

University of Alberta

**A Pilot Study of the Bullying Experiences of Children Who Stutter
and the Coping Strategies They Use in Response**

by

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Abstract

This qualitative pilot study investigated the bullying experiences of children who stutter, the type of coping strategies that they use to deal with these experiences, and their perceptions of the effectiveness of their coping strategies. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with seven 10- to 13-year-old children who stutter. Grounded theory methodology was used to analyze the interview data. Data analysis resulted in a preliminary four-element conceptualization of the process by which children who stutter experience and respond to bullying and the emergence of two themes: Individual Factors and Recommendations. Individual factors were found to influence the process of experiencing and responding to bullying, and recommendations were provided for how children who stutter may respond to bullying and how adults can help them. These recommendations may be used by speech-language pathologists, school psychologists, school counselors, teachers, and parents. The findings of this study support previous research with typical children and children who stutter.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Bullying is a widespread and concerning social phenomenon that has been shown to have damaging psychological, social, and physical effects on children who are victims (see Rigby, 2003). Research has found that children who are bullied employ a variety of response strategies, such as telling someone, lashing back verbally or physically, being assertive, making jokes, and ignoring the bullying (Craig, Pepler, & Blais, 2007). Current research efforts are aimed at determining how coping styles influence the occurrence of future bullying and children's psychological and social adjustment.

Stuttering is a speech disorder that can severely limit children's ability to express themselves. It is characterized by sound or syllable repetitions, sound prolongations, and "blocking", which is a stoppage of the flow of air or of voice (Guitar, 2006) and may be accompanied by extraneous signs of tension and struggle that include head nods, eye blinks, and disfiguring facial grimaces, even in very young children (Yairi, Ambrose, & Niermann, 1993). Research has shown that children who stutter are more likely to experience bullying than children who do not stutter (Blood & Blood, 2007; Davis, Howell, & Cooke, 2002; Langevin, Bortnick, Hammer, & Wiebe, 1998). In fact, children who stutter may be three times more likely than their peers to be bullied (Blood & Blood, 2007; Davis et al., 2002). Despite the elevated risk of being a victim of bullying and the serious negative outcomes that are known to result from bullying, little is known about the nature of bullying experienced by children who stutter beyond estimates of the frequency and types of bullying they experience. Even less is known about how children who stutter respond to bullying and the degree to which their responses are helpful or unhelpful.

The purpose of this research was to address these gaps in the current understanding of the nature of bullying experienced by children who stutter and the coping strategies that they use to deal with bullying. The overall aim was to provide this information to speech-language pathologists (SLPs), parents, school psychologists, school counselors, and teachers so that they could more effectively

help children who stutter who are being bullied. A qualitative methodology that used semi-structured interviews and grounded theory techniques was used. This methodology permitted a more in-depth exploration of the experiences of children who stutter than had been previously afforded by questionnaire studies.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This review will first provide a brief overview of the literature pertaining to bullying in typical school-age children and then report on what is known about bullying in children with communication disorders, and stuttering in particular. Then a discussion of what is known about how typical children cope with bullying and a summary of the literature regarding coping strategies and children who stutter will follow.

Bullying

Definition and Types of Bullying

Bullying occurs when a more powerful individual or group of individuals subjects a less powerful victim to repeated negative actions (Craig et al., 2007; Olweus, 1991; Salmivalli & Peets, 2009). Defined in this way, bullying is not limited to the schoolyard. Abuse in which an aggressor repeatedly takes advantage of a weaker individual occurs throughout the lifespan and includes sexual harassment, gang involvement, spousal abuse, workplace harassment, child abuse, and elder abuse (Pepler & Craig, 2000). Bullying behaviours can be physical, verbal, or relational. Physical bullying, such as pushing and hitting, and verbal bullying, such as swearing and name-calling, are considered to be “direct” forms of bullying (Olweus, 1991; Salmivalli & Peets, 2009). Relational bullying, which comprises more subtle types of aggression, including rumour-spreading and social exclusion, are considered “indirect” forms of bullying. A fourth type of bullying, cyber-bullying, has emerged in recent years, and involves sending or distributing harmful messages, photos, or videoclips via cellular phones or the Internet (Salmivalli & Peets, 2009; Smith et al., 2008).

Prevalence

Bullying affects many children, but fewer children experience bullying on a regular basis. In a review of the literature, Card and Hodges (2008) found that 30% to 60% of children are bullied at least once during a given school semester or

year, whereas frequent bullying, defined as occurring at least once a week, affected between 6% and 15% of children. The prevalence of bullying varies between countries. A study of bullying in 25 countries found that the prevalence of bullying, defined as being bullied more than twice in a school term, ranged from 5% to 20%, with an average of 11% across countries (Nansel et al., 2004). The prevalence of bullying in Canada and the United States also was approximately 11%.

Consequences and Risk Factors

Studies conducted in a number of different countries have shown that being the target of bullying was associated with, and led to, a large number of negative psychological, physical, social, and school difficulties. These results likely apply to Canadian children, as Nansel et al. (2004) found that children who were the victims of bullying in Canada also reported greater health problems, emotional and school adjustment difficulties, and poorer relationships with classmates than did children who were uninvolved in bullying. Children who were bullied had lower self-esteem, higher rates of anxious and depressive symptoms, and reported being lonely more often than non-bullied children (Andreou, 2001; Arseneault et al., 2008; Arseneault et al., 2006; Bond, Carlin, Thomas, Rubin, & Patton, 2001; Fekkes, Pijpers, Fredriks, Vogels, & Verloove-Vanhorick, 2006; Fekkes, Pijpers, & Verloove-Vanhorick, 2004; Hawker & Boulton, 2000; Houbre, Tarquinio, & Lanfranchi, 2010; Rigby, 2003). Some of these problems have been found to last into adulthood (Gladstone, Parker, & Malhi, 2006; Schäfer et al., 2004). Furthermore, children who were bullied reported higher levels of physical ill-health symptoms than other children, such as headaches, difficulty sleeping, tiredness, listlessness, poor appetite, abdominal pain, and bedwetting (Fekkes et al., 2006; Fekkes et al., 2004; Nansel et al., 2004; Rigby, 2003). Children who were bullied also struggled socially, had fewer friends, tended to be rejected by peers (Card & Hodges, 2008; Nansel et al., 2004; Rigby, 2003), and experienced more externalizing symptoms, such as delinquency and aggression (Arseneault et al., 2006). Other school difficulties included poor academic achievement (Beran,

2008), dislike of school, and absenteeism (Arseneault et al., 2006; Card & Hodges, 2008).

Research has shown that children who were bullied had higher levels of internalizing symptoms (i.e., anxiety, depression, withdrawal) and externalizing symptoms (i.e., delinquency, physical aggression), lower social status, more school adjustment problems, and more family problems, such as abusive parenting, over-protectiveness, dysfunctional parental relationship, and insufficient family income, before they became the target of bullying, and that these difficulties may be predictive of becoming victimized (Arseneault et al., 2006; Barker et al., 2008; Card & Hodges, 2008; Fekkes et al., 2006; Gladstone et al., 2006; Houbre et al., 2010). Thus, the evidence suggests a cyclical relationship in which emotional, familial, and social difficulties “place children at risk for victimization, and the victimization leads to further problems in these areas” (Card & Hodges, 2008, p. 454).

Perceived Causes of Bullying

Research with school-age children has shown that children perceive that bullying may take place for a number of reasons. These reasons include pressure from the peer group, characteristics of the child who is a victim of bullying, and characteristics of the child who bullies (Langevin, 2000; Thornberg, 2010; Varjas et al., 2008).

Peer pressure. School-age children in Thornberg (2010) cited negative social influence and group pressure as explanations for why bullying occurred. Participants in Thornberg’s study noted that children may bully others out of fear that if they do not join in they might be socially excluded or become a new target of the bullying. Salmivalli and Peets (2009) pointed out that peer attitudes and how peers respond to bullying may reinforce or discourage the actions of children who bully, especially if they bully in order to achieve social goals.

Characteristics of the child who is bullied. Studies have found that school-age children believed that deviant characteristics of the victim, such as their personality, physical appearance, behaviour, or having a disability can attract bullying (Thornberg, 2010; Varjas et al., 2008).

Research with people in general and with bullied children has suggested that children who blame themselves for being bullied may be at greater risk for experiencing negative outcomes. It has been found that when people in general attribute negative events to internal causes that are unlikely to change, and that affect them in many situations, they suffer from hopelessness, depression, lessened effort, and learning problems, a state also known as “learned helplessness” (see Aronson, Wilson, Akert, & Fehr, 2010). When girls who were bullied made the same types of attributions that have been found to lead to learned helplessness, they also experienced higher levels of victimization (Shelley & Craig, 2010). Furthermore, children who were bullied and who attributed the bullying to something about their own character, as opposed to something they did, also experienced higher levels of victimization (Shelley & Craig, 2010).

Characteristics of the child who bullies. School-age children perceived that a child might bully others because of personal problems, boredom, thinking that teasing is fun, or thoughtlessness (Langevin, 2000; Thornberg, 2010; Varjas et al., 2008). It has also been recognized in the literature that children bully others in order to achieve social goals (Salmivalli & Peets, 2009; Swearer, Espelage, & Napolitano, 2009), for example, to gain social status, power, or friends.

Conceptualization of Bullying: Bullying as a Relationship Problem

Children’s perceptions of reasons for bullying are consistent with Craig and Pepler’s (2008) conceptualization of bullying as a relationship problem, in which bullying difficulties “arise from complex interpersonal dynamics” (p. xxiii). These authors and others view bullying as occurring through unhealthy relationships in which children use bullying as a method to achieve their goals of gaining power and social status in the context of the peer group (Craig & Pepler, 2008; Salmivalli & Peets, 2009; Swearer et al., 2009). It has also been suggested that bullying interactions may become automatic and habitualized in bully-victim relationships, causing the perpetuation of bullying relationships (see Salmivalli & Peets, 2009; van Kuik Fast & Langevin, 2010). This perspective on bullying has led to the suggestion that bullying intervention should seek to build positive relationships between all children involved in bullying, including children who

bully, those who are bullied, and those who are bystanders (Craig & Pepler, 2008). Because of the central role played by the peer group, it has also been suggested that intervention should focus on changing peers' positive attitudes toward bullying and encouraging the peer group to oppose bullying and defend bullied children, in addition to addressing the difficulty that individual children who bully may have in empathizing with and taking the perspective of children they bully (Card & Hodges, 2008; Swearer et al., 2009; van Kuik Fast & Langevin, 2010).

Bullying and Communication Disorders

Children with communication disorders, including children with negative communication attitudes, children with specific language impairment (SLI), and children who stutter, may be at a higher risk of being bullied than are children without communication disorders (Blood & Blood, 2007; Conti-Ramsden & Botting, 2004; Davis et al., 2002; Knox & Conti-Ramsden, 2003; Langevin et al., 1998; Storch, Krain, Kovacs, & Barlas, 2002).

Children with negative communication attitudes. Storch, Krain, Kovacs, and Barlas (2002) examined the relationships between children's beliefs about their communication abilities, and victimization, depression, and loneliness. These authors found that children who had negative attitudes about their ability to communicate reported higher levels of bullying, as well as greater levels of depression and loneliness when compared to children who had positive attitudes about their communicative abilities. Furthermore, being victimized was more strongly associated to depression and loneliness for children who had negative communication beliefs as compared to children who did not have negative communication beliefs. The authors concluded that having communicative difficulties may increase the risk of bullied children to experience social and psychological problems.

Specific language impairment and bullying. Specific language impairment (SLI) is defined as a communication disorder that is limited to problems with language, including grammar, vocabulary, and the social use of language, in the absence of concomitant problems such as cognitive impairment

or deficits in other areas (Paul, 2007). Although Conti-Ramsden and Botting (2004) and Knox and Conti-Ramsden (2003) found that children with SLI were at a three times greater risk of being bullied than were their classmates, Lindsay, Dockrell, and Mackie (2008) found no significant difference between the number of bullying risk factors reported by children with SLI, children with learning disabilities only, and normally developing children. Nevertheless, the children with SLI in Lindsay et al.'s study reported high rates of bullying: 28% reported risk factors for physical bullying and 54% reported risk factors for verbal bullying.

Children who stutter and bullying. Stuttering can range in severity from mild to severe; therefore, its interference with effective communication varies from slight to crippling. Studies with children who stutter indicate that between 37.5% and 83% of children who stutter are bullied (Blood & Blood, 2007; Davis et al., 2002; Hugh-Jones & Smith, 1999; Langevin et al., 1998). These data reflect bullying about stuttering and about other things. When teasing and bullying about stuttering only is considered, Langevin et al. (1998) found that 59% of the 27 participants reported being teased or bullied about their stuttering. Of these children, 56% were teased once a week or more often. Participants in this study also reported that they found teasing or bullying about stuttering to be more upsetting than teasing or bullying about other things.

Bullying behaviours reported by children who stutter and by adults who stutter who experienced bullying as children included mimicking and making fun of stuttering, name-calling, rumour-spreading, threats, and physical bullying (Hugh-Jones & Smith, 1999; Langevin et al., 1998). Notably, in two studies, being bullied was not found to be related to the severity of a child's stuttering (Davis et al., 2002; Langevin et al., 1998), although Hugh-Jones and Smith (1999) did find that adults who reported having stuttered more severely as children were more likely to also report having been bullied. Hugh-Jones and Smith also found that males and respondents who had trouble making friends as children were more likely to report having been bullied.

Children who stutter have been found to be more likely to have social difficulties that may both put them at greater risk for being bullied, and result from being bullied. Children who stutter were found to be less popular, and more likely to be rejected by their peers than other children (Davis et al., 2002). Children who stutter in this study also were more frequently categorized by classmates as ‘seeking help’, a perception that suggests uncertainty or helplessness. These authors concluded that children who stutter seem to be viewed negatively by their peers and have lower social status. These findings are consistent with those of Langevin and colleagues who, across two studies (Langevin, Kleitman, Packman, & Onslow, 2009; Langevin, 2009), found that approximately one-fifth of the peer group held negative to very negative attitudes toward children who stutter.

Emotional difficulties may also place children who stutter at risk for being bullied, and being bullied may lead to further emotional difficulties. Blood and Blood (2007) found that boys who stutter reported higher levels of anxiety than boys who did not stutter, and that boys who stutter who reported frequent bullying were even more likely to report higher levels of anxiety. In addition to anxiety, adult participants in Hugh-Jones and Smith (1999) reported that being bullied had the following short-term consequences: loss of self-confidence and low self-esteem, social withdrawal, feeling ashamed and depressed, and becoming wary of others. Reports of severe bullying were also related to reports of more negative effects on schoolwork and bullying also was perceived to increase levels of stuttering (Hugh-Jones & Smith, 1999).

Coping Strategies

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) defined coping as “constantly changing cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person” (p. 141). It is important to note in this definition that coping is a dynamic process, not an ability that an individual can possess. In addition, this definition intentionally avoids implying that coping entails either a positive or a negative outcome.

Coping strategies may be described as avoidant strategies or approach strategies (Shelley & Craig, 2010). This classification system has been recognized as particularly appropriate for describing the strategies used to cope with bullying (Houbre et al., 2010). Avoidant strategies include cognitive distancing, ignoring the bullying, internalizing, and externalizing. These strategies are avoidant because they do not address the reason for the bullying; however, they may help children to manage their cognitive or emotional reactions to the bullying. In contrast, approach strategies involve confronting the cause of the bullying, for example, by seeking social support or by using conflict resolution.

Coping Strategies and Bullying

Research into coping strategies used by typical school-age children to deal with bullying has examined the relationship between coping strategy use and age, gender, and situational variables, the effectiveness of various coping strategies, and the psychological and social outcomes of their use. The majority of studies have used questionnaires to gather child self-report, peer report, and teacher report data. Two studies used interviews (Oliver & Candappa, 2007; Kanetsuna, Smith, & Morita, 2006). Only one used direct observations of bullying encounters (Mahady Wilton, Craig, & Pepler, 2000). Some studies asked children about their actual behaviour, while three studies used hypothetical bullying or conflict scenarios to elicit suggestions about coping behaviour from the participants (Camodeca & Goossens, 2005; Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2004; Andreou, 2001).

Children most frequently reported coping with bullying by ignoring it or by telling someone in order get help and support (Craig et al., 2007; Kristensen & Smith, 2003; Naylor, Cowie, & del Rey, 2001; Salmivalli, Karhunen, & Lagerspetz, 1996; Smith & Shu, 2000). Responding aggressively was also frequently reported by boys (Craig et al., 2007; Salmivalli et al., 1996). Mahady Wilton et al. (2000) used observational methods, rather than self-report, to determine how children respond to being bullied. The most common coping strategies these researchers observed were ignoring or distraction, and verbal and physical aggression for both boys and girls. However, these researchers were only able to observe immediate and externally visible responses to bullying.

Age. Participants in the studies reviewed ranged in age from Kindergarten students (Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2004) to 15-year-olds (Kristensen & Smith, 2003). Investigations of the relationship between age and coping strategy use have yielded some fairly consistent results. Older children were less likely to tell someone about bullying than younger children (Oliver & Candappa, 2007; Hunter & Boyle, 2004; Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2004; Kristensen & Smith, 2003; Naylor et al., 2001). Older children also were more likely to believe that aggression was effective and were more likely to ignore bullying episodes (Camodeca & Goossens, 2005; Craig et al., 2007; Smith & Shu, 2000). More often than older children, younger children were found to respond to bullying by crying and running away (Smith & Shu, 2000) or by internalizing (Kristensen & Smith, 2003). However, in hypothetical situations, younger children were more likely to endorse using conflict resolution than older children (Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2004).

Gender. Studies have found that girls were more likely than boys to report having told someone about bullying experiences, or to endorse doing so (Craig et al., 2007; Hunter & Boyle, 2004; Hunter, Mora-Merchan, & Ortega, 2004; Kristensen & Smith, 2003; Naylor et al., 2001; Smith & Shu, 2000). Girls also have been found to be more likely than boys to respond to bullying with helplessness (Smith & Shu, 2000; Salmivalli et al., 1996) or internalizing (Kristensen & Smith, 2003). However, Camodeca and Goossens (2005) found that girls chose assertive responses in hypothetical situations more often than did boys. On the other hand, boys were more likely than girls to report or to endorse aggressive reactions to bullying (Craig et al., 2007; Kristensen & Smith, 2003; Smith & Shu, 2000; Salmivalli et al., 1996). However, gender-specific attitudes about aggression and seeking help may change with age. In a retrospective study by Hunter et al. (2004), both male and female undergraduate students rated aggressive responses as ineffective, and males also rated getting help from friends as an effective strategy. Mahady Wilton et al. (2000) found no differences between boys and girls in their immediate responses to bullying. Whereas many gender differences were found in the self-report literature, the results of this study

indicated that boys' and girls' immediate reactions to bullying may be more similar than different.

Situational variables. The use of coping strategies may be influenced by how long the bullying has gone on, the bullied child's degree of perceived control, and the stressfulness of a situation. Martin and Gillies (2004) found that students who were bullied for more than four weeks and who had no perceived control over the situation used denial, avoidance, and wishful thinking as coping strategies more than students who were bullied for shorter durations. Furthermore, students who perceived bullying to be very stressful used less constructive forms of coping, such as rumination, intrusive thoughts, emotional and physiological arousal, and impulsive actions.

Effectiveness. In general, the strategies that children most often recommended or judged to be the most effective were ignoring the bullying, being assertive, and telling someone (Camodeca & Goossens, 2005; Craig et al., 2007; Hunter et al., 2004; Kanetsuna et al., 2006; Martin & Gillies, 2004). Some studies have specifically examined the relationship between approach and avoidant coping strategies and bullying resolution or perpetuation. Avoidant strategies, such as verbally or physically aggressive responses to bullying, externalizing, internalizing, helpless behaviours, and cognitive distancing have been found to be associated with higher levels of victimization (Houbre et al., 2010; Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2004; Kochenderfer-Ladd & Skinner, 2002; Mahady Wilton et al., 2000; Salmivalli et al., 1996; Shelley & Craig, 2010). However, other avoidant strategies, such as avoiding or ignoring the bullying, and acting nonchalant have been found to be associated with decreased bullying (Mahady Wilton et al., 2000; Salmivalli et al., 1996). Although these avoidant strategies may temporarily de-escalate a bullying situation, they do not address a long-term solution to the problem (Houbre et al., 2010; Mahady Wilton et al., 2000). The approach strategy of conflict resolution, that is, taking constructive action to change the situation, has been found to be effective for decreasing bullying (Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2004; Mahady Wilton et al., 2000). The second approach strategy, seeking social support, generally has been found to be effective (Houbre et al., 2010;

Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2004); however, Shelley and Craig (2010) found that the effectiveness of this strategy differed based on the sex of the child who was bullied. These authors found that seeking social support for girls predicted lower levels of victimization; however, boys who sought social support encountered higher levels of victimization.

Psychological and social outcomes of coping strategy use. Two studies have investigated the effect that coping strategy use has on social and emotional variables, such as peer acceptance or rejection, social problems, depression, loneliness, and externalizing. Avoidant coping strategies, such as cognitive distancing, aggressive responses, and internalizing have been linked to social and emotional difficulties (Kochenderfer-Ladd & Skinner, 2002; Hampel, Manhal, & Hayer, 2009). On the other hand, the approach strategies of problem solving and seeking social support have had mixed outcomes. Hampel et al. (2009) found that children who used problem solving experienced fewer emotional regulation difficulties and Kochenderfer-Ladd and Skinner (2002) found that boys who used problem solving were less lonely and were rated by teachers as having fewer social problems. However, both boys and girls who used problem solving were more likely to be rejected by peers (Kochenderfer-Ladd & Skinner, 2002). Seeking social support was linked to fewer emotional regulation difficulties in both boys and girls and to positive social outcomes in girls only (Kochenderfer-Ladd & Skinner, 2002; Hampel et al., 2009). However, seeking social support was also associated with greater loneliness and rejection for boys (Kochenderfer-Ladd & Skinner, 2002).

Coping Strategies and Children Who Stutter

Little is known about the coping strategies that children who stutter use in response to being bullied. However, some research has been done with peers of children who stutter, school SLPs, and adults who stutter to gather recommendations for how children who stutter can best respond to teasing or bullying. In addition, attention has been given to interventions that SLPs can implement to help children who stutter cope with bullying and improve their social relations with their classmates.

Research with children who stutter. Two sources were found that focused on the coping strategies used by children who stutter to deal with bullying. Davis et al. (2002) found that children who stutter often had social status similar to many of their peers. They also found that children who stutter were more frequently described as ‘co-operative’, and were infrequently described as ‘leaders’. The authors posited that these results may suggest that children who stutter try to fit in with their peers as a way to avoid being bullied. In two case studies involving children who stutter who were teased, Langevin, Kully, and Ross-Harold (2007) reported that the teasing ended when one child’s friends stood up for him and when the other child’s teacher stepped in.

Recommendations of peers, school SLPs, and adults who stutter. Three studies were found that included recommendations for how children who stutter should respond to bullying. These recommendations were made by peers of children who stutter (Link & Tellis, 2006), school SLPs (Blood, Boyle, Blood, & Nalesnik, 2010), and adults who stutter who had been bullied as children (Hugh-Jones & Smith, 1999). All three groups recommended that children who stutter who are bullied should tell an adult or ignore it. SLPs and adults who stutter also recommended that children who stutter should be assertive or stand up for themselves. However, SLPs primarily recommended ignoring and assertiveness in situations of relational bullying, whereas they recommended telling an adult and getting help from friends in cases of verbal and physical bullying. Peers of children who stutter had additional suggestions: discussing stuttering with the class or having a teacher do so, finding other friends, and getting speech therapy. Adults who stutter also recommended getting speech therapy.

Research with school SLPs who read bullying vignettes about a child who stutters revealed that these practitioners’ ratings of seriousness and their likelihood of intervening were highest for physical bullying, followed by verbal bullying, and lowest for relational bullying (Blood et al., 2010). Furthermore, SLPs reported that they were more likely to take action in cases of physical bullying, whereas in cases of verbal and relational bullying, they reported that they would use more passive strategies, such as giving advice to the child who

stutters. Blood et al. (2010) point out that if SLPs consider some types of bullying to be less serious and are unlikely to intervene, children who stutter will be less likely to tell SLPs about these episodes. The researchers indicated that there is need for SLPs to have greater knowledge about the various types of bullying and an appreciation of the seriousness of verbal and relational bullying, in particular.

Interventions for children who stutter who are bullied. A number of researchers have outlined intervention measures that can be implemented by SLPs to help children who stutter deal with bullying. Common main components of these interventions included informing the child about the nature of bullying, talking about different ways to respond to teasing and bullying, and preparing classroom presentations to teach peers about stuttering (Langevin, 2000; Langevin et al., 2007; Murphy, Yaruss, & Quesal, 2007; Turnbull, 2006; Murphy & Quesal, 2002). Children who stutter were also taught to discriminate between fun teasing and teasing that was meant to harm (Langevin, 2000; Langevin, et al., 2007; Murphy & Quesal, 2002). These programs also sought to increase assertiveness and self-esteem, and to encourage children who stutter to present information about stuttering and bullying to their classmates. Turnbull's (2006) approach was slightly different. In this method, the presentation to the classmates of the child who stutters was carried out by two speech-language pathologists and the child in the classroom who stutters was not identified. Unique to Langevin (2000) and Langevin et al. (2007) was the parent-child component of the intervention in which children who stutter discussed bullying with their parents. In Langevin et al. (2007), parents also participated in a seminar about bullying. Role-playing was a key component of all of these intervention programs, and was used to help children who stutter practice and evaluate response strategies generated in discussion with the clinician.

Murphy et al. (2007), Langevin et al. (2007), and Turnbull (2006) all included a case study in their respective reports to demonstrate the positive outcomes of their programs. Murphy et al. used pre- and post-intervention measures to track changes in a 9-year-old boy's understanding of bullying, feelings about being bullied and attitudes about his communication and stuttering.

They also used informal observation and long-term follow-up with the child, his parents, his clinician, and the classroom teacher to determine the benefit of the bullying component of their therapy. They found that the boy enjoyed the role-playing exercises and his presentation to his classmates, and he no longer reported concerns about being bullied. In Turnbull's case study, the 10-year-old girl and her classroom teacher gave positive feedback about the presentation made by the speech-language pathologists. In both Murphy et al. and Turnbull, it was reported that the classroom presentations had been positively received by the children's classmates. Langevin et al. (2007) reported on outcomes for a boy who participated in their program. Prior to therapy, older and younger children at school had teased him severely. At two months post-treatment, the child's parents reported that the teasing had stopped and that he felt more liked and accepted by his peers.

Summary

The topics of bullying, stuttering, and coping strategies have all received considerable research attention. However, the nature of the bullying experiences of children who stutter and the coping strategies that they use to deal with these experiences have not been adequately investigated. Methods that have been used to study the bullying experienced by children who stutter include questionnaires (Blood & Blood, 2007; Hugh-Jones & Smith, 1999; Langevin et al., 1998) and peer nomination of 'bullied' classmates (Davis et al., 2002). These approaches have yielded quantifiable data regarding the type and frequency of bullying, as well as some of its correlates, such as anxiety and social difficulties. However, a questionnaire cannot provide the in-depth information that is required to truly understand bullying experiences from the point of view of children who stutter.

Additionally, there is a dearth of research into the nature of the coping strategies used by children who stutter in response to bullying. The majority of the research in this area reports on recommendations that were made by others for how children who stutter should respond to bullying. The effectiveness of these recommended strategies remains unknown. In addition, research by Blood et al.

(2010) revealed that SLPs may have erroneous views regarding the seriousness of verbal and relational bullying. Therefore, these clinicians may not have the requisite knowledge to effectively respond to reported bullying events.

Consequently, this study aimed to describe the bullying experiences of children who stutter and the coping strategies they use in response. In addition, this study sought to gather recommendations directly from children who stutter regarding potentially effective responses to bullying and what adults can do to help children who stutter who are teased or bullied. These results were intended to provide information that SLPs, parents, and allied professionals (e.g., teachers, school counselors, and principals) could use in helping children who stutter respond constructively to teasing and bullying.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of the bullying experiences of children who stutter and the nature of the coping strategies that they use to deal with these experiences. This study employed a qualitative approach because qualitative research is used to explore social or human problems with the goal of building a “complex, holistic picture” (Creswell, 1998, p. 15) of the participants’ experiences. In particular, grounded theory methods were adopted to guide data collection and analysis, facilitating the construction of descriptive categories with defined properties, and revealing relationships between categories. The analysis resulted in an “analytic story” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 63) that narrates the process by which children who stutter experience and respond to bullying and describes individual factors that influence this process.

Research Questions

Specifically, this study investigated:

1. The nature of bullying experiences reported by children who stutter, including
 - a. The type of bullying experienced and the context in which the bullying occurred
 - b. Whether they perceived the bullying to be related to their stuttering
 - c. Their perceptions of the impact (e.g., psychological, emotional, social) of the bullying on them
2. The nature of coping strategies that children who stutter reported using in response to bullying, including
 - a. The type of strategies
 - b. Their perceptions of elements in their environment (e.g., people, anti-bullying programs) that played a role in their choice of and use of coping strategies

- c. Their perceptions of the outcomes (i.e., psychological, emotional, social) and effectiveness (e.g., in terms of reducing the bullying or diminishing any negative impact of the bullying) of these strategies

This study also examined participants' perceptions of their current levels of stuttering when talking with peers and how stuttering impacted their relationships with friends and classmates. This information provided a context within which to interpret the interview data and may assist readers in determining the transferability of the findings, or the degree to which the results can be applied to other children (see Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Design

The design of this research was informed by the principles and methods of grounded theory, a qualitative methodology that is used to investigate and delineate social processes (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007; Skeat & Perry, 2007; Charmaz, 2006; Charmaz, 2000). Grounded theory uses inductive guidelines to collect and analyze data with the goal of developing a theoretical framework that explains the data (Charmaz, 2000). Grounded theory was especially appropriate for this project as it was originally developed as a tool to uncover and explain social processes and lead to the development of a theoretical framework in areas where no such theory exists (Skeat & Perry, 2007).

Specifically, a constructivist rendering of grounded theory, as described by Charmaz (2006), shaped the perspective of this project. Constructivism is the view that truth is neither objective, that is, discoverable, nor subjective, that is, imposed by the subject on the object; rather, individuals construct meaning via interactions with other human beings and their world (Crotty, 1998). Constructivist grounded theory recognizes that the researcher is not a discrete spectator during the data collection process (Charmaz, 2006). Instead, the researcher is in dynamic contact with the situation or individual under study, and is engaged in an active process of constructing meaning with the information that is given.

This research used one-on-one, semi-structured, in-depth interviews for data collection as interviews are a primary method for carrying out grounded theory research (Creswell, 1998). Seidman (2006) wrote, “interviewing provides access to the context of people’s behaviour and thereby provides a way for researchers to understand the meaning of that behaviour” (p. 10). Semi-structured interviews permitted the interviewer to probe areas of interest and follow up on interesting or unforeseen topics. This flexibility is an important aspect of grounded theory (Charmaz, 1990). Drawing on the critical-incident technique (Byrne, 2001; Stitt-Gohdes, Lambrecht, & Redmann, 2000), at the beginning of each interview, the participant described a particularly memorable bullying experience, including the context of the experience, the actions taken by the participant, and the results of these actions.

Participants

As shown in Table 1, participants were two girls and five boys who ranged in age from 10 to 13 years. Two of the participants were receiving therapy for stuttering at the time of the interview, but the remaining children had received therapy in the past. To be included in this study, participants needed to be between 8 and 14 years of age and have been diagnosed as stuttering by a speech-language pathologist. Participants self-selected for this study based on the requirement that they had been teased or bullied and that they were willing to speak to the researcher in an interview about their experiences.

Table 1: *Participant Demographics*

	Age	Grade	Still receiving treatment?
David	10	Home-schooled	No
Nicholas	11	Grade 5	Yes
Noah	11	Grade 6	No
Mike	11	Grade 6	Yes
Alex	12	Grade 7	No
Paige	13	Grade 8	No
Sophia	13	Grade 8	No

Note. All names are pseudonyms

Recruitment Procedures

Creswell (1998) suggested that interviews with 20 to 30 participants yield sufficient detail for theory generation in grounded theory. In grounded theory, interviews are conducted until theoretical saturation is reached, which occurs when interview data no longer provide additional information to the identified categories, and when these categories are sufficiently elaborated (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). However, it has been shown that saturation of categories can occur within the first 12 interviews (Guest, Bunce & Johnson, 2006). Therefore, this pilot study began with the goal of recruiting 12 participants. Due to time constraints that governed the completion of this thesis, slower than expected recruitment, and the fact that sufficient data had been collected to reveal preliminary findings that could provide a foundation for future data collection and thematic analyses, recruitment for this thesis was terminated after seven interviews. Thus, this pilot study represents the first phase of data collection and analysis in a study that will be continued at the Institute for Stuttering Treatment and Research (ISTAR) until saturation has been reached.

After approval was obtained from the Human Research Ethics Board on August 24, 2009, recruitment began through the Edmonton and Calgary offices of ISTAR. In total, 64 recruitment packages that contained a personally addressed cover letter of invitation from ISTAR, the recruitment poster, the parent and child information sheets, and the parent consent form (shown in Appendices A to E) were sent to past clients of ISTAR who met the inclusion criteria. These families then received follow-up phone calls or phone messages made by the office manager of ISTAR and later by the researcher. Families who were interested in the study either returned the call or indicated their interest when they were contacted. From the recruitment efforts through ISTAR, eight families expressed interest in the study. Unfortunately, two families withdrew at the last minute; therefore, interviews with six of the interested children were completed.

Other avenues of recruitment were also explored. Approval to recruit through Alberta Health Services, Edmonton Region was sought and resulted in the recruitment of one participant. Private practitioners of speech-language

pathology who worked with school-age children in the Edmonton area were also contacted. These clinicians were sent information about the study and were invited to pass the information along to the families of children who stutter who fit the inclusion criteria. In addition, a poster that presented the rationale for the study was presented at the Alberta College of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists (ACSLPA) Conference in November 2009. Handouts of the recruitment poster and information letters were prepared for SLPs who expressed interest; however, this effort did not result in further recruitment.

Data Collection Measures and Procedures

Semi-Structured Interviews

Interviews lasted between 30 minutes and one hour. Two interviews were conducted at ISTAR in the City of Edmonton and five took place in the participants' homes. The interviews were audio-recorded with a high quality digital audio recorder and field notes were taken to supplement the interview data. Before each interview took place, informed consent was obtained from the participant's parent and assent was given by the child. Each participant was verbally reminded of the purpose of the project, that the interview would be recorded, that his or her name would not be used, and that he or she was free to end the interview at any time without penalty. The interview guide is shown in Appendix F.

Transcription of Interviews

The researcher transcribed each interview verbatim. The majority of the transcriptions were done immediately following the interview. During transcription, all names were replaced with a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality.

Self Rating of Effects of Stuttering

When the interview ended, participants completed a questionnaire, the Self Rating of Effects of Stuttering on Children Who Stutter-Adapted (SRES-A; Langevin & Kully, 2009), which was adapted for this study (Appendix G). The information from this scale was gathered in order to assist readers in determining the transferability of the findings. The SRES-A asks children to rate how much

stuttering affects their interactions with friends and with other children at school, how much their stuttering bothers them, and to rate their current levels of stuttering. The SRES-A comprises five items that measure the effects of stuttering on children and uses a 7-point Likert rating scale. Participants were asked to circle the response that was most appropriate for them, with options ranging from stuttering having no impact (i.e., 0 = “not at all”) to stuttering having a profound impact (i.e., 6 = “a lot”). Mean scores for each participant were derived by summing item scores and dividing by the total number of items endorsed. For example, if only four items were answered, then the total score was divided by 4 rather than by 5. As shown in Appendix G, a mean score of 0.1 to 1 denotes a mild effect, a mean score of 1.1 to 2 denotes mild to moderate effects and so on, with profound effects being reflected in mean scores of 5.1 to 6. If children respond with a rating greater than 1, they were given the opportunity to comment on their response.

Data Analysis

Characteristic of grounded theory, data analysis was viewed as beginning with the first interview and occurring simultaneously with data collection and transcription (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). As each interview progressed, the researcher was actively involved in understanding the meaning of each participant’s experiences and asking follow-up questions to clarify their meanings. This process of constructing meaning continued as the researcher transcribed each successive interview and began to make comparisons between them. This ongoing analysis prompted a number of amendments to the interview guide. For example, after the second interview, a question was added to the guide to ask what participants thought parents could do to help their child if he or she was experiencing teasing or bullying.

The analysis began more formally with careful readings of each transcript. Short memos of thoughts and impressions were written in the margins. Then, coding was commenced, which involved using labels to describe ideas that the researcher identified in the data. First, line-by-line coding was conducted, in

which each line of text was scrutinized for meaning. This initial coding resulted in a preliminary list of categories. Using NVivo8 (QSR International, 2008), the content of the first five interviews was coded for incidents that illustrated these categories. Then, each category and the incidents illustrating it were considered individually and memos were written about each category. In this phase, constant comparison was used to compare incidents within categories to one another in order to shed light on the properties of these categories (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Further consideration of the data led to the creation of new categories and to others being discarded or amended.

As the analysis progressed, the categories were grouped into themes and their relationships were probed. The memos for each category were revised, the properties of each category were summarized, and the researcher shared her emerging analysis with her supervisor in the process of peer debriefing. This feedback was subsequently integrated into the memos. Once an adequate understanding of the categories had been reached, the sixth and seventh interviews were coded for instances of each category. As a result, further changes were made to the properties of the themes and categories and some categories were added. Diagramming was especially useful at this stage to organize thoughts and illustrate the links between categories. Finally, the results of the analysis were shaped into a narrative with the goal of communicating the findings to others. This writing process further developed the researcher's understanding of the themes and categories and sharpened her conceptualization of how the themes and categories were related.

Trustworthiness

Qualitative research cannot be evaluated in the same way as quantitative research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) explained that the quantitative concepts of validity, reliability, and objectivity cannot be applied to research in the naturalistic paradigm due to the vastly different assumptions of qualitative and quantitative research. Consequently, these authors introduced the concepts of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability for naturalistic studies as ways to demonstrate trustworthiness.

Credibility. Credibility is established through the use of appropriate procedures or sources that allow for accurate representation and interpretation of the findings (Jensen, 2008; Saumure & Given, 2008). The credibility of this research project was enhanced through the use of informal member checks (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), in which the researcher frequently summarized her understanding of the participants' comments and asked them to provide confirmation or correction, as the interview progressed. Credibility also was improved through triangulating sources, or checking interpretations from one participant with those of another participant. The researcher also employed negative case analysis, or the process of seeking instances in the data that did not fit with current categories, and then revising these categories to account for the anomalous data. Credibility was further developed by peer debriefing, in which the researcher discussed the project with a colleague who could question the investigator's biases, methods, and findings, and provide different perspectives for consideration. Finally, the use of good quality recording equipment and the supplementation of transcription with field notes and memory support the credibility of the written transcripts, which were the primary data source (Poland, 2008).

Transferability. The transferability of a study's findings to a particular context is judged by the consumer of the research with the help of thick description, supplied by the researcher. In this pilot study, the researcher sought to provide the reader with detailed descriptions of the methods and the participants in order to assist readers in determining the transferability of the findings to their particular circumstances. Because saturation was not reached in this study, the findings are preliminary. Therefore, transferability of findings is limited and should be viewed with caution.

Dependability and confirmability. Dependability is established by providing sufficient information about the study procedures to allow for the appropriateness of inquiry decisions and any methodological shifts to be evaluated (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Confirmability relates to the degree to which the study findings are supported by the data and not subject to researcher bias. In

order to establish dependability and confirmability, the research procedures were carefully documented, including a record of changes to the interview guide, dated records of recruitment and data analysis strategies, and dated memos, notes, and diagrams showing the researcher's evolving understanding of the data. This documentation was kept and organized with the goal of leaving an "audit trail": "a thorough collection of documentation regarding all aspects of the research" (Rodgers, 2008, p. 43). In order to further assure confirmability, the researcher recorded personal reflections, recognition of biases, and reactions to the data in a reflective journal (Ortlipp, 2008). Some information regarding the researcher's experiences will be provided here in order to build confirmability. The researcher was not bullied as a child, but did witness bullying of a friend in Grade 6. Although the researcher does not stutter, she has family members who do, and it was her family history of stuttering that prompted her to complete this project. The researcher is a student SLP who has had only minimal exposure to treating children and adults who stutter.

A Note on Terminology: Teasing Versus Bullying

When participants were interviewed, the terms "teasing" and "bullying" were used to refer to their experiences. Although teasing is considered to be a subtype of bullying, it was decided to use both terms so that participants would not be forced to label their experiences as bullying if they preferred to use the term teasing, or another term, like "bugging" as in, "I got bugged on my stuttering". In this report, the term bullying is used as an umbrella term that encompasses the meaning of the term teasing. The term teasing is used alone only to specifically refer to situations in which this term more accurately describes a particular participant's experiences.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The purpose of this pilot research was to gain an initial understanding of the experiences that children who stutter have with bullying and how they respond to bullying. A grounded theory approach was used in the collection and analysis of interview data, which led to an initial conceptualization of the process of experiencing and responding to bullying and the emergence of two themes: Individual Factors and Recommendations. Individual factors were found to have an important influence on the process of experiencing and responding to bullying and the recommendations are based on participants' evaluations of response strategies that may be helpful or unhelpful for other children who stutter, and suggestions for how adults may best help children who stutter who are bullied.

Participant Information

Overview of Bullying Experienced and Self-Rating of Stuttering

Table 2 presents information about the bullying experiences of each participant. Table 3 presents SRES-A ratings. These data provide information that can assist readers in determining the transferability of the findings to individual children who stutter with whom they work.

Table 2: *Overview of Bullying Experiences*

	Types of Bullying	Teased or bullied about stuttering?	Still bullied?
David	Social exclusion Teasing/ Verbal bullying	Yes	Yes
Nicholas	Physical bullying Teasing/ Verbal bullying	Yes	Yes
Noah	Physical bullying Teasing/ Verbal bullying	Yes	No
Mike	Teasing/ Verbal bullying Social exclusion	Yes	Very little
Alex	Teasing/ Verbal bullying Physical bullying	Yes	No
Paige	Teasing/ Verbal bullying	Yes	Yes
Sophia	Teasing/ Verbal bullying	Yes	Yes

Table 3: *Self-Rating of Effects of Stuttering on Children Who Stutter (SRES-A) Scores*

	David	Nicholas	Noah	Mike	Alex	Paige	Sophia
How much does your stuttering interfere with or affect talking with your friends?	0.5	2	1	0	1	3	1
How much does your stuttering interfere with making new friends?	3	3	0	2	1	0	4
How much does your stuttering interfere with talking with other kids at school?	N/A	2	1	0	2	5	2.5
How much does your stuttering bother you?	1	1	0	6	0	3	2
How much do you think you usually stutter when talking with kids?	3	1	0	1	1	3	2.5
Effect of stuttering: mean score ^a and interpretation	1.9 mild-moderate	1.8 mild-moderate	0.4 mild	1.8 mild-moderate	1.0 mild	2.8 moderate	2.4 moderate

Note. Response options range from 0 (not at all) to 6 (a lot).

^aMean scores of 0 = no effect, 0.1 to 1 = mild effects, 1.1 to 2 = mild-moderate effects, 2.1 to 3 = moderate effects, 3.1 to 4 = moderate-severe effects, 4.1 to 5 = severe effects, 5.1 to 6 = profound effects.

Types of Bullying Experienced and Current Status

As shown in Table 2, all participants experienced teasing or verbal bullying and all were teased or bullied about their stuttering. Three participants reported physical bullying and two reported social exclusion.

David described instances in which he was excluded from social situations, but he did not attribute this exclusion to his stuttering. David was first excluded by other children when he was 8 years old. At the time of the interview,

he reported that he continued to be left out frequently by peers. He had also experienced occasional teasing about his stuttering.

Nicholas reported that he was currently experiencing frequent and severe physical bullying by classmates, but he did not attribute these experiences to his stuttering. This bullying had begun in the previous school year, but the majority of incidents had occurred in the present school year and did not seem to be decreasing. He also reported an instance in which another child insulted him about his stuttering.

Noah was physically bullied by older children when he in Grade 3. He attributed this bullying to his small size, not his stuttering. In Grade 5, some of his classmates, whom he considered to be his “friends”, began teasing him about his stuttering and about leaving class to go to speech therapy. He described this teasing as happening “constantly” and stated that it continued to get worse until he told his parents about what was happening. At the time of the interview, he was no longer being teased.

Mike reported that the teasing and verbal bullying relating to his stuttering occurred primarily in Grade 4 when he moved to a new city; however, he said that it probably began before that time. The bullying continued into Grade 5, but was not occurring at all, or only rarely, at the time of the interview.

Alex reported that a boy in his class in Grade 4, whom he described as the “class clown” had insulted him about his stuttering. He said that this teasing had not gone on for long. He stated that his current teacher liked to tease the kids in his class and that his teacher would mimic his stutter. However, Alex maintained that the teasing was fun and did not bother him or anyone else in the class. Alex also reported that a group of students had ganged up on him because he got a high average in Math class.

Paige reported that she began to be teased about her stuttering in Grade 2. At the time of the interview, she reported that she was still being teased at school; however, it was happening less often than it had in the past.

Sophia reported instances in which she was teased or insulted about her stuttering, the first of which took place in Grade 2. She said that the teasing still happened “sometimes, but not as often as it used to”.

The Effects of Stuttering on Participants and Their Social Interactions

As shown in Table 3, participants’ SRES-A ratings indicated that the effects of stuttering on their social interactions and themselves ranged from 0.4, reflecting mild effects of stuttering, to 2.8, reflecting moderate effects of stuttering. However, none of the participants experienced a severe or profound effect of stuttering. Consequently, the results of this study may not capture the experiences of children who rate stuttering as having a greater effect on themselves and their social interactions. Comments that participants made about the way in which stuttering interfered with their social interactions or how it bothered them are reported below and provide a more in-depth understanding of the participants’ ratings.

David indicated that his stuttering sometimes bothered him because of “not being able to speak clearly” and that his stuttering moderately affected his ability to make new friends because “they would probably think it’s a disability”.

Noah commented that sometimes stuttering interfered with talking to his friends or other kids at school because it “would make [his friends] pause/wonder” or his stuttering “can make [other kids] think different things of me”. Alex also reported that stuttering interfered with talking with other kids at school, because, “they get tired of waiting and leave.”

Mike wrote that stuttering interfered with making new friends, because “they ask me why I talk so weird”. He rated stuttering as bothering him “a lot” and he commented, “I really don’t want to stutter”. Mike was receiving speech therapy at the time of the interview. Mike’s mother commented that the therapy had been very helpful, and that prior to the therapy, Mike “could hardly talk” (Interview Field Notes, November 27, 2009).

Sophia indicated that stuttering interfered with making new friends. She reported, “I’m more shy because I stutter and when I meet people they sometimes don’t want to be friends with me because they think I’m weird because I stutter.”

She rated stuttering as interfering with talking with other kids at school. She wrote, “because they don’t know me too too well, they will sometimes comment on my stuttering and/or finish my sentences”. She explained that stuttering bothered her, “because I get teased about it and I sometimes don’t feel like I fit in.”

Introduction to Initial Findings

The data analysis resulted in a description of the process of experiencing, processing, and responding to bullying and in the emergence of two themes: Individual Factors and Recommendations. Figure 1 provides a visual representation of the process that this study’s participants were found to go through when they experienced and responded to bullying. This process was comprised of four elements: The Bullying Event, Internal Processing of the Bullying Event, Responding to the Bullying Event, and Internal Processing of the Response. Figure 2, which shows that the elements of the process of experiencing and responding to bullying are housed within the Individual Factors theme, reflects the influence of a child’s individual characteristics and experiences on the entire process. Figure 2 also shows how participants’ experiences with bullying and individual characteristics led to their recommendations for how other children who stutter may respond to bullying and how adults can help. The remainder of this chapter will focus on describing the four elements of the process of experiencing and responding to bullying, the individual factors that may influence this process, and the recommendations that the participants made for other children who stutter and for adults who want to help children who stutter who are teased or bullied.

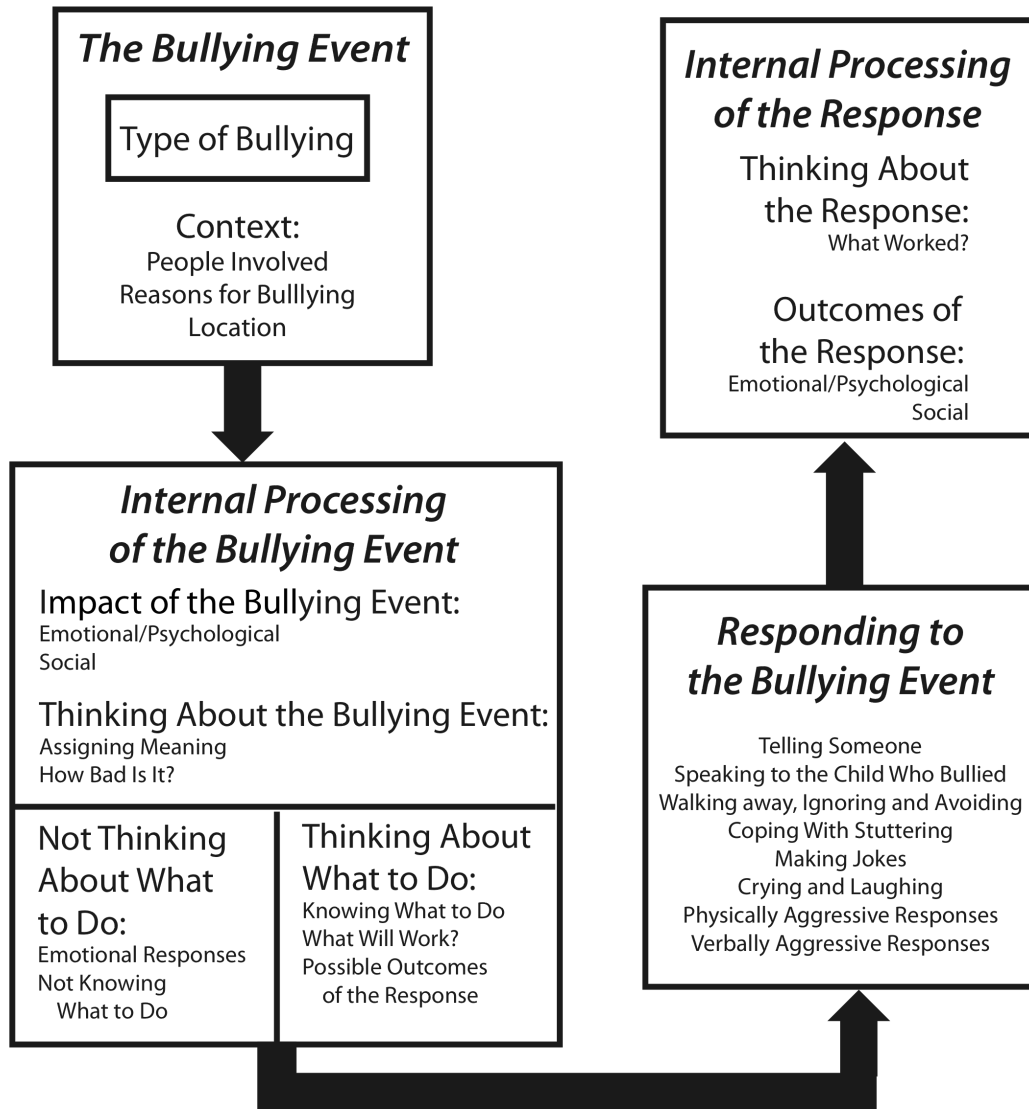


Figure 1. Conceptual schematic of the process of experiencing and responding to bullying

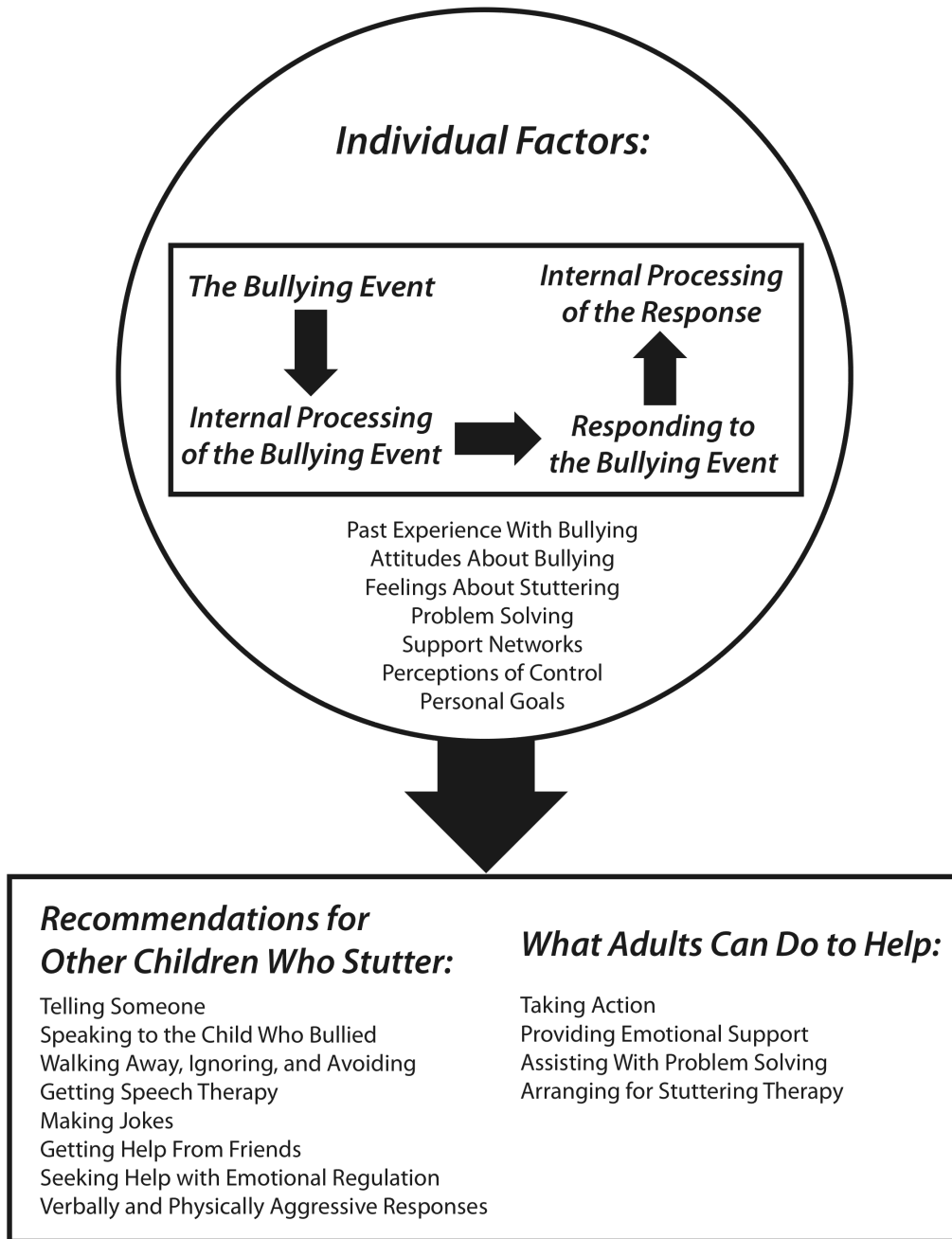


Figure 2. Conceptual schematic of the relationship between the process of experiencing and responding to bullying, individual factors, and recommendations for other children who stutter and what adults can do to help

THE PROCESS OF EXPERIENCING AND RESPONDING TO BULLYING

The Bullying Event

The first element in the process of experiencing and responding to bullying was the bullying event itself. Participants recalled in detail their most memorable bullying experiences. In participants' descriptions of these bullying events, they mentioned the types of bullying they experienced and described contextual factors that influenced or led to the event. These contextual factors included who was involved in the bullying event, participant's relationship with the perpetrators of the bullying, where the bullying event took place, and participants' perceptions of why the bullying occurred.

Types of Bullying Experienced

Participants described a range of bullying experiences, including teasing and verbal bullying, relational bullying, and physical bullying. Usually these events were related to their stuttering, but sometimes they were about other things.

Teasing and verbal bullying. Participants described a range of hurtful verbal behaviours related to their stuttering. They reported being made fun of for how they talked in general, being mimicked, insulted, taunted, called names, sworn at, and being asked ignorant questions about their stuttering. Sophia gave an example of being asked ignorant questions: "it's more just like people asking me, like, 'why are you stuttering? Are you cold?' ... I get a lot of people asking me if I'm cold". Some of the children also reported being teased or verbally bullied for reasons other than their stuttering, such as their hair, things they liked, or receiving speech therapy.

Relational bullying. Three participants, David, Mike, and Nicholas, reported experiencing relational bullying, including exclusion and attempts by the perpetrators to sabotage their social relationships. For example, Mike described how a peer tried to exclude him from playground sports, and Nicholas described

how children in his class spread a rumour that he carried a disease. Only Mike attributed this bullying to his stuttering.

Physical bullying. Noah, Alex, and Nicholas reported physical bullying, including pushing and being bullied by a group of children. Nicholas described the most severe examples of physical bullying, including getting punched in the nose, being choked, and having hand sanitizer sprayed in his eyes. All of these boys indicated that this bullying was unrelated to their stuttering.

Context

Contextual variables included who perpetrated the bullying and the relationship between the perpetrators and the participants, where the bullying occurred, and participants' perceptions of why the bullying occurred (i.e., reasons for the bullying).

People involved and relationship with the perpetrators. The children who bullied the participants were usually peers of approximately the same age, including classmates, cousins, neighbours, and friends. Only Noah mentioned older kids picking on him at school. Participants described incidents in which they were bullied by one child or by a group of two or more children at a time. In situations of group bullying, participants reported that often the bullying was initiated by a single individual, who was then joined by other children. For example, Mike recalled, "we were like in a group and talking, you know, and then a person brought up my stuttering and started making fun of it. Well, it was outside and then, and everybody started doing that too".

Mike had a particularly antagonistic relationship with a boy who bullied him. He declared, "that kid is my enemy since the first day I walked into school", and added, "he thinks it's funny to make fun of people with stuttering problems". Mike described the boy as mean and generally unpopular, but good at managing how adults perceived him: "those teachers... think that he's an angel, but really, he really sucks and everybody hates him".

Paige spoke about how she had lost patience with a boy in her class who had been bothering her since the beginning of the school year. She reported that "he has to get his two words in or get you mad up to a certain level before he'll

give you back [what he took] or say ‘sorry’ or something”. She said, “he’s done it too many times for me to be calm with him”. Her frustration was increased by the fact that the boy’s mother held a position in the community that protected him from negative consequences for his actions.

Nicholas described the girl who bullied him as “very aggressive”, “really mean”, and untrustworthy. For example, he described a time in which he and the girl were about to pinky swear that she would never pick on him again. Instead, the girl punched him in the face. Nicholas stated that there was “a war between me and [the girl who bullied him]”. After the interview, Nicholas’ father mentioned that Nicholas was not the girl’s only target and that although the school staff was doing all they could to address her issues, it appeared that her guardian was not willing to discipline her.

Alex described an unusual case in which it was his teacher who teased and insulted the children in his class. Alex said, “he basically teases everyone in the class. Um, he’ll, he even calls them idiots and they still laugh”. Alex reported that his teacher would mimic his stutter and the class would laugh; however, he claimed that it did not bother him.

Location and the presence of adults. Participants reported that most of their bullying experiences occurred on school property, such as on the playground or school parking lot, in the lunchroom, in the hallways, and even inside the classroom. They also reported being bullied in other places, such as at extra-curricular activities, at a family gathering, or at a friend’s birthday party. The presence of adults in these locations seemed to be an important contextual factor as the absence of adults appeared to permit teasing or bullying that may not have occurred otherwise. For example, Mike commented, “even in class as soon as the teacher’s gone, those people just started it”. Furthermore, when adults were not present, participants were unable to go to them for help.

Reasons for bullying: Participants’ characteristics, behaviours, and social standing. Participants cited their stuttering, other behaviours, and personal characteristics, such as age, physical size, and social disadvantages, as factors that led to their being targeted. As indicated earlier, all participants had been teased or

bullied because of their stuttering. Alex made the connection clear: “during that time I got nervous and started stuttering like crazy, and he took that to his advantage and started, uh, insulting me on that, the stuttering”. In addition to stuttering, some of the participants thought that something else they may have done contributed to their being bullied, although they did not give specific examples of what these behaviours may have been.

Age and physical size also appeared to be a particularly relevant factor for the boys in this study. Noah indicated that he was no longer being bullied in Grade 6, because, “I’m kinda at the top of the school”, but that in Grade 3, when he was being physically bullied by older kids, “I was the smallest in my class”. Informal conversations with Nicholas’ and Alex’s fathers after each boy’s interview lent further support to the idea that age and size influence bullying. Nicholas’ father hoped that Nicholas would start growing soon, and that being bigger would put an end to the bullying he was experiencing. Alex’s father remarked that Alex’s recent growth spurt may have been a factor in reducing the degree of bullying experienced by his son.

Other participants cited social disadvantages, such as being new, having few friends, and being disliked by classmates as contributing to the teasing or bullying. David noted, “we are being left out because we’re just new there” and Mike recalled that when he was bullied in Grade 4, “I practically had no friends”. Nicholas admitted, “I feel really, really hated. I think everyone in my class but my brother hates me”.

Reasons for bullying: Feelings and thoughts of the perpetrators and attitudes of the peer group. Participants perceived that the perpetrators’ feelings and thoughts could have led to the bullying or its cessation. Some of the participants reported that they were targeted because the perpetrators felt jealous of them, or were in a bad mood. Other participants reported that the children who bullied them had stopped because these children were afraid of getting into a fight or because the teasing was “getting boring”. In addition, the perpetrators’ lack of understanding about stuttering and about the impact of bullying was perceived to contribute to the bullying. Noah captured the sentiments of many participants

when he said, “I don’t think that they know how I felt ... like they just did it, not even thinking about it”. Mike also commented on this lack of empathy: “he just thinks that it’s really funny to make fun of people with stuttering problems”.

Many of the participants reported that the attitudes of the peer group toward bullying encouraged bullying. Paige said that bullying was “just normal in our class.... There are people that can tease and bully and the people that really can’t do anything”. She remarked that popular children were considered “cool if they make others feel bad”. David noted that social exclusion was also maintained by peer attitudes: “most people just have their friends, then [*sic*] don’t even care”. Participants also indicated that attitudes among the peer group could change over time and contribute to the cessation of bullying. Mike, who was frequently bullied in Grade 4, said that in Grade 6, at the time of the interview, he was hardly ever bullied. He explained that the attitudes of others had changed: “they just know, like ... it’s not funny” and they understood “how bad it is” to bully others. When a peer started to bully him in Grade 6, Mike said, “nobody just cares anymore, so he just stops”. Paige also indicated that the prevailing group attitudes could change over time. She stated, “kids are maturing about it”.

Peer attitudes toward stuttering also were perceived to encourage bullying or to contribute to the cessation of it. Negative attitudes about stuttering permitted teasing, including mimicking, taunting, and name-calling. For example, a classmate told Paige that her stuttering would bring down their presentation mark because, “no one else in our class stutters as bad as you”. In contrast, positive attitudes about stuttering limited bullying. Paige indicated that her classmates generally accepted her and her stutter: “most of the people in my class respect me, like just cause like it’s something I have, it doesn’t make me a bad person”.

Internal Processing of the Bullying Event

Participants in this pilot study internally processed their bullying experiences in a way that was complex, nuanced, and entirely individual. This internal process was characterized by the following: participants experienced emotional, psychological, and/or social impacts of the bullying event, and they

actively thought about the bullying experience, assigned meaning to it, and judged how “bad” it was. After internally processing the bullying event, participants either responded without thinking about what to do, or they thought about how to respond before doing so. When participants did not think about what to do in advance, their responses resulted from their strong emotional reactions or from not knowing what to do. When participants did think about how to respond, they considered whether they knew what to do and whether a response would “work” to stop the bullying. These elements of internal processing are illustrated on the left side of Figure 1.

Impact of the Bullying Event

Being bullied had an emotional and psychological impact on the participants. In addition, bullying had a social impact that affected participants’ interactions and relationships with peers.

Emotional/psychological impact. Participants all reported reacting emotionally to being bullied. Most reported feeling upset and angry. Mike and Nicholas reported especially intense anger about being bullied. Mike explained, “I felt like I could just break something right now and I could just like scream”. Nicholas’s anger was aimed at the children who bullied him: “I feel really, really, feel like kicking them. Where it hurts”. At another point, he stated, “I had some people I really hated because they were always mean to me. I wanted them dead”.

Many participants reported feeling confused, hurt, sad, or disappointed. When classmates whom Noah considered to be his friends started teasing him about his stuttering, he said that he felt “angry and just sad. It’s like when a person back-stabs you”. Nicholas expressed his disappointment in this way: “I wanted a perfect life. [sigh] Looks like I did not get one”. Some emotions were mentioned by only one participant. Only Nicholas expressed the emotions of fear, guilt, and self-blame. He said, “I hate being left alone. I hate it when my brother actually, my brother actually goes home by himself and I’m left at school”. Although it was unclear what specific events he was referring to, guilt was evident when he said, “I feel like it will haunt my life.... I’ve done things that have haunted me”. He also blamed himself for not being able to defend himself

better. Only Noah talked about feeling “ashamed”, and explained that he did not tell his parents about being bullied because, “I didn’t think that [my parents would] be that pleased with me”. Noah appeared to believe that children who are bullied may give other children a reason to bully them. He explained, “if you didn’t say much or do much, like, they wouldn’t find anything to tease you about or bug you about”. Therefore, a sense that he brought bullying on himself may have contributed to his feelings of shame.

In contrast, some participants indicated that the bullying was not upsetting. In regard to having his stutter mimicked, David said, “I was just like, [laugh], whatever”. Alex perceived teasing about his stuttering to be “funny”. When his teacher would mimic his stutter in front of the class he said, “I chuckle on the inside”.

Social impact. Being bullied affected how participants felt in terms of their position in the peer group. Bullying affected Sophia’s sense of belonging and her self-concept. She reported feeling “that I didn’t really belong, like I wasn’t normal”. Nicholas echoed this sense of ostracism, “I feel really, really hated. I think everyone in my class but my brother hates me”. Being bullied also affected the relationships of participants with their peers. Nicholas described how he distrusted classmates who were friends with the children who bullied him. Other participants indicated that they avoided peers who teased or bullied them.

Thinking About the Bullying Event

At the same time as participants experienced the emotional, cognitive, and social impact of a bullying event, they also showed evidence of engaging in an active process of thinking about the bullying event, in which they assigned meaning to the event and judged how “bad” the situation was.

Assigning meaning to the bullying event. Some participants did not immediately identify bullying behaviour as such, and what they considered to be bullying sometimes changed over time. When Noah’s friends first started making fun of him about his stuttering, he said, “I thought that it was nothing, like they were just playing around, you know. And then it just constantly happened and happened and I thought like, they probably aren’t joking”. The first time David

was socially excluded, he called it bullying, but at the time of the interview, David explained, “it’s always happening, so I don’t quite consider it bullying now, but before it was a big thing”.

Assigning meaning to the bullying event also involved labeling the behaviour as “teasing” or “bullying”. Some participants made a distinction between the terms teasing and bullying by labeling some of their experiences as teasing and others as bullying. For example, Paige said, “I’m usually not *bullied* [italics added] at all in general. I’m usually, I’m more *teased* [italics added]”. David also made a distinction between teasing and bullying: “bullying means being pretty much left out. . . . And, teasing just means, uh, [laugh] what we’re usually doing in our family, just joking all around”. Alex, however, did not differentiate teasing and bullying when he was asked to define these terms. To him, both were hurtful: “teasing or bullying someone is hurting anyone in any specific way. It doesn’t matter if it’s with words or with fists. It’s hurting someone in any way”.

Scrutiny of every instance in which participants used the words “tease/teasing” or “bully/bullying” revealed the following initial findings: (a) physical encounters, like fights, pushing, etc. were always called bullying; (b) teasing always was used to refer to a verbal behaviour, but verbal behaviours were also referred to as bullying; and (c) teasing was sometimes used to refer to verbal behaviours that were perceived to lack an intention to harm, but these behaviours were still hurtful. Although participants used different terminology, teasing events that were upsetting are considered as bullying events in this report.

How bad is it? Bullying was judged to range from “mild” to “really bad”, and this judgment affected how participants responded. The worse a bullying event was judged to be, the more likely the participants were to tell an adult, like a teacher, the Principal, or their parents. However, events were not always judged to be bad enough to warrant telling an adult. Paige said, “usually I can handle it. If it gets bad enough, I will tell the teacher, if they like continually annoy me with it”. How bad a bullying episode was judged to be also appeared to affect whether participants responded with nonchalance, or with aggression. For example, Mike

said, “a kid, he called me stupid, I don’t really swear – I just walk away”; he indicated that he used verbal aggression in response to a bullying event “only if it’s really bad”. There did not appear to be a predictable relationship between the impact of the bullying and how bad the event was perceived to be. Sophia commented that a bullying episode can be “something small but you still feel bad”. Noah admitted that the teasing about his hair “was fun teasing, but it made me feel bad”. That is, he perceived that the teasing was not intended to harm him but he still felt bad.

Not Thinking About What to Do

Participants sometimes did not think about what to do before they responded to the bullying event. Instead, they responded immediately and seemingly instinctively based on their strong emotional responses to the bullying or because they did not know what to do.

Emotional responses. Some participants described how their strong feelings of anger and hurt led them to respond quickly to the bullying, without thinking about what to do first. Paige recalled an episode with a child who frequently teased her and who had stolen one of her pencils:

I went up to him and I said, “Okay, I need it back now” and I stuttered while I was saying it, and *cause I was mad, I didn’t have time to think about it* [italics added]; he just grabbed it and I went after him and I started talking to him.

Mike also described how being angry led him to use aggressive responses to bullying events: “I used to get easily, like angry, and I just started to fight”. Feeling very hurt by bullying caused other participants, such as David, Sophia, and Nicholas, to cry as a result of being bullied. Because these responses lacked careful thought about what to do, they were often judged to be ineffective. For example, immediately after Mike got into a fight with peers who teased him, he recalled asking himself, “why did I just do that?”

Not knowing what to do. Many participants described situations in which they felt that they did not know what to do, especially if it was the first time they were bullied. In these situations, participants tended to respond without thinking carefully about how to respond, and as a result, they often implemented coping

responses that they later judged to be unhelpful. When Sophia reflected on being called a “bee” in Grade 2 because of her stuttering, she said, “I didn’t really know what to do since it was at lunch time and the lunch supervisor like doesn’t really interact with the kids”. As a result, she said, “I just sort of stood there and just sort of cried”. Instead, it was her friend who took action and told the lunch supervisor about the incident. Likewise, the first time David was excluded, he also reported now knowing what to do. He recalled that in this situation, he “cried and told everyone”, actions which he later judged to have been unhelpful.

Thinking About What to Do

In contrast, on some occasions, some participants went through a thought process in which they determined if they knew what to do about the situation, and considered whether a particular response would work to stop the bullying and what the outcomes of using that response might be.

Knowing what to do. Some participants demonstrated confidence in their ability to know what to do and carry it out. When other children mimicked his stuttering, David said, “I think it was just that I, I just knew what to respond”. Some participants knew what to do because of advice they received from various sources, including parents, friends, the school counselor, school presentations about bullying, and written material. For example, Paige described how her friends had observed her early, angry confrontations with children who teased her and had given her ideas for how to respond better the next time. She also mentioned that her friends reminded her to go and tell someone about what was happening when asking the child to stop teasing her was not working. At the time of the interview, Paige reported that she customarily responded to teasing by waiting to calm herself down before approaching the child who teased her. She explained, “I like to calm myself down before I go and talk to the person. Cause then I’ll be calm while I’m explaining it to them”.

What will work? When participants thought about what to do in response to a bullying event, they considered whether the response would be effective in stopping or decreasing the bullying they were experiencing. Mike used aggressive responses because “I thought that by scaring them off, he would stop”. Noah used

avoidance and ignored teasing because he believed that if the children who bullied him did not get a reaction, they would have nothing about which to tease him. Using similar logic, Sophia decided not to explain further about stuttering to children who made fun of her speech because, “I don’t want them to like start again, especially if they can’t like grasp it the first time”.

Possible outcomes of the response. Participants also considered the possible emotional, psychological, and social outcomes of potential responses. Some participants expressed reservations about telling adults because they were afraid that the adults might get upset with them, not believe them, or blame them for what happened. Nicholas said, “I always thought they wouldn’t believe me” and he added, “I’ve actually gotten blamed for things I haven’t done”.

Responding to the Bullying Event

When participants experienced bullying, they processed it internally, as was discussed above, and then they responded by doing something. Most commonly, participants told someone, spoke to the child who bullied them, or walked away, avoided, or ignored the situation. Often, participants used more than one response in a single bullying episode. For example, Mike described a situation in which a classmate who started making fun of his stuttering was joined by other children. He explained that first, he walked away, but, when the children continued to tease and make fun of him, he said, “I couldn’t take it, and I just got into a fight”. As this example illustrates, a bullying event was often a back and forth interaction between the participants and the perpetrators, in which the coping responses of the participants were met with renewed bullying, thus requiring further responses by the participants.

Telling Someone

All participants reported telling someone about the bullying they experienced. They told their peers, including friends, cousins, and classmates, and they told school staff, such as teachers, playground supervisors, the school Principal, and the school counselor. They also told their parents and some

participants told their SLP about being bullied. Feeling bad, unhappy, or unsure of themselves often prompted participants to tell someone about what was happening. Paige stated, “if it makes me feel bad, then I will tell [her mother]”.

Speaking to the Child Who Bullied

When participants reported speaking to the child or children who bullied them, they usually did one of two things. They either asked the other child or children to stop bullying them, or they tried to explain about stuttering. Paige gave an example of how she confronted children who teased her: “I’ll go up to them and I’ll say, ‘that was very rude of what you said. You know I have a stuttering problem, so please don’t bug me about it’”. Sophia said that she would explain to the other children, “I can’t help [stuttering]”. When David spoke to the children who excluded him, he asked them “why they were doing it”. Mike described how he undermined the attempts of a classmate to make fun of his stuttering:

Usually they start, like usually we’re just hanging out and then person starts, he continues, but now like, nobody else cares, so it just... and then I just tell them, I’m not even listening, and I just tell them, “Dude, it’s no use, nobody cares” and he’s like, “phh” and he just walks away.

Walking Away, Ignoring, and Avoiding

With the exception of David, all participants reported using passive strategies in response to teasing and bullying. They described walking away from the child or children who bullied them, ignoring the situation, and attempting to avoid the perpetrators. Noah said, “I just kinda, yah, avoided them. I would not make contact with them at all”. Participants explained that they used these strategies in order to distance themselves from the situation. Noah said, “I just kinda backed off, I didn’t really want to be involved with it”. Nicholas explained, “so I try to ignore people. I want to stay out of things”.

Coping With Stuttering

Participants described strategies that they used to deal with their stuttering when they were asked about how they responded to bullying. Both Noah and Mike talked about getting stuttering therapy and practicing smooth speech as a

way to cope with bullying. They stated that therapy and speech practice helped them feel more in control of their speech and to speak more fluently. In addition, Paige shared that she used positive, encouraging thoughts when classmates mimicked her stuttering: “I keep on reminding myself that I can control it and that when I can’t, it’s not my fault”. These initial data suggest that coping with stuttering may be related to coping with bullying.

Making Jokes

David and Alex reported that they made jokes in response to teasing or bullying. When David was teased about his stuttering, he said, “I just told them like ‘I don’t st-stutter’”. When some of Alex’s classmates who were jealous about his Math mark ganged up on him and started a fight, Alex said, “at first I thought they were a joke. And so everything I did, I did jokingly and with a smile”.

Crying and Laughing

Some participants’ responses stemmed directly from the emotional impact of the bullying experience. David, Sophia, and Nicholas reported crying in response to some bullying events. In contrast, Alex reported that one time he found the situation funny. He said, “I asked to go to the bathroom in class and laughed my head off in there”.

Physically Aggressive Responses

Mike was the only participant who reported that he frequently got into fights when other children made fun of his stuttering. However, other participants also alluded to the occasional instance of responding with physical aggression. Paige informed me,

We do lots of reading in class, and I will stutter, while we read and after class kids will come up to me and they’ll go, “st-st-st-st-st-st”.... If it’s a guy, I’ll slap them [laugh] and if it’s a girl, I’m like, “please don’t”.

Although Nicholas did not report being physically aggressive with the children who bullied him, he fantasized about it. For example, he told me, “if light sabres did exist, I would actually use a light sabre on [the girl who bullied him]. Cut her

head off. I don't have to worry about her. After all, a light sabre can cut through anything”.

Verbally Aggressive Responses

Mike, Alex, and Nicholas reported using verbal aggression against children who bullied them, including insults, threats, swearing, and name-calling. Mike said, “I kind of swear . . . and I call them really bad names”. Nicholas also fantasized about using verbal aggression against the children who bullied him. In reference to a particular boy who often teased him, he said, “I could call him a hundred things that could make him cry, actually”.

Internal Processing of the Response

After participants did something to respond to a bullying experience, they internally processed how successful their response was by considering whether it worked to bring an end to the bullying and by processing the emotional, psychological, and social outcomes of what they did. Using the same criteria, participants evaluated the actions taken by adults, such as their parents and teachers. As a result of their internal processing of their responses and those of adults, participants evaluated certain response strategies as helpful or unhelpful. Participants' internal processing of their own and adults' responses also intimately influenced their advice for other children who stutter, and for parents and other adults who want to help children who stutter. These evaluations and recommendations are presented later in this chapter.

Thinking About the Response: What Worked?

Participants evaluated their coping responses based on whether a response worked to end the bullying. Some responses were judged to be successful in causing a reduction or cessation of the bullying. When Mike's parents spoke with the school Principal about the bullying, Mike recalled, “then it kind of stopped”. Paige evaluated confronting a child who bullied her as helpful because, “he hasn't bothered me so far yet this year”. In contrast, participants also negatively evaluated some responses because they found that these responses caused the

bullying to continue or worsen. For example, when David reflected on his responses to being excluded, he concluded, “it didn’t quite help because all that happened is that it got worse and worse.... the people who [I] had told just came into the bullying”. He continued, “and then afterwards the next day, it was the same, it just, just resume”.

Outcomes of the Response

Emotional/psychological. Participants also evaluated their responses based on how their responses affected their feelings and thoughts. Participants noted that it “helped” or “felt good” to tell their parents or a trusted adult about being bullied. In reference to the school counselor, Noah said, “she helped me a lot to get through it. She kinda taught me stuff to, like to go through it”. Therefore, the participants seemed to recognize that some responses helped them to feel better and figure out what they could do next time.

Social. Participants also considered the social outcomes of a response, that is, how a response affected their interpersonal relationships and whether a response would be approved of by others. Noah found that when he told his parents about being teased, “it just made the kids that were teasing me angrier”. Mike found that aggressive responses to bullying affected him socially because other children labeled him as “a fighter”. Participants were also sensitive to the social acceptability of their responses to bullying. Mike admitted that he knew that he was “not supposed to fight” and Nicholas recognized how kicking could get him in trouble.

Conflicted perceptions of the success of coping strategies. Judging the success of a response strategy was not straightforward for many participants. Often responses that worked to stop the bullying had negative emotional, psychological, or social outcomes. For example, when Mike reflected on his aggressive responses, he said, “people stopped, but, I guess it wasn’t so useful. People stopped, I started having a couple of friends, but I could have went another way but, I don’t know why I didn’t”. Even though Mike found that aggression was effective in stopping the bullying, he still felt that it “wasn’t so useful”. The opposite also was true. When David reflected on his response of telling other

children that he was being socially excluded, he affirmed that telling someone was the right thing to do, and therefore, socially acceptable, but he also said that it had not been effective in bringing an end to the bullying.

INDIVIDUAL FACTORS

As shown in Figure 2, the initial findings of this pilot study indicate that factors unique to each participant, such as their past experiences with bullying, attitudes and feelings, problem solving skills, support networks, perceptions of control, and personal goals, appear to influence the process of experiencing and responding to bullying. Specifically, the data suggest that these individual characteristics and experiences influenced how participants internally processed the bullying event, what they did in response, how they processed the success of their responses, and how they responded to subsequent bullying events.

Past Experience With Bullying

Past experiences of bullying were defined by the duration and frequency of the bullying and whether it had increased or decreased over time. Many participants clearly recalled the “first time” they had been bullied. Some described how the bullying happened “constantly” or how it had gotten “worse”. Others described how the bullying was not happening “as often as it used to” or that it had stopped altogether.

Participants’ past experiences with bullying were linked to both positive and negative emotional reactions to bullying events. Mike and Paige spoke about how repeated teasing and bullying caused them to feel increasingly angry and frustrated. Conversely, other participants reported that having had experience with being bullied helped them to respond more calmly. Sophia reported, “he did it a few other times but it wasn’t as bad and I guess I was sorta used to it by then”. Mike linked his present nonchalance about bullying to his past experience: “so I have experience and now I just don’t really care if someone does it”.

Past experience with bullying also affected the process of thinking about bullying, including the meaning participants assigned to the bullying event and

how bad they judged the bullying to be. For example, David's repeated experiences of being excluded taught him to be less quick to identify exclusion as a type of bullying. For Noah, the opposite was true. Only after his friends' teasing had gone on for while did Noah think of it as bullying. In addition, experience seemed to influence whether participants knew what to do in response to bullying. Inexperience was often linked to not knowing how to respond. When two classmates sprayed hand sanitizer into Nicholas' eyes he told me, "I didn't know, that was my first time being bullied".

Participants' past experiences with bullying also were connected with what participants did in response to bullying. In particular, inexperience appeared to prompt participants to tell someone. David said that he told others about being excluded because it was the "first time that ever happened". In contrast, repeated bullying caused other participants to seek help. Paige noted, "this person that said it to me, he had a history of teasing me about it, and I think and to me, it was, the time was up for me to say something to somebody about it". Although Noah was initially reluctant to tell his parents, he remarked, "after it got worse and worse, I just told them and they helped a lot".

Participants also noted that having experience with bullying influenced their evaluations of what worked best and their thoughts about what they would do in the future. Sophia commented that her past experience with bullying had been more helpful for knowing how to respond in the future than school presentations about bullying had been, because the presentations were "just like sorta stuff that I already knew I guess from past experiences". Paige emphasized the role of past experiences with bullying in shaping future responses:

I think to grow as a person you definitely need to, um, you definitely need to experience, uh, experience a bad experience. Like you have to definitely experience being teased and everything to know where you need help, what situations you can't handle on your own.

Attitudes About Bullying

Participants' attitudes about bullying influenced how they responded to bullying. Many of the participants had an attitude that bullying was wrong and

that children who bully should be punished. Nicholas said, “I would say that bullying is ... actually a crime and should, and whoever bullies should be arrested”. Mike thought that children who bully “are just stupid and don’t get how bad it is to do it”. Other participants showed their opposition to bullying by choosing to respond to bullying by confronting the children who bullied them and telling adults about the bullying.

In contrast, other participants held conflicted opinions in which they entertained the possibility that they themselves might be responsible for being bullied. For example, Mike admitted that he had difficulty controlling his aggression and therefore, he considered another child’s attempts to exclude him from playground sports as not entirely unfounded. Noah also expressed the opinion that children who are bullied can do things to prolong or increase their victimization. Most extremely, Alex saw stuttering as his own problem and considered it unfair to blame others for teasing him about it. He considered it preferable to blame himself and avoid fighting back because, “I didn’t want, um, anybody else to be dragged into it”.

Feelings About Stuttering

Participants’ feelings about their stuttering influenced the impact of bullying about their stuttering. Mike stressed how the impact of stuttering compounds the impact of bullying: “after so many, so many days, so many months of bullying *and stuttering* [italics added], it’s, it gets to you”. Participants reported having a variety of emotional reactions to stuttering. Alex and Paige said that they felt mad at themselves for stuttering. Paige reported that stuttering made her feel vulnerable: “once I do it, I usually can’t concentrate on anything else other than, okay, how are kids going to tease me now?” She also indicated that she felt embarrassed and self-conscious when she stuttered. Sophia reported that her stuttering increased her sense of social isolation when she was teased. On the SRES-A, Sophia wrote that stuttering bothered her “because I get teased about it and I sometimes don’t feel like I fit in”. Therefore, it seems that negative feelings about stuttering increased participants’ sensitivity to the impact of bullying, and

likewise, being bullied may have exacerbated participants' negative feelings about their stuttering.

Participants' feelings about stuttering also affected how they responded to being bullied and how they evaluated their responses. Alex remarked, "I felt mad at myself for stuttering. But, I took it out on him [the child who bullied him], so that wasn't the best idea". Paige's sensitivity about her stuttering caused her to seek to calm herself down before talking to the child who bullied her so that she would avoid stuttering. She explained, "I try to stay calm and the calmer I am the better I can control my speech". Paige's desire to avoid stuttering also affected how she evaluated her responses. She viewed stuttering while talking to the child who bullied her as counterproductive: "if I go and stutter while I'm trying to tell them not to tease me about stuttering it kinda cancels itself out".

Problem Solving: Generating Response Options

Participants sometimes had difficulty generating potential response options to a bullying event. As indicated above, participants reported that they sometimes did not know what to do. Problem solving also was necessary when some participants' initial response failed and they were challenged to come up with an alternative solution. Sophia demonstrated some difficulty with problem solving when she realized that explaining stuttering to a child who teased her had not been effective:

I like sorta explained to her that I couldn't really control it [the stuttering] but she didn't really grasp that fact. *I didn't really know if there was anything else I could do* [italics added], so, I just sorta tried to stay away from her.

Some participants' difficulty with generating response options was evident when they were asked to suggest ways to improve their own responses to bullying as well as to recommend response strategies for other children who stutter and adults who want to help children who stutter. When Mike was asked how else he could have responded to teasing, beside using aggression, he said, "could have ... no, I can't think of anything else". Nicholas also stated, "I can't think of any other methods I would use [to respond to bullying]". Alex struggled with making suggestions for what parents could do to help their children. He said, "well,

[pause] I'll learn that when I have kids, so I have no idea right now". When asked what adults could do to help, Nicholas suggested that his parents should "sue" the child who bullied him or "call the military". In contrast, Paige, Sophia, and Noah showed evidence of employing a process of problem solving that resulted in their use of constructive coping strategies.

Support Networks

Whether participants had adequate support networks influenced the impact of bullying, their thoughts about bullying, and how they responded to being bullied. Adults and parents gave participants advice that helped them know what to do, and provided understanding and emotional support that mitigated their distress. Friends and siblings helped participants by standing up to the perpetrators or by helping participants determine how to best respond themselves. Paige affirmed, "my friends will stick up for me. They definitely will and I know they will". Some participants lacked these social supports. Mike recalled, "I practically had no friends, I had one or two friends in the class".

Perceptions of Control Over Bullying and Stuttering

Participants' sense of control over being bullied affected the impact of a bullying event, and their responses to the event. Most participants perceived that they had only limited control over whether or not they were bullied. However, both Alex and Paige saw themselves as having some degree of power in the classroom context. For Paige, this power was derived from her friendly relations with her teachers. She said, "I am trusted by every one of the teachers, so I almost have, like, I have a very high power and authority in my class.... So most kids know not to get me mad". This sense of control allowed Paige to confidently approach her teachers for help. For Noah, his illusions of control were shattered when he was bullied. He told me, "[being bullied] didn't really happen to me often. Like I wouldn't let that happen. And it just happened".

Participants' perceptions of their ability to control their stuttering affected the emotional impact of bullying about their stuttering. Some participants felt that they had no control over their stuttering. Others found that getting speech therapy

had helped them learn to control their stuttering. However, even these participants admitted that sometimes they could not control when they stuttered. As Mike put it, “it happens when I least expect it”. Paige articulated this conflicted sense of control when she said, “with all of the classes and courses I’ve taken, I should be able to control myself, but sometimes it just slips”. For Sophia, feeling that stuttering was out of her control heightened the emotional impact of being bullied: “I was talking and she like, was like, ‘Why are you stuttering so much, like it’s so annoying, like, why are you doing that?’ And like that, that hurt a lot, cause I can’t really control it”.

Personal Goals

Paige was the only participant to mention how her personal goals, such as wanting respect and independence, affected how she responded to bullying. Paige sought to respond in a way that would command respect. She stated, “I try to respond in a calm manner, cause I’ve been told that I’m one of the people that if you get me mad, I look really scary”. She explained, “I’ve always thought that if I go up to someone while I’m mad, they won’t take me seriously, when I’m trying to tell them to stop”. In addition, Paige wanted to be as independent as possible in dealing with being bullied. She stated, “I usually like to resolve it myself, cause it’s my issue”. She said that sometimes she chose not to tell her mom because “I don’t want her to interfere”.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OTHER CHILDREN WHO STUTTER AND WHAT ADULTS CAN DO TO HELP

The following recommendations were influenced by participants’ evaluations of the success of their own responses and their reflections on the helpfulness of actions taken by adults in response to a bullying event. Participants formed positive or negative evaluations of their own responses to the bullying and these positive and negative evaluations were closely linked to what they themselves would do “next time” and their recommendations for what other children who stutter could do. Thus, in the following section participants’

thoughts about each response and its outcomes are presented within the context of their advice for other children who stutter.

In addition to internally processing their own responses, participants also evaluated the actions taken by adults, such as their parents and teachers. Based on their thoughts about the effectiveness of adults' actions in stopping the bullying and what emotional, psychological, and social outcomes resulted, participants made recommendations for how adults and parents could best help them and other children who stutter. In the following section, helpful and unhelpful responses and advice for other children who stutter will be discussed first. A description of what adults can do to help children who stutter and participants' evaluations of bullying prevention programs at their schools will follow. Principles to help adults decide what to do are discussed last.

Advice for Other Children Who Stutter

Telling Someone

The majority of the participants recommended telling someone about being teased or bullied. They recommended telling parents, teachers, friends, or a guidance counselor. Sophia said that it was best to tell “a parent, someone who like knows about your stuttering and someone you trust, basically”. Although telling others about being teased or bullied was positively evaluated and recommended by many participants, it was also recognized that sometimes telling others had disadvantages.

Some participants perceived that telling someone could be effective in stopping the bullying. Noah warned, “if you don't [tell someone], the bullying can get way worse”. Nicholas also felt that telling was a good strategy, as long as a teacher was around who could verify the episode. Telling was thought to have emotional and psychological benefits. Noah said, “now if I have a secret or something, I'll actually share it. Cause it feels good”. In fact, not telling may have had negative psychological effects. Nicholas mentioned that he felt guilty for not telling his parents more about what was happening.

Participants also negatively evaluated some aspects of telling. Many noted that telling often did not result in the bullying decreasing. In some situations, participants felt that either the adults they told did nothing or were powerless to address the situation. Nicholas was dissatisfied when his father did not take action when he told him about being bullied: “I felt that it would be best if I told my dad and he would phone the school and complain about [names of children who bullied him]. And boy, was I wrong, he did not even complain”. Paige made the following comment regarding the limitations of adults:

Of course the teacher can’t do too much about him. All the teacher can usually do is say ‘okay, you have to stop bothering this student. Go and say sorry.

Okay, over, go ahead.’ That’s pretty much all they can do.

As a result, participants often perceived that the teasing or bullying continued despite their telling someone. Nicholas pointed out, “they will actually continue after you do it... after you tell the teacher or supervisor”. For Mike, this perception caused him to stop telling his teacher about the bullying: “they told him to stop and he didn’t stop, so I just stopped telling them, it’s no use”. Noah perceived that telling also could have negative social consequences, and that these consequences could actually make the bullying worse. He noted, “if they find that out [that adults were told], it probably makes them even more angry at you, for any reason that they are angry at you”.

Participants also recognized that by telling adults, they risked the possibility that the adults might do something that they did not want the adults to do. Because of this fear, some participants did not tell their parents everything about their bullying experiences. Paige described how she selectively shared information with her mother in order to avoid situations in which her mother took steps that Paige did not agree with: “what I tell her, I try to make it so that she won’t get like upset or go and do something and then I get even more embarrassed”.

Speaking to the Child Who Bullied

Noah, Paige, and Sophia recommended that other children who stutter should speak to the children who bully them to explain about stuttering and/or ask

them to stop. When Noah reflected on how he responded to being teased about his stuttering, he said that he would have liked to “tell them why my speech is bad or something like that and to tell them to please stop bugging me”. He also thought it would be a good thing for children who stutter to make a presentation to their class about stuttering. He mentioned that he had done this in the past.

Sophia and Paige both were aware that how they conducted themselves was just as important as what they said when they approached the children who teased them. Sophia gave the following advice about confronting a child who teases:

Just try to calm down. Like, cause, just take deep breaths, um, try to just tell them to stop and try to explain to them, like, that you can’t control it and um, and yah, like, don’t get like really frustrated.

Similarly, Paige advised that other children who stutter should “just know that no matter what people say, don’t be offended by it, and just try to control yourself when you’re handling the situation”.

Participants indicated that speaking to the child who bullied them had mixed success. Sophia recounted a situation in which the child who bullied her did not seem to understand her explanation about stuttering. Noah found that children did not always stop when he asked them to: “I would tell them to stop, but most of the times that would help, but like about 35% of the times it probably wouldn’t help”. On the other hand, Paige said that when she confronted a classmate about teasing her, he stopped.

Walking Away, Ignoring, and Avoiding

A number of participants recommended ignoring, or walking away from bullying situations, and avoiding children who bully. Noah believed that these strategies could be effective to stop the bullying. He said, “I found that like, if you didn’t say much or do much, like, they wouldn’t find anything to tease you about or bug you about. And then they’d just leave you and go find another person”. Nicholas thought differently: “[ignoring and walking away] sometimes works but not always...they think it irritates you so they’ll keep it up”. In addition, David saw social consequences to avoiding the children who bully: “Avoiding, well I

don't think that's the best... because if you avoid, you can't really talk with the others". Therefore, some children recommended ignoring, avoiding, and walking away, but there was no consensus as to the usefulness of these strategies.

Getting Speech Therapy

Noah and Alex recommended that other children who stutter should get speech therapy. Noah linked getting speech therapy to lessening the amount of teasing he experienced. He said that getting stuttering therapy "helped a lot... I would not really make speech problems anymore, so they kinda stopped teasing me".

Making Jokes

David and Alex recommended making jokes in response to teasing about stuttering. David stated, "I think making jokes is just the best". Alex explained that making jokes is "unexpected" and "it catches them off-guard a lot".

Getting Help From Friends

Paige advised that other children who stutter who are teased should get help from their friends: "make good friends and try to use them as your back-up plan. Cause those are the people that have helped me along the way".

Seeking Help With Emotional Regulation

Nicholas felt that the volatility of his anger when he was bullied was too much for him to handle alone. He stated, "I just have anger that happens way too often. I would really need the anger management. It would be much safer for me. That way no one would get hurt". Although not all children who stutter may feel they need help with anger management, seeking assistance for emotional regulation may help some children in dealing with teasing and bullying.

Verbally and Physically Aggressive Responses

Mike and Nicholas relayed both positive and negative evaluations of aggressive responses based on their thoughts about the effectiveness of these responses for stopping the bullying and on their social outcomes. Mike pointed out that, in his experience, verbal and physical aggression had been effective in

stopping the bullying. However, Mike recognized that in some situations, other children continued to tease him, even after he threatened them:

I thought that by scaring them off, he would stop. But then, every time he just like started it, but, and then every time I was like, I was like, ‘shut up’ and he’s like, ‘what you gonna do?’ and I’m like, ‘beat you up like I did last’ and every time he continues...

Nicholas pointed out that verbal and physical aggression could potentially backfire. He said the following responses did not work very well: “swearing, insulting them, going straight in and start pounding them”. He explained that although he “could go straight in going in, I would definitely get beat up”. He also mentioned a time in which swearing had resulted in escalating the situation because a friend of the children he swore at also became angry with him.

Mike and Nicholas also recognized that using aggression had negative social outcomes and that aggression was not socially acceptable. Mike admitted, “I know that [swearing and name-calling] is mean and rude, but it’s the only way, I guess, well not – well kind of, it’s like, yah, it’s kind of helpful”. Nicholas chose not to physically fight back because, “I felt that kicking would be wrong because I didn’t want to get in trouble”. Mike also described how his fighting had affected his interpersonal relationships. He explained, “I ended up hurting a lot of people, and yah, I ended up having, um, thing that’s that people thought that I was like, that I fight too much. Some were like, kind of scared of me”.

What Adults Can Do to Help Children Who Stutter

Taking Action

Some participants recommended that adults should do something when children who stutter tell them about being teased or bullied, such as telling the child who bullies to stop, walking the child who stutters to safety, alerting the school Principal to the problem, and calling the parents of the child who bullied to discuss the situation with them. Other suggestions included bringing the child who stutters to talk to the school counselor and speaking to the teacher about the

child's difficulty with stuttering and the bullying he or she was experiencing. However, there was little consensus about these responses. As discussed above, not all participants believed that adults were able to take actions that would actually cause the teasing or bullying to diminish. Furthermore, some participants wanted their parents to be quite involved, whereas others were less enthusiastic about their parents stepping in.

Providing Emotional Support

Paige and Sophia recommended that adults should focus on providing emotional support to children who stutter. Paige urged parents of children who stutter to "make sure that they support them, listen to them". Sophia gave the following advice to adults who want to help children who stutter:

Just tell them like that you know like it's alright to stutter and there's nothing wrong with you, or, and just like telling them that you can tell that person, like if someone's bothering you and you want to talk about it, or just being there for the person.

Other participants also indicated that receiving emotional support from adults was helpful. Mike said, "my parents are very helpful and they understand". Noah remarked that although he didn't tell his parents at first, "after it got worse and worse, I just told them and they helped a lot". Therefore, providing emotional support is an important role for parents and other trusted adults.

Assisting With Problem Solving

Mike, Noah, Paige, and Sophia all stated that adults can give children who stutter advice on how to deal with bullying. Paige emphasized that adults should not just tell children who stutter how to respond; instead, adults should work with the child who stutters to figure out what would work best for that child. She advised adults: "you can help them with their bad experience, and kinda grow on that and expand with, you can like expand on the coping skills to cope with that bad situation and know what you're going to do next time".

However, Mike and Nicholas noted that some advice they received had not been useful. Nicholas reported that his teacher "says to begin over again", but

it “doesn’t really help”. Mike commented, “my teacher always told me, ‘be nice, don’t fight’. Well, it’s pretty obvious”. Mike’s father gave him similar advice: “don’t fight much but stand up for yourself”. Although Mike recognized that his father did not support his aggression, Mike said “my dad, like, he didn’t tell me to fight, he told me that that was the last solution, but I, for some reason, I took it as a ‘go for it’”. It is clear that participants welcomed help from adults with problem solving, but the advice they received was not always helpful.

Arranging for Stuttering Therapy

Alex, Noah, and Mike found it helpful when their parents arranged for them to get speech therapy and helped them to maintain their fluency skills. Mike’s parents arranged for him to receive stuttering therapy and he said, “that was really helpful. I kind of stopped stuttering because of the warm-up and now I do it every morning”. Noah said, “It helped a lot, cause like, I knew that I could come here for help.... And it did help a lot, cause I learned how to control my stuttering”. Both Noah and Mike described how their parents helped them do exercises that assisted them in maintaining their speech fluency.

Bullying Prevention Programs

Participants evaluated anti-bullying policies, curriculum, and presentations that had been implemented in their schools. Mike, Alex, and Nicholas reported that bullying prevention programs or presentations had not been implemented in their schools. Mike claimed that his teachers never discussed bullying in the classroom because, “my teachers like don’t want to make me feel uncomfortable”. Although, Alex did not remember attending any full-school presentations about bullying, he said that over the daily announcements students were encouraged to report bullying and were assured that the school staff would take “immediate action”. Alex felt that this announcement was working to stop bullying. Nicholas’ school had a similar policy about no bullying, but he felt it was having little effect: “and this already three times about no bullying and I got bullied one, two, three”. Paige and Sophia reported that they had participated in bullying prevention programs or presentations, but that these had been of minimal use because they

already knew how to respond from their past experiences. In all, only Noah appeared to have benefited from school presentations about bullying. He commented that the presentations had helped him because, “I knew where to go and who to tell and what to do most importantly.”

Principles to Consider When Deciding What to Do

As noted above, there was little consensus regarding participants’ recommendations for adults’ responses, especially about whether or not adults should take action against the bullying. Comments made by Paige and Sophia highlighted two principles that may guide adults’ decisions regarding what they should do.

First, how bad the bullying is, as judged by the child who stutters, should dictate how the adult responds, be it by stepping in or by giving advice and emotional support. Sophia explained that she only wanted an adult to step in and take action if the bullying was “really bad and it’s constantly happening”. However, in less serious situations, she preferred to receive emotional support: “but if it’s something small but you still feel really bad, then for support”. Paige described how sometimes her mother could get “over-excited” about helping her: “she usually gets too worried when I tell her some of these situations and then she will do something about it. She’ll talk to the counselor and, it’s like, *it’s not that big of a deal* [italics added]”.

Second, Paige and Sophia recommended that adults should give children who stutter space to problem solve and wait for their child to direct them regarding how to respond. Sophia pointed out that if adults always took action on behalf of children who stutter, they would never learn to respond independently: “cause if you go out and do it, then I mean if one day the parent’s not there, then the kid doesn’t really know what to do”. Paige added that parents should wait for children who stutter to seek their help first:

Just don’t step in until the child asks. Because from my experience, I know that I want some freedom to figure out my own problems. Yah, and then if I really can’t, then I would ask my mom to help me, for sure. But I don’t like it when people step in and I know I can do it myself. That’s just me.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Introduction

This study examined the nature of bullying experienced by children who stutter and the nature of coping strategies that they used in response to bullying. In particular, this study sought to discover the perceptions of children who stutter regarding responses that had been helpful in bullying situations and what they thought adults could do to help, with the aim of providing this information to SLPs, parents, and allied health professionals so that they could more effectively help children who stutter who are bullied. The findings of the study are preliminary and give a first rendering of a theoretical understanding of the nature of experiencing and responding to bullying by children who stutter, individual factors that may influence their experiences and responses, and an initial set of recommendations for how children who stutter can respond to bullying and for how adults can help them.

The findings of this study suggest that experiencing and responding to bullying is a complex process that is influenced by the individual characteristics of children who stutter. In turn, these individual characteristics and experiences influenced children's recommendations for how other children who stutter may respond to bullying and how adults can help them. These recommendations provide implications for intervention that can help parents, SLPs, and allied professionals intervene with children who stutter who are being bullied.

Process of Experiencing and Responding to Bullying

Types of Bullying

Consistent with the findings of Langevin et al. (1998) and Hugh-Jones and Smith (1999), participants reported experiencing teasing and verbal bullying, relational bullying, and physical bullying which were not always related to their stuttering. Teasing and verbal bullying took the form of being made fun of, mimicked, called names, insulted, and sworn at. Relational bullying included

social exclusion and rumour-spreading. Physical bullying involved pushing, punching and other forms of physical aggression. These results support the types of teasing and bullying reported by the participants in Langevin et al., and Hugh-Jones and Smith, and add being insulted and being sworn at as verbal bullying behaviours experienced by children who stutter.

Reasons for Bullying

The current study's participants attributed the cause of bullying to three sources: their stuttering, the child who bullied them, and attitudes of the peer group. Similar explanations for bullying have been found in the literature (Langevin, 2000; Thornberg, 2010; Varjas et al., 2008).

Attributing bullying to their stuttering. All participants cited their stuttering as a personal characteristic that caused them to be bullied. Consistent with Thornberg (2010) and Varjas et al. (2008) who found that school-age children frequently attributed bullying to deviant or unusual characteristics of the bullied child, stuttering may be considered one such characteristic or negative difference that invites bullying. When children who stutter attribute bullying to their stuttering, they are attributing bullying to a cause that is internal, slow to change, not entirely controllable, and that affects them in many situations. Making this type of attribution may cause children who stutter to sink into a state of learned helplessness in which the bullying increases (Aronson et al., 2010; Shelley & Craig, 2010). However, results also suggest that such negative outcomes may be mitigated by receiving speech therapy that leads to improvements in a child's fluency.

Attributing bullying to the child who bullies. Participants cited the feelings and thoughts of the child who bullies as contributing to the bullying, such as being in a bad mood, and lacking understanding of how it feels to be bullied. Participants also perceived that children bully others in order to achieve social goals, for example, maintaining a group of friends without including others, wanting to be considered "cool", insulting the child who stutters out of jealousy, and using teasing or bullying as entertainment or to get attention. These reasons are consistent with those cited in the literature (Langevin, 2000; Thornberg, 2010;

Salmivalli & Peets, 2009; Swearer, Espelage, & Napolitano, 2009; Varjas et al., 2008) and support recommendations that children who bully may benefit from help with managing their aggression and empathizing with the children they bully (Swearer et al., 2009; van Kuik Fast & Langevin, 2010).

Attributing bullying to attitudes of the peer group. Consistent with the literature (Salmivalli & Peets, 2009; Thornberg, 2010), participants stated that peer attitudes that accepted bullying and censured stuttering led to acts of bullying. These findings also lend support to the results of Langevin (2009) and Langevin et al. (2009) who found that negative attitudes toward children who stutter are common among approximately one-fifth of the peer group. Therefore, the findings of this study support the widely recognized need to involve the peer group in actively opposing bullying (Card & Hodges, 2008; Craig & Pepler, 2008; Langevin, 2009; Langevin et al., 2009; Swearer et al., 2009; van Kuik Fast & Langevin, 2010).

Bullying as a Relationship Problem

The findings of this study support the conceptualization of bullying as a social relationship problem (Craig & Pepler, 2008; Salmivalli & Peets, 2009; Swearer et al., 2009). Participants in this study provided detailed descriptions of the children who bullied them and their relationships with those children, which were often antagonistic. Mike and Nicholas used words like “enemy”, “war”, and “battle” to describe their relationships with the children who bullied them. These words suggest that some children who stutter who are bullied feel threatened, fearful, and insecure and want to fight back against the child who bullied them, who is, by definition, a more powerful individual (Olweus, 1991). It is also possible that this “war” mindset may lead to the escalation of bullying encounters.

Consistent with the literature (Salmivalli & Peets, 2009; van Kuik Fast & Langevin, 2010), unhealthy patterns of interacting were found to develop and persist (i.e., become habitual) in the hostile and strained relationships that existed between the participants and the children who bullied them. For example, after getting into a fight once, Mike reported, “after that, every time someone was bullying me, I just did it again”. These findings support Craig and Pepler’s (2008)

recommendation that intervention must seek to increase the ability of children who bully and children who are victims to build and maintain positive relationships with others.

Emotional, Psychological, and Social Effects of Being Bullied

The participants reported a range of negative emotions in response to being bullied, including anger, confusion, disappointment, sadness, shame, and guilt that were consistent with emotions reported by typical children who were bullied (Langevin, 2000) and retrospectively reported by adults who stutter who were bullied as children (Hugh-Jones & Smith, 1999). In terms of other psychological and social effects of bullying, the findings of this study support Hugh-Jones and Smith's (1999) results that children who stutter who are bullied may experience a loss of self-confidence and self-esteem, wariness of others, and friendship difficulties, although there was little evidence in the interviews that the participants felt that being bullied negatively affected their level of fluency, as was found by Hugh-Jones and Smith.

The findings of this study also support evidence that, like typical children, children who stutter who are bullied may experience internalizing difficulties, such as withdrawal, anxiety, and depression (Arsenault et al., 2008; Card & Hodges, 2008; Davis et al., 2002; Hugh-Jones & Smith, 1999). In the present study, Mike, Nicholas, and Noah showed evidence of internalizing their emotions about being bullied. Mike described how he was teased "every day" and "all that time [he] had to keep it inside". Nicholas said that things he had done would "haunt [his] life" and that he felt guilty about "not sharing everything with [his] mom and dad". Noah mentioned feeling "ashamed" and worrying that his parents wouldn't be "pleased" with him. If adults become aware of these types of thoughts and behaviours, it is important to encourage children who stutter to talk with their parents about it and to seek professional help, such as from the school guidance counselor, a social worker, or school psychologist.

Thinking Versus Not Thinking About What to Do

Sometimes participants thought about what to do before responding to a bullying event; however, other times they did not, and at those times, they responded based on strong emotions or simply based on not knowing what to do. Further, an individual child may, at different times, think or not think about how to respond to a bullying event in advance. This was clearly indicated by Paige who explained:

I usually have to remind myself [to calm down first]. So then if something happens just really quickly and I don't know what to do, I just get mad and just go and tell them.... That's usually my first reaction. But, I'm getting better.

Children who stutter who are prone to responding without thinking first may benefit from efforts to help them evaluate the effectiveness and the social and emotional outcomes of their response. Other more beneficial responses that could replace these responses should also be discussed, as was suggested by van Kuik Fast and Langevin (2010). It might also be useful to encourage children who stutter to use strategies that give them a chance to think before responding, such as stopping and counting to 10. As Paige described in her interview, friends might be another resource to remind children who stutter to calm down and respond constructively when they are teased or bullied.

Responding to the Bullying Event

The ways in which participants in this study most commonly responded to bullying included telling someone, confronting the child who bullied them, and walking away, ignoring or avoiding. These responses closely matched those used by typical children (Craig et al., 2007; Kristensen & Smith, 2003; Naylor et al., 2001; Smith & Shu, 2000). As no previous study has specifically examined the actions taken by children who stutter in bullying situations, this information represents a unique contribution to the literature.

Speaking to the child who bullies. The similarities found between the responses used by typical children and children who stutter does not support the possible supposition that the responses used by children who stutter are limited by their speech difficulties; however, there was evidence that sometimes participants

perceived their stuttering to detract from their efforts to speak to the child who bullied them. David, Mike, Noah, Paige, and Sophia all reported or recommended speaking non-aggressively to children who bully. However, one time when she stuttered while confronting the children who teased her, Paige said, “I was stuttering lots, and like, it wasn’t helping”. Paige tried to avoid stuttering in these situations by calming herself down in advance, because she thought that stuttering would negate her message that the other child should stop teasing her. Nevertheless, Paige still recommended speaking to children who bully and none of the other participants expressed reluctance to respond verbally, despite the possibility that stuttering might elicit further bullying. However, it should be noted that all participants rated themselves as having fairly low levels of stuttering and that Paige rated herself as stuttering more than most of the other participants. More reluctance to respond verbally might be found if children with more severe stuttering were interviewed.

Aggressive responses. Evidence from Mike suggested some children who stutter may use aggressive responses because they perceive these responses to be effective and because using other non-violent responses may be perceived as difficult to implement. Mike stated,

I think that that [taking a breath, relaxing, not fighting] only works for like people that are being teased just a little bit and I don’t, that don’t really care. And I kind of have an anger management problem, kind of, yah, and, and I get angry easily, like if someone starts a fight, and after like 5 seconds, I get really carried away.

As shown by Mike, the intense emotional reactions to being teased or bullied experienced by children who stutter may cause them to have difficulty calmly walking away, ignoring the bullying, or speaking to the child who bullied them. Furthermore, they may not see telling adults as effective. As a result, they may fall back into using verbally or physically aggressive responses. Children who stutter who use aggressive responses may benefit from discussing the dangers of responding aggressively. Consistent with Salmivalli and Peets (2009) who stated that aggressive responses to bullying by children who are victims may

perpetuate bullying, Mike found that verbally aggressive responses sparked physical aggression, thereby escalating the bullying encounter: “I tried verbal, and well, I got them, but then it just started a fight”. In addition, adults should discuss with these children how using aggression may have negative social consequences related to being seen as aggressive by peers.

Individual Factors

Consistent with the results of studies by Martin and Gillies (2004) and Terranova (2009) with typical children, this study provided preliminary evidence that unique, individual characteristics, such as problem solving skills, perceptions of control, support networks, and past experience with bullying may affect how participants responded to bullying.

Problem Solving: Generating Response Options

Some participants had particular difficulty with the process of generating options for ways of responding to bullying. Other participants struggled to generate options for ways of responding when their initial response failed to end the bullying. This result supports Terranova’s (2009) finding that problem solving was an important factor influencing typical children’s responses to bullying. Therefore, children who stutter who have difficulty generating response options might benefit from explicit adult help to come up with and practice potential strategies and evaluate the outcomes and effectiveness of new strategies. Role-playing is a common method used in interventions with children who stutter to help them practice responding to bullying (Langevin, 2000; Langevin et al., 2007; Murphy et al., 2007; Turnbull, 2006; Murphy & Quesal, 2002). In these role-plays, children who stutter should practice employing more than one coping strategy in situations where the teasing or bullying continues after their initial response. Some children may require continued support to maintain their use of healthy coping strategies and to help them respond positively in new situations as they arise. Without support in this process, children who stutter who have

difficulty generating solutions independently may fall into negative patterns of verbal and physical aggression, to which they can see no alternative.

Perceptions of Control Over Stuttering

Participants seemed to have a conflicted sense of control over their stuttering. Although some participants said they could control their stuttering, none reported that they could control it at all times. Therefore, the findings suggest that children who are bullied about their stuttering may face a dilemma in which controlling their stuttering could end the bullying they are experiencing, but this control over their stuttering may be elusive. Feeling in control has been linked to positive psychological and physical health (see Aronson et al., 2010). Therefore, children who feel that stuttering is out of their control may be at risk for negative outcomes. Aronson et al. (2010) noted that in studies of people with chronic disease, these individuals benefitted from feeling in control of something, even though they could not control the disease. Therefore, as children who stutter may not be able to control their stuttering all of the time or control whether they experience bullying, it might be beneficial to encourage them to focus on something that is more controllable, for example, their own responses to being bullied.

Support Networks

Three participants, Mike, Nicholas, and David, mentioned having few friends at the time they were bullied. This finding supports evidence that having few friends may be a factor that puts children at risk for bullying (Card & Hodges, 2008; Nansel et al., 2004; Salmivalli & Peets, 2009). Consistent with studies that have shown that peers can support or protect children who are bullied (Card & Hodges, 2008; Langevin et al., 2007; see Swearer et al., 2009), participants noted that siblings and friends helped them respond to bullying by giving advice, or by standing up for them.

Potential Implications for Intervention

Advice for Other Children Who Stutter

Participants' recommendations for how children who stutter should respond to bullying were consistent with recommendations made by peers of children who stutter, school SLPs, and adults who stutter who were bullied as children (Blood et al., 2010; Hugh-Jones & Smith, 1999; Link & Tellis, 2006). Specifically, participants suggested that children who stutter should tell someone, speak with the child who bullies, ignore or avoid the bullying, get help from friends, and go for speech therapy.

As well, there were similarities between participants' evaluations of strategies that were successful or unsuccessful in ending the bullying, and strategies that have been found to be effective or ineffective in reducing bullying in typical children (Kochenderfer-Ladd & Skinner, 2002; Mahady Wilton et al., 2000; Salmivalli et al., 1996). For example, ignoring the bullying and using conflict resolution strategies, such as speaking to the child who bullied, were evaluated as helpful by the participants, whereas aggressive responses and helplessness were negatively evaluated. It should be noted that making jokes in response to teasing, as was recommended by Alex and David, may work in some situations, but can actually make the problem worse if the joke falls flat and gives the perpetrators fuel for more bullying. As Langevin indicated (2000; n.d.), a joke or a comeback will be appropriate for some children but not others. Therefore, clinicians should be cautious when recommending that children who stutter use jokes in response to teasing or bullying. If joking seems to be an appropriate response strategy for a particular child, Langevin (n.d.) recommended that the child should practice the words they will use and the mode of delivery in advance.

Implications for Parents

Initial evidence from participants showed that there often was a discrepancy between what they thought their parents should do to help in a bullying situation, and what their parents actually did. As a result, participants perceived that sometimes their parents under-reacted or over-reacted when they

were told about bullying events. This mismatch suggests that open communication is needed between children who stutter who are bullied and their parents regarding what they want their parents to do to help, and about their parents' plans for intervening. Furthermore, trust between children who stutter and their parents may be crucial for this communication to be successful. As Paige said in her advice to other children who stutter: "make sure you have a close relationship with your parent. Because, if you do, then they will help you". The importance of trust and open communication between bullied children and their parents is also recognized in the literature (Langevin, n.d.). Open communication between children who stutter and their parents or other adults may also assist in allaying the fears that caused some participants to hide bullying events from their parents. For example, participants feared that if they told their parents, (a) their parents might take actions that they might not agree with, such as calling the other children's parents, (b) their parents might blame them for the situation and punish them, or (c) the bullying might worsen because the children who bully might find out.

Implications for Schools

School staff. The participants frequently noted that the methods of intervention used by teachers, principals, and supervisors were insufficient or ineffective. This finding was similar to comments made by typical children and children with disabilities in studies that also used qualitative methods (Bourke & Burgman, 2010; Varjas et al., 2008). Therefore, teachers and other school personnel may need to be trained regarding the negative effects of different types of bullying and helpful ways of stepping in. As Blood et al. (2010) stated, school SLPs need to be made aware that relational bullying is a form of bullying that is distressing and requires intervention. In fact, it might be useful to have a panel of students lead or contribute to this training in order to create an atmosphere in which students and school personnel work together to ensure safety. Like participants in the present study, students in Varjas et al. (2008) noted that the absence of adults seemed to invite bullying behaviour. These students suggested that greater adult supervision might reduce bullying.

Bullying prevention programs. The lack of effectiveness of bullying intervention programs reported by participants mirrors the unfavourable results of zero-tolerance policies and bullying intervention programs in general. Zero-tolerance policies, like those reported by Nicholas and Alex, have been shown to be ineffective in stopping bullying (see Swearer et al., 2009). These authors suggest that the failure of these programs may be related to disregarding the relational context of bullying and ostracizing children who bully. In addition, two recent meta-analyses (Ferguson, San Miguel, Kilburn, Sanchez, & Sanchez, 2007; Merrell, Gueldner, Ross, & Isava, 2008) found very limited evidence for the effectiveness of bullying interventions in general. Ferguson et al. (2007) concluded that although bullying prevention programs do produce a positive and statistically significant effect, this effect is actually so small that it is not possible to conclude that bullying prevention programs have any “meaningful or practically significant effect on bullying or violent behaviour among schoolchildren” (p. 410). However, from Noah’s feedback, it seems that school presentations and classroom teaching have the potential to help individual children who are bullied by giving them ideas for ways of responding; however, such programs need to be more widely implemented and targeted toward children as young as Grade 1, because participants reported being bullied as early as Grade 2.

Study Limitations

The primary limitation of this study is that saturation was not reached by the end of the seventh interview. In a grounded theory project, the aim is *theoretical* saturation, which Charmaz (2006) defined as being achieved when “gathering fresh data no longer sparks new theoretical insights, nor reveals new properties of these core theoretical categories” (p. 113). Charmaz pointed out that this concept is different from claiming that saturation has occurred once the researcher hears “nothing new” (p. 113) in the final interviews. Instead, the focus is on enhancing the depth of the categories and developing a theory. It was apparent that saturation was not reached in this project because with each

successive interview, the categories continued to shift and take on new dimensions, and the connections between them were still emerging. Therefore, the results must be interpreted carefully and applied to other situations with caution.

A second limitation was the composition of the sample. In this study, the sample was comprised only of individuals for whom stuttering had mild, mild to moderate, or moderate effects on social relationships as reported on the SRES-A. Thus, children with moderate to severe or profoundly severe effects of stuttering were not represented. Also, the complete age range of interest was not represented; however, the representation of gender was reasonable given that the ratio of boys to girls in school-age children is approximately 5:1 (Guitar, 2006). As a result, the sample does not reflect maximum variation of participants in terms of age and the perceived effects of stuttering on social interactions. Therefore, the composition of the sample may limit the transferability of the results.

Recruitment Challenges and Recommendations for Future Recruitment Efforts

The limitations of this study reflect the challenges that the researcher encountered with recruitment. First, very few children stutter. The prevalence of stuttering in school age children is around 1% (Guitar, 2006). Because so few families are affected by this disorder, the parents of participants generally did not know other families of children who stutter, thus preventing recruitment through snowballing procedures, that is, asking participants or their families to nominate potential participants (Patton, 2002). Second, the researcher found the families of school age children to be very busy. As a result, very few families responded to the recruitment package or to the telephone messages left by the researcher. When the researcher spoke to these parents on the telephone, the researcher was often informed that they had not opened the package or did not remember receiving it. Third, many of the children whose families were contacted indicated that they had not been bullied or chose not to participate. One of the two children who withdrew canceled his scheduled interview because he was afraid that someone might find out and think that he had “problems”, despite the fact that the

researcher had clearly communicated the confidentiality of the interview. Fourth, most families preferred that the researcher come to their home for the interview. However, this presented a problem for the family of the second child who withdrew because their home was too noisy for the interview and a convenient, alternate location could not be found.

Future recruitment efforts should continue to target new clients of ISTAR and the Alberta Health Services fluency team, in addition to expanding recruitment to occur at conferences for children who stutter. Recruitment could also be pursued through the Edmonton Catholic School Board, Edmonton Public School Board, and the school boards of the communities neighbouring the City of Edmonton. Also, the recruitment procedures used for this study should be modified for future efforts. Instead of sending a recruitment package containing a cover letter, the recruitment poster, the parent and child information sheets, and the parent consent form, only the cover letter and recruitment poster should be included in the initial package. This information should be followed up with a phone call by the researcher, as these phone calls were found to increase the response rate. Parents who express interest could then be forwarded further materials. Another possibility to improve recruitment rates would be to broaden the research question to investigate the experience of stuttering in general and remove the inclusion criteria that participants must acknowledge having experienced teasing or bullying. This approach could prevent reticence to participate among some potential participants, and allow the researchers access to participants who might not openly admit that they are teased or bullied.

Directions for Further Research

As a study that describes heretofore poorly understood areas, that is, the experiences of children who stutter with bullying and how they respond, this study serves as a base for further research, both qualitative and quantitative. Because saturation was not reached at this point in the study, more interviews should be conducted in order to more fully elaborate the properties of the categories and the connections between them. Specifically, these interviews

should focus on how characteristics of children who stutter are related to the impact of bullying and their responses to bullying. Questions remain to be more fully answered: Why are some children who stutter more bothered by bullying than are others? Why do some children who stutter respond to bullying more constructively than others? In order to counter the difficulty with recruiting children who stutter to participate, further credibility could be achieved by presenting the findings to focus groups of teens and adults who stutter in order to assess how well the findings fit with their experiences.

Individual factors emerged as central to the process of experiencing and responding to bullying. These factors and their relationship with how children who stutter respond to bullying could be more closely examined in future research. A survey study could measure attitudes toward bullying, feelings about stuttering and perceived control over stuttering, problem solving skills, and support networks, including family dynamics and friendships, and look for a relationship between these factors and the coping responses that children who stutter report using. Furthermore, the researcher's interactions with the participants prompted her to suspect that personality traits, such as inhibition and extraversion, might also affect how children respond to bullying. Therefore, personality traits would be another individual factor that could be measured.

Finally, this study found that participants' feelings about stuttering influenced the impact of bullying about stuttering, and that coping with stuttering was connected to coping with bullying. These findings suggest that further investigation of how children feel about and cope with stuttering would complement or further clarify knowledge about how children who stutter respond to and cope with bullying. Just as Plexico, Manning, and Levitt (2009a, 2009b) used semi-structured interviews and grounded theory methods to examine how adults cope with the experience of stuttering, a similar study could be conducted with children who stutter. That is, children could be asked what they think or do to deal with stuttering, and about the function and impact of those coping strategies.

Conclusions

SLPs are in a unique position to intervene and help children who stutter who are being bullied. This study provides further evidence of the emotional, cognitive, and social impact of bullying on children who stutter and contributes important, albeit preliminary, knowledge about the coping responses used by children who stutter and factors that influence these responses. Despite the limitations of this study and the need for further research, it is clear that responding to bullying is a complex process that is influenced by many factors unique to each individual child, and that adults need to consider these factors and the recommendations made by participants when helping a child who stutters to solve a bullying problem or generate potential response options.

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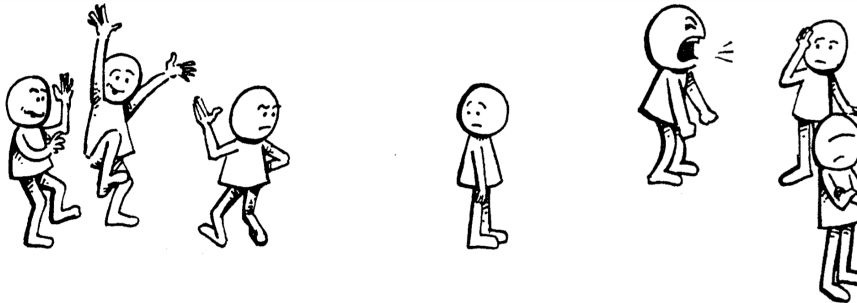
Appendix A: Recruitment Poster



**Institute for Stuttering Treatment and Research (ISTAR)
Communication Improvement Program (CIP)**
An Institute of the Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine, University of Alberta

*Research project: Bullying Experiences of Children Who Stutter and
Coping Strategies Used in Response*

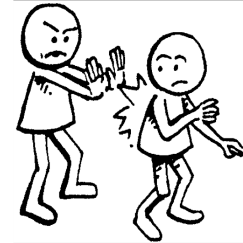
HAVE YOU EVER BEEN TEASED OR BULLIED?



If you stutter and you are between 8 and 14 years old,
you may be interested in this research project.

If you've been...

- Teased by other kids in a way that made you feel bad
- Called names or made fun of
- Left out of games or group activities
- Yelled at or threatened
- Pushed around, hit or kicked by other kids
- Sent mean or scary messages on your cell phone or on the internet
- Made to give another kid money or something that belonged to you



...we want to hear about your experiences and what, if anything, you did in response.

If you take part in this project, you will teach us about:

1. Ways that kids who stutter are teased or bullied.
2. What kids who stutter do when they are teased or bullied.

For more information, please ask your parents to contact:
Nathania van Kuik Fast, graduate student researcher, at (780) 492-2619 or vankuikf@ualberta.ca, or
Dr. Marilyn Langevin, Institute for Stuttering Treatment & Research, University of Alberta,
at (780) 492-0975 or marilyn.langevin@ualberta.ca, or
Dr. Joanne Volden, University of Alberta, at (780) 492-0651.

Appendix B: Letter of Invitation



Institute for Stuttering Treatment and Research (ISTAR) Communication Improvement Program (CIP)

An Institute of the Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine, University of Alberta

Title of Research Study: **Bullying Experiences of Children Who Stutter and Coping Strategies Used in Response**

Principal Investigator: **Marilyn Langevin, PhD**, Assistant Professor, Institute for Stuttering Treatment & Research

Co-Investigators: **Nathania van Kuik Fast, BA**, Graduate Student, Department of Speech Pathology and Audiology, University of Alberta
Joanne Volden, PhD, Associate Dean,
Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine, University of Alberta

(Date), 2009

Dear ,

We are inviting your child to consider participating in a research project. This project aims to investigate the experiences of children who stutter who have been teased or bullied, the coping responses that they have used, and the helpfulness of such responses. The results of this study will help us and others to help children who stutter deal with teasing and bullying.

We are enclosing the information sheets for you and your child. These sheets explain the purposes and procedures of the study. We are also enclosing a copy of the parent consent for you to review in the event that your child is interested in participating.

As explained in the information sheets, your child's participation in this study is completely voluntary. If your child declines to participate or if **his/her** participation is withdrawn at any time, this will in no way affect your or your child's relationship with ISTAR or **his/her** present or future treatment.

If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Langevin at 780-492-0975.

Thank-you for taking the time to review this invitation.

Yours sincerely,

Marilyn Langevin, PhD, R.SLP,
S-LP(C), CCC-SLP
Assistant Professor (Research)

Deborah Kully, M. S., R.SLP,
S-LP(C), CCC-SLP
Executive Director

Appendix C: Parent Information Sheet



Institute for Stuttering Treatment and Research (ISTAR) Communication Improvement Program (CIP)

An Institute of the Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine, University of Alberta

PARENT INFORMATION SHEET

Title of Research Study: **Bullying Experiences of Children Who Stutter and Coping Strategies Used in Response**

Principal Investigator: **Marilyn Langevin, PhD.** Phone: (780) 492-0975
Co-Investigators: **Nathania van Kuik Fast, B.A.** Phone: (780) 492-2619
Joanne Volden, PhD. Phone: (780) 492-0651

Purpose: The purpose of this research project is to learn about the ways in which children who stutter are teased and/or bullied and what they do in response.

Background: We know that many children who stutter are teased and/or bullied. However, little is known about their experiences and how they respond to teasing and bullying. There are several types of bullying. A child may bully another child physically, verbally or socially. Social bullying can include rumour-spreading and exclusion by peers. Bullying also includes teasing that is hurtful. Some children might not think that hurtful teasing is bullying and that is okay. That is why we are using the terms “teasing and/or bullying” and “teased and/or bullied” to talk about your child’s experiences.

Your child is eligible to participate in this study if he or she has been teased and/or bullied. The teasing and/or bullying can have been about anything at all. It may have happened once in a very hurtful way or it may have happened many times.

Procedures: If your child would like to participate in this study, he or she will take part in an interview with Dr. Langevin or Nathania van Kuik Fast. The interview will take about one hour and can take place in your home or at a place that works better for you and your child. The interview will be audio-recorded. The interview will be conducted by Dr. Langevin or Nathania van Kuik Fast. The interview will be conducted without you being in the room. After the interview, you are free to ask your child about the interview and how it went. In the interview, your child will be asked to talk about his or her experiences of teasing and/or bullying. This will include information about what happened, what your child did in response, and whether or not your child thinks that his or her actions were helpful or not helpful. Your child also will be asked whether or not the teasing and/or bullying were related to his or her stuttering. At the end of the interview, your child will complete a short questionnaire about his or her current level of stuttering and how it affects his or her social interactions.

Possible Benefits and Risks: Participating in this study may benefit your child in several ways. Your child will have the chance to share his or her story in a context where his or her experiences and perceptions are valued. Your child may also gain insight into his or her experiences. A potential risk is that your child may become upset during the interview. If that happens, your child may choose to stop the interview. Also, you may contact us after the

interview if your child reports any negative effects of taking part in the study. We would then connect you and your child with a counselor or other professional.

Confidentiality: Your child's personal information will be kept confidential. Your child's name and names of people that he or she may mention in the interview will be replaced with pseudonyms. That means that no information that could identify your child will be given in scientific presentations or publications. Everything that your child says will be kept confidential. However, there are situations in which we may need to disclose confidential information. For example, if we become aware that your child's personal safety may be at risk, we will discuss this with you and connect you with individuals who can support you and your child, such as counselors or educators. The information that we have about your child will be stored in the offices of Dr. Langevin at the Institute for Stuttering Treatment and Research for a minimum period of 5 years. After that time, it will be destroyed.

Voluntary Participation: Participation in this study is voluntary. If your child decides to participate in this study, you or your child may withdraw your child's participation at any time. However, your child's interview information can no longer be withdrawn after we have begun analyzing the interview data. If your child's participation is withdrawn after this stage, we will agree not to use any quotes from your child's interview.

Reimbursement of Expenses: I will reimburse you at the interview for any parking fees that you need to pay to bring your child to the interview.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please leave a message for me, Dr. Marilyn Langevin. You can contact me at (780) 492-0975. I will return your call as soon as possible. You may also contact Dr. Joanne Volden at (780) 492-0651. A message for Nathania van Kuik Fast can be left at (780) 492-2619.

If you have concerns about your rights or any aspect of this study, you may contact Charmaine Kabatoff with the Health Research Ethics Board. She can be reached at (780) 492-0302. This office has no affiliation with the investigators.

Appendix D: Child Information Sheet and Assent Form



Institute for Stuttering Treatment and Research (ISTAR) Communication Improvement Program (CIP)

An Institute of the Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine, University of Alberta

CHILD INFORMATION SHEET AND ASSENT FORM

Title of Research Study: **Bullying Experiences of Children Who Stutter and Coping Strategies Used in Response**
Principal Investigator: **Marilyn Langevin, PhD.** Phone: (780) 492-0975
Co-Investigators: **Nathania van Kuik Fast, B.A.** Phone: (780) 492-2619
Joanne Volden, PhD. Phone: (780) 492-0651

Bullying is when kids hurt other kids in some way. They do it on purpose and may do it over and over. Bullying is when kids:

- Hit or push other kids around.
- Say mean things about other kids.
- Take things that belong to other kids.
- Make other kids do things that they don't want to do.
- Spread rumours or tell lies about other kids.
- Leave other kids out on purpose.
- Tease kids in a hurtful way.

Sometimes kids are teased in a hurtful way, but they don't call it bullying. That's okay. That is why we are using the words "teasing and/or bullying" and "teased and/or bullied".

You are invited to take part in this study if you have been bullied and/or teased in a hurtful way. It can have been about anything at all. It may have happened once in a very hurtful way or it may have happened many times.

What will you do?

If you take part in this study, I will come and talk with you for about an hour. This will happen only once. I can come to your home or I can meet you at another place. I will interview you alone. That means that your parents will not be in the room. I will audio-record the interview so that I do not forget anything that you say. You can ask me to turn off the recorder at any time. I will not tell your parents or anyone else what you say. But afterwards, you can tell your parents anything that you want to tell them about the interview.

I will ask you questions about:

- What happened when you were teased and/or bullied.
- What you did about it.
- Whether you think that what you did helped or did not help.
- Whether or not you were teased and/or bullied about your stuttering.

At the end, you will fill out a short questionnaire that asks a few questions about your stuttering.

Will it make you upset?

If any of my questions make you upset, you can tell me that you do not want to answer the question. I will go on to something else. If you feel upset after the interview is over, please tell your parents how you feel. Your parents can contact me to find someone for you to talk to.

Will you get anything out of it?

You may find that talking about your experiences can help you feel better about them. During the interview, you will tell me about what you did to deal with being bullied. Talking about this might help you figure out what you want to do if you ever are bullied again.

Can you quit?

You don't have to take part in this study if you don't want to. You can quit at any time, and that is okay. You just need to tell me or your parents that you don't want to be in the study anymore.

Who will know?

No one except your parents and the research team will know that you are taking part in this study. The research team is made up of the researchers named above. The research team also may include research assistants who will work under Dr. Langevin's supervision. I will not use your name on the tapes or in anything that I write about the study. Only the research team will listen to the tapes. That means that only they will know what you tell me during the interview. When I write down what I learned from the study, I won't use your real name. Instead, I will use a fake name. But, if you tell me anything that makes me worried that something bad might happen to you, I will need to help you. That might mean telling someone about what you told me.

Do you have more questions? You can ask your mom or dad about anything you don't understand. You can also talk to me, Dr. Marilyn Langevin, or to Dr. Joanne Volden or Nathania van Kuik Fast. To contact me, you can phone me at (780) 492-0975 and I will call you back. Dr. Marilyn Langevin's phone number is (780) 492-0975 and Dr. Joanne Volden's phone number is (780) 492-0651. A message for Nathania van Kuik Fast can be left at (780) 492-2619.

Your signature: I would like you to sign this form to show that you want to take part in the study. Your mom or dad also need to sign a form that says that they agree that you can take part in the study.

I agree to take part in the study.

_____ (signature of research participant) _____ (date)

_____ (signature of witness) _____ (date)

_____ (signature of investigator) _____ (date)

Appendix E: Parent Consent Form



**Institute for Stuttering Treatment and Research (ISTAR)
Communication Improvement Program (CIP)**
An Institute of the Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine, University of Alberta

PARENT CONSENT FORM

Title of Research Study: **Bullying Experiences of Children Who Stutter and Coping Strategies Used in Response**
 Principal Investigator: **Marilyn Langevin, PhD.** Phone: (780) 492-0975
 Co-Investigators: **Nathania van Kuik Fast, B.A.** Phone: (780) 492-2619
Joanne Volden, PhD. Phone: (780) 492-0651

To be completed by the child's parent:

	Yes	No
Do you understand that your child has been invited to participate in a research study?		
Have you received and read a copy of the attached Parent Information Sheet?		
Do you understand the benefits and risks involved in your child's participation in this research study?		
Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study?		
Do you understand that you are free to withdraw your child from the study at any time, without having to give a reason and without your decision affecting your child's speech therapy, if he or she is receiving speech therapy?		
Do you understand who will have access to the research data and other information collected during this study?		
Has the issue of confidentiality been explained to you?		
Who explained this study to you? Write his/her name here:		

Child's Name: _____

I agree that my child can take part in this study: YES NO

 (signature of parent or guardian) (printed name) (date)

 (signature of parent or guardian) (printed name) (date)

 (signature of investigator) (date)

I believe that the person signing this form understands what is involved in the study and voluntarily agrees to have his or her child participate in the research.

If you wish to receive a summary of the results of this project please provide your mailing address below:

Name: _____
 Address: _____

THE INFORMATION SHEET MUST BE ATTACHED TO THIS CONSENT FORM AND A COPY GIVEN TO THE PARENT/GUARDIAN OF THE RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

Bullying Experiences of Children Who Stutter and Coping Strategies Used in Response

Appendix F: Interview Guide

Interview Guide

Now before we get started talking about what has happened to you and what you did, I want you to know that I am interested in what your thoughts and experiences really are, not what you think an adult might want to hear. I hope you will feel comfortable to talk freely.

1. Why did you decide to participate in this study?

2.1 Now think about the teasing/bullying experience that most stands out in your mind and tell me what happened.

Prompt: What did the kids do? Who was involved? When did it occur?

Where did it occur?

2.2 How did you feel when that happened?

2.3 Why do you think you were teased/bullied (if not answered above)?

2.4 Was there any link between the teasing/bullying and your stuttering (if not answered above)?

3.1 (a) Now I want you to think about the moment when (paraphrase the teasing/bullying incident). What did you do at that moment?

Prompt: How did you respond when (paraphrase experience)? Did you say or do anything?

(b) What, if anything, did you do later? For example, did you tell anyone, did you keep it to yourself, did say something to (him, her, them?) later?

3.2 Why did you (paraphrase the response)?

3.4 Did (paraphrase the response) help or not help?

Prompt: (If so) How?

(If not) Why?

3.3 Did anyone say or do anything that helped you figure out what to do?

Prompt: (If so) Who was it? What did they say or do that influenced you to (paraphrase response).

3.5 Thank-you for telling me about this time when you were (paraphrase the bullying experience). Have you had any other experiences with teasing and bullying?

Prompts: What happened? How did you feel? What did you do? Did it work?

Summary: So now you've told me about a few times when you've been teased or bullied. Does that pretty much cover your experiences or is there anything else?

4. Are the things that you have told me about still happening (if not answered above)?

Prompt: (If so) what are you doing now?

5. Now think about the ways you responded to the teasing/and bullying. Would you do the same things again, or would you do something different?

6. Now imagine that I am kid who stutters and (summarize experiences). What would you tell me to do if these things happened to me?

Prompt: Other kids have told me that it helps to [response].

What do you think about that? What about doing that would help?

7.1 Now imagine that I am an adult who wants to know how to help kids who stutter who are being teased and/or bullied. What advice should I give to them?

Prompt: Is there anything that I as an adult can do to help a kid who stutters? (If so) What could I do? Some kids are saying that it doesn't help to tell adults. What do you think about that?

7.2 Now imagine that you are the parent of a child who stutters and you find out that your child is being bullied or teased at school. What would you do to help?

Prompt: In your experience, what can parents do that is helpful? What can parents do that is not so helpful? Some kids are saying that:

a) It's not such a good idea for parents to step in and talk to teachers or the other kids' parents. Instead, they're saying that it's best for parents to give support.

b) It's helpful for parents to explain about stuttering to the classroom teacher.

What do you think about that?

8. This is the last question about teasing and bullying. Have you had any school discussions about teasing and bullying and what to do about it?

Prompt: (If so) was there anything that you learned from them that was helpful? Was there anything not helpful?

Great. Before we go on to the last thing, is there anything you'd like to ask me or add?

Thanks so much for helping me to understand your experiences. Now we have one last thing to do. I just need to learn a bit about your stuttering. We will use a short questionnaire.

(Complete the adapted Self Rating of Effects of Stuttering scale).

Okay, we are done now. Is there anything you want to ask me?

Thank you so much for sharing your experiences

Appendix G: Self Rating of Effects of Stuttering on Children Who Stutter -
Adapted

**SELF RATING OF EFFECTS OF STUTTERING
ON CHILDREN WHO STUTTER – ADAPTED 09 04**

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Marilyn Langevin & Deborah Kully
Institute for Stuttering Treatment & Research
Affiliated with the University of Alberta

Please read the item to the child and have them select the most appropriate answer. If you need to adjust the language to facilitate understanding, please indicate beside the item the terminology used.

SCORING INSTRUCTIONS

- Scores for items 1 to 5 are summed and then converted to a mean score.
- Mean scores are interpreted as follows:

Mean	Effects
0.1 to 1	mild
1.1 to 2	mild-moderate
2.1 to 3	moderate
3.1 to 4	moderate-severe
4.1 to 5	severe
5.1 to 6	profound

Item 6 is intended to get a sense of the child's perceptions of their levels of stuttering in the interviewing process.

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. How much does your stuttering interfere with or affect talking with your friends?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all						A lot

If applicable, how does it interfere?

2. How much does your stuttering interfere with making new friends?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all						A lot

If applicable, how does it interfere?

3. How much does your stuttering interfere with talking with other kids at school?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all						A lot

If applicable, how does it interfere?

4. How much does your stuttering bother you?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all						A lot

If applicable, how does it bother you?

5. How much do you think you usually stutter when talking with kids?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all						A lot

6. How much do you think you have been stuttering with me today?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all						A lot