insecurity and low self-esteem (Georgiou, 2008). This creates a vulnerability to being bullied, as instigators often perceive children with insecurities and low self-esteem as being weak and unlikely to retaliate against attack (Georgiou, 2008). These negative assumptions about social interactions may result in hostile interpretations of ambiguous behaviors and trigger aggressive reactions towards them (Renken et al., 1989; Troy & Sroufe, 1987). As such, children with low quality attachments are more likely to bully others than children with high-quality attachments because of their negative expectations regarding social interactions (Renken et al., 1989).

In addition, children's social beliefs, norms, behavior, and expectations are predominately rooted in what they experience at home (Berk & Roberts, 2009). Therefore, it is vital to look at the differences between families of bullies, victims, bully/victims and uninvolved children; to see how they describe their experience within their homes (Kokkinos, 2013; Onfer & Yurtal, 2008; Stevens, De Bourdeaudhuij & Van Oost, 2002).

Children who are classified as uninvolved in bullying report higher levels of emotional warmth, and lower levels of rejection from their parents (Kokkinos, 2013). In general, non-involved children describe their families as having more discipline, and rules (Stevens et al., 2002). They perceive their parents as less punishing (Stevens et al., 2002). Additionally, uninvolved children tend to have effective communication within their family (Onfer & Yurtal, 2008). Which help them develop good social, personal and coping skills (Onfer & Yurtal, 2008). These children also feel that they have a more personal and positive relationship with their parents (Stevens et al., 2002).

Children who are classified as bullies report their parents as being cold, indifferent, hostile and rejecting towards them (Kokkinos, 2013). Overall, bullies describe their families as being more conflicted, less cohesive, less organized, and less controlling (Stevens et al., 2002). These children perceive their parents as aggressive and not very involved with them, which cause's fewer opportunities to express their opinions directly (Stevens et al., 2002). As a consequence, bullies report less of a close relationship with their parents (Stevens et al., 2002).

Children who are classified as being victims report more parental overprotection and sheltering compared to bullies and uninvolved children (Kokkinos, 2013). Overprotective parents cease to allow their children to develop qualities such as autonym and assertion, and as a consequence they become easy targets for victimization (Lereya, Samara, & Wolke, 2013).

Victimized children describe their families as less conflicted, more cohesive, and more expressive (Stevens et al., 2002). These children perceive their parents as more hostile, less negotiable and ambivalent in terms of involvement with them (Stevens et al., 2002; Onfer & Yurtal, 2008). As a result, children who are victims report having a negative relationship with their parents (Stevens et al., 2002). In addition, studies suggest that both bullies and victims perceive inequalities in their parent's roles (Onfer & Yurtal, 2008). Thus, there seems to be a power imbalance between their mother and their father (Onfer & Yurtal, 2008).

Children who are classified as being bully/victims report their parents as having lower levels of warmth and a lack of parental management skills (Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005). Bully/victims describe their families as more conflicted, less cohesive, less organized and more controlling (Stevens et al., 2002). These children perceive their parents as angry, punishing, aggressive, inconsistent (overprotective and neglectful) and sometimes abusive (Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005; Stevens et al., 2002). As a result, these children experience less of a close relationship with their parents (Stevens et al., 2002). Which, causes them to experience fewer opportunities to express their feelings and opinions directly (Stevens et al., 2002).

Understanding how these children's families operate and function, helps us determine methods to promote family resiliency (Goldstein & Brooks, 2013). This is particularly important for families that have children involved in bullying (Berk & Roberts, 2009). This leads us to the next topic of fostering resiliency within the home environment.

Fostering Resiliency Within the Home

There are various definitions of what constitutes resilience in children. The consensus among academics is that resiliency is the ability to overcome difficult situations and continue to develop (Alvord & Gardos, 2005; Ungar, 2011). In this study, we will use a social-ecological

framework to understand resiliency (Ungar, 2011). The social-ecological framework concentrates on the environments in which individuals interact (Ungar, 2011). Therefore, the more children are exposed to adversity (e.g. social issues, learning disabilities) the more these children's resiliency will depend on the quality of their environment's (rather than their individual qualities) and the resources that are available and accessible to nurture and sustain their well-being (Breitkreuz, Wunderli, Savage, & McConnell, 2014).

Scholars who utilize a socio-ecological approach, believe that resilience arises from early developmental processes such as attachment instead of the traditional view of it as some extraordinary or innate ability (Masten, 2009). Children who show resilience do not have rare or special qualities; they have better protective factors and more resources in themselves, their families and their environments (Masten, 2009; Ungar, 2011).

The nature of these environments is indicative of the way children can successfully develop under stress (Ungar, Ghauzinar, & Richter, 2013). It is the levels that emerge within particular ecologies (societal, community, relationships and individually) that children experience (Meichenbaum, n.d). The societal level includes specific groups and policies that advocate for children (Meichenbaum, n.d). The community level involves any activities or any participation in volunteer work that encourages altruistic behaviors within children (Meichenbaum, n.d). The relationship level incorporates key-grown-ups, family/home, pets, peers, and school/teachers that can assist in pro-social behavior and positive role modeling (Meichenbaum, n.d). Lastly, the individual level integrates children's attachment behaviors, emotional regulations, interpersonal competencies, and academic performance, which can be strengthened by their caretakers and/or teachers (Meichenbaum, n.d).

Viewed in this light, resilience is an ecological interaction between risk factors, protective factors and the individual's internal process (Lee, Kwong, Cheung, Ungar, & Cheung, 2009; Breitkreuz et al., 2014). As stated by Ungar "resilience requires individuals to have the capacity to find resources that, support well-being, while also emphasizing that it's up to families, communities and society to provide resources in ways individuals value" (Ungar, 2011). Therefore, children change as a consequence of their environment's in which they live (Ungar, 2011).

There is limited work on children's own understanding of resilience. Past research indicates that resilience in the environment protects from negative effects of adversity and promotes positive growth; this is the foundation for new anti-bullying efforts in Quebec, including Bill 56 (amendment to the Quebec Education Act to require all public and private educational institutions to "adopt and implement an anti-bullying and anti-violence plan") (Bill 56, Explanatory notes, 2012).

Families and schools represent the primary systems in children's lives (Sheridan, Warnes, & Dowd, 2004). As a result, schools and homes are their primary learning contexts (Sheridan, Warnes, & Dowd, 2004). These ecological contexts provide important frameworks within which development occurs (Sheridan, Warnes, & Dowd, 2004). From a socio-ecological perspective, parents are understood to be one of a many interacting micro-systems', which may have direct or indirect influence on the development of bullying behaviors (Berk & Roberts, 2009). This being said, parents can serve as a protective factor (Berk & Roberts, 2009). Protective factors are considered to be those that may reduce negative impacts of various risk factors (Kim-Cohen, 2007). Furthermore, protective factors operate at the individual, relationship, community, and

societal level and may differ depending on the child's age or developmental stage, as well as the type of difficulty being encountered (Hunter, 2012).

Research has suggested that parents are key to helping their children build resiliency (Centre for Addiction and Mental Health [CAMH], 2009). By providing them with a few positive factors, parents create a balance within their children that help mitigate any problems that they may encounter throughout their lives (CAMH, 2009).

One of the main factors in resiliency is to have a strong relationship with someone (Berk & Roberts, 2009). If the primary caregiver is not available, it is fundamental for children to have access to someone else such as, a family friend or grandparent that can provide them with attention, guidance and the support they need (CAMH, 2009). This ensures that children develop a close, loving relationship with an adult in their life, which will enable them to feel safe and protected from harm (CAMH, 2009).

A study conducted by Ungar, Brown, Lienbenberg, Othman, Kwang, Armstrong, and Gilgun (2007) confirmed that relationships with significant others such as peers, adults, within one's family or community were the resources that children turned to when they faced challenges within their lives. Likewise, a meta-analysis conducted by Alvord and Gardos (2005) found that young adults that were diagnosed with a learning disability felt that the presence of an influential person in their lives, that were there for them and believed in them (e.g., parent, teacher, coach) was most significant.

A second factor in resiliency is for children to experience positive interactions with important people in their lives (Berk & Roberts, 2009). These interactions teach them how to have caring relationships (CAMH, 2009). Especially, when they are treated with warmth, care, and sensitivity they are more likely to reach out to others when they need help (CAMH, 2009).

Furthermore, through these interactions' children learn how to regulate their thoughts, behaviours and emotions (CAMH, 2009). In addition, positive interactions teach them social skills, such as sharing, cooperating, and respecting others (CAMH, 2009). Which later becomes transferred in their ability to understand others within their environment (CAMH, 2009).

A third factor in resiliency is to accept and appreciate children just the way they are (CAMH, 2009). When children feel understood and accepted, they feel good about themselves (CAMH, 2009; Berk & Roberts, 2009). When parents highlight their children's areas of competence, they help their children experience a sense of accomplishment (Alvord & Gardos, 2005). This in turn, teaches them to have positive thoughts about themselves (CAMH, 2009). Additionally, it helps reduce stress and improve their performance in school/sports that they are involved in (CAMH, 2009).

A fourth factor is spending quality time together (CAMH, 2009). This is a time where parents can show their children things, do fun activities together, and even teach their children values (CAMH, 2009). By engaging and exposing children to a variety of learning environments, it helps them gain confidence to explore their world (CAMH, 2009). This in turn, allows children to develop awareness, imagination, know-how, initiative and decision-making skills (CAMH, 2009). Furthermore, it enhances the parent child bond (Berk &Roberts, 2009)

The fifth factor is to ensure open communication between family members (Berk & Roberts, 2009). Open communication teaches children to express themselves about feelings, concerns or worries that they may have during the day (CAMH, 2009). It helps them learn to talk about their issues instead of keeping them to themselves, which can cause emotional distress (CAMH, 2009). Children, who have discussions with their parents, learn healthier ways to express and cope with their emotions (CAMH, 2009). Engaging in open communication with

children demonstrates alternative ways to solve problems (CAMH, 2009). Furthermore, good parent-child communication has been associated with lower levels bullying (Shetgiri et al., 2012). Children who engaged in conversations with their parents tended to express their thought/feelings freely on matters that were bothering them during the day (Shetgiri et al., 2012).

Research seems to be lacking in how parents can engage in open-ended conversations with their children, in order to learn what is really going on in their children's day to day lives. By encouraging communication between parent and children, it can prove to be beneficial (Shetgiri et al., 2012). This can help parents take the appropriate steps to rectify any situation that their children are struggling with (Shetgiri et al., 2012). It is also important that children feel comfortable and confident to come ask their parents for help (Shetgiri et al., 2012; Berk & Roberts, 2009). Thus, when parents learn to be available and act as active listeners towards their children it can prove to be beneficial (Shetgiri et al., 2012; Berk & Roberts, 2009). Especially, when their children are having a hard time in school socially and academically (Berk & Roberts, 2009; Berk & Roberts, 2009).

Therefore, the present study will examine how children and parents talk to each other about issues or concerns they are facing in their daily lives. It will use a grounded theory method to understand the development processes of resilience from the perspective of the insiders (parents and children) in their natural setting (home environment). Furthermore, themes will emerge during the research process rather than being preconceived.

Present Study

Goals of the Present Study

The aim of this study was to explore and understand communication and parent child relationships within the home. To provide participants an opportunity to express their thoughts

and perceptions on bullying, home-school collaboration, family communication and home life.

Along with anything else that they wanted to share about their daily lives. This study used

Participatory Action Research (PAR) to actively involve children with learning difficulties and

their families as co-researchers in the research process. It was expected that this approach would

help the participants express information, which may not be otherwise expressed, while

providing children and their parents a chance to discuss their point of views separately and then

together.

The research questions for this participatory project were:

1) How do students who have learning disabilities and who are involved in some form of

   bullying, perceive their home and family life?

   a. What aspects of family are perceived as important?

   b. With whom within their family do they communicate best?

   c. How do they perceive their home?

   d. What do they like/don't like about being at school?

2) How do parents/guardians perceive their communication with their children?

   a. What aspects of their child do they perceive as important?

   b. How do they bond with their child?

   c. What types of approaches/strategies do they use with their child?

   d. How do they foster their child's development?

   e. How do they perceive their home school collaboration?

3) What are the differences between parent and child in terms of perceived bullying?

   a. How do children talk about bullying in accordance to their own experiences?

   b. How do children relate to bullying experiences? Home or school life?

    c.   How do parents react to hearing the word bullying?

    d.   How do parents talk about bullying in accordance to their own children?

The 4 main objectives of this participatory action research project were:

1) To empower both children and parents to tell their stories by giving them an opportunity for self-expression through picture taking.

2) To identify successful communication, and parent child interactions that favour the development of an open and positive family life climate.

3) To capture the quality of the relationship between children and parents while sharing their posters with each other.

4) To promote children and parents to share something with each other that they would not necessarily express on one another.

Methodology

Research Design

    A case study methodology was used in combination with a participatory action research (PAR) approach to explore perceptions on bullying, home-school collaboration, family communication and home life. It included as participants, children with learning disabilities who were involved in some form of bullying, and their parents (mother, father, or guardian). The families who consented to participate within the study were guided and supported throughout the project, which involved the use of photo-elicitation, semi-structured interviews and activities. This process took place over a two-month period that started in the spring (early April till the end of May). The data from three of the seven participating families were discussed in depth. Specifically, the themes that emerged from the interviews and the activities were analyzed to understand the participants' perspectives.

Recruitment & Ethics & Participants

  The participants were part of a larger study that was being conducted in a suburban school. The school was part of the New Frontiers School Board (NFSB), it was an Anglophone board with schools located on the south shore of Montreal. Roughly, one in seven students have been identified as "special needs" that require support (New Frontiers School Board Annual Report, 2011). The students who had special needs were fully integrated into regular classrooms within the school.

  The larger study was investigating children's perceptions of their strengths and resources (people, places and things) that may help them avoid or cope with bullying situations. The method that was being used in order to obtain this information was, photographic storytelling.

  The school had formed a committee to create and implement an ABAV plan which is approved and evaluated by the school's Governing Board, as stipulated in Law 19 (Section 75.1). In accordance with Quebec's Law 19 (Bill 56 – An Act to Prevent and Deal with Bullying and Violence in Schools), the school had implemented a detailed Anti-Bullying Anti-Violence Plan designed to prevent and stop all forms of bullying and/or violence targeting a student, or any school staff member. Steps were taken in case of incidents and follow-up measures. There were also preventive aspects such as a Character Education program (Character Pillars), and Codes of Conduct. Furthermore, parent participation was promoted through links on the schools' websites, information evenings, and meetings with individual parents. The confidentiality of any report was protected, and the plan was reviewed annually and signed by the entire staff. Reports were kept in confidential files locked away or on a secure website, along with records of disciplinary measures used and monitoring for incidents according to their severity.

The participants of the study were recruited from grades 5 and 6 from the elementary school. The teachers along with the Principal and school personnel identified students who may be good informants for having learning difficulties and who had been involved in bullying. Furthermore, in order to be considered for the study these students had to have had a formal assessment of their learning difficulties as well as an IEP. Additionally, the school file contained confidential information regarding their involvement with bullying.

Parents were contacted by receiving a letter at home explaining the study and its goals (See Appendix A). If they agreed to have their child participate, the research assistant contacted them by phone addressing any questions and concerns they may have had. They were also advised of the times and procedures that would take place during the home visits. Furthermore, the researcher reassured the parents that the study was an independent project from the school.

The researcher also told the parents that their participation in the study was important, as it would contribute to the advancement of the field. By participating in this research with their child, they would have the opportunity to express their feelings about family communication and home life. They were also advised that there would be an assignment of pseudonyms in order to protect the anonymity of their children and themselves.

After parental consent and child assent had been obtained (See Appendix B), all participants were informed that they were participating in a study and were given general information regarding its purpose, including the research goals and the procedures that would take place. The participants were also informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time.

All permissions were obtained through the ethical guidelines related to research with children with difficulties. Ethics approval was obtained from Concordia University by Dr.

Petrakos, as well as from l'Universite de Sherbrooke Departement de Psychologie, and the New

Frontiers School Board (See Appendix C, Ethics Certificate).

Setting and Procedure

The research took place within the families' permanent residence. All seven families

lived in the Chateauguay area of Quebec. There were two home visits scheduled at the

convenience of the family (See Appendix F, Calendar). The first visit lasted approximately one

hour. The second visit lasted about one hour and a half.

At the beginning of the session the two researchers sat down with both the child and the

parent and gave instructions. The instructions provided an overview of what would happen

throughout the two visits (See Appendix G, Script Details). Furthermore, one of the researchers

gave a quick overview of the camera and ethics of taking pictures, as well as, informed the

parent and the child that they would be audio-recorded during the sessions. They were also told

that whatever they shared during the sessions would remain private and confidential.

During the first visit, the researcher re-obtained consent from both the parent and the

child. The two researchers then divided from each other in order to have the individual sessions

with the participants. In these individual sessions they engaged in a variety of activities, which

included the following: a bucket game, picture taking, and a few questions pertaining to the

pictures the participants took. This was done in separate rooms in order to insure privacy and

confidentiality.

During the second visit, the researchers began together with the parent and the child in

order to explain the procedure and what would take place during the visit. The two researchers

separated again in order to engage in the following activities: a semi-structured interview and the

fixing of their posters. Once the parent and child had completed their posters, they came together again in order to share what they had created with their pictures.

There was a board game set up on the table (see appendix #, for picture #). The child and the parent answered a total of five questions about their poster. There were also three bonus questions at the end.

The following will outline the four basic parts of the project: The word bucket, the picture taking, the semi-structured interviews, and the board game.

Word bucket. The parent and the child were in separate rooms while doing this activity. The parent went with one researcher while the child went with the other researcher. This helped to insure privacy. There were two buckets (See Appendix D, Picture #1). One of the buckets was given to the child and the other bucket was given to the parent. Inside each bucket were a total of nine words (See Appendix E, Words in the Bucket). The child and the parent were instructed to pick up a word and tell the researcher the first thing that came to their mind. Both child and parent did this till all nine words had been picked from the bucket.

Picture taking. The parent was given a camera and asked to take pictures around their home. The researcher suggested as they were taking pictures to keep in mind the following four themes: 1) what is important to you about your home? 2) What is important to you about your family? 3) What do they think is important to know about your child? 4) What is something you would like to share with your son/daughter? Furthermore, the researcher encouraged them to take pictures of whatever else they felt was important to include on their poster. This ensured that whatever they wanted to share with their son/daughter would be on their posters.

The child was also given a camera and asked to take pictures around their home. The researcher suggested that as they take pictures, they keep in mind the following three themes: 1)

what is important to you about your home? 2) What is important to you about your family? 3) What is something you would like to share with your mother/father/guardian? Furthermore, reminding them that they could take pictures of whatever else they felt was important to include on their posters. This ensured that whatever they wanted to share with their mom/dad, or both would be on their posters.

After both the parent and the child were done taking pictures, they were asked to choose seven photographs that were most important to them. The researchers then sat down and conducted an open-eneded intriview with each of the particioants. Both the parent and child were asked the following: "What is this a picture of?" "Why did you take this picture?" "Why is this picture important to you?" Follow up questions focused on clarification and elaboration of their responses (See Appendix E, Photo-Interview Questions).

Semi-structured interviews. There was a semi-structured interview for the child (See Appendix E, Child Interview Questions) and a semi-structured interview for the parent (See Appendix E, Parent Interview Questions). The interview was done separately; the parent went with one researcher while the child went with the other researcher. The interview was done on the second home visit. It took approximately 45 minutes to complete. It asked the participants different questions revolving around themes of family, home and communication. The semi-structured interview was conducted in order to allow for a more in-depth conversation between the researcher and the participant. By engaging in this kind of discussion it allowed the researchers to ask for clarification in the participants' responses and any extra information that might be necessary.

Board game. It was in a form of an actual board game (See Appendix D, Picture # 2). There were 6 cards on the board (See Appendix E, Game Questions). Both the parent and the

child took turns rolling the dice and moving the piece of cork according to the number they got on the dice. They continued to roll the dice, but once they landed on a red brick they had to stop and pick up a question. They had to pick up the number that corresponded to the card. Also, regardless of who picked up the question, both the parent and the child had to answer the question.

Proposed Analyses

      Qualitative analysis. As an exploratory research design, the data was coded qualitatively. Qualitative research was used to gain insights into the participant's feelings and thoughts (Sutton & Austin, 2015). It focused on participants' perceptions and experiences and the way they make sense of their lives. It is an approach that tries to describe life experiences and attempts to give meaning to the situation that is being studied (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The current study was exploratory in nature because it used participatory photography to explore how families (Children & Parents) discussed and shared their thoughts and ideas about difficult topics such as bullying (Einarsdottir, Dockett, & Perry, 2009). Therefore, by using qualitative analysis it allowed emerging themes and patterns from the narratives of the participants to be explored (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

      Grounded theory. The current study used the method of grounded theory to investigate the participants' perspectives. Grounded theory does not use data to support preconceived assumptions or hypotheses. The goal was to identify emerging themes and arrive at a theory or concept that had been revealed by the data in the study (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This type of qualitative analysis required both critical and creative thought (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The researcher had to thoroughly explore the raw data while simultaneously considering how to interpret it (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The data had to be read and re-read in order to continue

comparisons and identify emerging categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The use of constant comparison of the data ensured that the researcher did not just build up categories but also broke them down again into smaller units of meaning in order to identify emerging categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This helped the researcher avoid bringing existing theory into the analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The analysis involved various forms of data. This data came from the word bucket activity, photo-interviews, semi-structured interviews, board game session, and field notes. These were analyzed using the method of grounded theory.

They addressed the following research questions: "How do students who have learning disabilities and who are involved in some form of bullying, perceive their home and family life?" How do parents/guardians perceive their communication with their children? And "What are the differences between parent and child in terms of perceived bullying?". These research questions were open-ended and addressed the gaps in the literature that discussed family life and adult-child communication. These questions were repeatedly refined as themes emerged throughout the data analysis; this is common occurrence in qualitative research (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Furthermore, responses from the word bucket activity were analyzed as an attempt to access the thoughts and feelings of the participants in the study. The photographs and photo-interviews were analyzed to address how parents and children perceive their family/home life. The semi-structured interviews were used to address how both (parents and children) perceive their communication with each other. The board game narratives were used to observe the adult-child communication in action.

A microanalysis was conducted by a way of "line-by line analysis" of the children and parent's interview transcripts (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This procedure allowed for a thorough analysis of each word, phrase, and paragraph of the transcripts (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Applying this technique enabled the researcher to pay closer attention to the details of the data, as they tried to understand the participants' interpretations (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). It also prevented the researchers from applying their own interpretations onto the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Furthermore, "Microanalysis analysis" was an approach that allowed for the establishment of initial label variables (called categories/concepts and properties) and their interrelationships through the use of open and axial coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The following paragraphs will further describe the procedures of axial, open and selective coding that were applied.

Open coding. It is the initial data analysis technique of grounded theory tradition (Hayes and Singh, 2012). The researcher read through the data several times and then started to create tentative labels for chunks of data that summarize what they saw happening. Each line, sentence, paragraph was read in search of the answer to the repeated question "what is this about? What is being referenced here?" This was not based on existing theory. It was strictly based on the meaning that emerged from the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This process was concerned with identifying, naming, categorizing and describing phenomena found in the text. It was used in order to identify general categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In addition, memos accompanied open coding in order to keep track of the researcher's thoughts and interpretations throughout the coding process. This helped inform the direction of further data collection (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

The process of conceptualization was used in order to group similar items according to the defined properties and label a new grouping that stood for the common link (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This process was used in order to help manage the large amount of data into smaller units. In order make way for axial coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Axial coding. It is second level coding, used in the second phase of analysis in the grounded theory tradition. It consisted of the researcher identifying relationships among open codes (Hayes & Singh, 2012). The question that was asked at this point was "what was the connections among the codes?" (Hayes & Singh, 2012). This process was concerned with relating codes (categories and properties) to each other, through a combination of inductive and deductive thinking (Hayes & Singh, 2012). The researcher moved back and forth between open and axial coding and created subcategories which provided context to the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This happened in order to achieve thorough analyses of the properties and dimensions of the identified categories as well as the relationship between them (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This further broke down the data permitting concepts to emerge and theories to from (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This was done as an attempt to gain a more in depth understanding of what the data was revealing (Hayes & Singh, 2012).

Selective coding. A grounded theory analysis technique was used to further refine axial codes (Hayes & Singh, 2012). It is said to be the most complex coding process in grounded theory, wherein patterns, processes, and sequences were identified among axial codes to generate a theory about a phenomenon (Hayes & Singh, 2012). It was the process concerned of choosing one category to be the core category and relating all other categories to that category (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Thus, it was figuring out the core variable that included all of the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). At which point, the researcher reread the transcripts and selectively coded any data that related to the core variable that was identified (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). These refined categories came together to unveil a central category, one that reflected the emerging theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The idea was to develop a single storyline around the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

The visual story telling data as well as the word bucket activity, semi-structured interviews, bored game, and field notes were qualitatively coded and analyzed using grounded theory methods. The goal of this project was to explore emerging themes of resiliency and adult-child communication that the participants had identified as being significant. Previous literature helped give context and theoretical directions on the themes being studied. However, the researcher based the analysis of the data on the participant's interpretations of their family/home life, communication and bullying instances.

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher in the present study was to work in collaboration with the family in order to provide a platform for both (children and parents) to feel comfortable to share their perspectives on their family/home life, communication and instances of bullying. The researcher also had to take the necessary steps to ensure that the findings were true to the participant's thoughts and feelings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). There are no statistical tests that can be used in order to check for reliability and validity as there are in quantitative research (Sutton & Austin, 2015). However, work by Lincoln and Guba suggested that there are other ways to "establish confidence in the 'truth' of the findings" (p. 218) (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). They called this "trustworthiness" and they suggested that there are four principles of trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability (Hayes and Singh, 2012; Sutton & Austin, 2015; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Trustworthiness was supported by the use of the following few methods. Member checking was applied into the data process. This happened during the first session, when the parents and the children finished taking their photos of the pre-established "themes". They were asked about their photographs through a photo-interview. This interview was recoded and

reflected upon by the primary researcher and the research assistant. In the second session, both parents and children took their developed photographs and stuck them on a little poster board. Their poster board was then used for the game. As the primary researcher and the research assistant helped the parent and child arrange and fix the pictures on their posters, they had the chance to double check the accuracy of the interpretations of the message the participants wanted to convey with their photos. The game offered even more clarification and meaning behind each photograph; as both the parent and child shared them with each other. These steps enabled the data to be credible.

Confirmability is defined as making sure that the findings of the study are formed by the participant's perceptions and not the researcher's bias, motivation, or interest (Hayes & Singh, 2012; Sutton & Austin, 2015; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Both the primary researcher and the research assistant that entered the field kept a reflective journal. These journals included detailed information about the data collection, the participants, observations and the setting. It also included instances of subjectivity such as personal feelings, and opinions of what the researchers saw and heard. This helped the researchers be more aware of their own biases and how they interacted with the data. In addition, keeping two reflective journals provided differences in perspectives that were taken into consideration when reflecting and coding the data. Furthermore, the use of reflexive journals helped with dependability, because it allowed the researcher to be more confident in the connection between the data and the findings (Letts, Wilkins, Laws, Stewart, Bosch, & Westmorland, 2007).

In order to further account for confirmability, the primary researcher and the research assistant that entered the field together met (debrief) to discuss and interpret the session that took place. These meetings were used to help guide any decision that needed to be made in terms of

data collections process or things that needed to be fixed. They were also used to address issues such as feelings, emotions or thoughts that came to mind during their interactions with the participants.

The primary researcher along with a second research assistant kept a reflective journal, while transcribing the data. After each transcription the primary researcher had a debriefing session with the second research assistant in order to share any thoughts and feelings she was having as she was listening to the narratives of the participants. This further helped come to an agreement on what was being heard during the sessions.

Dependability is defined as being able to show that the findings are consistent and could be repeated (Hayes & Singh, 2012; Sutton & Austin, 2015; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The transcripts of both parents and children were codded and verified for dependability. The second research assistant was trained on how to use hyperResearch and was given an outline of the projects research questions. The second research assistant coded the data by applying open coding to the transcripts. As the second research assistant was using open coding and did not have a coding schema to follow, the primary researcher used different words/different interpretations to imply similar meaning and understanding of the children's and parent's responses. During these instances of discrepancies, the primary researcher along with the second research assistant engaged in an open discussion. This allowed both of them to come to an agreement on a single term and adjusted these labels for the coding. Additionally, the primary researcher and the second research assistant reviewed the patterns that emerged from the transcripts.

In order to establish "credibility" of the coding, the supervisor was asked to code the same transcript and then discuss any similarities and differences in the two resulting sets of

codes. This resulted in revisions to the codes and also helped clarify and confirm the research findings (Sutton & Austin, 2015).

Together, the primary researcher, the two research assistants and the thesis supervisor met in order to review the codes assigned by each researcher and discuss any discrepancies that emerged as a result of different interpretations of the data. Issues were discussed and checked by the supervisor of the thesis in order for an agreement to be reached.

The primary researcher was also responsible to document all phases of data analysis (open, axial and selective coding and memo-ing in order to track the process).

Transferability is defined as being able to show that the findings have applicability in other contexts (Hayes & Singh, 2012; Sutton & Austin, 2015; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Transferability was taking into consideration when keeping record of the entire data collection process (Letts et al., 2007). The detailed descriptions were kept in order to allow the findings to be clear and potentially beneficial to other students in the field.

Findings

The researchers had previously established a rapport with the children. The children had already taken part in a past study that examined perceptions regarding the strengths and use of resources, or resilience, of identified elementary school children who had been involved in bullying and who had classified learning difficulties. The researchers had worked with the children at school. As such, the transition to home visits for the purpose of this particular study was a natural progression.

The results of this research project have focused on three of the five participating families. The results came from the participating children, their parents, and the two researchers. The different perspectives yielded a rich body of information.

A qualitative analysis had been carried out with the use of 15 transcripts. Various collection methods were used throughout the project. These methods included the following: the visual word game, photographs, photo-interviews, open-ended interview questions, and the board game sessions. This analysis revealed multiple themes related to each parent and child's family and home life experiences.

As such each family that participated in the project will be briefly discussed. The descriptions were formed by field notes, observations and the discussions that took place during the two sessions. Furthermore, these descriptions will give an overview of the participant's perceptions of their families.

The results are organized by theme. These three themes are: communication and support, bullying, and home/school collaboration. Selected quotes from the parent's and children's responses were incorporated in the analysis of the themes and patterns that emerged during the study. This allowed the parent's and children's experiences and perspectives to be represented.

In order to protect the identity of the participants, pseudonyms were used throughout the paper.

Introduction to Families

How these children & parents perceived themselves and their family. This section provides an overview of each family. First, it describes contextual information such as family structure. Second, it discusses how each parent and child perceived their family. Third, it looks at how parents and children perceived their relationships with one another. Fourth, it explains how communication influences the quality of their relationships as well as their family dynamics. Finally, it examines each child's protective factors that provide them with resiliency.

The information in the aforementioned subsections emanate from the field notes, the interviews that were conducted with each participant and the activities that were used throughout the study.

Family K. Family K consisted of a single mother raising her daughter (Child K). Child K has two older sisters, one sister is from a previous marriage and is married. The other sister is a half-sister from her father's second marriage, who she rarely sees. Child K visits her biological father whenever she likes because he lives within walking distance. There is also an aunt (Aunt C), which is her mother's sister, who frequently visits their home.

Parent K. Parent K worked full-time. She was a quiet and soft-spoken woman; when she spoke, she revealed a considerable amount of depth. When discussing "family" parent K, defined it as "being silly, having fun together, and having special moments with each other." However, she pointed out that although "family" is great, there are up's and there are downs. She expressed that having unconditional love for one another is what keeps a family together.

She viewed parenting as given privilege. She considered being a parent "a responsibility" that humans are fortunate enough to experience in their lifetime. She took her role as a mother seriously.

> Every child is a gift! We are entrusted with them when they come into our lives. You
> know, to take care of them and bring them up. So, it is a gift. It is up to you. It's the best
> and the worst thing that could happen to you. Your life as you know it, is changed
> forever.

She also explained that being a parent came with challenges. Especially, as children grow and develop. She stated that "It starts getting hard when they are teenagers because you become the

bad person all of a sudden when you start telling them to be careful." She also called Child K her "little brat" because she appreciated her spontaneous nature.

When addressing the topic of communication, parent K revealed that child K communicated better with her father. For the mere reason that she believed that child K was selective in what she shared with him.

> She communicates better with her dad. But she tells me a lot of things that she won't tell him…Because she doesn't want him to have a different outlook of her.

Parent K disclosed that her relationship with her daughter resembled "two bulls." She realized that her daughter was growing up. However, she still felt the need to protect her from certain things, namely the internet.

> I try to tell her certain things you know the reason why I do something. She says, "I'm very over-protective" and I say, "You're damn right I'm over-protective, I'm your mom". And you know she's 13 she knows everything already. So, she doesn't need me to tell her anything, you know and that kind of thing… The internet access that stuff scares the crap out of me, you know because it's no longer a guy on the road or a van passing by.

Parent K explained that there were issues with the way they were communicating with each other and that it was affecting their "relationship quality. Parent K stipulated that child K easily trusted and that she wore "rose-colored glasses." Although child K admitted to trusting easily, there was a big contrast with what child K disclosed during her two sessions. Parent K voiced how she wanted to shelter her daughter from harm. While, Child K voiced other issues such as her hospitalization for her depression, her anxiety and how little joy she found in her life.

Child K. Child K was in grade 6. Her school had classified her as being involved in some form of bullying. In addition, she identified herself as being bullied but also being a bully

herself. Furthermore, she struggled in school because of her anxiety, depression and having a learning difficulty (dyslexia). She sought art therapy. However, it seemed that Child K was not entirely satisfied with the progression of her therapy.

> Therapy. I hate it. It never helped me. It's been six years. I dunno, I've been to four different therapists and none of them can help me. It's drawing therapy cause I love drawing still. Even though you're only allowed to do that from like five till eleven. I'm 13 and I'm like I just wanna draw let me draw!

Child K expressed herself through drawing and writing stories. Child K claimed that she was selective with whom she confided in. She stated this through the following quote:

> Talking I hate that word to be honest. Even though I do it. Talking sounds like a pretty intense thing I would say. Cause like when you're talking to someone, you're letting out your secrets or your stories. And sometimes you are not allowed telling your stories. Researcher C: Do you feel like you have to hold back with everybody or just some people? No, like you guys (referring to researcher K and C) I trust you, you know!

When Child K described herself, it was apparent that she had a poor self-image. She described herself as a "very ugly" person. However, despite her description, she still felt that she was a "loving and caring individual." She disclosed how she kept her "caring side hidden." Furthermore, she opened up about her sexuality and identified herself as being "gay." She also talked about having a girlfriend but how her depression affected her relationship with her.

> I have two people basically it's like I'm being possessed at certain times. I'm really happy and then like all of a sudden, I'll be like really mad for no reason. I'm like am I bipolar? I feel this heat wave over me. And that's when I know right away when someone has like

> taken over my body and controlled it now. I can control it, but sometimes I just can't, it's weird.

She described her family as "big, and cool." She stated that "A family is composed of individuals who are consistent in your life" and "who can make you happy." Despite this description, she felt that she had no family. She stated that "People that are family should realize the fakest smiles on your face. So, mine don't I would say." She felt that her family didn't seem to understand her and couldn't help her feel better. Thus, she stated that she usually turned to her friends for support.

Child K described the relationship with her mother as "troubled." Child K felt that her mother did not understand or accept her. She explained that her mother was overprotective and would make her cry. She also stated that they always argued. Furthermore, she justified these arguments with her mother by saying: "I think that is how we show we love each other." The communication between child K and Parent K was challenging. Their arguments go unresolved. She perceived their disagreements as a way "they showed love to each other." However, the communication between child K and her father seemed to be more favorable. Child K stated that her father was "more open and accepting about her sexuality" than her mother.

> My dad is Very cool. Cause uh he's accepting. I don't know my dad's more open about
>
> me being gay. My mom thinks it's a phase!

Despite all the difficulties, child K described two positive relationships in her life, her online friend (Wolfe) and her aunt C. Her online friend served as a support system (protective factor) because he was always there for her when she needed him. She stated this by saying the following:

Whenever I'm down or sad. He's there every single time for me, like that (snaps fingers). That's Wolfe! There is no one else. I'm thankful for him being my friend and being there for me.

Her aunt C was used as a support system as well. She used her aunt C for advice on how to deal with her mother. Her aunt also served as a source of happiness. She stipulated this with the following passage:

My Aunt usually says to me "Hey princess! What's up". And I'll say "Uh I have a girlfriend and mom doesn't want me to date her but dad's okay with it. What do I tell her? And she'll give me good advice. Or she'll just make me happy.

Therefore, child K did not seek support from her mother. Instead, she found it through her online friend and her aunt.

Family W. Family W consisted of a single father raising his son (Child W). Child W had a half-sibling (younger brother) who lived in Gaspe with his mother. He also had two stepbrothers who spent every second weekend at his house. The two stepbrothers were his father's girl-friend's children. Child W visited his mother during holidays. According to Child W's father there seemed to be issues with child W's mother respecting the "Custody Agreement." The father stated, "she had not respected it since they signed it." The home had pets, two bunnies and one dog.

Parent W. Parent W owned a company, which dealt with Quality Assurance of railroads within Canada. Asides from his current job, Parent W served in the military. Throughout the sessions, he communicated quickly, clearly and without any hint of ambiguity. When discussing family, Parent W defined it as, "Where you come from." He stated, "It is the most important

thing than anything anywhere in the world." He compared serving the country to now serving his family. He believed that his son held the same values.

He viewed parenting in accordance with his upbringing and relationship with his parents. His father was absent. During the sessions, he kept addressing his father as his "sperm donor." He was raised by his mother who tried her best to provide for the family. He grew up in a poor area and was exposed to violence. He explained that it was a harsh environment to live in. Therefore, it seemed that his circumstances and his upbringing were the cause of his approach to parenting. He stated that he did not want the same lifestyle for his son.

Additionally, parent W did not agree with parents that use technology (computer, TV's, video games, play station, Xbox) to keep their children busy. He stated that, "Parents are supposed to do that." He believed that parents who use these types of methods are the ones who do not want to hear or spend time with their children. He stated that this was not his style and that he enjoyed being around child W.

Parent W provided a routine for his son. His son was expected to follow it on a daily basis.

> I'm not saying they're supposed to be like a dictatorship or anything at the house. But at my house there's certain times for certain things. My son knows when it's playtime, when it's clean-up time, he knows when to take his shower, brush his teeth, get ready for bed, he knows when to do his homework. I try to get a routine for him. So, he could be functional for the next day.

Parent W was responsive to his son. He showed his emotions both physically through hugging and verbally through his words. He stated that he would tell his son he loved him on a daily basis. Therefore, he provided his son with warmth and support.

I encourage him daily. We even train together sometimes alone (karate). I show him things. I try to help him improve. Even for schooling, anytime he needs help he knows I'm available.

When speaking about his son, parent W referred to him as his "froggy monster." He stated that "He's my buddy, my little guy." "You know, he's the only thing that really means a lot to me." He talked about how he almost lost his son at birth. Since that day parent W has been doing everything in his power to protect and help his son through any difficulties that he may be experiencing.

Parent W also specified that the best thing about living with his son was his presence. Primarily, because he felt that it was a privilege, that the courts granted him full custody of his son. According to parent W fathers usually, did not have that pleasure.

The communication between child W and parent W was good. Parent W believed that his son communicated well with him. He also knew when his son was upset. He stated that "His face becomes blank when there's a problem, so it shows right away on his face". Child W showed emotions through his facial expressions. Therefore, whenever there was an issue parent W was able to address it immediately.

The communication between child W and his mother was sparse. She called every 3-5 weeks. Parent W noticed changes before and after a phone call with her. According to parent W, his son did not like visiting his mother because he did not like his stepfather. However, child W seemed not to like his stepmother either. He talked to her sometimes. Parent W stated, "Some days are good, while other days are not." It depended on child W's attitude that day and whether he was feeling friendly or not. Furthermore, parent W suspected that his son saw his stepmother as a threat to their father-son relationship.

Parent W felt that his relationship with his son was okay. However, he had been told by other's that he was too strict and direct with him. These acquisitions made him rethink how he approached his son. He questioned his ability in raising him. It was evident that he wanted the best for child W.

I'm trying to listen to what my son is saying. It's my responsibility to help him be the best he can. I try and help out with anything that he needs at all times, whether it's financial, or emotional. Anytime he needs me he knows I'm always available.

Parent W placed his son's happiness, safety, and health as his top priority. If his son did not succeed despite trying his best, parent W took it upon himself as the cause of his son's inability to reach it. Parent W felt that it was his responsibility to help his son be the best version of himself. He provided much structure in child W's life, which has helped his son progress despite having a learning disability.

Child W. Child W was in grade 6. His school had classified him as being involved in some form of bullying. Also, child W admitted to being bullied.

He described his family as "A big English/French one," He stated that "family is someone that everyone likes." He then described the people who were in it, which included his father, mother, grandmother, and grandfather. He referred to his half-brother as his actual brother, while he referred to his father's girlfriend's children as his friends and not part of his family. Furthermore, he never mentioned his father's girlfriend throughout the sessions. He expressed that he was not always happy to see his family.

Child W mentioned that his dog had passed away. The dog had fallen in the pool and drowned. He described this incident as a family problem. Child W stated that he was very sad.

He briefly mentioned how his father was hard on him. His father came up in many of his stories and memories he talked about during the two sessions. Child W seemed to have a close relationship with his father, even though he perceived him as strict. He only mentioned his mother once and it was when he talked about visiting his younger brother in Gaspe during the summer.

The communication between child W and parent W was okay. Child W stated that he was comfortable to go to his father when he needed something. He stated he went to his father and not his mother because he was his primary caregiver.

> My dad, because he's mostly there for me. When I'm hurt, or when I eat too much and when my stomach hurts. Umm and sometimes when I get hurt, he plays around with me, to make me laugh.

Child W had two main protective factors in his life. One was his karate class and the second one was his relationship with his father. Parent W was a proactive parent. When his son told him that he was getting bullied he enrolled both his son and him in Dojo (Karate). Throughout the two sessions, child W voiced that karate had helped him in self-protection. This activity allowed him to feel self-confident and self-sufficient.

Family T. Family T was a nuclear family. There was a mother, father, and three children. The house was in the middle of being renovated. Child T was the oldest of the three children. He had two younger sisters. They also had several pets (two dogs, one bird, a cat, a fish, and a salamander).

Parent T. Parent T was a stay at home mother. The father was a car mechanic and owned his own garage. Furthermore, she had a genuine interest in the study and wanted to be part of it. When discussing family, parent T defined it as, "being united under one roof." She viewed

"family" as a support system. She also mentioned that she and her husband continuously worked on their relationship. Their goal was to stay married not divorced.

She viewed parenting as a responsibility toward her children. Parent T held herself accountable in helping them build their self-confidence and self-esteem. She reflected on her parenting style. She discussed how she approached all three children differently.

> One of the things I learnt early on was to figure out who they are and what their good at…. from there you can move toward building their self-confidence and self-esteem. So, when they go out into the real-world, they can make the right choices and feel good about themselves.

Parent T voiced that she found it difficult to figure out what child T would excel in. She stated that "He was all over the place and very scattered." His lack of attention made him lose focus quickly and caused him to feel like he never mastered anything. After trying a whole bunch of sports, parent T put him into lacrosse.

When speaking about her son parent T, described him as "exceptional. She stated that "he is a sweet, emotional, empathetic and loving boy." However, she explained that he was getting older, and his attitude seemed to be developing.

> He's becoming nippy with his mouth. Not in a negative way, but he has started answering back to me. It's just normal for preteens, I guess. The whole "I know everything kind of thing."

Parent T specified that the best thing about living with her son was his "smartness." She stated that he catches her of guard at times.

> He's got such insight with the things he says to me and the things he understands.

He'll tell me something that goes beyond me, that I hadn't even thought about. Not

necessarily like a fact, just something that he's realized on his own.

Parent T also mentioned that she appreciated his creativity and imagination. She stated that "I

love his little genius ideas and I would never want to suppress that side of him." She tried not to

stunt his endeavors, but to encourage them. However, she feared he lacked patience. His lack of

patience caused him to become discouraged, and he never finished what he started.

An idea pops in his head and he doesn't really go through all the little details, which then

create it to be a little more successful. He does it fast and a lot of the times they fail. He

gets really upset. Instead of looking up maybe how he should do it.

The communication between child T and parent T was good. She was satisfied with the way

they both communicated together. He went to her when he needed consoling. He went to his

father when he wanted to ride his motorcycle. Thus, his mother was more his emotional

confidant while his father was more his activity companion. Child T would communicate with

them according to his needs.

I think he's more comfortable talking with me than his father. His dad is very open also,

but I am his mommy, you know. I am the first person he's closest to. But there are things

he goes to his father for, that he wouldn't come to me for.

According to parent T, her son had a good relationship with his father. He looked up to him and

enjoyed spending time with him. She stated that "My son tries to talk, joke and act like my

husband." Child T admired his father and tried to mirror his behaviors. Furthermore, she stated

that her relationship with her son was also good. If there was a problem, she provided a "safe

place" for her son to speak. This encouraged him to express himself.

Parent T pointed out that her husband was better at delegating chores. He would make child T complete them whereas she was more lenient with him. She explained that she took more of a relational role toward him while his father took more of a performance role.

Parent T placed her son's needs above her own. She got him another dog even though she did not want to.

When Kitty (dog) came into the picture last year, he was having the worst year ever. But despite the work and the anxiety this dog has given me. She was there for child T. She was a friend. And he needed a friend.

Child T's parents had a great relationship with their son. They were consistently present and available. Their support encouraged him to communicate openly. As a result, they knew what was happening in school and how he was feeling.

Child T. Child T was in grade 6. His school had classified him as being involved in bullying. The bullying took place in his previous school. He transferred out of his former school because the circumstances were unbearable. Furthermore, child T identified himself as being bullied.

Child T was a creative child. He expressed himself through building things with his hands. He liked taking things apart and putting them back together. He made little bombs. He made throwing knives. He always had little projects going on at home. He also enjoyed being able to make things with his father. For instance, they created miniature robots. Thus, it was clear that they both shared a passion for creation.

When Child T described himself, he stated "I'm everything, I do a lot of stuff." He enjoyed going to the gym. He stated that "I can deadlift 175lbs." Thus, the gym made him feel strong. Child T was an active child. His extracurricular activities included: lacrosse, CrossFit,

snowboarding and dirt-biking. He felt proud that he had a dirt bike and that he could ride a unicycle. Child T perceived himself as being well rounded.

Child T defined his family in concrete terms. He described his sisters as annoying and whiney. He characterized his mother as hilarious, and his father as strict and straightforward. Furthermore, he considered his pets as part of his family and as companions.

Child T described the relationship with his mother as "good." He felt that his mother knew him the best. He stated that she could pick up on his emotions and facial expressions. Thus, it was clear that child T had a close relationship with his mother.

All she has to do is look at me, and she knows if I'm happy, sad, or okay. And I'm like, how does she do that? But, I guess she knows me. Because we talk all the time together.

The communication between child T and parent T was good. They communicated openly. Child T stated that his mother was the first person he went to if he had issues at school. He stated that it was easier to talk to his mother more than his father. He felt that his father was more abrupt when he spoke to him about issues.

Most of time when things happen at school, I prefer to tell my mom rather than my dad. My dad's very straight-forward and if I've done something bad, he's very like... he doesn't sugar-coat it. So, it's just easier and simpler to talk with my mom.

Child T had two main protective factors in his life. The first one was his relationship with his parents.

My parents, Um... like they are always there for me for anything I need. They always encourage me to do good in school or in anything else I do. Like that kind of stuff. They're just the best. That's really it.

He consistently pointed to his mother as his primary source of support. As well as the person he could talk to about anything stressful. As per his father, even though child T characterized him as strict and straightforward, he thought he was extremely caring. He mentioned how he appreciated the effort his father made to spend time with him, despite having a busy schedule. The second protective factor was his pets, specifically his dog kitty. This dog represented unconditional acceptance for child T. The dog also served as a source of comfort for him when he was having a hard time in school.

Communication and Support

Parents and children's perceptions of communication and support. The following section investigates the way parents and children discuss communication and support. First, it examines the time of day when parents feel it is best to communicate with their children. Secondly, it will look at the methods the parents used to support their children emotionally. Third, it will outline how the parents encouraged their children to develop independently. Fourth, it will highlight the strategies parents used when communicating with their children. Fifth, it will describe the children's perceptions; notably how available the children felt their parents were to communicate with them. Lastly, it concludes by showing whether or not the children felt their parents understood them.

Perceptions of parent's communication and support toward their children

Best time of day to communicate with their children. Parents reported that the best time of day to communicate with their children was right before bed, after school, during dinnertime or in a car ride — the conversations revolved around their children's day, friends, worries, hopes, and curiosities. Additionally, their children would discuss things that they wanted, needed or desired.

Both parent T and parent K stated that bedtime was a good time to communicate with their children. For parent T, it was a period where nothing else was going on in her home. Thus, she felt that she had her son's undivided attention.

I think it's because it's quiet and nothing is going on in the house. Things pop up in his head. He'll talk to me about things that he's worrying about, or something that happened during the day, or any questions that he has about something.

Parent T also disclosed that dinnertime gave her another chance to communicate with her children. It helped her connect with them and find out what was happening in their lives. Parent T stated that it allowed both herself and her children to share positive or negative experiences that had occurred throughout the day. Furthermore, if the environment was relaxed, it increased the likely hood that a conversation would arise.

Both parent W and K, reported that after school and in the car was another great time to communicate with their children. Parent K suggested that a conversation emerged between her and her daughter in the car because they were not looking at each other. They were in a parallel position. She found that her daughter would open up in the middle of doing other things. For parent W his reasoning was based on the fact that after school was a time of day where they were not hurrying from one activity to the next.

I'd say right after school when I pick him up. In the car. It's the time where we actually speak the most. Uh cause obviously when he gets home it's rush to get the homework done, get ready for karate. It's probably really in the car where we communicate the most.

Therefore, each family seemed to communicate with their children in ways that suited their circumstances. For parent T communication was more effective when her attention focused on her son, and vice versa her son focused on her. While parent W and Parent K felt that

communication was more beneficial with their children when it was brought up casually during an activity or in the car.

Methods parents used to support their children emotionally. Children's emotional expressions were influenced by the kind of relationship they had with their parents. In other words, children learned different ways to express their emotions based on how their parents responded to their emotional needs.

Parent K reported that she gave child K space and time to calm down. This approach allowed her daughter to sort out her feelings. After this, she let her daughter decide if she wanted to sit down and have a discussion.

> I need to give her time. But once I give her time, later on, she'll talk to me and say well I was feeling this, and I was stressed, or I was worried, or you know whatever. So, this is what I do, I leave her alone, give her space and let her decide. Otherwise, she's too overwhelmed, or she's too happy or too excited that she blurts out something and it comes out negative.

With respect to experiencing negative emotions she explained how she would handle the situation if they were to discuss it: "Initially, I can't address it. Or else I'll explode! So, I have to let the boiling pot simmer, and then I can approach her and talk with her about it".

For parent T, it was imperative to help her son express his emotions by talking with him. This approach helped her understand what her son was feeling. She also stated that child T used art and music to self-regulate his emotions.

> We express it through dialogue, that is mostly what we do together. But he also does paint and origami. These are things that help him open up. He also likes music. He plays on his guitar and drums sometimes. But when we do speak, he gives me bursts of how

he's feeling, and that's when I know what's going on inside. For example, he had a lot of

turmoil with things that were happening in his previous school. I would address them

right away. He gave me details which helped me paint a picture of what was going on.

Parent W took a different approach with his son. He encouraged him to express himself the way

he wanted. He felt that emotionally coaching his son through his emotions would not help him

deal with them appropriately. Therefore, he allowed his son to come to terms with his own

feelings by himself. He believed that this method was practical because it would help him gain

self-awareness.

Well, I let him speak freely. Everybody has their own free agency you know. I don't try

and dictate how he should be or how he shouldn't be. Because he has to develop his own

self-awareness.

All three parents used different techniques to support their children's emotional well-being.

These techniques depended on how they thought their children needed their support. Parent T

encouraged her son to express a range of emotions. Parent K gave her daughter space. Parent W

let his son deal with them on his own, without guiding or influencing him. The different

techniques parents used affected the way their children learned to self- regulate their emotions. It

is important to note that the parents did what they thought was best for their own children.

Parents encouraged children to develop their independence. The parents in the study

used various ways to help their children build their independence. They provided them with

opportunities to take on different responsibilities.

Parent K gave her daughter more leeway. She took a step back and allowed her daughter

to explore, struggle and make mistakes. Even though she found it challenging to do, she

understood that it would help her daughter in the long run.

It was tough for me. Uh... probably only the last two months did I give more string. I

didn't cut it. You know? I let her go through the process of figuring it out. It will help her

with her confidence in the future.

Parent T gave her son household responsibilities. He put his clothes away, meowed the loan and

picked up after the two dogs. She compensated him with money. Furthermore, with the money

she gave him, he was allowed to purchase items from the store or at school. She believed that

this would help him gain some decision-making skills. It also allowed her to see what her son

would choose to purchase with his money and if would make smart choices.

Parent W gave his son the opportunity to make his own choices. He did not impose his

wants on his son. For example, he enrolled his son and himself in karate but let his son decide if

he wanted to continue. However, he offered his guidance in finding an activity for him which

would be meaningful and satisfying.

I do this with any activity that he does. I support him, but I also distance myself because

he has to do it not me.

All three parents gave their children opportunities to develop their independence. They used

different approaches. Parent T gave her son responsibility for certain household chores, even

though she admitted to being controlling. Parent K decided to give her daughter room to learn

through trial and error. As for Parent W, he stated that he would provide his son with

opportunities to choose his endeavors, thus, letting his son make the final choice.

Strategies used to communicate with their children. Parents discussed strategies that

they used to communicate with their children. They supported their children according to their

personalities and needs. Parent W explained:

Children have their own separate personalities……. So, what works for one doesn't

necessarily work for the other.

Parent K used a step-by-step approach with her daughter. It helped her daughter not to feel

pressured when she would struggle with her anxiety.

I'm careful with how much I throw at her. I'll give her maybe two steps at the most.

Cause if I give her a list of five right away, she's overwhelmed and then the anxiety sets

in. I can't do this. I can't do this. But you know if I give her two things then okay, I can

tackle those, you know? So, I can take a bath and brush my teeth. Alrighty.

Parent T used a no distraction policy while speaking to her son. Her son struggled with ADHD.

Thus, it was important to her to have his undivided attention.

When I speak with him, I make sure that there's no distractions like the TV, Xbox or

anything else like that. Because you know he won't even look at you when you're talking

to him. You're like hello? And he's probably not even listening. I also usually pull him

aside one-on-one, away from his siblings.

Parent W used visual symbols. He used this approach to reinforce positive behavior that he

wanted his son to continue. He stated that his son was sensitive. Therefore, he preferred this type

of method instead of verbally saying something to his son that would upset him.

Well he'll know how I feel because I'll either make a happy face, or a straight line. I

mean why would I wanna put pressure on my child? That's why, I'll do my happy face or

whatever on the page of his exam.

Additionally, parent K voiced that when parents communicate with their children, they should

think before speaking or acting. Something a parent says or does may affect their child for the

rest of their life.

It really is treading lightly… one word that you say, can set the dynamite off. One thing

that you do could actually influence them for the rest of their life. Even with a certain

look that you give them…. There goes the confidence, there goes the self-esteem. So, we

just gotta let them express themselves.

All three parents used different strategies to get through to their children. Parent K used a step by

step approach. Parent T used a no distraction policy. Parent W used visual symbols. These

methods assisted parents to state their expectations in ways that fit their children's characters.

Children's perception of their communication/relationship with their parents

Availability of parents to communicate. Children reported that when they needed to talk

to someone, they would choose a person that was consistently present in their life. The children

in this study pointed to either their mother or father. However, when parents were not available,

children would seek help from a friend or a relative. Furthermore, it also depended on what they

needed help with at that moment.

Child T stated that he would always go to his mother because she was his primary

caregiver. He pointed out that he told her just about everything on a daily basis. The

conversations consisted of things that happened in school, things that he needed and things that

he wanted to do during the week. When he communicated with his father, it was when he was

planning to make something and needed help. Also, when they were engaged in an activity

together.

Um... mostly my mom because she's home most of the time. Mm. I tell her about all kind

of things. I also go to my mom when I want to go somewhere, or I need something.

Umm, and my dad or grandfather when I wanna make something or when I need

supplies.

Child W mentioned that he communicated more often with his father because he was his primary caregiver. He pointed out that when he told his father about an issue, he reacted right away. He actively tried to help Child W solve the problem. He was very proactive. However, when he told his mother about an issue, her reaction was different. She did not take action; she tried to be there for him emotionally. She would concentrate more on how he was feeling and more on trying to console him.

> If I need to talk, I go to my dad. My dad, because I see him more. I tell him a lot of different things. Like what I do at school or when I get bullied. He goes see's the school the next day and tries to fix it. But when I talk to my mom on the phone it's different. She'll tell me not to believe or listen to those kids. She'll help me feel better.

Child K mentioned that even though her mother was available she did not choose to talk to her when she had an issue. She preferred to talk to her online friend. He encouraged her and made her feel safe.

> I don't go to my mom. I go and talk to wolfie. He's basically my family. He encourages me when I have low self-esteem…. I'm so thankful for him because I know he's there for me all the time, he won't let anything happen to me.

If restricted to family, child K reached out to her aunt C. She explained that her aunt gave her the chance to express herself. She accepted her for the way she was. Furthermore, child K stated that "My Aunt is the one that talks to my mom for me, when I cannot."

> My Aunt C understands me, and just lets me say whatever I want, she listens to me. And so, if something happens, I tell her and then she explains it to my mom.

In general, two out of the three children (child T and child W) went to their mother or their father when they needed to talk. On the other hand, child K preferred to speak to her friend or her aunt.

Therefore, the two children that felt accepted by their parents were more likely to open up and share their thought, feelings, and concerns with them.

The feeling that parents understand them. Children seemed to bring up how their parents always asked them about their day. However, not all children felt as though their parents were able to tell if they were having a good day or bad day. Furthermore, some choose not to tell their parents about it at all.

Child K claimed that her mother never knew when something was wrong. She stated that she never showed her emotions. However, when she was not feeling well, she would tell her mother. Nonetheless, it seemed that child K was not happy with the way her mother would handle the situation. She pointed to her online friend as a person who would show empathy toward her. He would address the issue and help her feel better.

> On Monday I called my mom because I wanted to come home from school early. My mom's like "you can't come home." I'm like "I'm having an anxiety attack and a heart attack, you have to bring me home." Then she's like "fine." So then, I got home, and I started crying, I cried for the whole day. She didn't say anything to me! But then I watched the video that me and Wolfie made. As soon as I watched it, it made me so happy. Then he called me, and I was like "you know what?" Today, I've been feeling like crap"……" Then he asked, "What happened"?

Child W stated that his father did not know when he was having a bad day. He stated that he wouldn't tell his father. If his father would ask him, he would tell him that he was having a good day. He preferred to hide his feelings toward his father especially if he had gotten in trouble at school. However, he would tell his father if he was not feeling good or he was hurt.

Nope. Because I don't act like I have a bad day. I just act like I have a good day. Even if

it was a bad day. I don't want my dad to know that I got in trouble in school. But when

I'm hurt, or I eat too much and my stomach hurts, then I tell him.

Child T stated that his mother always knew when something was wrong with him. She would

initiate conversation with him after school. Whether or not his mother asked him, he also stated

that she was the first one he would go to if he needed to talk. He trusted his mother. He felt

connected and understood by her. Furthermore, she was the one that knew when he was sick or

when he was having a bad day. He felt that their interactions together were always positive.

Yes, my mom's great! I don't have to say much to her. She just knows. If I'm sick, or

something happened at school. I trust her and tell her pretty much everything…. I don't

have secrets with her. She knows how to make everything better; I don't know it's weird.

All three children had someone to speak to whom they felt understood them. However, it

depended if they wanted to address it or not. When someone important to them validated them, it

let them know that they were supported. Therefore, these three children had a secure relationship

with either a parent, friend or relative which served as a protective factor in helping them

become resilient.

Bullying

Parents and children's perceptions of bullying. The following section examines the

way parents and children approached the topic of bullying. First, it describes how parents

perceived bullying in accordance with their children's involvement with the bullying. Second, it

discusses how these parents wanted to protect their children. Third, it considers the children's

experiences with bullying. What they thought about the bullying. Also, how they might have

reacted if given a chance to re-experience the situation.

Parent's perceptions of their children in the context of bullying. All three parents talked about bullying differently. One parent expressed that bullying was a "part of being a child" while the other two parents saw it as something they needed to be "proactive about." Furthermore, all three parents discussed some faults in their children.

Parent K stated that "bullying sucked." She acknowledged that her daughter had experienced bullying but downplayed the severity of these situations. She thought that child K was just too sensitive. She stated that she did not feel that her daughters' experiences classify as bullying and neither did her teachers. As parent K explained "So, for her it's not necessarily that someone physically pushed her or anything like that, it's a word that she took and become super sensitive".

Parent W stated that he knew that his son was involved in bullying. He found out that the bullying started with the father of the bully — the father called child W "Gollum" (the funny looking character from the movie Lord of the Rings). He immediately decided to take matters in his own hands. He approached the bully's father himself. After he dealt with the issue, he enrolled his son in self-defense classes. He mentioned that he wanted to get his son involved in an activity that would build his confidence and raise his self-esteem. Furthermore, he voiced that he could not protect his son forever. He thought that child T was getting bullied because it was in his nature to be a people pleaser. His father believed that his son's willingness to please was a weakness in his character that bullies exploit.

> I know my son's been bullied in school. Uh even with one individual kid. It came from
>
> his dad. I mean he's an adult, and he's bullying a kid and saying stupid things and because
>
> of that, his own son with his buddies, they were picking on my son.

Parent T talked about bullying in the context of the old school, where she described it as a constant struggle. Child T had many incidences with bullying. She stated that "It was verbal, physical and psychological." There was also instances of sexual harassment. Parent T was always at the school. She felt that the school was not addressing the issue. She stated that "It did not seem that their main concern was to breed a loving, caring, growing educational environment."

Parent T recounted incidents that took place at child T's old school. Child T was written up and given multiple detentions for invalid reasons. These situations made her very upset that to this day she still holds onto these feelings. She stated that she was "shocked and saddened by the way the school handled these events."

I would call meetings with the school and the principal would be like "so why are we here"? I wanted to punch her in the face just for saying that. In my head, I was like why are we here? Why are you not calling this meeting with me? Like how do you not know, other parents know? Other kids know they're telling their parents. Everyone knows!

Parent T also spoke about how helpless child T was in these situations. She stated that "even if he became the biggest, toughest kid and he learned to deal with it on his own, was unlikely to happen because it was not in his nature to be aggressive."

I even told him to push back and to get them away from them. It was very difficult for him to learn that. It's just not natural for him to be physical mean.

Parent T voiced that these circumstances caused extreme anxiety for her son. She was afraid that the bullying that he endured would have long-lasting detrimental effects on his psychological well-being.

He had no power. He was powerless. I'm not even sure if he's going to come out of this

unscarred.

Additionally, parent T discussed how the bullying affected child T in his immediate

relationships. She stated, "He feels that people are out to get him, even his siblings." She worried

about him bringing this kind of baggage into to new friendships. Thus, sabotaging his

relationships before they even had a chance to begin.

Parent T also discussed how child T was impulsive and inattentive. She acknowledged

that this could have been the primary reason why he may have had issues with his friendships.

She stated that he did not pay attention to the cues of other children in social settings. She

explained that if he were able to pick up on social cues, he would have the ability to understand

his peers and have meaningful relationships. Due to her becoming aware of this issue, she

decided to try ADHD medication in hopes of not only helping him academically but socially as

well.

I'm not completely blind to the fact that Child T is not perfect. That he needs to learn to

make friends. He needs to learn to be responsible for his decisions. His responsibility was

that maybe he was too impulsive and maybe he did, chase away a few friends.

Overall, depending on the parental definition of what bullying was, and how their children

experienced bullying; affected the way they intervened with the situation. Also, it established the

sort of expectations they had from the school to handle the issue. Furthermore, all three parents

discussed qualities in their children that could have contributed to their involvement in bullying.

Wanting to protect their children. A common theme that arose between all three parents

revolved around protecting their children. They also all seemed to express how parenting was

difficult. This topic triggered parents to discuss their insecurities about raising their children.

Parent K sang a song in her native language. She stated that it was a song to the creator. The meaning behind the song was "protecting her children from harm." She mentioned that "As a parent, you want to make sure your children are safe from the outside world." "Especially, when they are not near you." She explained that these feelings increase when parents see their children having a hard time. Furthermore, she mentioned that having children has changed her life.

So, the song that I wrote…. what it means is: My children, I will protect you and I will carry you and lift you into the sky away from the chaos of the world…. You know, because having children is the best and the worst thing that could happen to you.

Parent T also mentioned how all she wanted to do was keep her children safe. She stated that when her children were younger, she had control of external factors that might have affected their well-being. These included types of peers her children interacted with as well as, social environments that were undesirable. Therefore, having child T experience difficulties at school with bullying, she yearned to have him as a baby again. She felt that she would have been able to protect him. This situation caused her to feel helpless. She experienced feelings of inadequacy stating that "she failed as a parent and did not feel she had done enough for her son."

I'm sure that's my feeling because of having child T and all the things that he went through and feeling so helpless and wanting to help and doing my best but some days not sure if I did enough and what else to do? I felt so empty!

Parent T also discussed how difficult it was to raise children. Mainly, because of their demanding natures and constantly having to tend to their basic needs. However, she felt that the younger her children were, the easier it was to protect them because of her ability to control everything.

> You feel like this overwhelming responsibility to keep them safe. You know when they are born, they are helpless, right? But, it's so much easier to control them...... because you control everything they're exposed to. What I wouldn't pay to have that control still.

Parent W talked about protecting his son as well. He stated that it was his responsibility as a parent to provide tools for his son that would allow him to protect himself. He acknowledged that parents are not always able to defend their children. However, preparing them is vital for when they do encounter stressful situations. He stated that "These situations are an inevitable part of life, which help us learn and grow."

> I can't protect him. He has to be able to protect himself. We cannot protect our children from all the hardships of life, especially as they grow into adolescence and adulthood. What we can do, is provide them with their own self-protection.

He mentioned that parenting is "hard," and that "there are no materials or books that you can read that will prepare you for raising a child the right way."

> When you have kids your life changes fast. There's no bloody old manual to you tell you how to raise a child correctly. It's easy to make kids, harder to be a parent. Very hard. All you care about is trying to keep them away from harm.

Overall, all three parents felt responsible for keeping their children safe. They wanted to protect them from harm. They voiced that raising children was not easy. At times it becomes overwhelming and demanding. They talked about feeling frustrated at times and doubted their abilities as parents. They seemed to question if they had done enough for their children. However, it was clear that they were trying their best. Also, parents who witnessed their children having a hard time, tried to help them in a way they saw fit.

Children's perceptions of their own bullying experiences. All three children experienced bullying differently. They discussed how they felt about the bullying situation. Furthermore, they also mentioned how they would have dealt with the scenario differently if it was possible.

Child K stated that she experienced verbal bullying at her old school. She said that nobody liked her, and nobody wanted to play with her. Being alone all the time made her sad, and she cried a lot. They would also make fun of one of her fingers. She had an accident when she was young and cut off the tip of her thumb where the nail starts. Furthermore, she mentioned how in her room she had a rope with a loop around it. However, she claimed not to remember what it was for, possibly a repressed memory.

I got bullied in my other school, so I changed schools. Kids called me frog fingers….

Everybody didn't like me. I got bullied every day and I cried a lot.

Child K explained that the bullying she endured caused her great discomfort. These incidences provoked her to want to change. She was determined to become physically stronger. Eventually, she became stronger. Thus, when she was involved in another bullying incident, she was confident and took matters into her own hands. She pushed the bully into the fence. She stated that "from that day on she proved her worth to her peers."

This boy started calling me a bitch. I was sick and tired of it. I thought to myself if he's gonna bully me I'm gonna bully him. So, I started becoming really strong…. He punched me in the face. So, I pushed him in the fence, and he started bleeding.

She also explained that she only bullied people back if she felt threatened. Thus, her experiences have shaped her in how she is, and how she interacts socially.

I'm a bully to whoever is in my path and in my way of trying to succeed in life.

Child T stated that he experienced physical bullying at his old school. He described it as a reoccurring situation. He stated that he was distraught because the boy who was hurting him never got reprimanded. He felt that the boy got away with whatever he did to him.

> There was this kid at my old school. He pulled out like a big chunk of my hair…
>
> The same day, he had punched me in the back of the head. He didn't even get a note in
>
> his agenda.... I got in trouble and he didn't. Because they thought I was lying.

Child T mentioned that the school staff never took him seriously and accused him of lying to them about the incidences. He stated that he became so frustrated with being bullied all the time. These situations provoked him to want to take action and stand up for himself. He explained that "he wished he was physically stronger."

> He bullied me like a billion other times he got away with everything he did to me.
>
> Nothing ever happened to him. I wish I had done something. I'd probably just stand up
>
> for myself a bit better, and not let him jump on top of me and hit me.

He spoke about how he liked his new school because of the rules put forth to prevent bullying from occurring. He also appreciated that he had friends that were like him. Possibly because he was able to relate to other children, he also seemed to emphasize that school rules did have an impact on preventing bullying.

> I don't really care anymore because I would have never gone to MGS. It's a lot better
>
> there. I have friends that are like me now. The school actually has strict rules about
>
> bullying. So, nobody bullies.

Child W stated that he experienced relational bullying at his current school. He explained that they would call him names, make fun of him and force other peers not include him during play time. He confessed that he told his father and it stopped.

I used to be bullied a lot… they made fun of me, called me names, lied to me and told

other people not to be my friend. But, when I told my dad, my dad told the teacher and

the daycare monitor, the daycare monitor told the principal and it stopped.

He defined bullying as being the opposite of respect. He mentioned that "When people are

respectful, they are considerate of other people's feelings, they do not hit or hurt anyone."

Respect is "Being nice to other people." Therefore, he believes that being respectful helps people

form and maintain positive relationships.

Bullying is the opposite of respect. It's being mean to other people and stuff like that.

Child W also stated that the bullying he endured at school caused him not to feel safe. He only

felt safe when he did not get bullied. These incidences have also pushed him to believe that being

alone was safer. As he confirmed by saying that "Being all by himself was to feel safe."

In general, children feel vulnerable when their bullied. Their views about bullying were

related to their personal experiences of how their peers treated them.

Home School Collaboration

Parents and children's perceptions of their home life with each other. Children and

parents discussed home and school as two entirely separate spheres of their lives. Therefore, the

following section will analyze these two contrasting topics (home life and school life). First, it

will examine how parents perceived their home life regarding the type of environment they

wanted to provide for their children. Secondly, it will discuss the types of activities parents did

with their children. Thirdly, it will describe where children preferred to spend their time when

they were at home. Fourthly, it will report a few methods that the parents used to communicate

with their children's teachers. Finally, it will describe the children's likes and dislikes about

school.

Parents perceptions of their home life with their children

Home environment. Parents perceived their "home" as shelter from the outside world. It was a place where they provided their children with care and invited friends and extended family over occasionally. Furthermore, it was a place for comfort and rest.

When speaking about "home," parent K described it as "love for your family." She explained that home is "love." Home is somewhere people go after work to calm down and relax." She stated that she wanted to provide a specific type of atmosphere, which she referred to as "a loving environment for her and her family." Furthermore, she believed that her home was a representation of herself.

I want it to be, and I want you to feel when you walk into the home. I want you to feel that love. It's not the house that makes it a home; it's me! We could live in a box, but it's going to be the best goddamn box ever.

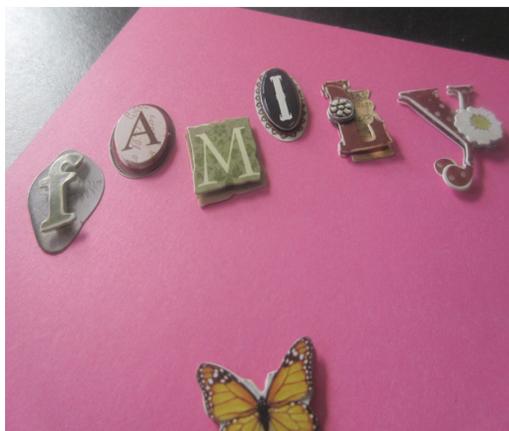Figure 1. Parent K home is "love for your family"

Parent K also stated that when she was home, she was usually in the kitchen cooking, cleaning or catering to whoever was over at that moment. Furthermore, she stated that her daughter usually did her own things. These things included: watching TV, YouTube videos, skateboarding, hanging out with friends or just having a sleepover with someone on the weekend.

Similarly, when parent T talked about her "home." She described it as "taking care of everyone." She explained that "home" represented her family, husband, three children, and pets. She disclosed that her refrigerator symbolized health and how she would always keep it full. It was vital for her to have everyone well fed.

Figure 2. Parent T refrigerator a symbol of health

Furthermore, parent T voiced that she spent a lot of time cleaning and cooking. She stated that "I'm always in my kitchen." However, she confessed that she wished that her house was larger, especially when they had family gatherings. She wanted her guests to feel more comfortable.

Comparatively when parent W spoke about his "home," he described it as "A place for relaxation." He talked about having a spa room which was situated downstairs. He called it "the harmony and tranquility room." The door to this room was complete with Chinese symbols (love, peace, and happiness). He explained that inside the room, there was a Jacuzzi and on the surrounding walls were achievements, trophies, medals, awards, and karate belts. These possessions were of things that he and his son had acquired together or separately over the years.

Figure 3. Parent W Chinese symbols

Parent W stated that when he was home, child W and his girlfriend's children would play together. Whereas, he would occupy himself with things that had do with the backyard. His girlfriend, on the other hand, would tend to the "stuff" inside the house. He also mentioned that on weekends he would frequently cook breakfast for everyone.

When I'm working outside you know, the kids do what they want outside. Umm, like

riding bikes or just running around. Whereas, my girlfriend does everything else.

In general, all three parents mentioned that their children would keep themselves occupied while they tended to their obligations. The two mothers (parent K and Parent T) discussed how they spent the majority of their time in their kitchens. They also focused on how they cleaned. Parent

W pointed out that even though he cooked occasionally, it was his girlfriend that tended to the household responsibilities.

Spending time with children. The parents focused primarily on the opportunities they had to care and bond with their children at home. Additionally, they mentioned certain activities they would do with them when they had the chance.

Parent K mentioned that she spent time with her daughter once a week. She stated that "We do arts & crafts or color together." She expressed how they also went for car rides, bike rides or walks to unwind. When they spend time with other family members, it was for dinners, movies or to play board games. Additionally, she stipulated how she wanted her daughter to have life experiences. She did this through traveling, going on cruises and camping during the summer with her. She explained that:

> I want to expose her to many different things. My daughter has been all over the world
>
> and she's only 13. Hawaii three times and Europe twice. We also go camping in the
>
> summer………And we have campfires and we roast marshmallows, it's very fun.

Figure 4. Parent K campfires

For parent T spending time with her children meant going for ice-cream in the summer. In the winter she loved being cuddled up watching movies or playing games on the kitchen table.

She voiced that she was excited for her basement to be fixed because it would be another area where they would be able to create family memories. She stated that "Maybe it will be another place where we could talk compared to our kitchen table" or "like another place where we could share ideas, and thoughts of our day."
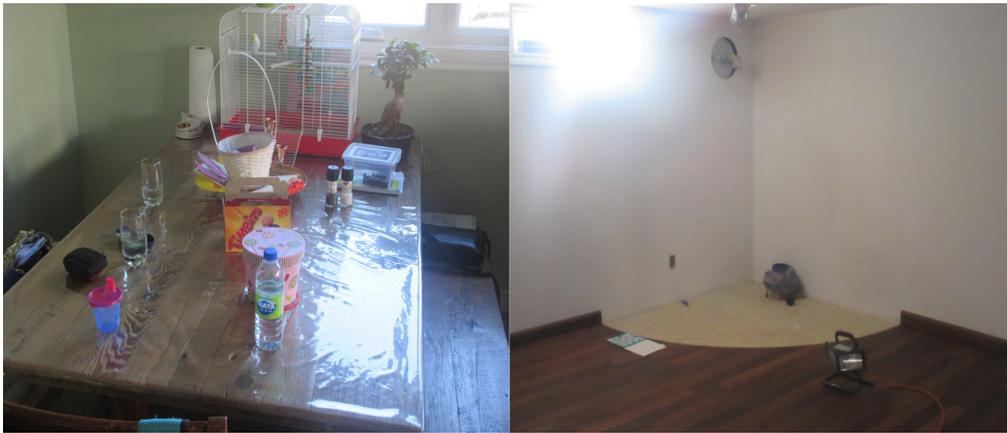
Figure 5. Parent T kitchen table Vs. basement

Parent T stated that she was the one that cared for her son the most because she was his primary caregiver.

> I spend the most time with him because I take care of him all day. I do the regular feed, clean, make sure he has all his homework done, put him to bed, bring him to his extracurricular activities or appointments. While, my husband gets to do the cool things with him.

She pointed out that although she spent time with her son, the circumstances were different from how her husband spent time with him. She stated that her husband would do activities with child T that he enjoyed such as building little robots, taking things apart and re-building them, riding their dirt-bikes, going to the gym and going fishing.

Parent W expressed that when he was home, he would spend time with his son watching TV "Well I spend time watching Simpsons and other corny shows with him." He also stated that

they go to the movie theater together on the weekends; and that they both enjoyed going for breakfast.

The main activity that they both did together was Karate. However, parent W pointed out that they did their classes only on Saturdays together, which he referred to as "father-son days." The rest of the days they would be in separate classes. He also mentioned that when they had Karate tournaments, they would act as each other support systems.

Figure 6. Parent W karate tournaments

In general, parent K and parent T are mothers in the study. They found themselves in a nurturing role. One of the mothers pointed out that her husband enjoyed fun activities with their son. Parent W is a father in the study. He spent time doing extracurricular activities with his son. Therefore, fathers tended to engage with their children physically.

Children perceptions of their home life with their families

Children's Safe places within their home. The children focused on activities and personal interests that were available to them when they were home.

Child K did not enjoy spending time at her home. Regardless, she pointed to certain areas and possessions that she appreciated such as her belongings: her piano, her room, video games, the WIFI, Karaoke, and her Apple TV. Also, she liked being able to have coffee. However, she disliked everything else and preferred to be in the forest.

I feel like the forest is more my home, because I feel more accepted there…. Every tree

has a soul, has its own person, and each tree is basically like my friend. When I go to the

forest it helps me calm down. The forest is like an anti-anxiety pill for me. I have this

weird connection with it.

We saw that Child K felt close to nature. She used the forest as a "safe place" to go relax and

revive herself. The forest brought her comfort and acceptance.

Figure 7 Child K the forest

Child W enjoyed spending time at his home. He sounded satisfied with the way his life

was. He pointed out to all the things he had at his disposal. He also seemed to be aware of when

his father needed his space. He would take it upon himself to keep busy. Furthermore, respect

was something highly valued within the home.

Where I live. I have a Jacuzzi in my house. I feel happy when I'm at my house. The

Xbox, the Jacuzzi, and the TV in my room. Sometimes when my dad's watching

something from Netflix. Instead of annoying him I watch TV, or I just go in my room.

Child W pointed to the living room and his room as his two favorite places in his home. He

stated that "I go in the living room when I am bored and play on my Xbox or watch TV or watch

a movie" or " I go to my room so I can do my homework or just read quietly."

Figure 8. Child W X-box and video game

Child T enjoyed being at home. He pointed to all the different areas where he usually spent his time. These areas included his backyard and his basement. His backyard was where his trampoline was situated. When he jumped on it, he stated that it made him feel like a superhero.

Figure 9. Child T trampoline

The basement was another area, which he liked because it was where he created all his stuff. Child T also mentioned how excited he was that the basement was being renovated. He stated that it was going to be cool to be able to watch movies on the big screen TV with his family.

Child T also stated that "Home was a place where a person should always feel welcomed." He explained that when he went over to other people's homes. The first thing he would notice was how hospitable they were towards him.

In general, the children emphasized things that they had and owned in their home, which was things that they did not have access to at school.

Spending time with their family and friends. The children discussed how they spent time with their parents, siblings, friends, and cousins. When they talked about their parents and their sibling's they focused on the types of activities that they did with them. When they spoke about their friends and cousins, they mainly talked about how they played with them.

Child K spent time with her mother during vacation. She stated that "I have already been on seven cruises with my mom." "I guess that is how we bond." It became evident that she had fun. She discussed how many things she got to see during these trips. Furthermore, she stated that "the cruises that I have been on, are far more educational than being in school."

Another way child K spent time with her mother was when they played "The question game." She explained that this game was in their living room. They had a big bowl full of folded up paper which had a variety of questions on them. They included the following:

What is your least favorite chore? Where would you like to go on our next family

vacation? What is something you want to learn to do?, and why? etc.,

Child K stated that this game facilitated conversation as well as helping them learn about each other. After they finished playing, they would change the questions for the next time they played.

When she was not with her mother, she expressed that she spent a great amount of time in her room. Her room was a place where she had a chance to spend time with her online friend and play Minecraft. She referred to it as her "chill space."

My bedroom is my favorite place in the house. It's where I spend a lot of time with

Wolfie! Because we play Minecraft together online.
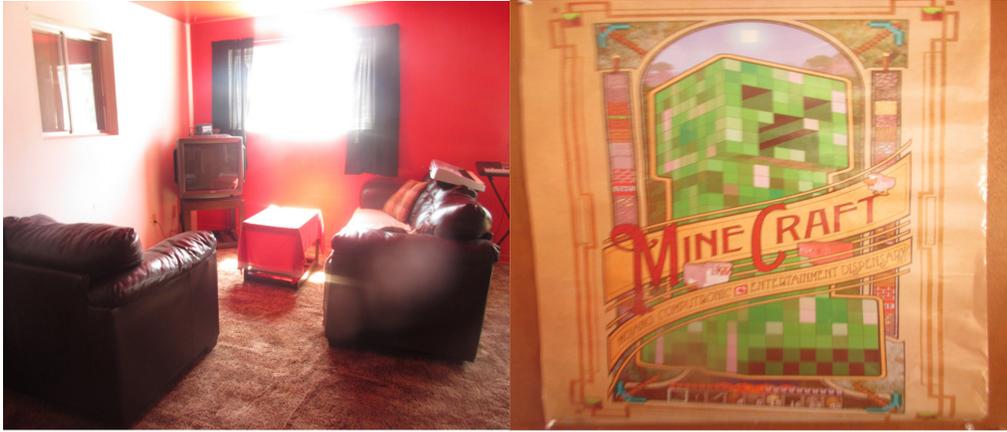
Figure 10. Child K bedroom and Minecraft game

When she was not in her room, she was with her cousins or her friends either riding her bike, skateboarding or swimming. She also mentioned that she played piano for a musical band, which she explained that they practiced together during weekends. Furthermore, she spent time with her sister when she and her mother would drive over to have dinner. However, she did not discuss any particular activity she did with her.
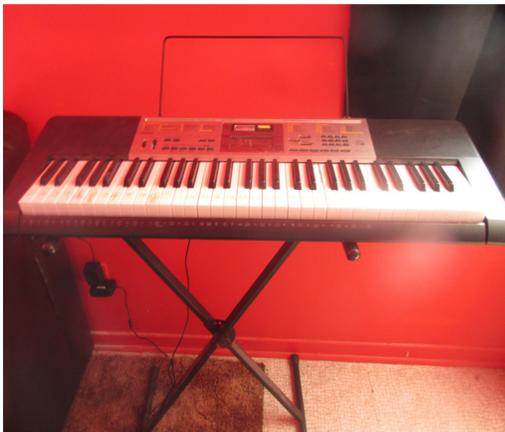
Figure. 11 Child K piano

Child K also briefly mentioned her father and reminisced about how she would spend time with him when she was little. Her favorite memory was going ziplining with him through the forest. Unfortunately, her father had an accident and was bed bedridden for a few years and seemed to be absent from her life.

Child W spent time with his father during Karate classes. He explained that sometimes during the weekends he and his father would train together. He stated that "Sometimes my dad helps me with my technique."

Figure 12. Child W dad helps me with my technique

Child W explained that he enjoyed spending time at home. He stated it was because he got to play soccer with his next-door neighbor. Child W viewed his relationship with his friend as a trainer. His friend would teach him tricks and techniques that would help him play better. Child W appreciated his friendship with this boy. He stated that this boy made him feel good about himself.

Yeah, because he teaches me how to play soccer. He's like my coach of soccer.

My neighbour's friendship brings me happiness.

Figure 13. Child W soccer ball

Child W mentioned that when he was with his family, he enjoyed spending time at a place called "Funtropolis." Funtropolis is an amusement center for children. He stated, "It is a place where kids have fun, and they have many games like trampolines and laser tag." He explained that he usually went there when his father's girlfriend children would spend the weekend at his house. Furthermore, when they were home altogether, they would either play street hockey or with the WiiU.

Child T stated that when everyone was home on weekends, they all sat around the table playing board games or watching movies. He also mentioned that he did not like playing with his sisters, but when he would play with them, it was on the trampoline.

Child T also discussed how he enjoyed going up north to his father's friend's cottage. It gave him the opportunity to do activities that he enjoyed such as fishing and cutting wood etc...

Also, child T appreciated spending time with his father, whenever he was home from work. He stated that they would build things and go dirt-biking. He also mentioned that he brought his friends dirt-biking a few times and talked about how much fun he had.

I think I kinda like to talk about my dirt bike a lot because it's so much fun. It's like every time I go, I'll come back and it's like I did a jump on my dirt bike it was so cool.

Figure 14. Child T my dirt-bike

He also seemed to have a close relationship with one particular cousin. He expressed that he enjoyed hanging around with him because they both had similar interests. He stated that "My

cousin and I both do Lacrosse and snowboarding, so we are together a lot; it is nice to have him around."

In general, we see that there is a lot more to these three children than meets the eye. Their parents provide them with experiences that they appreciate. All three have friends that are not part of their everyday school life which they spend time playing together when they are home. Furthermore, for those that have half-siblings or full siblings they also spend time with them doing a variety of activities that they enjoy with one another. Cousins also seem to play a role when they live close to each other and are close in age.

Parents perceptions of their children's school.

State of knowing. Parents stated that they appreciated the school contacting them when they saw that their child was having a hard time. Also, when they were struggling with something. This connection reassured them that the school staff had a genuine care for their child's well–being and had their child best interest at heart.

For example, Parent K stated that she received a phone call from the principal. Her daughter was feeling sick again and wanted to come home. During the conversation, the principal stated how important it was to address this issue. The principal suggested that her daughter might need to talk to someone about how she was feeling. He pointed out that the children had exams the following week. He felt that this might have been the reason for child K experiencing stomach pain.

Parent W talked about his appreciation for the daycare staff. He stated that he interacted with them more than his son's teachers. He would see them when he would go and pick up his son after school. They would inform him about child W's mood. He found that this was a sign of

attentiveness toward his son's needs. He also stated that he found that the school was quick to respond to him when his son had a problem.

However, parent W did was not impressed with the school's principal. He was shocked when he approached him to discuss his son's issues with bullying. He claimed not to be aware of it. Parent W found it strange how the daycare services and the teachers knew about it, but not the principal.

> He was unaware or he acted like he wasn't aware. And then he said, "well I'm gonna check up on into it because this is a "zero zone bullying school" …. I don't know if it was just a song-and-dance to shut me up.

Parent T spoke confidently about how good she felt about her son's current school, because of how much she disliked the old one. She stated that "They care about my child." She mentioned that when he first started, they sat down with him for the purpose of trying to make his transition easier. The school asked him what things he liked to do, to be able to place him with students that had similar interests. Their objective was to help him make friends. Parent T stated how nice it was to hear that they were not only focused on how he would perform academically. This school took in consideration their student's whole school life experience including their social life. Parent T felt that this was an extremely positive attribute of the school.

> Their new school is a positive place. They have very good teachers. There's a lot of structure compared to their previous school. I feel like they're safer at this school because in the previous school kids got away with so much. …. This school genuinely cares about the children.

In general, parents emphasized the "need to know" when their child was involved in a bullying situation. They stressed the importance of being contacted right away. They wanted to know

what occurred and be informed of the circumstances. Thus, parents wanted to know about the incident even before their child had a chance to talk to them about it.

Relationships and avenues of communication. When the topic of school came up with the parents, they focused mainly on the relationship that they had. These interactions included both the actual relationship with the school and the avenues of communication (i.e., agendas, emails, parent-teacher interviews, and phone calls).

Parent K expressed great appreciation with their efforts to communicate with her. As well as, feeling pleased with the school's efforts to follow up with her to make sure everything was okay.

> They communicate very well. I get teacher emails from the teachers; I get newsletters from the class. It's not a school-wide newsletter, I get that too you know but I also get teacher letters as well and phone calls when they see something that has to be addressed with my daughter. So, the communication is very good!

Parent W discussed how the school communicated with him through the agenda. He stated that "It is a great method." He also specified how liked getting e-mails from the teachers and newsletters from the classroom. He mentioned how he enjoyed parent-teacher meetings every few months because it informed him of his son's progress. It also helped him see if his son needed help in a particular subject.

Parent T stated that she was feeling good about her son's current school stating that they are on the "ball." If there is a "problem, they will call me right away, or they will use the agenda to communicate with me."

Overall it seemed as though all three parents felt that communication with the school was excellent. They talked about different forms of communication from phone calls to e-mails to

agenda messages. The parents who appreciated their interactions with the school pointed to follow-ups as an essential aspect. Therefore, parents liked having a relationship with the school, primarily when the school was able to accommodate each family's preferred method of communication.

Children's perceptions of their school life

Dislikes and likes of school. When the topic of school arose, the children focused on different things such as courses, learning software, learning difficulties, school rules and help they received from their teachers.

When child K spoke about "school," she referred to it as being in a "jail." She stated that she disliked everything about it. The only thing she liked was the feeling she got when it was 2:50 in the afternoon and she got to go home on the bus. Furthermore, she stipulated that she preferred if her mother homeschooled her.

> I've been crying to be homeschooled ever since I was in second grade. I remember the
> time when I was hospitalized for my depression, I freaked out at the doctor and told him
> that I can't learn French.

Child K voiced that she had experienced anxiety attacks from a specific course at school. She stated how she did not like that she had to learn a different language other than English. Having to learn another language seemed to be the main reason for her resentment of going to school.

Child K also stated that she had learning difficulties. She explained that when she had to do school work, she frequently used programs and tools on the internet to help her.

> I don't even know English right now. How I'm talking to you is phenomenal. I'm pretty
> surprised I can even speak English. I have a problem, like a disorder. I can speak, and
> write but, I use Word Cue and Google to do everything especially my school work.

Child W referred to "school" as a place where he learned. He stated that "at times school was fun, but at other times it was boring." It depended on what type of activity he was doing in class. He talked about how he enjoyed computer class because sometimes the teacher allowed him to play videogames. He also pointed out that he enjoyed free-time, track & field and carnival days.

Child W also talked about having good days and having bad days at school. He hated getting in trouble. Specifically, when he would get detentions or warnings. He stated that "I get so mad and frustrated." He also discussed that he did not like it when his teachers told him that they would play a game, but it turned out to be educational.

Child W also mentioned how much he appreciated his teachers. Specifically, when he was having a hard time learning something new.

Child T talked about "school" by comparing and contrasting his previous school to his current school. He stated that "my current school runs better than the previous school I attended." The rationalization given by him, revolved around feeling that his previous school "did not care" and that they had a more "laid-back approach." He discussed how his current school had a lot more requirements and rules, which he liked.

Child T mentioned how much he liked his current school because he felt like he finally fit in with other students. He explained how his classmates respected him and never made him feel bad.

> At this school there's a group of kids that are like me. They talk a lot like me. In my last school, I'd be talking and mid-sentence somebody was like shut up you're annoying. And they'd say that I talked too much. But kids don't do that in my school now.

He enjoyed going to school now. He formed friendships with other children. He talked about how his friends would praise him on his physical strength. He had flipped a classmate over his

shoulder in wrestling class. Child T pointed out that his friend's comments made him feel good. He stated that it was nice to hear that he was good at something. However, he expressed that in school he did not like that children were trying to sign him up for fights. He felt that they were trying to challenge him. He stated that he was relieved when the fights never happened. He also mentioned that he did not like math tests. With regards to academics, he had a hard time with multiplication and did not like going to math class.

Child T also expressed how much he appreciated his teachers. He pointed out that they were always available to help him whenever he needed assistance. He also discussed how sometimes he gets pulled out of class in order to get extra help.

> In this school, my teachers always help me in whatever way they can. Like in my schoolwork or anything else. If I don't understand, I go to the game room with Mrs. C and she explains it to me.

In general, some children felt happy to be at school where others were not very thrilled to be at school. However, all three children mentioned the pros and the cons that come to being at school. They pointed to specific courses, teachers, types of difficulties that they had, and school rules impacted their overall school life experience.

Discussion

The study aimed to investigate communication and parent-child relationships within the home. The study used Participatory Action Research (PAR) to actively involve children with learning difficulties and their families as co-researchers in the research process. The emerging themes that came from this data analysis reflect their perceptions on the visual word game, open-ended interview questions, picture taking ideas and the board game, but also go beyond them, revealing a set of unique patterns from each parent, child, and family as a whole.

This thesis was based on previous research that showed that bullied children were more likely to have poor relationships, less encouragement and support from their parents than non-victims (Bjereld, 2017; Cassidy, 2009). Having a poorer parent-child relationship is a concern since parents are vital in helping victims cope with, prevent and end bullying (Siyahhan, Aricak, & Acar, 2012). Consequently, previous research pointed to obstacles for children to disclose victimization, such as the ubiquitous nature of bullying, concern over adult response and a sense of autonomy and shame (DeLara, 2012). Therefore, the current study offered insight to children's and parents' perceptions and newly emerging themes of how a different context (home environment) may influence parent-child communication; using a different methodology (photo-elicitation with a game) allowed for deeper insight into this issue.

We were interested in understanding: (a) how parents support their children; and who children go to when they need support (b) how they perceived their communication with each other (c) how parents and children perceived bullying and, (d) what was important to know about their different environments (school, home) within their lives.

The Importance of Communication and Support for Resiliency in Families.

There are many ways parents can help children develop resiliency (Berk & Roberts, 2009). Finding the strength to overcome adversity is essential for children who struggle with learning difficulties and other issues such as bullying (Berk & Roberts, 2009; Sawyer et al., 2011; Mishan, 2003). Ecological resiliency is the ability to access and use the resources in one's environment (Masten, 2009; Ungar, 2011; Lee et al., 2009). One way may be for children to have positive interactions with important people in their lives (Berk & Roberts, 2009). Parents in the study reported that the best time of day to communicate and have positive interactions with their children was right before bed, after school, during dinnertime or in a car ride. Parents

explained that finding a specific time during the day to speak to their children without distractions was beneficial. It gave parents a chance to connect and discuss with them about their day, friends, worries, hopes, and curiosities. Research has shown that listening to children is extremely important (Berk & Roberts, 2009). It allows them to express themselves and feel that people understand them, which is essential for children who struggle socially and academically (Berk & Roberts, 2009; Lavoie, 2015; Lehman, 2016). It allows them to express their thought/feelings freely on matters that bother them (Shetgiri, Lin, Avila, & Flores, 2012). In turn, it helps children feel cared for and supported (Ballantine, 2001).

Parents may have to consider their children's strengths, interests, and areas of difficulty, in order to come up with plans for managing their child's behavior and support their development (Smith, 2002). Parents in the study used different techniques to support their children's well-being. These techniques depended on how they thought their children needed their support. The techniques included (a) letting their children express a range of emotions, (b) giving them space or, (c) letting them deal with it on their own, without influencing them. Research has shown that being able to make responsible, independent decisions is a crucial part of competence that builds children's resiliency (CAMH, 2009). Furthermore, parents in the study provided their children with opportunities to develop their independence. They used different approaches. These approaches included: (a) giving them responsibility for certain household chores, (b) giving them room to learn through trial and error and (c) letting them carry their own money. Research has suggested that children learn to make good decisions with practice (Berk & Roberts, 2009). It allows children to gain confidence in their competencies (Ballantine, 2001). Therefore, it is important for parents to allow them to make choices, and even mistakes, that are appropriate for their age and be there to encourage them (Berk & Roberts, 2009; CAMH, 2009).

It is also essential within the parent-child relationship for parents to learn how to communicate with their children (Berk & Roberts, 2009). For this to happen, it is imperative for parents to adjust their parenting strategies to fit their children's individual needs (Achtegarde, Postert, Wessing, Romer, & Muller, 2015). The study found that indeed all three parents used different strategies to get through to their children. These strategies included (a) a step by step approach, (b) a no distraction policy and, (c) visual symbols such as happy faces. These methods assisted parents to state their expectations in ways that fit their children's characters and needs. Research has shown that children with learning disabilities and ADHD are usually disorganized (Smith, 2002). They have trouble dealing with sequences, order, and planning (Smith, 2002). They are distracted easily and can often be impulsive (Smith, 2002). Therefore, breaking down routines and other tasks into manageable chunks helps these children complete tasks faster (Smith, 2002). Additionally, parents who choose to speak with their children without interruptions or distractions are engaging in effective communication (Berk & Roberts, 2009). This type of interaction leads children to feel worthy and deserving of their parent's undivided attention and care (Berk & Roberts, 2009; CAMH, 2009).

When children become aware that they have unconditional support from their parents, family member or even a friend, they feel empowered to seek guidance and make attempts to work through difficult situations (Hurley, 2018). Children in the study reported that when they needed to talk to someone, they would choose a person that was consistently present in their life. The children in this study pointed to either their mother or father. However, when parents were not available, children would seek help from a friend or a relative. Furthermore, it also depended on what they needed help with at that moment. Two out of the three children in the study felt accepted by their parents and would open up and share their thoughts, feelings, and concerns

with them daily. Research has shown that parents who provide their children with understanding and acceptance help create a climate for open communication (CAMH, 2009).

Furthermore, one out of the three children chose not to speak to her parents but to her friend or aunt. Research has shown that as long as children have a positive relationship with someone that listens to them; it helps them tune into themselves and accept their emotions as real and meaningful (CAMH, 2009).

Social-Ecological Framework in Regard to Bullying at School and in the Home

The social-ecological theory suggests that students exist and interact within a complex ecological system, consisting of three interrelated systems: the microsystem, the mesosystem, and the macrosystem (Ayers, Wagaman, Geiger, Bermudez-Parsai, & Hedberg, 2012). The microsystem includes those settings in which the student participates directly (e.g., home, school) (Ayers et al., 2012). Mesosystem represent their relationships between those microsystems which indirectly influence students (e.g., parental involvement in child's life), whereas macrosystems consist of broader social forces and structures that influence students (e.g., school) (Ayers et al., 2012). These systems influence and impact children's behaviors (Ayers et al., 2012). Children who bully have individual characteristics that predispose them to be involved in bullying, such as being aggressive (Olweus, 1997), having limitations in their cognitive, emotional or social abilities (Kokkinos & Antoniadou, 2013), or being inflexible (Lavoie, 2015), but their relationships with their friends, families, teachers, and schools also contribute to bullying behaviors (Ayers et al., 2012). Furthermore, the lack of parental involvement in a child's life has been linked to aggressive behavior (Ayers et al., 2012).

Bullying at school can be a distressing experience for children. It is also likely to be distressing for their parents (Hale, Fox, & Murray, 2017). As suggested from the parents in this

project, they looked toward their immediate environment in their child's life which was school, for assistance. Parents reported that they appreciated when the school would contact them when they saw that their child was having a hard time or struggling with something. This connection reassured them that the school staff had a genuine care for their child's well–being. Additionally, parents reported that they want to have a collaborative relationship with the school, especially when the school was able to accommodate each family's preferred method of communication. These avenues of communication included (i.e., agendas, emails, parent-teacher interviews, and phone calls). Having positive encounters between parents and teachers ensures that parents are kept informed of their children's progress (Hale et al., 2017). Furthermore, keeping them informed is important when trying to address a problem like bullying (Hale et al., 2017).

In contrast, research has shown that parents of children who are involved in bullying seem to have negative encounters with the school (Hale et al., 2017). They reported that the school (a) did not always take their complaints seriously, (b) they adopted a position of power during their interactions, and (c) approached school bullying from a different viewpoint than their own, instead of meeting parents half way (Hale et al., 2017). These interactions caused parents to feel helpless, frustrated and distrustful toward the school personnel (Hale et al., 2017).

In the current project, these parents of children who had learning disabilities and who were involved in bullying were more likely to want to support their children as much as they could. They wanted to have a positive relationship with the school. The reason for this is because children with learning difficulties needed help setting learning goals that were suited for their abilities (Smith, 2002). They needed parents to review things that they learned in school (Smith, 2002). Therefore, these parents use almost every resource they had to help their children and needed to be in constant contact with their children's teachers (Smith, 2002). Evidence has

suggested that parents want to work collaboratively with the teacher and school in ways that do not signal or lead parents to be perceived in a negative manner (Hale et al., 2017).

      The interviews in the current study revealed that parents talked about bullying differently. One parent expressed that bullying was a "part of being a child" while the other two parents saw it as something they needed to be "proactive about." They all took measures based on how they viewed the situation. One out of the three parents acknowledged that her child had encounters with bullying but downplayed the severity of the bullying; she told her daughter to ignore it. The other two parents took matters in their own hands. One removed her child from the school and enrolled him in activities in order to enlarge his social network. The other parent approached the bully's family to discuss the issue. Also, he enrolled his child in an activity that promoted self-defense such as karate. These findings closely match other research that looked at the kinds of strategies parents used to help their children cope with bullying (Harcourt et al., 2014; Sawyer et al., 2011). Parents provided their children with emotional support, taught them pro-social behavior, attempted to increase their self-esteem and tried to help them overcome their fears (Harcourt et al., 2014; Sawyer et al., 2011).

      A further observation from the study suggested that parents saw some flaws in their children. They believed that these flaws could be the primary reason they experienced issues in their friendships. The first parent thought that her child was sensitive. The second parent believed that his child's willingness to please was a weakness in his character that bullies exploit. The third parent discussed her child's impulsive and inattentive nature. These results support findings which suggest that bullying could be linked to children's challenges (Bourke & Bourgman, 2010; Lavoie, 2015). Sometimes, bullied children have been perceived as "social

misfits" by their peer groups (Thornberg, 2011). Thus, they are more likely not to belong to a particular social group and to have limited peer support (Thornberg, 2011).

Even though parents perceived their children as having challenges, all three stated how they wanted to protect their children from harm. This finding is consistent with other research that has found how parents viewed their primary role as being able to protect their child; they referred to this as an instinct and fundamental to being a good parent (Hale et al., 2017). Parents in the project voiced that raising children was not easy. At times it became overwhelming and demanding for parents. They talked about feeling frustrated at times and doubted their abilities as parents. They seemed to question if they had done enough for their children. Furthermore, one parent felt that she was responsible for her child being victimized. Their child's victimization not only represented a situation where they struggled to protect them, but also a situation where they had little or no control over if and when the bullying occurred (Hale et al., 2017). Therefore, although parents can protect their children at home, they are unable to protect their children outside their home environment (Hale et al., 2017).

Children in the study reported how vulnerable they felt when they were bullied. The children discussed the following challenges that they encountered: (a) they wished they had done something when they were bullied, (b) they wished that they were stronger, and (c) they wished that they had friends that were like them (being able to relate to other children). Peer relationships have shown to play a role in promoting resilience to bullying (Sapouna & Wolke, 2013). Bullied adolescents who report high levels of support from peers are more likely to maintain appropriate academic achievement for their age group compared to those with low peer support (Rothon et al., 2011; Wang, Iannotti, & Luk, 2011). Some studies have also suggested that peer support can reduce the effect of bullying victimization on adolescents' emotional

adjustment (Flaspohler, Elfstrom, Vanderzee, Sink, & Birchmeier, 2009; Stadler, Feifel, Rohrmann, Vermeiren, & Poustka, 2010; Yeung & Leadbeater, 2010).

When the topic of school emerged, children focused on different aspects. They referred to the school as a "place where they learn." They discussed certain classes that they enjoyed and other classes which caused them to feel anxious. They voiced their views about exams. One child talked about the school by comparing and contrasting his previous school to his current school. Saying "he liked his new school because of the rules put forth to prevent bullying from occurring." He also explained how his current school was run better than the previous school he attended. The rationalization given by him, revolved around feeling that his previous school "did not really care" and that they had more of a "laid-back approach." while, his current school had a lot more requirements and rules. Similarly, a study found that when the school rules were inexplicit and weak, it created the room for bullying to occur (Andersson, 2002). However, the bullying disappeared for some children when the teacher became a strong leader, who could create a secure school climate (Andersson, 2002).

Children who show resilience have been shown to take advantage of more protective factors and find resources within themselves, and within their home environments (Masten, 2009; Ungar, 2011). The data revealed that home was perceived as a safe place and a source of comfort for both parents and children. Children seemed to focus on things they had, such as their belongings which were things that were not available to them at school. Also, they discussed certain activities, personal interest, pets, and relationships that were available to them when they were not at school. The parents focused on things within their home that they were preoccupied with such as cooking and cleaning trying to provide a comfortable environment for their children and themselves. Furthermore, they were also directly caring for them by handling other types of essential,

behind-the-scenes management of their children's lives such as arranging appointments. It is also important to note that all three parents showed a strong desire to spend time with their children. These family moments included: eating dinner, playing games, watching movies, going for ice-cream or theme parks and vacationing together. Parents perceived these activities as a way of bonding and connecting with their children. This is vital for children who struggle with adversity. Furthermore, children seemed to appreciate how their parents tried to spend time with them despite their busy schedules.

Methodological Reflections

Photographs have a way of encouraging children to talk about things that they may not be able to discuss (Einarsdottir et al., 2009; Zalter & Richter 2014). Visualizations support children in verbalizing their thoughts but also help stimulate narrations on issues that are not displayed (Zalter & Richter 2014). All three families used the game as a tool to communicate and open up with each other. The parents used it as a way to connect with their children either by learning something new, listening to their point of view, or by just supporting them to express their perspectives. The main focus of the children was sharing with their parents' important things within their lives such as possessions, relationships or safe places. They also mentioned things that they wanted their parents to know about them such as how creative they were, what they wanted to become when they were older, or just voicing things that bothered them.

Photo-elicitation activities seem to enrich the process of reflecting, to support children in verbalizing thoughts (Zalter & Rictcher, 2014). For example, child T pointed to his knife that he made by hand. He told his mother that he was happy that he created something that worked.

> That knife took me all day to make but it was fun because rarely whenever I make something it works out exactly how I want it to. But that did, and it sticks right into things when you throw it properly.

Photographs may also encourage children to bring up sensitive aspects of family life, e.g., issues that they may find difficult to articulate (Zalter & Rictcher, 2014). The picture may stimulate accounts via the presence of persons or issues displayed on them (Zalter & Rictcher, 2014). For example, child W used this moment to talk to his father about how he felt. He told his father that he was hurt and disappointed that he was not the first one in his family to be informed about his dog drowning in the pool. He seemed very upset and disrespected. Parent W acknowledged his son's feelings. He addressed the issue by trying to make child W understand that he did not do it intentionally.

> Parent W: Don't you enjoy the swimming in the pool? Child W: Yeah! But not anymore since it killed Josh. Why didn't you tell me first? Parent W: Why should I let you have a bad day at school? Child W: No, I mean tell me before Child A and Child E. It was not their dog; it was my dog. Parent W: I know but they only found out the day after, and it wasn't me, it was Adult S that told them. Child W: I just wanted to know, first. Parent W: It's okay buds! Child W: How dare you? That really hurt me! Parent W: I'm really sorry bud, I never realized how you felt.

Secondly, they inspire narrations on individuals or details that are not present in the photograph (Zalter & Rictcher, 2014). For example, child K described a picture she took of herself to her mother. She stated that "Look this is me, and I'm the sun, and I'm looking into the mirror, and I wish I always felt like that."

Home visits. Although there was some hesitation towards the idea of visiting families, all participating parents and children welcomed us into their homes and appeared to appreciate the visit. My role as a researcher allowed me to be associated with the school while still remaining separate. This may have created a legitimate but neutral role for me. It facilitated the connection and rapport I had with the families. Children were also taking photographs in school during the week for the bigger project. This may have helped bring a level of familiarity with the project before we began the home visits.

Visual word and bored game reactions. One of the parents enjoyed the game so much that she was thinking of getting a game like this for their home as a way of learning about her daughter.

> I loved that this whole experience it had balance. It was a really awesome exercise. No, I really do, I think it was the coolest thing ever. I learned a lot from it about my daughter. We need to go buy a game like this, for the house (Parent K)

Furthermore, parents enjoyed the visual words, because of how it got them to think and express themselves.

> I liked it. I really really did! I enjoyed it. The separating us and then numbering it back together by bringing us back together afterwards. That's really good. And the thoughts and how you got it out of us, you know? And, when we had to explain it and then the questions, how it initiated all of it using the one-word thing. It was a really good exercise that I enjoyed for sure. (Parent K)

Children also seemed to appreciate how they were able to interact with their parents during the board game. For example, child K stated that it helped her talk about her thoughts, feelings, and emotions.

I liked the game. And picking out of the box and answering the questions. It really comes

to show you how there are certain things that you can love, certain things that you can

hate. But, there are also things that you can actually fix.

The children also mentioned how they enjoyed taking pictures independently from their parents

because it allowed them to reflect before they showed it to them. In general, both the parents and

children seemed to enjoy taking pictures around their home and then using a game to share their

pictures.

Limitations

The current study contributed to research on children's and parent's perspectives about

their communication and parent-child relationships within their home. We gained a unique

understanding of what children and parents felt was essential to know about them. However, as

with any study, certain limitations apply and will be discussed to improve future research.

Firstly, this study involved three participating families from middle to lower

socioeconomic status situated in a suburban area in Montreal. Therefore, while these findings

provide possible implications for children with similar demographic information, they can only

be transferable across similar backgrounds. Therefore, this study was designed to study these

particular families and the emerging findings may be transferable (i.e., when one makes

connections between elements of a study and their own experience) but not generalizable across

all families and contexts. However, this study does provide valuable information pertaining

specifically to how these children and parents perceived their family/home life at the time of

these interviews. These findings represent the perceptions, feelings, and attitudes of the

participating children and parents.

Secondly, throughout data analysis, we have been conscious to avoid bias or acknowledge and reflect on biases in order to truly represent the children's and parents' voices (through dependability, discussions, memoing and debrief sessions) (Hayes & Singh, 2012; Sutton & Austin, 2015; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). However, it is important to note that their perceptions are subject to change along with their experiences.

Thirdly, we have to keep in mind that only a small fraction of what constitutes a family can be displayed on a photograph (Zalter & Richter, 2014). One parent did not allow her child to take certain pictures within the home. This presented a problem because the object they wanted to take a picture of may have been symbolic of something important in their lives. For example, child K wanted to take a picture of native medicines. Her mother did not let her. Her mother felt that they were sacred. By not taking the picture we may have missed a valuable piece of information that was a crucial aspect of the child's family home life.

Fourthly as in any qualitative study, it is understood that subjectivity is part of the research and is something that needs to be identified to the best of our ability (Letts et al., 2007; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). While interviewing one of the participants, it was brought to my attention by the other researcher that more often than not I smiled or nodded my head when they would say something of interest. Thus, I had to be aware of my facial expressions and my gestures to keep a neutral demeanor. My actions may have been guiding the conversation. Thankfully, this was caught early on and I was conscious not to do so as often. However, brief, these moments are crucial to reflect upon.

Writing field notes after every session is also important for self-reflection. In qualitative research, this is an essential element because it takes into consideration credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Letts et al., 2007). Field notes help explore

emerging themes that arise in the early stages of data collection. This self-reflexive process also helped me become aware of how I was interacting with the participants.

Future Research

This thesis has explored interesting and important research questions; however, as with all research studies, new research questions and directions emerge. In this current study, children and adults talked about bullying differently. Some children's perspectives differed from that of their parents. Furthermore, their children's distress may have been greater than their parents anticipated. Studies have interviewed children and their parents about their views on bullying and how they experience it (Mishna, 2004). An in-depth, comparison between the two viewpoints would be a logical progression.

The study used an ecological theoretical framework. It attempted to access not just the child's perspective but also to understand the perspectives and roles of others within the child's immediate environment, their parents. Research has identified resilience as being a fluid attribute, meaning that it changes as a result of developmental and situational changes (Green, Oswald, Spears, 2007). Developing a study that enables parents to understand the complexity of resilience and how they play a role in assisting children to overcome adversity would be a logical progression (Green et al., 2007). It would address the issue of stability in their children's life. For example, parents would have to engage in an activity together once a week for three months. Pre- and post-levels of connectiveness, and quality of relationship would be recorded. It would be interesting to see if consistently spending time with one another would positively affect their relationship.

The current study also found that not all children use their parents as their support system. Some children turn to their friendships. Therefore, creating a project using the same methodology would be interesting to explore how these friendships serve as buffers of stress. Children would pick one friend to take pictures with. They could be given themes that revolve around friendship. They could create a portfolio with all those ideas/themes of the week and then engage in a conversation about their pictures. These findings can reveal, how they support each other? What they value most about one another? Also, how friends help them solve problems?

It may also be interesting for future research to implement the same methodology to explore how students who have learning difficulties relate to their school environments. Children with school difficulties have cognitive, social and emotional challenges (Andersson, 2002). Therefore, it would be beneficial to learn how they perceive their learning, how they cope with it, what resources they use, and if or how their parents support them (Monette, 2015). This research could reveal the strengths and shortcomings of the education sector to support students and implement an inclusive model within the education system (Monette, 2015). These insights could help school communities support their students and can inform educational policy (Monette, 2015).

Practical Implications

The current study found that parents wanted to have a relationship with the school. Especially, when their child was involved in bullying incidences. Therefore, one educational implication could be the development of a systematic school-based bullying intervention program. This program would aim to reduce existing bullying problems and to prevent the development of future situations (Brown et al., 2013). The program would include the staff and teachers of the school, the children and their parents. A critical dimension of this family-school

partnership would be to reach out and involve parents. It would include effective communication between schools and families to learn about each other with an attempt at reaching a mutual understanding (Mishna, 2003). It would ensure that schools are sensitive to parent's sensibilities (Mishna, 2003). There can also be conferences for teachers that provide teachers with education, training, responses, support and strategies to use in order to help eliminate bullying from schools altogether (Brown et al., 2013; Mishan, 2003; Sawyer et al., 2011). It is recommended that teachers continuously discuss the rules against bullying with their students as well as provide limits for students who engage in aggressive behavior (Brown et al., 2013). A restorative justice approach can be taken to rectify the situation (Brown et al., 2013). All parents concerned need to be notified of the situation. Measures may also be taken to ensure that it does not re-occur. An intervention by the school psychologist is imperative as well. The more communication between all key stakeholders, the better the experience will be for the students at school and the parents in their children's education and life.

Conclusion

When we looked at foregoing research on bullying in school and its relation to parenting and family life, the research literature focused on topics such as parenting approaches, quality of relationships and family functioning as essential factors related to children being involved in bullying (Ballantine, 2001; Berk & Roberts, 2009; Nikiforou et al., 2013; Renken et al., 1989). However, few had concentrated on capturing both the parent and child perspectives on family life and how a parent can help foster resilience through communication.

Most authors are agree that resilience is not a personality trait but rather a capacity that develops over time in the context of positive relationships with family members (Sapona, 2013). Providing the necessary assistance offers a child a sense of security and confidence, and also

provides the necessary self-confidence in order to respond adequately to difficulties which may arise (Papanikolaou, 2011).

Through my research project, I wanted to focus on the positive side rather than the negative side of families who have children with challenges. It is common knowledge that bullying situations are aversive for children However very little is known on how families try to overcome and help their children. We wanted to capture for a moment how these parents assist them to become the best versions of themselves. Therefore, we went into their homes as observers in order to learn something from these parents and their children's unique situations.

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Appendix A
Parent Meeting Material

Letter to parents

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s)

I am a researcher and school psychologist from Concordia University in the Department of Education. I am interested in exploring children's perceptions of the positive things in their experience at school through photographic storytelling. I am also interested in teachers' and parents' perceptions of the students' ability to recover from setbacks or negative situations. This project will look at children with learning difficulties and their perceptions of their strengths and resources (people, places and things) that may help them in avoiding or coping with bullying situations.

When you consent to participate in this study, data collection will take place over the 2015-2016 school year. The following information will be collected:

a) Information regarding the identification of a learning difficulty; b) Information whether the student has had any issues with bullying; c) Child interviews regarding photos they take will be used to understand the children's perspectives of their strengths and resources; e) Teachers and school personnel will be invited to partake in 2 focus groups and interviews to give their views about these students strengths and use of resources, and discuss themes about anti-bullying programs and their impact on students, parents, and teachers; f) one-on-one interview with you, the parents to discuss your perceptions of my child's strengths and use of resources, as well as the impact of the school-wide anti-bullying program; g) photographs taken with you the parents and interviews to understand your perspectives of your child's strengths and use of resources. With the help of a research assistants, the children will participate in a 10-week photography project in 2016 (Feb-May). The children will be interviewed about their photos each week.

Themes will be assigned each week and will center on their strengths and use of resources. Photo sessions will be done at the convenience of the teachers and will be audio-taped. Care will be taken to ensure that the children are not inconvenienced and disadvantaged by being taken out of class.

One of the potential benefits of this project is student empowerment. Photography is a tool that can help give a voice to the student's stories.

Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions or concerns please feel free to contact me, Janet Strike Schurman, at 450-691-1440 ext. 218 or Dr. Hariclia Petrakos at 514-848-2424 ext. 2013.

Sincerely,

Hariclia (Harriet) Petrakos, Ph.D.,

Associate Professor

Concordia University

Parent Consent Form
The Perceptions of Resilience of Children with Learning Difficulties Who Have Been Involved in Bullying

Appendix B

Consent form to participate in research

This is to state that I agree to have my child participate in a program of research being conducted under supervision of Dr. Hariclia Petrakos of the Department of Education of Concordia University (telephone: 514-848-2424, ext. 2013; email: hpetrakos@education.concordia.ca).

A. PURPOSE

I have been informed that the purpose of the research is: to explore children's perceptions of their strengths and resources (people, places and things) that may help them avoid or cope with bullying situations, through photographic storytelling; and to explore teachers' and parents' perceptions of the students' ability to recover from setbacks or negative situations. This information will help schools increase a positive climate for all students.

B. PROCEDURES

I have been informed that the procedure is the following: The data collection will take place over the 2015-2016 school year. The following information will be collected:

a) Information regarding the identification of a learning difficulty;

b) Information whether the student has had any issues with bullying;

c) Child interviews regarding photos that they make will be used to understand the children's perspectives of their strengths and resources;

e) Teachers and school personnel will be invited to partake in 2 focus groups and interviews to give their views about these students' strengths and use of resources, and discuss themes about anti-bullying programs and their impact on students, parents, and teachers.

f) I will participate in one-on-one interviews to discuss my perceptions of my child's strengths and use of resources, as well as the impact of the school-wide anti-bullying program. I will be given the opportunity to take pictures and discuss these pictures with the researcher and my child. I will be given the opportunity to do this in my home or any location that is convenient to me.

The children will participate in a 10-week Photography Club in the spring (February - May 2016). Themes will be assigned each week and will center on their strengths and use of resources. Photo sessions will be done during school hours and will be audio-taped. Each week the researcher will interview the children about their photos. Care will be taken to ensure that the children are not inconvenienced and disadvantaged by being taken out of class.

C. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

• I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my child's participation at any time without negative consequences.

• I understand that my child's participation in this study is CONFIDENTIAL (i.e., the researcher will know, but will not disclose my child's identity). All the information that all the participants share is also confidential and private, unless the children are unsafe in any way. In that case, any concerns will be reported to the school principal.

• I understand that the data from this study may be published.

 I HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT. I FREELY CONSENT AND VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO HAVE MY CHILD PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

NAME (please print)

_____

SIGNATURE

_____

If at any time you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Adela Reid, Research Ethics and Compliance Officer, Concordia University, at (514) 848-7481 or by email at areid@alcor.concordia.ca, or

Contact Number: _____

Child's Name: _____

Appendix C

Ethics Certificate

CERTIFICATION OF ETHICAL ACCEPTABILITY FOR RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

Name of Applicant: Dr. Hariclia Petrakos
Department: Faculty of Arts and Science\Education
Agency: N/A
Title of Project:
The Perceptions of Resilience of Children with Learning Difficulties who Have Been Involved in Bullying
Certification Number: 10000145
Valid From: December 19, 2014 to: December 18, 2015
The members of the University Human Research Ethics Committee have examined the application for a grant to support the above-named project, and consider the experimental procedures, as outlined by the applicant, to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.

Dr. James Pfaus, Chair, University Human Research Ethics Committee

Appendix D

Picture # 1- Buckets

Picture # 2 –Board Game

Appendix E

Words in the bucket	
Child words	*Parent words*
Family	Child
Activities	Activities
Talking	Communication
Encouragement	Encouragement
Help	Help
School	School
Home	Home
Caring	Caring
Bullying	Bullying

Photo-Interview Questions
Tell me about this photo? What is this photo of? Why is it important to you?
Why did you take this picture? What do you like about it? What do you dislike about it?
Would you change anything about this picture?
How do you feel about this picture?
Who would you like to show this picture to?
What would you say about this photo?

Parent Semi-structured Interview Questions

1. Tell me about _____?
    Prompts:
    What is the best thing about living with _____?
    What in your opinion is _____ best at?

2. How do you spend time together?
    Prompts:
    What are some activities you like doing together?
    What are the activities that help you feel connected to _____?
    If they need an example: reading a story, going for walk, doing homework e.c.t

3. What is the best time of the day when you and your family communicate with
    _____?
    Prompts:
    Is it over dinner, is it while he is doing his homework, is it when he's getting ready for bed?
    Can you give me an example?
 	
    Who communicates best with _____? Is it his siblings, is it you, or your husband?
    Prompts:
    Who does _____ communicate more with?

4. How do help you _____ express his emotions?
    Prompts:
    When he is overwhelmed?

When he is happy? What are things you say to him? Can you identify situations when you responded in such a way, what happened?
5. Tell me about how you support your child's independence   *Prompts:* If he can't do something by himself, how do you help them?

6. Tell me about how the school communicates with you?
  Tell me about a time?
    Prompts:
  By phone, do they call you into the school, parent teacher interview
 	
  Have other people expressed concern about _____?
  How do you continue to learn about your _____development?
  Are there things that worry you about you _____development?

7. How do you react, when _____ tells you about something positive?
  Prompts:
  Such as a good mark, or an achievement
  Can you tell me about your experience with this?

Child Semi-structured Interview Questions

1. Tell me about you family?
   Prompts:
  What is your favorite activity to do with your family?
  Explain this to me?

2. Who do you go to, if you need help in your family? Why?
   Prompts:
  Mom, dad, siblings

3. If you have something you really need to talk about, who in your family do you go to?
   Prompts:
  What do they do?
  What do you talk to them about?

4. Tell me about your favorite place or places in you home and why?
   Prompts:
  How does this place make you feel?
  Why do you go there?

5. Does your family know when you are having a good day?
  Does your family know when you are having a bad day?
   Prompts:
  What do they do?
  What do they say to you?
  How does this make you feel?

6. What do you like/dislike about being at school?
  What do you like/dislike about being at home?
   Prompts:
  None

7. Bonus Question – Depends on what was said during the interview (May change with

every child)

Game Questions
Unveil your poster! Describe your poster in a few words?
Which picture on your poster is your favorite? Why
Switch Posters!
Describe each other's poster in a few words?
Ask something about the other person's poster
Which picture on the other person's poster is your favorite?
Bonus: Describe your family in a few words? Describe your home in a few words? Is there anything else you want to share with each other?

Appendix F

Calendar

April 2016

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2
3	4	5 Child T Home Session 1	6	7 Child B Home Session 1	8	9 Child W Home Session 1
10	11	12 Child T Home Session 2	13	14 Child JN Home Session 1	15	16 Child KD Home Session 1
17	18	19	20	21 Child JN Home Session 2	22	23 Child KD Home Session 2 Child W Home Session 2
24	25	26 Child B Home Session 2	27	28	29	30

May 2016

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3 Child KL Home Session 1	4	5 Child KR Home session 1 & 2 Child KL Home Session 2	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

~*Home Photos*~

1st visit: Family takes photos of what is important to them about home
2nd visit: Family scrapbooks the photos and shares them with each other

Appendix G

The script

Home portion

Part 1:

Introduction- Arrival at the home

Hello I'm Kelly and this is Cassandra.
Cassandra and I would like to thank you for inviting both of us into your home.
We appreciate that you took the time out of your busy schedules to meet with us today.
So lets get stated, I think we should start by sitting down all together to discuss what we will be doing.

Sitting down together- Child and Parent

Cassandra and I will come visit your home twice
The first time, which is today, we will do an activity with a bucket, and then take some pictures and talk about them when you are finished (show camera and bucket)
The second time Cassandra and I will come, we will bring you your developed pictures.
We will ask you some more questions.
Then you both will work on your posters, which you can share with each other at the end.
After your finished making your poster's we will play a game called Q's and A's.
I will explain this in much more detail, when we get to that day.

Explanation of day 1

So for today the activity that we will do is with these two buckets (show them both buckets).
In these buckets there are nine different types of words.
Your job is to pick a word from the bucket, read the word out loud and then
I want you to tell me the first thing that pops into your mind.
After you finished picking all nine words then we can go and take your pictures.
I will go with your mom/dad and you will go with Cassandra.
We will also audio-record things we talk about so that Cassandra and I don't forget what we have talked about (show them the recorder). Is this all okay with you?
Do you have any questions before we begin?

Separate- Cassandra with Child and Kelly with parent

Bucket words:
These will be the words that will be picked by the parents and the child during the bucket activity.

Words in the bucket	
Child words	*Parent words*
Family	Child

Activities	Activities
Talking	Communication
Encouragement	Encouragement
Help	Help
School	School
Home	Home
Caring	Caring
Bullying	Bullying

Cassandra to child

So now we are going to take pictures.
The themes are 1) what is important to you about your home? And 2) What is important to you about your family? What is something you would like to share with your _____.
Remember you can also take picture's of whatever you feel is important to you that you would like to put in your poster that you will share with your mom/dad at the end when you show each other your posters.

Kally to parent

So now we are going to take pictures.
The themes are 1) what is important to you about your home? And 2) what is important to you about your family?
And also, what you think is important to know about your child. What is something you would like to share with _____.
Remember that you can also take pictures of whatever you feel is important that you would like to put on your poster that you will share with your son/daughter at the end when you show each other your posters.

Photo-Interviews

These will be the open-eneded interview questions that will be used on both the child and parent order to gather data on their views on home and family life.
Both the child and the parent will be asked to choose 7 photographs that are most important to them and will be asked to describe each in the following manner:

The prompts will be the following:
Tell me about this photo? What is this photo of? Why is it important to you?
Why did you take this picture? What do you like about it? What do you dislike about it?
Would you change anything about this picture?
How do you feel about this picture?
Who would you like to show this picture to?
What would you say about this photo?

Part 2:

Introduction- Arrival at the home

Hello, So nice to see you again!
Cassandra and I would like to thank you a second time for inviting us into your home.
We appreciate it very much!
So lets get started, I think we should start by sitting down all together again to discuss what we will be doing.

Sitting down together- Child and Parent

Explanation of day2

So today we will again split up, I will go with your mom and you will go with Cassandra.
We will ask you both a few questions.
Then we will give you back your pictures.
Cassandra and I brought paper and things for both of you to decorate your pictures in which ever way you want.
When both of you are done you will get to show each other your posters.
 We will then play a game together using your posters.

Separate- Cassandra with Child and Kelly with parent

Cassandra to child

So before I give you your pictures we are going to answer some questions that are in the bucket that we used last week.
The questions are generally asking you about how you communicate with your family.
Is it okay if I ask you some questions? May I put the tape recorder on so I won't forget what we talked about?

Child Semi-structured Interview Questions

1. Tell me about you family?
     Prompts:
     What is your favorite activity to do with your family?
     Explain this to me?

2. Who do you go to, if you need help in your family? Why?
     Prompts:
     Mom, dad, siblings

3. If you have something you really need to talk about, who in your family do you go to?
     Prompts:
     What do they do?
     What do you talk to them about?

4. Tell me about your favorite place or places in you home and why?   *Prompts*:

How does this place make you feel?   Why do you go there?
5. Does your family know when you are having a good day?   Does your family know when you are having a bad day?   *Prompts:*   What do they do?   What do they say to you?   How does this make you feel?
6. What do you like/dislike about being at school?   What do you like/dislike about being at home?   *Prompts:*   None
7. Bonus Question – Depends on what was said during the interview (May change with every child)

Poster time- Cassandra and child

These are your pictures.
Here is some paper glue, scissors, and other things that you can use to decorate. When you are finished will share it with your_____.

Kally to parent

So before I give you your pictures I'm going to ask you some questions. The questions are generally asking what are some ways you communicate best with you son/daughter.
Is it okay if I ask you some questions? May I put the tape recorder on so I won't forget what we talked about?

Parent Semi-structured Interview Questions
1. Tell me about _____?   *Prompts*:   What is the best thing about living with _____?   What in your opinion is _____ best at?
2. How do you spend time together?   *Prompts:*   What are some activities you like doing together?   What are the activities that help you feel connected to _____?   If they need an example: reading a story, going for walk, doing homework e.c.t
3. What is the best time of the day when you and your family communicate with _____?   *Prompts*:   Is it over dinner, is it while he is doing his homework, is it when he's getting ready for bed?   Can you give me an example?   Who communicates best with _____? Is it his siblings, is it you, or your

husband? *Prompts*: Who does _____ communicate more with?
4. How do help you _____ express his emotions? *Prompts*: When he is overwhelmed? When he is happy? What are things you say to him? Can you identify situations when you responded in such a way, what happened?
5. Tell me about how you support your child's independence *Prompts*: If he can't do something by himself, how do you help them?
6. Tell me about how the school communicates with you? Tell me about a time? *Prompts*: By phone, do they call you into the school, parent teacher interview Have other people expressed concern about _____? How do you continue to learn about your _____ development? Are there things that worry you about you _____ development?
7. How do you react, when _____ tells you about something positive? *Prompts*: Such as a good mark, or an achievement Can you tell me about your experience with this?

Poster time- Kally and Parent

These are your pictures.
Here is some paper glue, scissors, and other things that you can use to decorate. When you are finished will share it with _____.

Sitting down together- Game

It will be in a form of a board game. The parent and the child will take turns rolling the dice and answering the questions. There will be 6 cards on the board. They will roll the dice and move according to what the dice say's. Both the parent and the child will answer the question.
The questions will be the following:

Questions for the game are the following:
Unveil your poster! Describe your poster in a few words?
Which picture on your poster is your favorite? Why
Switch Posters!
Describe each other's poster in a few words?
Ask something about the other person's poster
Which picture on the other person's poster is your favorite?
Bonus: Describe your family in a few words?

Describe your home in a few words?
Is there anything else you want to share with each other?

Keep your posters face down till we start the game. You both are going to take turns rolling the dice, and moving this little guy (Piece of cork) according what number you get on the dice. You will continue to roll the dice, but once you land on a purple brick you stop and then you pick up a card. You pick up the number that corresponds to the card. Also, regardless of who picked up the question you both have to answer it. Do you have any questions? Are you both ready to start?