

**Bullying and Team Sports:
An Exploratory Case Study on Adults' Recollections**

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by
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ABSTRACT

For children and adolescents, there are many physical, social, emotional, and psychological benefits in organized team sports participation. However, what happens when those team environments turn negative as a result of teammate bullying?

By using a qualitative case study approach, the goal of this inquiry was to gain a better understanding of the impact this type of bullying has on teammates. Through purposeful sampling, the lived experience of two participants was investigated through multiple in-depth, semi-structured interviews. Together with the participants, the researcher recreated and co-constructed the participants' experiences, views, and meanings of the teammate bullying they encountered while participating on organized sports teams.

The objective of this research was to generate significant, positive conversations on teammate bullying, which in turn would ideally promote healthier attitudes and behaviour changes within organized team sport environments. Educators, parents, and coaches may benefit from a better understanding of the impact teammate bullying has on individuals who experience such behaviours within their organized sport teams. The findings indicated that teammate bullying is flourishing within organized sports teams due to a lack of adult supervision and an adult reluctance to intervene. While such behaviour diminishes the victim's "love for the game," those who witness the bullying tend to normalize it in order to maintain their "love for the game." While victims value the support of their peers during these bullying episodes, non-supportive bystanders feel remorse over their inactions during adulthood.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the many youth who have been bullied by their teammates. What you have experienced is unfortunate and wrong. Bluntly put, bullying has no place in life. Your school hallways, local playgrounds, and organized sports teams should be safe places for all! Organized team sports are meant to be platforms where individuals are taught unity, teamwork, commitment, perseverance, and fitness. Team sports should never be allowed to become environments that permit or reward bullying behaviours. So to you, who are bullied by your teammates, please stay strong! Communicate any and all bullying that you witness or experience. Tell your parents, guardians, coaches, teachers, and school counsellors so that they may be able to help and support you. May these responsible adults understand and respond appropriately so you are able to play the sport that you love in a safe, bully-free environment!

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Throughout my life, I have attended many school assemblies. Some of these assemblies date back a few decades to my own educational upbringing, while others have been more recent, and have been attended as a result of professional obligations and/or parental responsibilities. Over time, many of these well-prepared and rehearsed assemblies have faded from my memory to the point where many are altogether forgotten. At the same time, there are others that bring back faded memories and faint recollections. Many of these assemblies fall into the “classic, annual, time-honored, traditional” category, such as the Terry Fox or MADD assemblies. Yet out of the multitude of these assemblies, three clearly stand out and bring to mind vivid memories.

The first assembly was in seventh grade, when the school student body decided that it was time to come up with a new school nickname for our sports teams. Of the multiple options we were given to vote on, a common name that many professional and amateur sporting organizations currently use was chosen. Leading up to this assembly, this particular team name was clearly the popular favourite, except when it came to one teacher who zealously disliked the option due to its historical connection to violence. For him, he did not want our school to have any connection to such a name. As a result, in the weeks leading up to the vote, this teacher made several verbal pleas within his classroom to sway his students from choosing it.

At this memorable assembly, in a last-ditch effort, this teacher presented a passionate, heart-filled speech on the many significant, negative connotations he believed were associated with the name. Unfortunately for him, his speech fell on deaf ears as it came across as more of a long-winded lecture. Ultimately, at the assembly, both

democracy and the team name in question won by an overwhelming show of hands, followed by a loud, cheerful ovation.

The second assembly that clearly stands out for me, was one hosted by a Saskatoon paramedic. Throughout the assembly, my peers and I were challenged with a powerful, motivational message on the dangers of drugs, alcohol, and impaired driving. I can still vividly recall many of the stories and visuals that the presenter challenged us with. Its proposed message had an astounding effect on my life and proved immensely valuable as it helped formulate many early morals, standards, and values in my life when it came to substance abuse and the responsibilities of having a driver's license.

I understand that there may be some who are wondering why I began this thesis sharing about these past experiences. As memorable as those two assemblies are for me, it is this third assembly that played a huge role in my decision to include the topic of bullying as the centerpiece for this thesis proposal. This particular assembly occurred a few short years ago, and one of my daughters played an active role in it. Its message focused on two very important topics: empathy and bullying. For years these two topics that have resonated within me. Yet, what makes it so memorable over the many other assemblies I have witnessed on these topics has to do with what transpired on the days following the assembly.

In regards to this assembly, the host Grade One and Four students wonderfully delivered their message of empathy and bullying through music, poetry, speeches, and drama. Interwoven throughout the production was an ongoing dramatization of a recent immigrant student's difficulties in finding friendship and acceptance at her new school. Ignorance, apathy, avoidance, and bullying were all issues that were addressed. By the

time this assembly came to an end, understanding, sympathy, compassion, and responsiveness were all attributes that were positively reinforced; while apathy, ignorance, mistreatment, and intimidation were all clearly shown to be negative and undesirable attributes.

It was clearly evident that much time, effort, and commitment had been poured into this one-hour endeavor. Moreover, it was evident that the performing Grade One and Four students had been saturated with the message of this theme. For weeks, my daughter had talked and sang non-stop about what she learned for this assembly presentation. The lessons learned from the hours of practice and preparation resonated within her. Needless to say, I was very proud of her and the stance her school was taking on this important issue.

Unfortunately, two days after this powerful presentation, a third grade student, was bullied by a fourth grade student as they walked home from school. The aggressor was the student who portrayed the lead bully role throughout the assembly's drama. This individual was the same student whose character took the lead in bullying the immigrant student in the dramatization, until ultimately realizing the errors of their way, and repented for their actions. Regrettably, many fellow students who either observed or participated within the school assembly also witnessed this episode as they walked home. Unfortunately, no one stood up for the victim. Understandably, the negative events that transpired on this walk home allowed me to give my three children a wonderful teaching opportunity.

Unfortunately, the aggressiveness shown towards this student on the way home from school is not an uncommon occurrence in our world today. Despite the admirable

job the media and educational systems have done with educating children and implementing bully prevention policies and programs, intimidation and bullying is still a common occurrence.

The timing of this assembly and the bullying episode that followed greatly challenged and inspired me. As I reminisce over the events following this third assembly, I realize that this act of aggression may not have been classified as bullying, but rather an isolated incident. Nonetheless, the timing, my history, experiences, and feelings on the topic of bullying, along with the need for me to choose a thesis topic, all seemed to perfectly align and steered me towards this research endeavor. As this chapter unfolds, I will attempt to explain how this all transpired.

The Researcher

Over the years, the topic of bullying has consumed much of my professional life and personal experiences. Too often it has been an unfortunate issue that I have had to deal with in a wide variety of present and past roles. Currently I am an elementary school counsellor. Prior to this role, I was employed in a church setting, working with junior and senior high students. Earlier to those work experiences, I was a cabin leader at various summer youth camps for five seasons. Additionally, I spent two years as a Resident Assistant at a private boarding school, where I was required to live within the dormitory with the male high school students. Finally, I have experienced nine years of coaching Initiation, Novice, Atom, Pee Wee, and Midget hockey over the course of three different decades.

These various experiences have been fascinating and rewarding. Cumulatively, they have enhanced my skills and abilities in helping countless children and youth

navigate through life's challenges. Often, my services have required me to assist individuals dealing with issues such as anxiety, trauma, grief, depression, suicidal ideation, self-harm, poor social skills, and family struggles. Repeatedly, the problem behaviours I have encountered have included both traditional bullying episodes and cyber bullying.

As for my personal life, I am a husband and a father of three children, a son who is in junior high school, and two daughters that are in elementary school. As a result, my children have witnessed countless playground and classroom situations. In turn, many of these stories have been shared around our supper table. Some have brought much laughter, while others have provided valuable teaching moments. Unfortunately, too many have involved bullying episodes.

As for my own childhood experiences, the Kindergarten to Grade Twelve school I attended during my childhood and adolescence was home to many bullying episodes. I had many opportunities to witness such events. At least, that is how I remember much of those thirteen years of education. More often I was a spectator. Regrettably, I was also an encourager and a participant on occasion. The school hallways and gymnasium change rooms were the locations where much of this bullying occurred. Based on my recollections, the targets were usually the same individuals while the bullying was disguised as humor and teasing. A specific target that I can recall was a Grade Nine schoolmate who consistently experienced multiple body checks into the lockers during my Grade Ten year from my fellow classmates and myself.

Then, for a variety of reasons, in my Grade Eleven year, I matured and “grew a conscience.” I felt compelled to seek out this individual who deserved an apology from

me, and asked forgiveness for the various times I watched, laughed, and even participated in the bullying episodes he encountered. This individual graciously accepted my apology, despite being somewhat confused since he deemed me to be the lesser of his many nemeses. Nonetheless, my apology seemed pathetic, cheap, and very necessary. As a direct result of my transformation, I vowed to never again bully an individual, and to the best of my ability, always advocate on behalf of such victims.

Researcher Interest

Ultimately, these many experiences are the reasons as to why I decided to include the topic of bullying alongside a passion of mine, sports. Understandably all forms of bullying warrant research, time, and energy. Yet, within this research endeavor, I have chosen to focus on bullying in team sports; an issue that I have had the opportunity to witness and confront on numerous occasions. As I think back over my lifespan, I believe that the majority of the physical activities I have participated in have occurred within the parameters of team sports. In varying degrees, all these team sports had a positive physical, social, and psychological affect on me.

For example, team sports, such as hockey, basketball, volleyball, soccer, and fastball, allowed me to achieve a greater and healthier self-efficacy, an increased ability to problem-solve and tackle difficult situations, and an improved level of social acceptance. My involvement within these teams taught me many valuable life-lessons, such as: the meaning and value of teamwork, unity, commitment, hard work, physical fitness, and exercise. Such involvement also taught me the joys accompanied with achieving individual and team goals, the honing and development of various skills and

talents, and what it takes to be a leader. Furthermore, team sports provided me with countless opportunities to learn how to win humbly and lose graciously.

I could go on describing all I have learned regarding myself, life, competition, respect, determination, perseverance, communication, and leadership through such involvements. In many ways, much of who I am today was taught within the confines of hockey arenas, soccer pitches, baseball diamonds, school gymnasiums, and locker rooms. The classic doctrines “there is no ‘I’ in team” and “to be a great team, one needs to play as one unit” has clearly been preached and enforced on every organized team I have played on. As a result, such notions and ideas have been transferred into additional areas of my life, such as family, work, school, and volunteer endeavors.

Over time, my passion and love for hockey began to consume my time, as it began to take precedence over my other sports involvements. Eventually, the many examples and role models who taught and coached me along the way inspired me to give back to the game of hockey. My first coaching experience occurred in my early twenties as an assistant coach with a Pee Wee minor hockey program. The next season, I was asked to be the head coach of the same team. Throughout the next few summers, as a college student, I volunteered at hockey camps, spending most of my time assisting the professionals with moving pylons, demonstrating drills, and encouraging proper techniques and procedures. Throughout these camps, I continued to accumulate and add to my hockey knowledge and coaching skills set, all the while playing on various adult hockey teams.

After a two-year hiatus from coaching hockey, I was asked to be an assistant coach on a Tier II Midget hockey team. It was during this experience that I was able to

utilize the knowledge of the game I had acquired over my meager “hockey career.” This team consisted of boys ranging between fifteen and eighteen years of age. Many were very skilled hockey players who were passionate about the game. Many of them reminded me of younger version of myself. For the most part, they were an easy group to coach and teach the game of hockey to.

Unfortunately, it did not take me too long to realize that there was an unhealthy, social pecking order amongst the individuals on the team. Included in this cast system, were a few individuals whom I later found out, had a history of making specific individuals know they were not welcomed or accepted. Unfortunately, much of what I witnessed and dealt with that year, reminded me of many of my own on and off ice experiences with youth minor hockey.

In many ways, I was ill prepared for the verbal conflict and teammate bullying that occurred during that hockey season. In comparison, the Pee Wee boys I had coached a few years previously, in a different community, were a dream to coach. It was as if those boys were all one big, happy group of friends. Moreover, since that team consisted of ten and eleven year olds, it had a very strong parent presence that assisted alongside me both on the ice and in the dressing room. Unfortunately, that was not case for this new Midget hockey team that I now found myself on.

In many ways, this year of coaching was pivotal in my development as a hockey coach. Looking back, I had seriously undervalued my role as an assistant coach, as my intentions were to merely show up for games and practices, and help assist the head coach in whatever way he desired. Such self-imposed expectations would have included

moving pylons and pucks in practices, giving the occasional pep talk, and opening the gate to the bench during games.

All I expected was to help develop hockey skills, be a positive role model, and when necessary, verbally curb and correct the occasional negative attitude and behaviour. In hindsight, all of this was relatively easy to maintain and accomplish within specific locations such as the practice ice or on the bench during games. Unfortunately, as coaches, we eventually learned that we were failing miserably within a key and crucial location of every sports team, the locker room. In time, it came to our attention that this location, a room that we as coaches found difficult to control and supervise, had become a breeding ground for negativity and bullying.

Understandably, at no time did these teenage boys ever want their parents or coaches in the dressing room while they were changing and showering. As a result, during all practices, players changed in one room while the coaches prepared in a second room. During games, coaches stayed out of the dressing rooms while the team got ready. Minutes before game-time, we would give a quick pep talk and send the boys out onto the ice. In between periods and after the game, similar talks would be given to the team. When those were accomplished, as coaches, we would once again exit the dressing room and allow them to have their privacy.

This was definitely the wrong choice to make as coaches. Yet, for the time period, this only made sense since it was the late 1990's. The motivation behind leaving the dressing room had to do with the Graham James sexual abuse tragedy that had recently surfaced (The Globe and Mail, 2011). The news of a highly accomplished

Western Hockey League coach sexually molesting teenage boys had a direct impact on how we were going to coach.

Unfortunately, by trying to protect ourselves as coaches, life got very intimidating for some of the players when we left the dressing room as much bullying occurred behind those closed doors. Unknowingly, specific individuals were consistently and routinely being punched, shoved, intimidated, berated, and belittled by certain teammates. I will never forget the altercation that occurred when the father of one of the bullied players approached the players and the parent coach after one of our practices. What ultimately transpired from this conversation was the realization that extremely unfortunate bullying and negativity had been occurring within our team, right under our noses, behind closed doors. How naïve could we have been? How naïve could I have been?

According to Van Den Hoonaard (2012), researchers often choose research topics based on their own personal experiences. This is especially true for me. Often, I have found myself deep in thought, reminiscing over the many memories and highlights from my past playing days on various sports teams. Such memories include notable provincial and playoff hockey, basketball, and baseball games.

On the other end of the spectrum, many times I have also found myself mulling over the many unfortunate bullying episodes I witnessed throughout those playing days. Such recollections often include teammates bullying teammates through belittling, intense teasing, and aggressive physical confrontations. Most notably, I remember the teammates who were physically forced to smell sweaty jockstraps. Or the teammate who came out of the shower and unsuspectingly put on underwear that had been laced with itching powder. Or the teammates who were repeatedly “snapped” with “rat-tails” from

wet shower towels. Or the teammates who were repeatedly doused with water from team water bottles, or continually the targets of tape balls, or Charlie Horses (punches to the legs and shoulders), and so on.

Such childhood memories from my involvement in team sports, in addition to the bullying that occurred “on my watch” as one of the midget hockey coaches, challenged me and helped shape my focus, strategies, and style when I got back into coaching hockey when my own child began youth minor hockey. As a result, for six years, from Initiation to Atom hockey, I made a personal commitment that each and every child I coached, to the best of my ability, would have the opportunity to play hockey in a bully-free environment.

Throughout those six years of coaching, I was able to learn from my mistakes and implement many of the valuable lessons I learned from my previous bullying experiences. My goal was to go beyond just developing and teaching specific hockey skills and promoting physical fitness. My objective was also to help these young athletes grow as individuals providing them with skills and tools that would go beyond the hockey arena. Fair play, fun, anti-bullying strategies, appropriate social skills, healthy emotional regulation, discipline, and unity all became key components of my coaching philosophy. Fortunately, Hockey Canada also regulated and mandated much needed changes within their minor hockey associations. As a result, it became mandatory for all coaches, managers, and trainers to provide criminal record checks and fulfill intensive clinics where dressing room and on-ice protocols and procedures are formally taught.

For my teams, adult supervision was a priority and positive reinforcement was crucial. Every player knew where I “drew the line” when it came to bullying and poor

behaviour. Every negative incident became a team teaching moment, as it is my belief that this coaching style had a positive impact on the individual players and teams that I coached.

Yet, despite all of these progressive changes I made in my coaching style, bullying still occurred. The only difference was, much of the bullying that occurred became more strategic as the children aged. From my observations, the players who still bullied would torment their victims/teammates using similar tactics that NHL players who play the role of an agitator use. For example, NHL agitators always seem to have this uncanny ability to know when the referee is watching them. Such was the case with the kids I coached who had bullying tendencies. They always seemed to know when the coaches were not watching. The bullying typically was in the form of negative cut-downs, jabs with the blade of the stick, accidental bumps and shoves while standing in line, getting squirted with the water bottles, being the targets of tape balls and/or snowballs from snow collected from skate blades, or purposefully directed swearing.

Fortunately, players began to report such bullying behaviour to myself, other adult volunteers, or to their parents. As a result, appropriate consequences occurred and corrective conversations were able to take place. Such consequences included apologies, the loss of playing time during games, and time-outs or early dismissals from team practices.

Presently, I am no longer coaching hockey. At the same time, it often feels as though the hockey arena is still my home away from home. As a result, I am very aware that bullying is still thriving in and around hockey arenas. One particular incident that I recall occurred between three teammates whom I previously coached. It was early fall,

during a pre-season 3-on-3-hockey league. One youth, who was often the victim, was lying on the ground holding a bloody knee. Standing above him were two youth, one who often played the role of the bully and another who often played the role of the bystander. As I approached the situation, all three claimed everything was okay and that it all was an unfortunate accident. Regrettably, both my gut and my experience with the three youth told me it was much more.

Unfortunately, I am aware of many other team sport related bullying incidents that have occurred over the past few years of teammates who repeatedly berate and belittle other teammates. I am aware of a situation where teammates bullied another teammate by allegedly holding his head inside a dirty, un-flushed toilet bowl. Additionally, I am also aware of a situation where one teammate repeatedly bullied another teammate. This particular situation escalated until the door to the bathroom stall the victim was using was kicked in. As a result, the victim was required to miss his game due to an emergency trip to the hospital for stitches to the head and for a suspected concussion.

Purpose And Importance Of The Study

Inspired from the situation surrounding my daughter's elementary school assembly on bullying and empathy, my personal childhood experiences with bullying, my love for sports (particularly team focused sports), and my eight years of experience in coaching youth minor hockey. It is my belief that too often, the many positives that team sports should be having on the lives of youth are being hindered due to bullying that occurs between teammates. As a result, it is my hope to shed some light on this unfortunate phenomenon.

In recent years, media, school boards, and communities have gone to great lengths highlighting and researching the many tragic stories of bullying related school shootings, violence, and teen suicides. Understandably, much research has gone into the impact school-age peer bullying has on both the victims and bystanders (Coloroso, 2002; Olweus, 1993). For obvious reasons, the immense amount of literature, research, data, websites, and television commercials on bullying is commendable and praiseworthy. The rationale behind this growing body of research is apparent, thus allowing our schools and many community agencies to be on the right track as they make steady progress tackling this ugly phenomenon head on.

Yet, based on my personal experience and research, there is a need for more direct research and literature in the specific area of bullying in organized youth team sports. The importance of this statement can be seen when you compare and contrast the following statistics: (1) more than one third of Canadian youth experience some form of bullying through their educational experience (Craig & Pepler, 2007); (2) bullying occurs at a greater rate in Canada than in the majority of other world nations (Craig & Pepler, 2007); and (3) 3,738,500 Canadian youth between the ages of five to 14-years-of-age participated in organized team sports in 2010 (Government of Canada, 2013).

Research Questions

Due to the seriousness and prevalence of bullying, in addition to the amount of time and volume of children and adolescents who participate in team sports, I believe this research topic to be necessary and worthwhile. The methodology I used to guide this study was a Case Study approach (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007; Yin, 2003), which will be described in detail in Chapter Three. The goal was to explore

this phenomenon through the experiences of my participants. My approach to this case was be guided by the following research questions:

1. How does bullying within team sports impact individual experience?
2. To what extent have these experiences influenced participants' views of these team sports?

What I hoped to accomplish through this investigation was to have the reader gain a better understanding of the lived experiences of no less than two individuals, 18 years-of-age and older, that had previously witnessed or experienced bullying between teammates in an organized team sport. It was my desire to research the past and existing effects these experiences had on my participants. Ideally, my hope is that this data will begin a conversation that will ensure future team sports to more effectively incorporate important life skills, social skills, and anti-bullying strategies alongside the specific sport's team strategies and skill training.

As a researcher, I was fully aware of who I am and understand that the data I collected could be filtered through a potentially biased lens (Bogdan & Bilen, 2003), since the data first went through my mind before it was added on paper. Such biases could directly result from my elementary school counsellor role, my experience as a hockey coach, or from the mere fact that I am the father of three children who all participate in team sports. Furthermore, the fact that I too am an individual who perfectly fits the description of the proposed participants had potential drawbacks. As a result, it was of utmost importance that at all times I was aware of these potential personal biases throughout my research.

Therefore, I purposefully strove to minimize any and all influence I potentially could have on my participants. According to Polkinghorne (2005), this could be accomplished through the use of effective listening and attending skills. As a result, my education and training in School and Counselling Psychology played an important role in maintaining a self-awareness of all potential personal biases. By doing so, along with the procedures I employed, as discussed in Chapter Three, I was able to reduce the possibility of acquiring results based on personal expectations and gain authentic results from my data.

Definitions

For the sake of clarity, I deem it necessary to specify key terms that I will be referring to throughout this research. They are as followed:

Bullying: According to Dan Olweus (1978), in order for peer aggression to be labeled as bullying, the following three components need to be present: (1) the bully must use repeated, aggressive behaviours towards the victim over a period of time; (2) the bully must use deliberate, aggressive behaviours with an attempt to cause harm towards the victim; and (3) there must be an imbalance of power between the bullying and victim (Grief & Furlong, 2006; Olweus, 1978).

Team Sports: For the purpose of this study, I will be defining a team sport as a competitive activity consisting of two or more individuals working together towards a common goal and/or shared objective. Team sports involve physical exertion, a specific set of skills, and a set of rules or customs that governs its outcome and performance. It will be necessary that all participants for this research to have been involved in an

organized team sports such as: soccer, volleyball, baseball, football, hockey, basketball, and so on.

Overview Of Chapters

This research project will include five chapters. Following this introductory chapter will be a second chapter that will review previous research and literature pertinent to this current study. In the third chapter, I will explain the methodology, Case Study, chosen for this project. Within this chapter, I will elaborate on the specifics of qualitative research, data collection, data analysis, ethics, and various procedures that I adhered to. Chapter Four presents the results of the study. Specific themes and thoughts elicited from the data collecting process are contained within this chapter. In Chapter Five, I summarized my findings. Included in this chapter is a discussion on the context of the study, along with its strengths and limitations.

Chapter 2: Review Of Literature

In this chapter, I will review literature in the areas of bullying, the benefits of physical activity, the benefits of team sport involvement, and Canadian team sport involvement data. These bodies of research informed and provided a theoretical rationale for the present study. This chapter concludes with a statement of the study's purpose and guiding research question.

As will be clearly revealed within this chapter, exposure to bullying can cause various intellectual and physical difficulties, as it has been associated with physical, emotional, and psychiatric symptoms (Bowles & Lesperance, 2004). Personal exposure to such behaviour is damaging and clearly interferes with an individual's ability to reach their maximum potential. Its consequences can be devastating. Such behaviour is wrong and should not be a common experience in the development, educational process, or extracurricular activities of any individual. Therefore, additional research on this topic is urgent and necessary. To avoid this area of focus would undeniably be thoughtless, simple-minded, and harmful (Glanz, 2003). For these reasons, I selected the topic of bullying in the context of organized team sports for my thesis.

Importance Of Physical Activities

As previously identified in Chapter One, my background in organized team sports played a vital role in shaping me and molding me as an individual. Throughout my developmental years, and well into adulthood, my involvement in organized team sports taught me many valuable life lessons. Some of these lessons bring back regrets; such as the bullying episodes I endorsed as a silent bystander, or executed as the bully. At the same time, many of these life lessons bring back fond memories of personal and team

achievements and accomplishments. Furthermore, the many years spent playing organized team sports taught me the meaning and value of exercise, physical fitness, hard work, teamwork, friendship, unity, leadership, commitment, and humility.

Physical Benefits

Personal involvement and participation in physical activity can have an immense, wide-range, positive affect on overall health and well-being (Gano-Overway, 2013). Such activity can lower ones risk for serious, disabling health conditions such as coronary heart disease, diabetes, stroke, and cancer (Anokye, Trueman, Green, Pavey, & Taylor, 2012). According to Rief (2005), physical exercise increases one's blood flow and oxygen levels to the brain and stimulates the central nervous system. Powell, Paluch, and Blair (2011) added there is strong scientific evidence that regular physical activity reduces the risks of depression, injurious falls, while improving sleep quality, and maintaining weight loss and obesity.

Psychological Benefits

Psychological benefits of physical activity includes developing one's ability to control emotions, building confidence and discipline, maintaining higher levels of self-esteem, reducing body dissatisfaction, and lowering levels of social anxiety (Eime, Young, Harvey, Charity, & Payne, 2013; Marsh & Kleitman, 2003). Rief (2005) added that physical exercise increases focus, alertness, learning, memory, and boosts disposition.

Social Benefits

In school settings, Gano-Overway's (2013) research revealed that in physical educational programs, the prevalence of bullying is lower than what occurs generally in

other school situations. Participation in physical activities, such as organized team sports, reduces the likelihood of specific detrimental risks for students such as school truancy, substance abuse, criminal misconduct, and risky behaviour (Eccles, Barber, Stone, & Hunt, 2003; Cooley, Henriksen, Nelson, & Thompson, 1995; Mahoney & Cairns, 1997; Mahoney & Stattin, 2000; Marsh & Kleitman, 2003). Additionally, according to Broh (2002), such involvement increases academic potential and achievement.

Organized Team Sports

Over the years I have met many parents who have seen great value in having their children participate in a variety of physical fitness activities and organized sports. Often, such parents have chosen the path of individual sports for their children, rather than organized team sports. Such organized sports have included figure skating, speed skating, swimming, diving, bowling, gymnastics, track and field, tennis, badminton, golf, and martial arts. Some of these organized sports are activities that my children, wife, and I greatly enjoy participating in. Understandably, there is a group component with each of these sports, yet for the purpose of this study I will not be focusing in on such meaningful activities. Instead, I am focusing in on bullying episodes that occur specifically within the confinements of organized team sports.

It is my opinion that organized team sports can be wonderful avenues that can help youth develop physically active lifestyles that can ultimately enhance overall health and well-being. Recent Canadian surveys indicate that roughly 80% of twelve to seventeen-year-olds participate in team sports (Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute, 2009).

According to Statistics Canada, in 2010, the top ten participated organized team sports for Canadian children between the ages of five and fourteen were: (1) soccer; (2) ice hockey; (3) basketball; (4) baseball; (5) volleyball; (6) ball hockey; (7) football; (8) in-line hockey; (9) curling; and (10) softball (Government of Canada, 2013). To break down this list a little further, a total of 3,738,500 individuals, between the ages of five to fourteen-years-of-age, played the following team sports. The participation statistics for these team sports can be found in table 2.1.

Table 2.1 Canadian Team Sport Participation Statistics (5-14-year of age)

Sport	% of that population	total # of participants
Soccer	42.3%	1 581 386
Ice Hockey	22%	822 470
Basketball	16.3%	609 376
Baseball	13.7%	512 175
Volleyball	8.2%	306 557
Ball Hockey	2.9%	108 417
Football	2.8%	104 678
In-Line Hockey	1.2%	44 862
Curling	1.1%	41 124
Softball	0.8%	29 908

(Government of Canada, 2013)

During the same year, the top ten organized team sports for Canadians 15-years of age and older were as followed: (1) ice hockey; (2) soccer; (3) baseball; (4) volleyball; (5) basketball; (6) curling; (7) softball; (8) football; (9) ball hockey; and (10) rugby (Government of Canada, 2013). The participation statistics for these team sports can be found in table 2.2.

Table 2.2 Canadian Team Sport Participation Statistics (15+ year of age)

Sport	% of that population	total # of participants
Ice Hockey	4.4%	1 239 000
Soccer	3.5%	981 000
Baseball	2.1%	581 000
Volleyball	1.9%	531 000
Baseball	1.8%	512 000
Curling	0.9%	245 000
Softball	0.8%	219 000
Football	0.7%	186 000
Ball Hockey	0.5%	138 000
Rugby	0.4%	100 000

(Government of Canada, 2013)

Youth participation team sports such as these provide the individual with the basic and fundamental need of belonging (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). This is especially crucial during these pivotal development years. According to Wagner (1996), it is during these years that there is an increased need for interaction and intimacy with peers that goes beyond the social realm of the family. Carron and Brawley (2008) added that next to the family system, involvement with an organized team sport is one of the most influential groups a child or adolescent can belong to. Yet, what happens when the opposite happens? What happens when that team environment, that ideally is supposed to provide that fundamental need of belonging, actually becomes a breeding ground for ongoing intimidation, humiliation, and isolation? What happens when bullying occurs within the confines of organized team sports?

Background Bullying Information

Bullying is certainly not a new phenomenon. In fact, it is a very old experience. As mentioned earlier, bullying happened when I went to school, just as it happened when my parents went to school, and when my grandparents, and so on. Traditionally, or

“back in the day,” when bullying took place, it was simply known and referred to as a form of perverse child's play. Fortunately this ideology changed and is now recognized as a very serious problem.

In 1972, Dan Olweus (1978) was the first scholar to systematically research the topic of bullying. Throughout the following years, he began to identify this phenomenon as a serious threat to healthy child development, as well as a potential cause of school violence (Olweus, 1978). Five years later, bullying hit headlines worldwide.

The year was 1982, and three separate cases of bullying rocked the nation of Norway. The outcome of the bullying was tragic, as three 14-year-old Norwegian boys committed suicide as a direct result of extreme bullying from classmates. In response to those events, the Norwegian Ministry of Education launched a nation-wide campaign against bullying. Within it, they mandated and implemented a bully prevention program to occur within every elementary school and high school throughout Norway (Olweus, 1993). Soon after, many other countries, including Canada, followed Norway's lead.

Understanding Bullying

Bullying is defined as a form of aggression where one or more dominant individuals, systematically target, harass, and abuse a specific, less dominant individual with the intent to cause distress (Belsky, 2007; Smith & Thompson, 1991). As previously mentioned, a commonly accepted definition of bullying comes from Dan Olweus, who stated that in order for peer aggression to be labeled as bullying, the following three components need to be present: (1) the bully must use repeated, aggressive behaviours towards the victim over a period of time; (2) the bully must use

deliberate, aggressive behaviours with an attempt to cause harm towards the victim; and (3) there must be an imbalance of power between the bully and victim (Olweus, 1978).

Moreover, Olweus, and other noted authorities on childhood aggression further define bullying as episodes where one or more individuals repeatedly harm others by physical attack or by hurting other's feelings through words, actions, or social exclusion (Hazler, 1996; Randall, 1997; Smith, Mororita, Junger-Tas, Olweus, Catalano, & Slee, 1999). Specific bullying behaviours often include physical assault, vandalism, theft, exclusion, and verbal abuse such as name-calling, threats, taunts and slander (Beale & Scott, 2001).

Glew, Rivara, and Feudtner (2000) described this form of aggression as intentional and deliberate, with the bully's end goal being to either harm or disturb their victims, whom they perceive as being unable to defend themselves. Such episodes can occur for a plethora of reasons, ranging from vengeance, hatred, jealousy, etc. Roberts (2000) referred to these episodes as patterns marked with fear, humiliation, and abuse. According to these statements, conflicts between peers of approximately the same physical or mental strength must not be considered as bullying.

According to McGuinness (2007), each and every bullying episode must be separated from the occasional, peer-related joking and/or teasing that is done "playfully," as bullying is always malicious, unjustifiable, and undeserved. Typically, there is a discrepancy in power between the bully and the victim (Nansel, Overpeck, Pilla, Ruan, Simons-Morton, & Scheidt, 2001). This power imbalance is often seen as both psychological and/or physical. Either way, each bullying episode must be seen as an

unfair match since the bully is either physically, verbally, and/or socially stronger than the victim.

Victims of such behaviours can be innocent or provocative, but generally have an easily exploitable weakness that the bully devalues in order to feel superior (Carney & Merrell, 2001; Hazler, 1996). Such incidents often transpire without any justifiable cause. Mason (2008) suggested intellect, age, ethnicity, race, gender, social status, physical appearance, and social competence as examples of such exploitable weakness and/or traits. Furthermore, Lee (2006) added that the following eight factors must always be considered when labeling aggression as bullying: intent, hurt, repetition, duration, power, provocation, culture and context.

The Bully

Much of what is known about bullying comes from Dan Olweus (1978). As mentioned earlier, the most recognized and accepted definition of “bullying” comes from him. In it, Olweus stated that in order for peer aggression to be labeled as bullying, the following three components need to be present: (1) the bully must use repeated, aggressive behaviours towards the victim over a period of time; (2) the bully must use deliberate, aggressive behaviours with an attempt to cause harm towards the victim; and (3) there must be an imbalance of power between the bully and victim (Olweus, 1978).

Over the years, many researchers have added to Dan Olweus’ literature. Such findings include work done by Argenbright and Edgell (as cited in Beale & Scott, 2001), who suggested there are four specific types of bullies: (1) physical bullies who often hit, kick, or shove others; (2) verbal bullies who use words to harm others through name-calling, insulting, making racist comments, or harsh teasing; (3) relational bullies who

focus on excluding specific individuals from their peer group, usually through verbal threats and rumors; and (4) reactive bullies who are both the bully and the victim. Typically these individuals are victims first, and respond to their victimization with bullying behaviour.

A character examination of bullies indicates that such individuals typically “have positive attitudes towards violence, poor relationships with parents, and use drugs or alcohol” (Mason, 2008, p. 324). Olweus (1993) referred to bullies as walking time bombs, individuals who are ready to go off with little warning. Olweus (1993) went on to add that bullies tend to be impulsive, quick-tempered, non-empathetic, and maintain a low tolerance level when it comes to frustration. Further research adds to these findings, identifying bullies as individuals who are overly aggressive, destructive, and enjoy dominating their peers/victims (Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005); who gain control of their victims through physical force or threats, verbal teasing, and exclusion (Beale & Scott, 2001). Perhaps these findings have direct correlations to McNamara and McNamara’s (1997) data, which suggested that bullies are inclined to have greater difficulties when it comes to processing social cues. As a result, their interpretations of other’s behaviours are often misread and seen as being antagonistic.

The unfortunate reality is, bullying behaviours typically do not go away on their own, and often get worse over time (Public Safety Canada, 2009). According to Ma (2001), boys who bullied as children and who continued such behavior into adulthood are more likely to engage in criminal acts, including marital violence, child abuse, and sexual harassment. Craig, Pepler, and colleagues supported these findings, suggesting that the many lessons learned through the aggressive nature of childhood bullying can lead to

future sexual harassment, dating aggression, workplace harassment, marital abuse, and child abuse (Craig & Pepler, 2005; McMaster, Connolly, Pepler & Craig, 2002).

The Victim

Brockenbough, Cornell, & Loper (2002) suggested that two-thirds of individuals who are bullied are submissive or passive in nature, while the other one-third of the recipients are seen as more aggressive. Despite these statistics, they in no way justify bullying, as many times these victims already display poorer social skills and lack the ability to manage their emotional responses (Nansel et al., 2001).

Glew, Rivara, and Feudtner (2000) depicted these submissive and passive individuals as having insecure, hypersensitive, anxious, quiet, and cautious personalities. Olweuz (1993) describes these victims as abandoned individuals who have difficulties in making and keeping friendships. As a result, many times, victims feel isolated and lonely. They see themselves as unappealing, insignificant, and unintelligent failures (Smokowski et al., 2005). Carney and Merrell (2001) added that such negative cognitions often cause victims to wrongly blame themselves for the bullying they experience.

Roberts' (2006) research added that individuals who are seen as being different are at greater risk of being bullied. These differences can include either a physical, mental, social, economic, or sexual nature. Furthermore, Roberts (2006) stated that the following individuals are at a greater risk of being bullied by their peers: individuals who are from a lower economical social status, individuals who are social outcasts, individuals who have special needs, individuals who are seen as being defenseless, and/or individuals who are of an alternative sexual orientation/lifestyle.

Research done by Mason (2008), suggested that ongoing, repetitious bullying is not necessary for damage to occur within these victims, as single occurrences of bullying have been documented to cause noteworthy emotional, mental, and physical damage. As a result, how much more damage is possible when frequent, reoccurring, and prolonged bullying is directed towards a single victim? According to Rivers (2004), such individuals have been known to battle posttraumatic stress into their adult years.

Furthermore, longitudinal studies confirm a wide variety of other psychosocial problems for bullying victims as evidence shows that victims experience an extensive array of emotional difficulties such as stomach aches, headaches, anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, suicidal ideation and tendencies, loneliness, a greater dependency on adults, school truancy, and various health concerns (Hawker & Boulton, 2000; Kim, Leventhal, Koh, Hubbard, & Boyce, 2006; Mason, 2008; O'Moore & Kirkham, 2001; Roland, 2002). Research by Seals and Young (2003) backed up this evidence, but their data reveals that both the victim and the bully have been found to be more depressed than students who are not involved in bullying.

Such problems can obviously affect school and learning experiences (Horne & Staniszewski, 2003; Nishina, Juvonen, & Witkow, 2005), as victims face a greater risk of experiencing maladjustments within academic achievement, self-confidence, self-esteem, and pro-social skills (Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1996; Kochenderfer-Ladd & Wardrop, 2001; Paul & Cillessen, 2003). Additionally, there have been relationships found between childhood bullying and diagnoses of social phobia, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and panic disorder later in the individual's adulthood (McCabe, Antony, Summerfeldt, Liss, & Swinson, 2003).

The Witness/By-Stander

Often, bullies purposefully seek out opportunities where their peers can witness their bullying behaviour (Belsky, 2007). Typically, a group of one or more individuals initiate the bullying while a second group stands on the sidelines, either watching, encouraging, or laughing at the bullying. Inappropriately, this group of onlookers feed the bullies a steady dose of positive reinforcement. As result, bullying is not the only problem; the fact that there is an audience that “passively” approves the bullying compounds the problem (Batsche & Porter, 2006).

According to Craig et al (1998), within schools, bystanders and individuals who witness bullying episodes often feel pressured to join in with the bullying. In a later study by Oh and Hazler (2009), data revealed that by-standers who assist and reinforce bullying behaviour are typically friends of the bully. In contrast, their research goes on to say that bystanders who are friends with the victim are less likely to assist the victim. Such individuals often feel conflicted, in that they want to intervene, but do not do so, for fear of being future victims of the bully (Campbell 2005).

Additional research shows that bullying has a negative impact on individuals who witness such episodes. For example, by-standers belonging to classrooms that have bullying problems often feel less safe and experience less satisfaction with school life (Olweus et al., 1999). As a result, the school setting can quickly become an environment that is not conducive to learning and/or concentrating for the innocent by-standers who witness such acts of aggression.

Gender Differences

Research has determined that gender plays an important role in regards to bullying factors and expressions. For example, girls tend to report higher levels of empathy and prosocial behavior and lower levels of bullying and antisocial behaviour than boys (Endersen & Olweus, 2001; Kavussanu, Stamp, Slade, & Ring, 2009; Nansel et al., 2001). Males tend to engage in bullying more frequently than females (Nansel, Overpeck, Pilla, Ruan, Simons-Morton, & Scheidt, 2001; Seals & Young, 2003). Males are more likely to engage in physical or verbal bullying, while females often revert to a relational style of bullying (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Nansel et al., 2001; Vaillancourt, Hymel, & McDougall, 2008). Research done by Besag (2006) revealed that males view physical aggression as a more hurtful form of bullying while females view social aggression as the most hurtful form.

Gender difference is also evident in an individual's response to bullying. According to Rigby (2003), female victims are more likely to stay home than male victims. In regards to gender and the by-stander, Haffner et al. (2007) revealed that there tends to be a greater willingness in girls to intervene on behalf of the victim when the victim is a friend.

Bullying And Schools

Throughout the last decade, bullying has received substantial research due to the fact that it is the cause of many difficulties for students (Carney, Hazler, Oh, Hibel, & Granger, 2010). Today, bullying is still a disheartening reality, as it occurs at an alarming rate among school age students in elementary and secondary schools all around

the world. In recent years, there have been some who have wanted to change the traditional term of “bullying” and call it “school violence” (Peguero, 2008).

Generally, researchers indicate that the majority of these episodes occur close to school settings, with the school playground and the school hallways being the two most common locations for such confrontations (Beale & Scott, 2001). Typically, the common denominator for such episodes is a lack of adult supervision (Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005). As mentioned earlier, four distinct types of bullying have been identified: (1) physical; (2) verbal; (3) relational; and (4) reactive bullying. Despite the various forms of delivery, all types of bullying commonly include excessively aggressive and damaging behaviours from individuals who find joy and satisfaction in dominating their victims.

Research suggests that these episodes largely spike during second grade and gradually decline throughout the remaining educational years (Olweus, 1993). Bullies who continue on with their aggressive behaviour during high school, typically begin to manifest and incorporate more aggressive types of behaviours into their bullying.

According to McNamara & McNamara (1997), victims of bullying tend to miss more school days than their peers who are not bullied. Understandably, this trend seems to have a direct impact on academic success. In McNamara and McNamara’s (1997) research, individuals who are victimized by bullies tend to have lower academic success and achievement than that of their peers. What this means is that individuals who are bullied have a less likely chance of reaching their full academic potential.

In a recent study, Carney et al. (2010) investigated, through the testing of saliva, how the levels of cortisol in middle childhood students were affected by both the victimization of bullying and the exposure/witnessing of such an event. According to

Stansbury and Gunnar (1994), cortisol, the primary product of the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis, is released into the saliva as a response to stress. Such levels increase during social threats (Dickerson & Kemeny, 2004).

Ninety-One Sixth-Grade students made up their sample, 55 female and 36 males participants, ranging from ages 11 to 14 with a mean age of 11.5 years. Of the 91 participants, 70 students indicated that they were exposed to repetitive bullying. Thirty-Five reported that they were victims of some form of bullying almost every day. Within this study, their sample's exposure to victimization as well as the witnessing of such events had a direct relationship towards cortisol levels. Furthermore, there was also a direct relationship towards cortisol levels and the various time of day when there was the potential for bullying to increase, such as during recess and the lunch hour. During such times, cortisol levels in their participants significantly spiked (Carney et al., 2010).

According to Craig and Pepler (1998), they observed 48 hours of recess where a total of 314 bullying incidents amongst 65 elementary school students were witnessed. Of these observations, 84% of these episodes occurred in the presence of peers and/or adults. According to Craig and Pepler (1998), only 25% of these situations were intervened by school staff. Ten years later, the same researchers reported that the prevalence of bullying in Canada was still a serious concern, occurring at a greater rate here than in the majority of other nations (Craig & Pepler, 2007). Using data from UNICEF's Innocenti Report Card 7 (2007), they calculated that out of a total of 4,331 Canadian students ages 11, 13, and 15, 36.3% reported being victimized by bullies, while 37% reported bullying others (Craig & Pepler, 2007).

Research generated from Media Awareness Network (2005) revealed similar data, suggesting that 34% of school-aged children, from grades 4 to 11, have been systematically bullied throughout their educational upbringing. When one considers the data obtained from these studies, the fact that more than one third of Canadian students are involved in bullying is disturbing, especially since every child has the right to feel safe at their homes, schools, and within their communities (UNICEF's Innocenti Report Card 7, 2007). The ramifications of such bullying episodes carries the likelihood of making school a horrific experience for victims, potentially causing academically competent students to withdraw and struggle with their curricular studies (Buhs & Ladd, 2001).

In hindsight, it almost sounds ridiculous that Olweus (1978) called bullying a potential cause of school violence. According to Winzer (2008), it is the most prevalent form of violence in schools today; such behaviors typically begin during elementary school years and continue to thrive throughout the middle school years. In fact, if gone unchecked, bullying often gets worse over time. Its consequences can be far reaching.

For instance, Olweus (1993) found that 60% of those who bullied others in Grades 6 and/or 9 had at least one criminal conviction by age 24. Additional research goes on to state that students who are bullied by their peers are twice as likely to be responsible for school shootings (Anderson, Kaufman, Simon, & Barrios, 2001). According to Borg (1998), self-pity and rage have the potential of turning into vengeance.

To paint a grim picture on this last statement, CBC News (2012) contributed 30 individual deadly school shootings to bullying. One that garnered much media attention

occurred in 1999, where two Columbine High School students from Littleton, CO, violently took twelve lives. Then eight days later, a 14-year-old student in Taber, AB, killed one student and wounded another (CBC.ca, 2012). All three shooters were individuals who were bullied by their school peers.

Cyberbullying

Due to social media and technology, such acts of intimidation and bullying are no longer merely confined within the boundaries of our schools or places of employment. Currently, cyberbullying is a new hot topic that has caught many of the headlines and is a type of bullying that often occurs through social media. Tokunaga (2010) described this phenomenon as any aggressive or adverse behaviour, accomplished through the use of an electronic device, and is intended to inflict harm and/or discomfort towards a recipient(s). According to Cochrane (2008), most cyberbullies and victims attend the same school.

Professionally, I have encountered such acts of bullying delivered through digital platforms such as Facebook, Snapchat, SMS, and Instagram. Examples include horrible text messages sent to individuals at all hours of the night, harassing Snapchat videos and pictures sent to victims, and mean comments left on Facebook and Instagram accounts. The consequences of these types of acts are very similar to those of traditional bullying. Many victims I have counselled have experienced emotions such as anger, betrayal, embarrassment, fatigue, fear, frustration, and sadness as a result of cyberbullying.

The traditional bullying episodes that I vividly recall from my youth that troubled my school's hallways, classrooms, locker rooms, and playgrounds can now follow victims home. Through social media and technology, bullying episodes can now occur while individuals are sitting at their own dining room table, or in the safety of a bedroom,

or wherever else one may find themselves. Furthermore, such incidents can occur at any hour of the day.

For these reasons, cyberbullying is very unique and different when compared to the traditional form of bullying. According to Li (2007), it is much more difficult to control than traditional forms of bullying as it creates many challenges and obstacles for students, parents, and teachers to overcome. All one needs to do is type the words “individuals who have been cyberbullied” in any Internet search engine to uncover the horrors, effects, and consequences this form of bullying has on society. The names of Ryan Halligan, Megan Meier, Jessica Logan, Hope Witsell, Tyler Clementi, Amanda Todd, and Alexis Pilkington serve as grim reminders of its potential, as each were victims of intense cyberbullying who took their own lives (NoBullying.com, 2015). Suicide, a potentially devastating consequence that has been linked to cyberbullying, has brought this phenomenon to the attention of the media many times over the last few years. Unfortunately, in this technically savvy world that we live, with new advances in media and electronics being developed on a continual basis, cyberbullying is a phenomenon that does not appear to be ending anytime soon.

Bullying And Organized Team Sports

At the start of this chapter, I posed the following question: What happens when a team-sport environment, that ideally is supposed to provide that fundamental need of belonging, actually becomes a breeding ground for ongoing intimidation, humiliation, and isolation? What happens when teammate bullying undermines the physical, psychological, and social benefits of exercise and team-sport involvement? In fact, there are some who suggest that participation in organized team sports has the potential to

cause more harm than good, making children and adolescents more vulnerable to victimization, rather than protecting them from bullying (Peguero, 2008).

Peguero's (2008) findings indicated youth who are actively involved in school related sports and intramural teams are more likely to be bullied than youth who do not participate in such types of extracurricular activities. These findings appear to be contrary to previous research that suggested that such activities were protective factors from bullying, aggression, and violence because of the increased levels of adult supervision found within them (Feldman & Matjasko, 2005; Schmidt, 2003).

Despite all of the media attention, prevention protocols, education, and funding, youth are still bullying fellow teammates. However, it does not necessarily begin and end with our youth. Consider the following non-stereotypical example surrounding two Miami Dolphin teammates, Jonathan Martin and Richie Incognito. According to ESPN (2014), 6-foot-5, 315-pound Jonathan Martin was exposed to systematic harassment and taunting by 6-foot-3, 319-pound Richie Incognito on a daily basis. As a result, Jonathan Martin left the team, leaving the suspended Richie Incognito to justify his actions by claiming he was merely misunderstood, and that his behaviours were a result of their friendship (The Globe and Mail, 2013).

According to The Globe and Mail (2013, para. 44), hazing haunts many individuals who play team sports, as many teammates are victims of public nudity, extreme intoxication, humiliating photographs, and other acts that are meant to "humiliate, demean, degrade, or degrade a person regardless of location or consent of the participant(s)."

Although the topic of hazing is brought up in this inquiry, it was not intentionally sought after. Instead, the more traditional forms of bullying that occur within organized team sports were the primary focus of this research. Nonetheless, the many articles that were read and the extensive research that was done suggest that it is a topic that requires further inquiry.

Additional research on the phenomenon of traditional bullying and team sports is also needed, as such activities have the ability to breed negative social outcomes, alongside the positive ones. Group dynamics, group leadership, coaching style, and player vulnerability play a vital role in potential bullying episodes amongst teammates. Yet, based on my experience and observations, the bulk of these outcomes must be determined by the coaches, as it is their responsibility to set the culture of the team they have been given the responsibility to lead. Ultimately, these coaches may not be able to change the individuals, but it is my belief that they all are very capable of changing the behaviours of these individual.

Summary

Often, society is all about the quick fix. Unfortunately, when it comes to bullying there does not seem to be one. At one point in time, such aggression was viewed as a form of perverse child's play. It was merely regarded as an everyday part of a child's social development. Today, it is a known fact that it causes its victims a number of psychosocial problems, such as depression, low self-esteem, suicidal tendencies, posttraumatic stress, social phobias, obsessive-compulsive disorders, panic disorder, learning disabilities, and greater dependency on adults (Hawker & Boulton, 2000; Kim, Leventhal, Koh, Hubbard, & Boyce, 2006; Mason, 2008; O'Moore & Kirkham, 2001;

Rivers, 2004; Roland, 2002; Seals & Young, 2003). For such individuals, these extreme physical and psychological complications have been known to persist well into their adult years (McCabe, Antony, Summerfeldt, Liss, & Swinson, 2003).

According to the literature, bullying continues to receive much needed research due to the fact that it is the cause of many difficulties for students (Carney, 2000). In Canada and the United States, this is especially true since the Columbine and Taber school shootings. In 1999, the social, political, and legal obligation to provide safe school environments for all students became an instant priority for both nations. Undoubtedly, it is still a high priority that will always require a continual proactive response.

Although the prevalence of bullying within organized team sports is unknown, researchers have documented that approximately 41% of children are subjected to bullying every school semester with the highest frequency of bullying occurring in Grades Six to Eight (Nansel et al., 2001). Despite so much of bullying research being focused primarily on school settings, it is my thought that many parallels can be made between school settings and organized team sport settings. Conceivably, the decades of school-based bully research could be instrumental in making organized team sports an even safer, more fun, positive environment for physical fitness, skill development, and social, emotional, and psychological growth. At the same time, if there is any substance to these parallels, more focused and relative inquiries must take place in relation to this proposed phenomenon.

As a result, the researcher's intention is to highlight and dissect the bully experiences found within organized team sport settings from the perspective of two

participants who experienced these bullying situations. The guiding research questions for this qualitative case study were:

1. How does bullying within team sports impact individuals' experience?
2. To what extent have these experiences influenced the participant's view of these team sports?"

Together, the participants and the researcher co-constructed and recreated the participants past lived experiences of the phenomenon in order to provide future readers a rich understanding of the participants' experiences, intentions, and meanings of the phenomenon. It was the researcher's intention to contribute a greater understanding to the phenomenon of teammates who bully teammates. Furthermore, it was the researcher's intention to generate significant, positive conversations on the phenomenon that could ideally change the attitudes and behaviours within organized team sports.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter will define the role of the researcher, present the rationale for the using a qualitative inquiry approach, and reveal how a case study methodological approach can provide valuable participant insight into the bullying experiences they witnessed and endured within organized team sports. Additionally, participant selection, the methods used to generate data, and the process used to analyze that data will be outlined. Finally, the ethical issues that were under consideration by the researcher for this case study are highlighted.

Qualitative Inquiry

Over the past few decades, due to the rise of the postmodern movement, it became necessary for traditional quantitative research to make allowances for qualitative inquiries and research. As a result, it became apparent that alternative paradigms existed apart from the positivist way of knowing, such as the Critical Theory Paradigm, the Constructivism Paradigm, and the Participatory Paradigm (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Denzin and Lincoln (1994) defined these various paradigms as basic sets of belief that are used to help guide qualitative researcher's principles and worldviews. According to Morrow (2007), these paradigms are to monitor the qualitative researcher's actions.

Throughout this study, the research approach utilized was a qualitative approach that adhered to Guba and Lincoln's (2005) Constructivist Paradigm. Within this paradigm of inquiry, the assumption was made that the participants interviewed were subjectively and completely interconnected to that what was known about their lived team sport experiences with bullying. Constructivists, such as Yin (2003), claimed that

such truth was relative and completely dependent upon each individual participant's perspective.

According to Gall, Gall and Borg (2007), the goal of qualitative researchers is to seek and discover both a greater understanding and meaning of their participant's lived experiences. Merriam (2002) characterized such inquiries as a way of understanding social phenomena within the context of the participants' perspectives of their lived experiences. Wilson (1998) goes on to state that qualitative research "attempts not only to understand the world, but also to understand it through the eyes of the participants whose world it is" (p. 3).

One of the advantages of this type of approach is the close collaboration the researcher has with the participants (Yin, 2003). Through this relationship, my participants were able to tell their stories, and together with me, the researcher, co-construct their views of reality in order for the reader to better understand these lived experiences. In order to accomplish this, as the researcher, I built a complex, holistic picture within their observations of the teammate/bullying problem we were exploring (Creswell, 2002).

Rooted in this paradigm of inquiry were ontological and epistemological questions. Ontological questions are used to persistently seek and uncover that what can truly be known about reality (Guba & Lincoln, 2005), such as: "What is it truly like to be a witness to bullying episodes?" "Or what it is truly like to be a victim of bullying?" Epistemological questions are to seek and discover the relationship between the knower/participants and the prospective knower (Guba & Lincoln, 2005).

As a result, through this research study, the goal was to enter the world of the two participants and gain a holistic understanding of their stories. The ontological assumption made was that it was possible to identify with these two participants and their experiences. Concomitantly, the epistemological assumption made was that the participants could not inexplicably share the knowledge and comprehension of what it was truly like to be bullied. Such comprehension and knowledge needed be shared with the researcher, so that together, the participants and the researcher could co-construct understandings of their lived experiences in order to inform and educate the reader (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

As a researcher, it was my responsibility to obtain these shared experiences the participants encountered without allowing any of my personal biases to interfere. Therefore, rather than creating data, it was my responsibility to collect, study, and generate all participant data into rich, valuable information.

For these reasons, in an attempt to find answers for the ontological and epistemological assumptions that were made, a case study approach was chosen. Through this lens, the end goal was to gain knowledge and understanding as light was shed onto the lived experiences of the participants. Ultimately, the theory was that the participant's perspective would provide much meaning and insight into the phenomenon of bullying within team sports.

Case Studies

Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007), defined the case study approach as an “in-depth study of one or more instances of a phenomenon in its real-life context that reflects the perspective of the participants involved in the phenomenon” (p. 447). The utilization of

this approach provides researchers with an opportunity to examine in detail a precise setting, an individual subject, a specific collection of documents, or a particular event (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). According to Yin (2003), the case study design should be considered when the focus of the study is to answer questions such as “how” and “why” and when the researcher believes contextual conditions are clearly relevant to the phenomenon.

For these reasons, I deemed this approach quite appropriate, as one of the research goals was to discover how bullying in team sports impacts individual team members. In regards to this study, the phenomenon needed the context of team sports, and more specifically the various settings, such as the dressing rooms, locker rooms, team benches, playing surfaces, etc. as all settings were clearly relevant to the case. As a result, this design allowed the researcher to explore both the specific and the multiple perspectives of this phenomenon. Additionally, this approach enabled the data to be well grounded since the actual perspectives of the participant’s specific experiences were co-constructed with them. With this specific purpose in mind, this case study was able to contribute further understandings to the phenomenon of teammates who bully teammates.

Since one of the goals was to both know and understand the impact these lived experiences had on my participants in relation to this phenomenon, this case study incorporated a phenomenological approach through the use of in-depth, phenomenological interviews (Fontana & Frey, 2005; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Patton, 2002; Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). Throughout this process, similar questions were incorporated and utilized for each of the participants (see Appendix C).

Additionally, both individual and personal questions were used which in turn allowed for unique, individual responses. As a result, a “thick description” of each participant’s experiences (environment, team dynamics, behaviours, and thoughts) helped assist the researcher in identifying specific sets of categories and patterns from the data (Gall et al., 2007, p. 451). This thick description is best described as a thorough and accurate account that provides a rich recreation of the participants’ experiences, meanings, and intentions as it relates to the phenomena (Gall et al., 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

As a researcher, the goal was not to be a mere observer or interviewer. Therefore, through the utilization of this approach, I was allowed to be an engaged researcher, vigilantly and thoughtfully navigating through the interpretative and collaborative data process with the participants. By doing so, this case study provided an opportunity to better understand the participant’s lived experiences, and better convey these experiences to the reader (Smith & Osborn, 1998).

As a researcher, the intention was to identify, understand, translate, and address the lived experiences of the participants. Highlighting their experiences was not enough as the goal was to promote these experiences, intentions, and meanings as accurately as possible in order to provide the reader with a greater understanding and a valid source of knowledge (Gall et al., 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). For these reasons, this case study methodology was very relevant to the exploration of this topic, teammates who bully teammates, and is why this study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How does bullying within team sports impact individual experience?

2. To what extent have these experiences influenced participants' views of these team sports?

Assumptions

The assumption in this study was that the lived experiences of the participants would shed much needed light on the nature of this research. Furthermore, it was assumed that these experiences would serve as crucial sources of knowledge and understanding on the issue of bullying within the confines of an organized sport team.

A second fundamental assumption of this research was that the everyday world is a valuable and productive source of knowledge that offers many opportunities to learn about ourselves and the nature of lived experiences by analyzing how they occur in our daily lives (Becker, 1992). Through studying, interpreting, and co-constructing individual details of my participant's experiences, it was assumed that much valuable and rich knowledge would be revealed. Furthermore, it was assumed that the participant's descriptions of these experiences, along with their perceptions and understandings of how they experienced it in their world, would help to uncover much knowledge and understanding within this topic of teammate bullying.

Procedures

The intention of this research was to gather data concerning the lived experiences of teammate bullying. Within qualitative research, data collection and data analysis is often done simultaneously (Thorne, 2000). Through this process, the analyzing process often helped inform the collection process, which assisted the researcher in obtaining relevant data from the participants. Furthermore, the raw set of data as a whole was then

conceptually interpreted and converted into a new, articulated, co-constructed depiction of the phenomenon (Thorne, 2000).

Participants

The participants sought for this study were 18-years-of-age and older. Each participant was required to have experienced teammates bullying teammates within an organized team setting. This exposure to bullying could be diverse. Therefore, the participants could fit the role of victim, bully, or witness/by-stander. The reason for this age parameter was because this targeted population potentially had been exposed to a greater volume of bullying within team sports. Furthermore, due to their higher cognitive development, it was deemed that they were better able to articulate their experience and more accurately co-construct them.

Participants were recruited through poster advertising throughout Saskatoon and area athletic and sports facilities (see Appendix A). Initial contact was made through email. Once potential participants had been acquired, they were emailed a brief series of screening questions (See Appendix B). In the event of multiple potential participants, a five to ten minute pre-screening telephone conversation was prepared. The goal was to interview the top two to three participants (See Appendix C). These participants were asked to commit to the interview process and one or two mutually convenient meeting(s) that would be used to co-construct and confirm the accuracy of the interpretations.

Furthermore, participants were provided with consent forms (see Appendix E) outlining the research project, the participants' obligations, and the participants' right to terminate involvement at any time without any penalty. Participant signatures on these forms were accepted as indication of their consent to participate.

Data was attained utilizing semi-structured interviewing. A minimum of two separate meetings occurred with each participant. The first meeting consisted of the interviewing process. The goal was for the participants to speak openly and candidly about their bullying experiences. The data collected from these interviews was then analyzed and interpreted.

Once this analyzing and interpreting process was completed, a second meeting occurred. This meeting allowed participants to confirm the accuracy of the interpretations. If further changes were needed, additional meetings were provided until all interpretations were deemed relevant and accurate. At that point, a Transcript Release Form (see Appendix D) was signed and dated, which allowed the participant's data to be used for this research inquiry.

Interviews

According to Yin (2003), interviews are a very important source of collecting data for case studies. As previously stated, the interviews that were administered consisted of open-ended and semi-structured phenomenological questions (Fontana & Frey, 2005; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Patton, 2002; Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). A set of questions (Appendix C) was utilized to guide this process. These interviews were designed to get as close to the stories of the participants as possible by encouraging them to provide rich, detailed, retrospective accounts of their lived experiences in their own words (Smith, et al., 2009). This format allowed me some freedom in how questions were asked and in what order. This type of questioning was important to the interview process, as it provided many layers of rich, thick data.

In keeping with a phenomenological interviewing strategy, an interview guide with a series of open-ended questions and potential probes (see Appendix D) was created for the interviews (Van Den Hoonaard, 2012). This interview guide was used to direct the researcher's interactions with the participants to ensure that all relevant topics were covered. All interview questions were worded openly to ensure that all researcher assumptions were not transferred towards the participants that could have possibly led them towards particular answers (Smith, et al., 2009).

Furthermore, it was of utmost importance that the interviews sounded like a purposeful conversation (Smith, et al., 2009) with an end goal of understanding the participant's lived experiences of bullying and team sports. This line of questioning allowed the participants to focus on the phenomenon, giving them the opportunity to both reflect on the meanings of their experiences and provide rich details of these experiences. Due to my counselling background, I was also able to utilize important skills such as attending, paraphrasing, summarizing, and questioning throughout these interviews (Ivey, Ivey, & Zalaquett, 2010). As a result, the interviews were conducted in an effective and sensitive manner.

Additionally, two semi-structured interviews were administered with each participant. The locations and times of these interviews were arranged in order to provide the participants a safe and convenient environment for them to share their stories. Both of these interviews were audio-recorded. The first interview lasted approximately one-hour. It was conducted with the purpose of gaining initial insight into the experiences of the participants. After the conclusion of the interview, the audio recording was transcribed and analyzed. Within the following weeks, participants were presented

with a transcript of the interview. Both participants were invited to add, alter, or delete any portion of the transcription they felt did not accurately reflect their depiction of the phenomenon. This was done in order to ensure that the participants' perspectives were authentic and the themes generated were genuine. These scheduled interviews were approximately thirty minutes in length.

The purpose of this second interview was to allow the participants an opportunity to confirm, critique, and/or clarify the transcripts. This allowed for a more accurate interpretation of the data, rather than the researcher's limited implied perspectives of them. Additionally, main themes that had been generated from the first interview were conveyed, which provided an opportunity to discuss the accuracy of the analyses (Van Manen, 1990). Any additional data obtained from this second interview was also transcribed and analyzed for further themes. At the end of this process, both participants were asked to sign a transcript release form (see Appendix D) that allowed their data to be utilized within this research study.

Data Analysis

According to Marshall and Rossman (2011), the following seven phases must occur throughout a case study: (1) Organizing the data collection; (2) immersing oneself with the collected data; (3) generating thematic categories with the data; (4) coding the data; (5) interpreting the data; (6) considering alternative understandings of the data; and (7) formatting and writing a report.

According to Schatsman and Strauss (1973), qualitative data is typically complex, making it quite difficult to translate into standard, measurable units. For this reason, all audio recordings were carefully and repeatedly listened to and transcribed onto paper.

Once transcribed, the interviews were analyzed and summarized through an in-depth process of reading and rereading of the data, while identifying excerpts that seemed to exemplify the main points and insights of the interviewees in relation to the research question. The goal was to produce a comprehensive and detailed set of notes and comments from the data that depicted the participants' words and experiences.

Throughout this process, key reoccurring quotes, topics, and themes were identified and analyzed in an attempt to seek out thick descriptions (Gall et al., 2007; Schatzman & Strauss, 1973) that reflect meaning towards the participant's lived experiences in relationship to the phenomenon. Significant excerpts were manually coded with representative words related to the focus of the quotations. Such categories were highlighted and colour coded. These categories included events, places, people, words, statements, objects, feelings, and emotions. Frequently, I reviewed the transcripts and listened to the recordings to make sure what I was interpreting was not going beyond the data (Langdrige & Hagger-Johnson, 2009).

Furthermore, peer debriefing and support from three different colleagues was utilized (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). This procedure kept the participants' anonymity intact. This peer debriefing and support process is described in the next few pages.

A continuous, inductive review of the raw data occurred throughout this process in order to ensure that these emerging themes were truly being discovered, as opposed to what the researcher expected to find. Drawing conclusions from what was discovered and not from what was anticipated was crucial to the research. The data was to speak for itself. Eventually, clusters, subcategories, and emerging themes were identified.

Once the transcripts were coded in their entirety, the codes were arranged into themes. These themes were established in order to accurately represent the participants' experiences. The themes represented the participants' verbalized reflections, as well as their underlying impressions and thoughts. Some excerpts revealed rich data that resonated with multiple themes. As a result, these excerpts were coded under more than one theme heading. In time, the mass collection of data began to be reduced to more manageable chunks (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

Within the next stage of analysis, attempts were made to make sense of the various connections discovered between the emergent themes. The themes that derived were continuously reviewed in order to ensure their accuracy. Throughout this progression, meanings began to emerge from out of the massive amounts of raw data, giving way to clearer understandings and significant knowledge. Throughout this complex and tedious analytical process, much diligent interpretation was needed. Within this process, the seven phases of thematic analysis as outlined by Marshall and Rossman (2011) were adhered to.

Potential Limitations

Limitations identify the potential weakness of a study. As is the case with many studies, various aspects of this inquiry could not be completely controlled. In terms of design, methods, and findings, these limitations must be specified.

Prior to the research, the following limitations were identified as potential threats towards the trustworthiness of the study. A major factor in this threat was found within potential participant biases. For example, it was considered that the participants might only reveal what they thought the researcher wanted to hear, or omit what they thought

the researcher did not want to hear. Such limitations potentially may paint a more positive or negative view in regards to their experiences with teammate bullying.

Participant honesty was also a potential limitation that was identified. Such a determining factor could either be relayed consciously or unconsciously. Furthermore, the participants' ability to recall past events related to the phenomenon also provided potential limitations to the data. To minimize this threat, only participants over the age of 18 were recruited for this study.

A third potential limitation identified was the possibility of participants not wanting to share certain aspects of their experiences. If such a scenario occurred, the provided data would only reveal a portion of the participant's whole lived experience on the phenomenon. In order to decrease the outcome of this limitation, the researcher's goal was to alleviate any of these feelings throughout the interview process.

Therefore, as is the nature of qualitative research, these limitations, along with the limited number of participants, suggest that the findings of this study should not be generalized to the population as a whole.

Delimitations

According to Creswell (2002), delimitations are utilized to purposefully narrow the range of qualitative studies. In essence, they determine what is and what is not to be included within the study. Therefore, a purposeful delimitation of this study was that it was confined to only two adults who had experienced teammates bullying teammates from within the province of Saskatchewan. This experience could either be as a victim or as an observer. As a result, the research that was acquired may not necessarily be generalizable to different samples and populations, thus delimiting itself. Coincidentally,

according to Creswell (2002), qualitative research allows for this type of participant selection as it helps the researcher understand the phenomenon and their research question.

An additional delimitation was that this research was limited to only those individuals who come forward and sign up for the research project. As previously mentioned, participants were recruited through poster advertising throughout Saskatoon and area athletic and sports facilities. The goal was to interview the top two to three worthy participants. Obviously, there were many individuals who have experienced bullying within organized team sports who did not sign up for this research study. Many of these candidates could have provided additional valuable and rich data to what was collected from the participants that did accept the poster invitations.

Establishing Trustworthiness

Qualitative researchers, who frame their studies in an interpretive paradigm such as constructivism, think in terms of trustworthiness as opposed to the conventional, positivistic criteria of internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). In regards to qualitative research, trustworthiness refers to the goodness or overall quality of the gathered data (Guba & Lincoln, 1985; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Denzin and Lincoln (1994) suggested that four factors be considered in establishing the trustworthiness of findings from qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility

Credibility refers to the confidence one can have in the truth of the findings. For this reason, participants in this study were required to meet a specific selection criterion.

According to Padgett (1998), the following six methods can enhance and establish credibility: (1) Prolonged engagement; (2) Triangulation; (3) Peer debriefing and support; (4) Member checking; (5) Negative case analysis; and (6) Auditing. Methods utilized within this case study were member checking, peer debriefing, and support.

Member checking. According to Guba and Lincoln (1985), member checking is a very important component of qualitative research as it significantly contributes to the credibility and trustworthiness of the research. In order to increase the credibility of this study, prior to the second interview, both participants received copies of the transcripts from the first interview. They were then given the opportunity to review the transcripts and then add, alter, or delete any portion they deemed inaccurate. This interview was conducted with the purpose of presenting the participants with the themes generated from the first interview and engaging in an assessment/discussion with them regarding the accuracy of the interpretations of the data (Guba & Lincoln, 1985; Van Manen, 1990).

The credibility of this study lay within the researcher's faithful representation of the participant's individual experiences of the phenomenon. Ultimately, the end goal was to evoke the lived experiences of the participants so that their voices could be heard. If any misinterpretations or omissions were discovered, these checks allowed the participants the opportunity to verify whether the data was a meaningful, accurate, and faithful representation of their experiences. If not, it gave them the opportunity to provide important and relevant feedback. Ultimately, by doing this, it allowed the researcher to be more confident with the summaries and conclusions, especially when considering the important responsibility of portraying accurate reflections of the lived experiences and the realities the participants faced in regards to this phenomenon.

When the participants deemed the interpretations accurate, they were then given an opportunity to sign the transcript release form (see Appendix D). This consent form allowed their data to be used within this research and any future publications.

Peer debriefing and support. Simultaneous to the member checking process, peer debriefing and support from various colleagues was utilized (Gubea & Lincoln, 1985). This support was provided through two separate peer groups. The purpose of this step was to allow the researcher to reflect and determine whether any personal biases were affecting the interpretation of the data and subsequent themes derived from the data. The insight these colleagues provided helped in the identification of significant interview themes and with determining what data was needed during the second interview process.

The first peer group included two counselling psychologist, one with a masters degree and another with a doctorate degree. The second peer group included a fellow graduate student. Full anonymity was given to the two participants within these discussions. The goal was for these individuals to provide the researcher with a parallel analysis of the transcripts. Throughout this process, these three colleagues generated their own themes and categories from the raw data that was provided. Through this support, it was the researcher's intention to allow these peers to provide additional support through feedback, suggestions, and insight (Shenton, 2004).

Additionally, as a graduate student, all research and data analysis was shared with Dr. Tim Claypool, my thesis supervisor. This allowed Dr. Tim Claypool to guide, review, and critique the research process with his expertise and experience. Any support through feedback, suggestions, and insight was greatly appreciated.

Transferability

Transferability refers to whether or not the research from a study has the potential of transferring from one setting to another (Thomas, Nelson, & Silverman, 2011). This was of great importance, as it was my goal for this study to resonate with other individuals who have experienced similar situations. With respect to participant confidentiality, the information provided allows the reader to gauge the applicability of these findings to comparable phenomena they may encounter. To ensure this, all obtained data was represented in a manner that allowed for accurate comparisons within the phenomenon. Furthermore, the rich data and information provided by the participants can potentially facilitate future research endeavors involving similar circumstances.

Dependability and Confirmability

The last two important concepts of qualitative research are dependability and confirmability. According to Guba and Lincoln (1985) these two factors are closely tied together in ensuring trustworthiness. According to Thomas et al. (2011), in qualitative research, dependability speaks to the quality of the data and the research design; whereas confirmability addresses whether confidence can be placed in the results. In other words, they determine whether the findings are a true reflection of the participant's experiences, or a mere reflection of the researcher's opinions (Shenton, 2004).

Therefore, it was of utmost importance to be mindful of any and all personal biases and assumptions. According to Gall et al. (2007), this is to be accomplished through a chain of evidence referred to as an audit trail. Thomas and Magilvy (2011) suggest that such a trail should include the following six steps: (1) declaring the intent of the research; (2) describing the methods used for participant selection; (3) clearly

defining data collection procedures; (4) defining the process of data analysis; (5) describing how data was obtained and interpreted; and, (6) providing a detailed explanation of how credibility was established.

In order to accomplish this, a detailed account was kept containing all research expectations, assumptions, and interpretations. This document included all pre and post interview reflections and findings. Its purpose was to maintain researcher neutrality (Thomas and Magilvy, 2011) and accountability in regards to any preconceived notions, judgments, and biases.

Ethical Consideration

In order to ensure ethical research, the researcher sought research approval from the University of Saskatchewan's Research Ethics Board (REB). In keeping with ethical standards, all data was attained voluntarily, discreetly, and confidentially. All adult participants were provided with an informed consent form, which they were asked to sign and date once they agreed to participate in the study. This form was explained in its entirety to the participants. It contained all pertinent information about the purpose and nature of the study and guaranteed the privacy and confidentiality of each participant. All participants were advised that they could withdraw at any given time. Consent was verbally reaffirmed at the beginning of the second interview meeting with all participants. Additionally, pseudonyms were used in all reporting in order to protect the anonymity of the participants. At the end of this project, all audio recordings and transcripts were protected and securely stored on the University of Saskatchewan campus by Dr. Tim Claypool. After a minimum of five years this data will be properly destroyed.

Chapter 4: Results

Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007, p. 447) defined a case study as an “in-depth study of one or more instances of a phenomenon in its real-life context that reflects the perspective of the participants involved in the phenomenon.” As a qualitative researcher, it was my responsibility to gain understanding and insight into my participants lived experiences. The focus of this research was to investigate the impact and effect of teammate bullying within organized team sport. The main research questions that guided this study were:

1. How does bullying within team sports impact individual experience?
2. To what extent have these experiences influenced participants’ views of these team sports?

In the following chapter, two participants are described; one who witnessed bullying between teammates, and another who witnessed bullying between teammates and personally experienced bullying by teammates. Capturing the individual voices of these participants was a priority throughout the data collection process; all results were based on self-reports of these lived experiences within the context of their teams.

Data was collected from the participants using a semi-structured, phenomenological interviewing process (Fontana & Frey, 2005; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Patton, 2002; Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). Participants were assigned pseudonyms in order to maintain complete anonymity. All names, places, and direct quotes retrieved from these interviews were modified in order to maintain complete participant anonymity.

Necessary, minor changes to stories and quotes were made in order to increase readability, coherency, and comprehension. The participant is noted within the text, unless their identity is deemed unnecessary. Additionally, three consecutive periods (...)

indicate the deletion of conversation that was deemed irrelevant to the passage's significance, weakened comprehension, or was not relative to the phenomenon being explored. Words that were repeated and used as filler (i.e. um, ah, yeah, you know) were also omitted. Square brackets were used to both identify words that were added in order to clarify participant statements for the sake of the reader. Both participants approved these modifications and amendments.

Data was analyzed using the following seven phases: (1) Organizing the data collection; (2) immersing oneself with the collected data; (3) generating thematic categories with the data; (4) coding the data; (5) interpreting the data; (6) considering alternative understandings of the data; and (7) formatting and writing a report (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Through this analytic process, reoccurring themes and meanings emerged from the data, which provided rich interpretations, clearer understandings, and significant knowledge.

Interview Participants

The participants recruited for the study were John and Will. Both participants came from rural backgrounds and had rich histories in team sport participation. John and Will effortlessly provided their unique perspective and insights into their personal recollections.

John's Story

At the time of the interview, John was a married, career-established, 32-years-old male Caucasian, comfortably living in an urban Saskatchewan setting. According to John, the days leading up to our interview allowed him to review his thoughts associated

with the bullying he witnessed during his youth. As a result, John was a confident and relaxed participant, comfortably answering all questions with well thought out responses.

John grew up in a rural community in Saskatchewan. From an early age, John saw himself as an active participator of organized team sports. John's involvement in organized team sports began when he was "*six or seven years-of-age.*" These involvements included hockey, soccer, volleyball, and basketball. Throughout John's childhood and adolescence, hockey became his primary sport. When John was in high school, he played on competitive hockey teams that required tryout camps. In his twenties, John played competitive senior men's hockey. Today, John continues to pursue his passion for hockey and now participates with peers in an adult recreational league.

What John enjoyed most about hockey "*was scoring goals...[and] getting out with the guys.*" The parts about hockey that John did not always enjoy were the countless practices and the times he was relegated to the third or fourth line on his teams. Personal highlights from John's organized team sport experiences include playing on various Tier II and AA hockey teams that competed in Provincial Championship games. Unfortunately, these positive memories were at times clouded by significant teammate bullying experiences. According to John, memories of such incidents started during his first year of Pee Wee hockey.

When asked about these negative experiences, John shared that teammate bullying victimization was not an issue that he personally ever had to endure throughout his participation in organized team sports. The recipient of such behaviour was more often one of John's teammates named Joe. According to John, Joe grew up in the same

rural community as he had. As a result, the two of them had been teammates for the majority of their youth minor hockey years.

The following are some of John's recollections of the bullying that Joe was forced to endure from his hockey teammates:

Joe was always getting picked on. Not...physically but usually verbally. Back then I didn't think much of it because it wasn't me doing it. And you know...we all saw Joe as a bad hockey player. Now this was when we were nine to eleven-years-of-age. Back then you didn't really think of it as 'poor Joe!' You just [thought] he was being picked on because he was a bad hockey player.

Throughout John's minor hockey experience, Joe was forced to endure humiliation as his fellow teammates constantly were "*laughing and hollering*" at him. According to John, Joe "*usually freaked out and yelled*" back in defense, only to have his teammates ridicule and mock him with more "*laughter... hooting and hollering.*"

However, as John shared, it became apparent that this teammate bullying that Joe experienced went beyond the verbal teasing and crossed over into social isolation and ostracizing. According to John:

If they were picking teams, Joe would always be last. Or if you had to do a drill with a partner, Joe would have been searching for a partner because no one ever wanted to go with him.

It became evident that the bullying Joe was forced to endure had more to do with him being "*a bad hockey player*" as much of it was a direct continuation from what was occurring at school. According to John, "*it wasn't just at hockey that Joe got picked on. It was [also] at school. He was just one of those kids that everyone picked on.*" As John

shared his story, descriptors such as “*strange,*” “*different,*” “*unique,*” and “*socially awkward*” were often used to describe Joe. Statements such as “[Joe] *was always the kid...who never really had a friend*” were repeated numerous times. According to John:

[Joe] *had all these weird quirks...[he would] look at the clock with weird twitches...he would always be picking his nose and [then would] smear it on the bottom of his desk. At recess he'd be [on the] playground looking for rocks that had little white lines on them...and telling us they were fossils...[while] the rest of us would be playing...tackle football or contact soccer or something like that.*

As John continued to share his story, he told of a childhood game that he and his classmates played which was specifically aimed at humiliating Joe. In John's words:

...when we were younger, I remember everyone...would play [the] 'Joey Germ' game. So that when [Joe] touched you, you would wipe it off and you'd touch someone else and say 'Joey Germs' and they would have to try and get rid of [the germs]... all the while Joe would be there. I can't imagine it felt too good for him.

Typically, Joe would “*never [be] one to just take it [and would] usually say something back that never really helped his case.*” The teasing, verbal abuse, and bullying that Joe experienced from his peers would “*intensify*” as a result of his reactions to such events. According to John, these types of peer interactions were a normal part of Joe's educational experiences.

From an organized team sports perspective, this bullying intensified and escalated for Joe when their local hockey team was required to join up with a neighboring town in order for both communities to have enough players to form a Pee Wee team. At the time of this interview, Pee Wee hockey in Canada consisted of Sixth and Seventh Grade

students between the ages of eleven and thirteen. It was while John played on this team that he witnessed the most disturbing teammate bullying incident that he ever encountered. Here is how he described this particular incident:

It was our first year Pee Wee and we didn't have enough kids in town that particular year to make a team, so five or six of us ended up going to a neighboring town....Joe came along with us...he was never the most popular kid back home. We had all grown out of giving him a hard time...Joe was just very unique, different. But the guys from this new town, they treated him really badly! He would usually be one of the last to show up and they would make him sit on a garbage can in the middle of the room. They would all insult him. I remember one particular time where he was sitting on the garbage can in the middle of the room and one of the guys got up and just ran at him and smoked him off the garbage can. Joe flew through the air...they actually both flew and went through the curtain of the shower stall. Most of the guys were laughing and hollering and having a good time, but for Joe, this poor guy, I just can't imagine what he was feeling.

Many of the teammates, including John, found humour in this particular incident. In John's words, "[for] *the first couple of years, after it happened, we kind of all laughed about it.*" According to John, at the time he did not remember this "garbage can" incident bothering him since "*it was just a part of life in the [hockey] dressing room.*" At the same time, John expressed that the laughing was probably a strategy he used that allowed the bullies to see that he too had found humour in the incident.

Yet over time, as John matured, he realized just how terrible this “*garbage can*” incident truly was. Furthermore, he eventually realized that his laughing was actually supporting and encouraging the bullying. Two decades later, John no longer finds any humour in this “*garbage can*” incident. In fact, it is because of this specific incident that John chose to participate in this research endeavor. What did not “*affect [John] at the time,*” now does affect him as it has been etched in his memory and has “*stuck*” with him.

According to John, this “*garbage can*” incident was the most violent bullying situation he witnessed Joe endure. “*As time went on [I realized] we were idiots...how dumb...that this kind of thing [could have] happened, right?*” Unfortunately it was just the pinnacle of many other episodes of teammate bullying that Joe was forced to endure throughout that season. During that year of Pee Wee hockey, “*everyone would insult him and [say] whatever they [wanted] to say [to him].*”

As a result, John has had to deal with various degrees of regret and disappointment over what he did and did not do for Joe so many years ago. According to John:

Right now, I have regrets because obviously that [garbage can] incident is clear in my mind all these years later. But as a 13-year-old kid, it wasn't something that affected me at that time... Looking back on it now, I wish that I would have done something, because...I don't know if I was one of the more popular guys on the team...but I was one of the better players, which stands for something on hockey teams.

John went on to share:

[Joe] *was different, but there was no reason that...we should have...[given] him a hard time physically or verbally or anything. I remember back then being scared. Like if I said something, then maybe I would get teased or [my teammates] would [have thought] less of me. But looking back at it now, I had a place on the team...[that] wouldn't have happened. I was the assistant captain and our top scorer. If I had said something they would have probably stopped at least while I was around...but you don't know that when you're 13.*

As John continued to describe the various experiences Joe endured, John mentioned numerous times that he wished his coaches would have said something about the bullying that was occurring. Such was the case with one of his favorite coaches from his minor hockey days. This adult coached John and Joe during a few of the years prior to this Pee Wee hockey “trash can incident.” Here is how John described his thoughts:

One of my favorite coaches [from my home town], was really nice to Joe...he took his time and tried to help him with his cross-overs at practice...but it was never ‘okay guys, you [have] to be nicer to Joe’ or ‘you [have] to treat everyone with respect.’ I don't know what you'd say to a group of 9-year-old kids that are picking on someone, but...something could have been done differently.

In regards to this intensified bullying that Joe experienced during that specific year of Pee Wee hockey in the neighboring town, John pointed out that the majority of it occurred in the dressing rooms when no coaches or adults were present. Furthermore, John acknowledged that his Pee Wee coaches were “*aware that Joe got picked on*” as they had witnessed some of the less aggressive bullying. At the same time, John was never sure if they were ever “*fully aware of the extent [of the bullying] because the worst*

parts didn't happen when [the coaches] were around." Nonetheless, John wished his coaches had at least made an effort to put a stop to the bullying that they were aware of.

According to John, one simple option would have been for his coaches to utilize the team captains. John believed that if the coaches had empowered and challenged these individuals, they could have helped control the bullying behaviours that were running wild while they were not in the dressing rooms. If the coaches had pulled them aside, John thought they could have challenged their team leaders with the following:

When we are not in the [dressing] room, you [captains] are responsible, and we expect you [captains] to make sure that everybody's getting treated fairly...we are going to play better if everybody is getting along and [right now] we are not [all getting along].

Throughout the interview, John's regrets concerning his passive, non-responsive behaviours towards the bullying he witnessed as a child were clearly evident. As a result, he was now able to articulate solutions that could have helped right the many wrongs that Joe experienced at the hands of his bullies. Furthermore, John's regrets played a role in how he reacted towards two future bullying situations he encountered later during his high school years. The first of these two bullying episodes occurred, once again, at his local hockey arena. According to John:

I can remember a time when...there was a kid picking on some [other younger] kids in the dressing room. I can't remember exactly what he was doing, but he was just being an idiot. And this kid was well known around town for being that way...I told him to stop and he didn't...then he started kind of picking on me and

so I just grabbed him and threw him over my shoulder and walked him out the back door of the rink and threw him in the dumpster.

In John's words, this was "*probably not the best way to handle it, but I think he got the point.*" It was John's hope that his actions would have meant something to the victims. According to John:

I'm sure that for the [younger] kids who were being picked on, seeing an older student...an older peer standing up for him and telling the bully to stop, maybe in some way [gave] them hope or [gave] them inspiration or [gave] them some kind of notion that somebody cared.

The second bullying incident John recalled occurred in a non-sport related setting. Within this situation, John felt compelled to approach a close friend's younger brother. This younger brother, along with two other individuals, was "*bullying a kid.*" The following is how he challenged these individuals:

You just need to be nice to him. You don't have to be buddies with him, but don't go out of your way to be mean to the kid...he is not bugging you at all...just leave him be. I'm not asking you to be best friends with him...just don't...go out of your way to ruin his day.

As a result of this conversation, things "*instantly got better*" with his friend's brother and with the other two individuals who were committing the bullying. As he connected with these three individuals, John wished his hockey coaches had "*tried to level with [the team] and tried to help [the team] understand how Joe felt [about the bullying].*" Perhaps if his hockey coaches had attempted such a connection with the team, they might have better understood the impact the bullying was having on Joe.

Conceivably, if the coaches would have made that attempt, the teammate bullying Joe was enduring could have possibly ended.

Presently, John has only been in contact with Joe once since high school. This interaction was through a brief social media conversation “*about four years ago.*” John described this brief encounter as “*a disheartening conversation*” where Joe disclosed a discouraging workplace situation. Once again, Joe was “*at the brunt end*” of being treated unfairly. According to John, based on this fleeting encounter, it appeared as though Joe’s adult life was following a similar path to that of his childhood.

Based on this disheartening conversation, alongside his regrets over past behaviours and years of personal growth and maturation, John wishes he had done more to help Joe. According to John, he would have “*tried to be more of a friend... encouraging [Joe] and just [tried to] be nice to him.*” If he could do it all over again, John would like the opportunity to go back and openly respond to his teammates regarding the bullying Joe experienced in the dressing room. According to John:

I would have...stood up and [said] ‘guys let’s just leave him alone...give it a rest...you are not impressing anyone...he’s not causing us any problems. Let’s just leave him alone! So what if the kid is a little different than you are, it doesn’t give you the right. We don’t have to ridicule him and we don’t have to tackle him! Let’s just leave him be!’

As the interview closed, John went on to briefly share one more additional bullying incident from his Midget hockey years. At the time of this interview, Midget hockey in Canada consisted of Tenth to Twelfth Grade students between the ages of

fifteen and eighteen. This was a team “*where over half of the players were just not nice to other people.*”

The bullying on this hockey team was directed towards a teammate, Ryan. John and Ryan were also teammates on the same Pee Wee team where Joe was bullied. When they played together in Pee Wee hockey, Ryan was not actively involved with the teammate bullying Joe endured. Now, a few years later, in a different community, Ryan was the “*kid that got picked on*” in part because “*he is now the worst guy on the team.*” The bullying that Ryan endured was verbal in nature, mainly focusing on his poor hockey skills and physical appearance. This verbal bullying was consistent throughout the hockey season, with Ryan’s “*big nose*” being the brunt of much abuse.

Regrettably, this verbal taunting went beyond Ryan, as his father was also a victim of disrespectful juvenile comments. Ironically, this father was the former head coach of the Pee Wee hockey team where Joe’s “*garbage can*” incident occurred. Ryan’s father often visited the team dressing room throughout the year. During these sporadic visits, John’s teammates would routinely insult and belittle Ryan’s father. For John, these awkward experiences were disrespectful and inappropriate. Unfortunately, when Ryan’s father left the dressing room, the verbal bullying Ryan was already forced to endure intensified, as the humiliation that was being hurled towards his father was now also coming Ryan’s way. As with the case of the bullying Joe endured, John also felt helpless to help Ryan or his father.

As John reminisced over these various bullying episodes, he shared that as a young child, he and his peers would have viewed many of these episodes as “*innocent teasing.*” As John matured, he began to realize that many of these “*innocent teasing*”

behaviours were actually incidents of bullying. As a result, John has found himself lamenting over such memories. He especially has regrets over giving Joe a hard time.

Despite these disturbing bullying experiences and the regrets of not doing more to help the victims, John has maintained his passion for the game of hockey and continues to play it. When asked, John could not ever recall the bullying ever affecting or impacting his enjoyment of the game. From the age of “6 or 7” to the present, hockey has continued to be John’s favorite sport. John has continued to participate in a variety of other organized team sports such as volleyball, basketball, soccer, and slow-pitch ball.

Will’s Story

The second participant to be interviewed was Will. At the time of the interview, Will was a middle-class, married, 29-years-old male Caucasian, with three young children, comfortably residing in an urban Saskatchewan setting. Will spent the first part of his life living in northern Canada. During his middle school years, Will and his family relocated to a rural community in central Saskatchewan. The days leading up to our interview allowed Will to collect his thoughts surrounding the bullying he witnessed during his youth. As a result, Will was confident and easy to interview. His responses were meaningful and well thought out.

At the age of 10, Will first became an active participant of organized youth hockey. In his teen years, Will played volleyball, as well as non-team sports such as competitive swimming, martial arts, and track and field. Throughout Will’s childhood and adolescence, hockey was “*definitely [his] favorite sport.*” When Will was in high school, he played on hockey teams that required competitive tryout camps. Such teams included AA Bantam, AA Midget, and Junior B hockey. Between the ages of 17 and 19,

Will “*played a little bit of rec hockey*” but has not regularly participated in any organized team sport since. After high school, Will’s athletic pursuits and ambitions changed, as he focused more on martial arts.

What Will enjoyed most about hockey was “*the social aspect... getting together with the guys...hanging out [in] the dressing room...[and] before the game...[all of] the excitement.*” What Will did not like about hockey was all of the pressure that he placed upon himself. According to Will, he always felt as though the outcome of the game was solely dependent upon his performance. Moreover, Will shared that whenever he felt that his game and practice performance was subpar, he was letting both himself and his teammates down.

Personal highlights from Will’s organized team sport experiences include playing on hockey teams that competed in League and Provincial Championship games; being scouted by junior hockey leagues; attending Saskatchewan Junior Hockey League tryout camps; and being the last cut at a Western Hockey League tryout camp. Personal lowlights from Will’s organized team sport experiences include witnessing teammates bully teammates, personally experiencing bullying by fellow teammates, and witnessing extreme hazing rituals.

One month into junior high, Will and his family moved to a new community. Not long after the move, a new hockey season commenced. It was during this hockey season, his second year of Pee Wee minor hockey that the bullying began. It was in the hockey dressing room that many of his teammates decided to give “*the new guy*” a disrespectful nickname that Will did not appreciate. The first few months of Will’s Pee Wee hockey experience in this new community was filled with a lot of dressing room tension. Before

and after every game and practice, specific teammates bullied him through “*teasing... pushes...shoves...and bugging.*”

The beginning of that particular season was difficult and frustrating for Will. There were many times that he did not want to attend team games or practices. Fortunately, as the season progressed, he started to make new friends. Along with his newfound friends, the teammate bullying eventually subsided. As he reminisced, Will now can say that the teammate bullying he endured during that Pee Wee season was “*not too bad*” because his teammates “*were not making personal attacks*” towards him. The reason he could say this was because of what occurred two years later, when he should have been participating in his second year of Bantam hockey. At the time of this interview, Bantam hockey in Canada consisted of age appropriate Eighth to Ninth Grade students.

During this particular season of youth minor hockey, Will was asked to be a full-time affiliated player to his minor hockey association’s Midget team. What this meant was Will was being given the opportunity to skip his second year of Bantam hockey and play Midget hockey one year earlier than his peers.

Many aspiring Saskatchewan youth hockey players see this type of an invitation as both an honor and a privilege. At the same time, such opportunities can also be quite challenging for younger players, as the game is typically played at a high caliber with the older age groups. This is especially true with the jump from Bantam to Midget hockey, as both teammates and opponents are usually faster, bigger, and stronger due to the one to three year age differences.

For Will, this chance to be a full-time affiliated player with a Midget hockey team potentially factored in some future hockey opportunities that came his way.

Unfortunately, this same opportunity also brought with it many teammate bullying episodes that far surpassed what Will had experienced two years earlier.

Eddie, a player who was *“two or three years older,”* let Will know he was not welcomed or accepted on their team. According to Will, he felt Eddie saw him as a rival. As a result, a much younger Will began to once again experience teammate bullying within the dressing rooms. Will shared that there was a lot of *“pushing...shoving...and punching”* being directed towards him. The bullying eventually escalated until there was a fistfight between Eddie and Will. This fistfight occurred in an unsupervised dressing room and had to be separated by their teammates.

Eddie and *“two buddies”* orchestrated the majority of the bullying throughout that year of hockey. Eddie would verbally assault him while they were in the dressing room. As a result, Will would attempt to verbally defend himself, only to be verbally assaulted again by Eddie’s *“two buddies.”* Defending himself *“was pointless,”* because he would always find himself in a losing situation since it was always *“three against one.”*

The bullying that he endured was *“continuous from [those] three [teammates]...especially with the name calling.”* Other than that initial fight with Eddie, *“there was only one other time when [the bullying] got a little more physical.”* As Will continued to share the teammate bullying he suffered, he revealed that he also witnessed other teammates; more specifically, *“the younger guys”* get bullied around in the dressing room.

As Will shared these experiences, it soon became apparent that there was a definite hierarchy in their team dressing room. According to Will:

There was the older group [on his team], and they were trying to put us in our place...they were the senior guys...and [the younger guys] were...to do what they said. [We] were to sit where they wanted us to sit in the [dressing] room.

Due to an accumulation of unjust behaviours, Will never really felt as though he was a part of this team, often feeling as though he “*was a fill-in*” and “*an outsider*” on the team. Much of these feelings stemmed from the verbal and physical bullying Eddie and his “*two buddies*” delivered. Despite loving the game of hockey, there were times that Will considered quitting or asking for a release so he could play hockey in another community.

According to Will, the coaches were aware of what was happening in the dressing rooms when they were not present. On one occasion, when he approached the head coach about the bullying, the head coach responded with:

Its hockey! You are going to have to deal with it. You are going to have to tough it out. I will have a talk with [the bullies]...I will try to have a talk with them, but there is not a lot that I can do. [Eddie] is 16 or 17-years-old. It is what it is. You are just going to have to be better than him...you are going to have to be the bigger guy!

What Will recalls most vividly from that conversation was the coach’s challenge for him “*to be the bigger guy*” and simply ignore the bullying. What stands out the most from that conversation was the statement “*there [was] not a lot that [he could] do*” about

the bullying. For Will, the “silver-lining” in their conversation was that the coach did have a conversation with Eddie and the amount of bullying did temporarily diminish.

Will reiterated a few times that he wished his coach would have “*tried to do something more*” about the bullying he experienced. He also stated that he wished the coaches could have had more of a presence in their dressing room. The “*five minute pep talk*” before the games, and “*two minute talks in between periods*” were not enough, because when they were present the bullying “*didn’t really happen...it was calm...it was good.*”

Fortunately, things slowly improved for Will. These improvements were highlighted by various teammates who approached Will and attempted to support and encourage him. As Will briefly shared these accounts, it became apparent that he truly appreciated their sentiment and support. However, what he appreciated the most that season was when one of their leaders openly supported him in the dressing room and told his teammates to leave Will alone. Not only was this individual one of their team leaders, he was also the team’s “*tough guy.*” According to Will, this individual stood up for him “*a couple of times*” towards the end of the hockey season. To have this team leader “*put the [bullies] in their place*” was significant. In Will’s words:

It was awesome! It was pretty awesome! I instantly felt as though I was a part of the team! It felt good! It really felt good! It did pick up my spirits...when that happened.

The next couple of hockey seasons were relatively calm until he played Junior hockey. It was here that bullying once again became a significant issue in the dressing rooms. Despite being one of the youngest players on the team, the bullying that occurred

during his Junior playing days was not directed towards Will. Much of this was attributed to his physical stature and his abilities in martial art. Will shared that this was knowledge that he intentionally made sure his new teammates knew. He wanted them to be fully aware that he had additional athletic endeavors that he pursued. The thought process behind this decision was directly related to his past experiences with being bullied. He wanted to let his teammates know that he was very capable of defending himself.

During his time with this team, much of the bullying originated from “*six or seven*” veterans and was directed towards the younger, new guys “*who were smaller.*” Here is how Will remembered these experiences:

They pretty much left me alone...it was pretty harmless for me. There were other younger guys though, smaller guys...[who experienced] verbal harassment... constant [verbal harassment]. [The bullies were] trying to break the guy down... pushing guys into the wall...bumping them every practice...every game. [The bullies] were very crude. [It was] a totally different kind of [verbal abuse] than [what I experienced] in Midget and Bantam [hockey] where [the bullies were just] trying to get a laugh out of their buddies. [In] junior hockey, they were personal attacks. [The bullies] would razz you about your girlfriend, or razz you about your parents, or your brother or sister. They were personal attacks!

When asked about witnessing this bullying behaviour, Will explained that by Junior hockey “*he had gotten used to the bullying*” since he “*had seen so much of it*” over the years. Will also revealed that while he sat in the dressing room and witnessed the bullying, he was “*relieved that it was not [him]*” on the receiving end. In Will’s

words, “*things were going great. [He] was happy! [He] just wanted to sit there [in the dressing room] and enjoy [his hockey success].*” As a result, Will was content despite the bullying behaviours occurring all around him. Initially, the bullying he witnessed had no affect on his level of play or on his enjoyment of the game. Yet as the season wore on, and the bullying continued, Will’s contentment towards hockey slowly started to change.

Now, years later, much like John, Will revealed that he too now had regrets about not “*stepping forward*” and helping his victimized teammates. The more Will reflected upon his Junior hockey experiences, the more similarities he discovered between them and his Midget hockey days. In ways, he identified with both the Junior victims and with the “tough guy” from his Midget hockey team. The only difference was that he remained silent every time he witnessed his teammates being bullying. Looking back, Will would have liked to have come to the rescue of his bullied Junior teammates and given them the same good feelings he felt when the Midget teammate came to his rescue. As Will contemplated the reasons for his silence, he concluded that a combination of his younger age, along with his history of being bullied kept him from standing up for the victims.

As the interview wound down, Will briefly shared that what occurred between Eddie and himself had the greatest emotional affect on him. The “*pushing, harassment, bullying, being picked on*” affected him, but what he remembered most vividly are the hazings and initiation parties his Junior hockey teammates organized. Will shared that they were “*without a doubt*” the worst part about his Junior experience. He had heard of what happened at rookie hazing and initiation parties, but what he personally witnessed

was “*shocking!*” He “*couldn’t believe [what] actually happened [at the party]...it was insane.*”

Peer pressure, extreme verbal bullying, and intimidation were used at these parties to persuade teammates to perform an assortment of dangerous and humiliating feats. Such tasks were considered rituals, as veteran players were now given the opportunity to do to rookie players what had been done to them. These feats were considered to be initiation requirements.

According to Will, his teammates “*tried to hold [him] down [as] they pulled out a two six of inferno [alcohol].*”

I was like, there was no chance this is happening! And so I remember [my teammates] trying to peer pressure me into [doing] it...and [intimidate] me into [doing] it...and yeah there was a little bit of pushing and shoving, but thankfully [with me] being the bigger guy they kind of backed off and they were like, ‘OK, he’s pretty serious, we’re moving on to the next guy.’

Fortunately Will’s saving grace from these tasks was his physical stature and his ability to defend himself. As a result, Will was spared from all of these tasks simply because he chose not to perform them. Unfortunately, the rest of the new recruits did not get off so easily. Rituals that his fellow rookie teammates were forced to endure included creative ways of consuming extreme amounts of alcohol, and dangerous activities involving male genitalia, such as tying pails of pucks to reproductive organs. Much of what Will witnessed at these parties still disturbs him to this very day.

As the researcher, what was most shocking about these hazing and initiation parties was the involvement of the adult coaches. According to Will, these coaches not

only witnessed the events, but also encouraged the consumption of lethal amounts of alcohol and the participation of humiliating and potentially dangerous acts of senselessness. According to Will, the coaches “*were right down there pouring shots for the guys*” despite being fully aware that all of the rookies were under-aged. For Will, the coaches’ attitudes were like “*yep...no problem! You guys go to town!*”

In so many ways, the entire team environment was unhealthy. According to Will, it was not uncommon for coaches and teammates to show up to the arena intoxicated. Furthermore, he and his teammates were encouraged by the coaches to collect female undergarments to hang on a trophy wall in the team dressing room. In Will’s words, the season “*turned into a total gong-show.*” The sum of these many experiences played a role in that season of Junior hockey being Will’s first and last year. In Will’s words, “*after that year, I packed it in.*”

Despite these experiences, Will still enjoyed playing the game of hockey. Yet in the same breath, Will identified that this Junior experience did tarnish his “*love for [hockey].*” The following hockey season, Will made plans to play in a Senior Men’s hockey league, but was unable to follow through on his commitment. In the years following, Will eventually stopped playing hockey, the game that he loved for so many years. According to Will, it was “*because of those [many] experiences, [that he] continued on with the solo-sports.*” According to Will, these solo-sports had much “*friendlier atmospheres.*”

Furthermore, the extreme, shocking hazings that he witnessed during Junior hockey still plays a direct role in Will’s family. Both Will and his wife have purposefully

chosen not to enroll their children in organized hockey because of what he witnessed at the team parties.

Despite no longer being involved in organized team sports, Will does miss aspects of team sports such as the friendships and socializing that occurred during them. According to Will, he does not have the time, nor does he want to make the financial commitment to return to the game he once loved.

Interview Themes

Throughout the remaining part of this Chapter, the significant themes that were identified within John and Will's interview data will be highlighted. Fifteen themes were derived as a result of the interview data analysis, member checking, and peer/supervisor debriefing portions of the research. They represent the heart of this case study, as they explain and clarify the environment, impact, and effects of the bullying that occurred within the participants' organized team sports. In Chapter Five, each of these significant fifteen themes will be individually discussed in greater detail.

John's Perspective Of The Teammate Bullying

Skill Deficits And Perceived Areas Of Weakness Precipitates And Fuels Bullying Behaviour

The theme of teammate bullying being directly related to an individual's skills and abilities on the ice was identified through John's interview data. John observed that both Joe and Ryan were the least skilled players on their individual teams. In both of John's youth minor hockey recollections, these were the two teammates who endured the most concentrated teammate bullying. It appears as though the bullying that John witnessed had much to do with teammate perceptions of weakness and inferiority,

therefore, the victim's vulnerability had a direct link to their hockey-related skills and abilities.

While John did acknowledge that many of Joe's behaviours and mannerisms contributed to the bullying he experienced while playing hockey, he also stated that Joe was "*a bad hockey player.*" Additionally, John shared that Joe "*was not skilled at hockey at all...he was quite a few steps below everyone else.*" As a result, John believed that was why the bullying intensified while Joe participated in hockey, especially during that year they played Pee Wee hockey for a neighboring community.

In regards to Ryan, John shared that he never recalled Ryan being bullied when they were on the Pee Wee hockey team. Yet, a few years later when they were Midget AA teammates, John stated, "*now [Ryan was] the worst guy on the team and [was getting] picked on by all the guys.*"

Bullying And Social Ostracizing Has A Cyclical Nature

The previous theme identified that inferior hockey skills played a role in which teammates were bullied. The theme of teammate bullying being related to a lack of peer connections was also identified through John's interview data. This was especially true when it came to Joe.

According to John, Joe did not have many friends on or off the hockey team. As a result, the excessive bullying that Joe endured stemmed from this social isolation. To make matters worse, much of Joe's victimization had to do with his poor social skills, as Joe would often initiate topics of conversation that were more immature than his teammates'. Furthermore, Joe would often be caught "*picking his nose and smear[ing] it.*" Unfortunately, additional "*weird quirks...and weird twitches*" were noticeable traits

and characteristics Joe exhibited which ultimately intensified his victimization. As a result, Joe's response to this bullying with "*freak[ing] out and yell[ing]*" only made matters worse.

A combination of inappropriate behaviours, tardiness, poor social skills, and inferior hockey skills all contributed to Joe's victimization and teammate ostracizing. Moreover, according to John, his coaches were aware of the teammate bullying problems but did nothing to intervene. As a result, a vicious circle was formed that perpetuated a cycle between Joe and his peers that included poor social choices, inappropriate behaviours, peer rejection, isolation, and teammate bullying. This cyclical nature was reinforced when the coaches failed to appropriately respond to this bullying. Ultimately, by not intervening on Joe's behalf, the coaches allowed the bullying to continue on their team.

Normalizing Bullying Behavior Helps Preserve The Witness's "Love For The Game"

The theme of teammates witnessing bullying episodes not having an effect on the individual's personal satisfaction and enjoyment of the game was identified through John's interview data. According to John, when he "*was a thirteen-year-old kid, [the bullying] was not something that affected me*" as it was just a normal part of life in the hockey dressing room. It was not until years later that John started to have regrets for being non-responsive to the teammate bullying. Those regrets have not impacted his satisfaction, enjoyment, or love for the game.

An Inadequate Or Lack Of Adult Supervision Provides Opportunities For Bullies

The theme of teammate bullying occurring primarily in unsupervised team locker

rooms was identified through John's interview data. According to John, "*they always had two or three [adults] helping out with the teams.*" Unfortunately, they were not always present in the dressing rooms.

John mentioned three different times that the dressing room was the worst place for teammate bullying to transpire. "*The worst parts [of the bullying] didn't happen when [the coaches] were around.*" Most notably, the extreme "trash can incident" occurred behind those closed doors while no coaches or adults were present.

The only consistent bullying John remembered witnessing in the presence of an adult was the verbal abuse that was directed towards an adult during his AA Midget hockey season, more specifically Ryan's dad. In John's mind, he viewed his teammates behaviours as bullying. These behaviours occurred whenever Ryan's father entered the room, and according to John, "[Ryan's father] *was always...in the dressing room.*" Unfortunate for Ryan, the bullying intensified for him as soon as his dad left the dressing room.

An Adult Reluctance To Intervene

The theme of coaches being both aware of teammate bullying, and non-responsive to this awareness was identified through John's interview data. According to John, during that particular year of Pee Wee hockey, when the bullying was at its most extreme level for Joe, he was uncertain "*if [his coaches were] fully aware of the extent [of the bullying]...but [the coaches] were aware that Joe got picked on.*"

Such was also the case in John's home community where "*the coaches all knew*" Joe was being bullied in the dressing room, yet never really did anything to stop it. As a result, John believed this was why one of his favorite home town coaches was always

“really nice to Joe and [why] he took his time and tried to help [Joe].” John saw this additional kindness and time spent with Joe as the coach’s way of making up for all of the teammate bullying Joe was experiencing. As positive as the kindness and time was, John desired that his past youth minor hockey coaches would have done more.

If only they had *“tried to level with [us] and tried to help [us] understand how Joe felt [about the bullying].”* Perhaps, if these coaches had attempted to make such a connection with John and his teammates, they might have all better understood the impact the bullying was having on Joe.

Another option would have been for the coaches to utilize their team captains. John shared they could have challenged their captains to be leaders while they were not present in the dressing room. One would have hoped that the adult coaches would have been more willing to intervene. However, the inaction of the coaches sent a clear message that it was okay for such bullying behaviour to continue. In many ways, their reluctance to intervene normalized these harmful behaviours.

Presence Of Bystander Effect Among Peers

The theme of teammates being non-responsive to the bullying they witnessed was identified throughout John’s interview data. As already stated, when John *“was a thirteen-year-old kid, [the bullying] was not something that affected [him]”* as it was just a normal part of life within the poorly supervised dressing room environment. Yet as John shared his experiences, he acknowledged that his reluctance to intercede on behalf of the victim was fueled by a fear, as he was scared that if he made a stand, he might end up being the next victim.

As a result, the only response from John during these bullying episodes was laughter, a response that more than likely encouraged his teammates to continue their assaults on their victims. For John, it was not until he was older that he realized the effect his laughter and non-responsive behaviours must have had on his victimized teammates. Present day, the realization of this has led John to deal with personal regret over his reluctance to intercede and inappropriate response to the bullying he witnessed.

A Reflection On Previous Inactions As Bystanders

The theme of individuals having future regrets for non-responsive attitudes towards other teammates being bullied was identified through John's interview data. According to John, he wished he had done more to help Joe. Additionally, John revealed he wished he had the opportunity to "turn back time" and go back and openly challenge his past teammates' bullying behaviors and try "*to be more of a friend [to Joe]... encouraging [him more] and just [trying to] be nicer to him.*"

Will's Perspective Of The Teammate Bullying

A thematic evaluation of Will's interview transcripts produced the following themes: (1) bullying and social ostracizing has a cyclical nature; (2) bullying diminishes the victim's "love for the game;" (3) normalizing bullying behaviour helps preserve the witness's "love for the game;" (4) an inadequate or lack of adult supervision provides opportunities for bullies; (5) an adult reluctance to intervene; (6) peer support is valued by bully victims; (7) an adult reflection on their inactions as bystanders; and (8) hazing rituals have lasting effects.

Bullying And Social Ostracizing Has A Cyclical Nature

The theme of teammate bullying being related to a lack of peer connections was identified through Will's interview data. Much of the bullying that Will experienced in Pee Wee hockey had to do with him being "*the new guy*" on the team. Fortunately, as Will began to build deeper peer connections with his teammates, the bullying that he endured at the start of the season eventually subsided.

Additionally, this theme was also evident with the team dynamics of the Midget hockey team. As an under-aged player, Will was required to socialize and interact with a group of peers one to three years older. None of these players were a part of Will's close circle of friends. As a result, it was this lack of peer connections, and not a lack of hockey skills, talents, and abilities that were attributed to his bully victimization.

Such was also the case when Will played Junior B hockey. In order to be on the team, all players had to prove their capabilities throughout the team tryout process. Skills and talents were not attributed to the teammate bullying that transpired. Instead, the bullying on this team originated from "*six or seven*" veteran players who were already friends. Due to Will's size, this bullying was typically directed towards the other rookies on the team who had not yet made meaningful peer connections.

For Will, many bullying episodes transpired on the teams he played on due to social isolation from either being "*the new guy*" on the team, being the only under-aged player on the team, or as a direct result of the entrenched and divisive junior hockey class system that divided the rookies from the veterans. As a result, a bullying and social ostracizing cycle was formed between Will and his Pee Wee and Midget teammates, as well as between Will's Junior B rookie and veteran teammates.

Bullying Diminishes The Victim's "Love For The Game"

The theme of teammate bullying having a direct effect on the victim's personal satisfaction and enjoyment of the game was identified through Will's interview data. The beginning of Will's first Pee Wee hockey season was difficult and frustrating. Not only was he new to the team, but also new to the community. Due to the bullying, there were many times that he did not want to attend team games or practices. As the season wore on, the bullying subsided due to the new friendships that were forming. As a result, Will's satisfaction and enjoyment for the game returned.

Likewise, during his first year of Midget hockey, Will often felt like quitting hockey. The bullying he endured from his teammates negatively affected the satisfaction and enjoyment he had for the game that he loved. This bullying caused Will to often feel as though he was an "*an outsider*" on his team.

Normalizing Bullying Behaviour Helps Maintain The Witness's "Love For The Game"

Earlier in Will's hockey experiences, there were many times that he did not want to attend team games or practices due to the bullying. According to Will, the bullying made being in the dressing room difficult, often causing him to feel like "*an outsider.*" Despite such responses, theme of teammates witnessing bullying episodes not having an effect on the individual's personal satisfaction and enjoyment of the game was identified through Will's interview data.

For example, later in his teen years, when Will began witnessing his Junior B teammates get bullied, he explained that the bullying did not affect his satisfaction and enjoyment of the game as it did when he was victimized. According to Will, by the time

he reached junior hockey, “*he had gotten used to the bullying*” since he “*had seen so much of it*” over the years.

Furthermore, Will revealed that while he sat in the dressing room and witnessed the teammate bullying transpiring all around him, he felt “*relieved*” because it was not him on the receiving end. “*Things were going great. [He] was happy! [He] just wanted to sit there [in the dressing room] and enjoy [his hockey success].*” As a result, the bullying that surrounded him had no effect on his hockey enjoyment and satisfaction.

An Inadequate Or Lack Of Adult Supervision Provides Opportunities For Bullies

The theme of teammate bullying primarily occurring in unsupervised team locker rooms was identified through Will’s interview data. According to Will, the majority of the teammate bullying occurred when the coaches were not present in the dressing rooms. If there was a coach in the dressing room, bullying “*didn’t really happen... it was calm...it was good.*”

Moreover, for Will, the “*five minute pep talk*” before the games and the “*two minute talks in between periods*” was not enough time for his coaches to spend in the dressing room. As soon as the coaches exited the dressing room, there was always a chance for Will to be bullied.

An Adult Reluctance To Intervene

The theme of coaches being both aware and non-responsive towards the teammate bullying was identified through Will’s interview data. In Will’s experiences, all of his coaches knew that there was teammate bullying occurring within their dressing rooms. When it came to the bullying on his Midget team, the coach was passive towards it until Will approached him. Only then did the coach have a conversation with Eddie. When

Will had this conversation with his head coach, the response he got was disheartening.

According to Will, his head coach answered with:

It's hockey! You are going to have to deal with it. You are going to have to tough it out...It is what it is. You are just going to have to be better than him...you are going to have to be the bigger guy!

During his youth minor hockey years, Will wished his coach would have “*tried to do something more*” about the bullying that he was ruthlessly experiencing.

Additionally, he stated that he wished his coaches had more of a presence in their dressing room.

In regards to his Junior B hockey experiences, Will understood why they differed from youth minor hockey, as many of his teammates ranged from 17 to 21-years-of-age. According to Will, the coaches were well aware of the bullying that occurred but chose not to deal with it. Furthermore, the culture of this level of hockey appeared to permit veteran players to treat younger teammates however they desired. Additionally, it was Will's understanding that his Junior B hockey coaches encouraged this type of environment. This understanding was based upon the Junior B hockey coaches' presence and involvement with team hazings and rookie initiation parties.

Peer Support Is Valued By Bully Victims

An additional theme that was identified in Will's interview data was the value victims of teammate bullying place on teammates who stand up for them. Within Will's first year of Midget hockey, he acknowledged a desire to quit hockey due to the bullying he was enduring. The season slowly improved as various teammates approached Will and encouraged him one-on-one. Will truly appreciated their sentiment and support.

However, what Will appreciated the most was when his teammate courageously supported him in the dressing room. To have this teammate “*put the [bullies] in their place*” was significant for Will. In Will’s words, this teammate support “*was awesome...it really felt good!*” As a result, this teammate instantly made Will feel as though he was “*a part of the team.*”

A Reflection On Previous Inactions As Bystanders

The theme of individuals having future remorse for non-responsive attitudes towards other teammate bullying was identified through Will’s interview data. According to Will, he felt regret for not “*stepping forward*” and helping his Junior B hockey teammates who were being bullied. Years later, Will expressed that he wished he had come to the rescue of these teammates and given them the same “*awesome*” feelings he experienced when his Midget teammate came to his rescue.

Hazing Rituals Have Lasting Effects

The theme of hazing rituals having lasting results on witnesses was identified through Will’s interview data. Of all the bullying Will personally experienced or witnessed, what he remembered the most vividly were the Junior B hazings and initiation parties. They were “*without a doubt*” the worst part of Will’s hockey experience and were what led him away from the game that he loved.

Lasting memories of these hazings still play a direct role in Will’s family. Both Will, and his wife, have purposefully decided not to enroll their young children in organized hockey in an attempt to spare them from any future, similar, traumatic events.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This chapter presents a discussion of the researcher's main findings. First, the study's purpose and procedures are summarized. Second, the results of the study are presented along with a comparison and discussion of these findings. Third, the importance of this investigation, the strength of the study, as well as the limitations of the research are examined. Fourth, suggestions for future research are discussed. Lastly, practical suggestions and implications for individuals who coach or participate in organized team sports will be provided.

Summary Of Research Findings

For children and adolescents, there are many physical, social, emotional, and psychological benefits within organized team sports participation (Anokye et al., 2012; Broh, 2002; Cooley et al., 1995; Eccles et al., 2003; Eime et al., 2013; Gano-Overway, 2013; Mahoney & Cairns, 1997; Mahoney & Stattin, 2000; Marsh & Kleitman, 2003; Powell et al., 2011). However, what happens when the opposite occurs? What happens when those team environments become breeding grounds for teammates to bully other teammates?

Years of research have revealed data on the affects bullying can manifest on its victims and witnesses. Much of this bully research comes from a school-based perspective. However, research is limited when it comes to teammates bullying teammates within organized team sports settings. By using a qualitative case study approach, the goal of this inquiry was to gain a better understanding of the impact teammate bullying has within organized team sports. More specifically, this research investigated the following questions:

1. How does bullying within team sports impact individual experience?
2. To what extent have these experiences influenced participants' views of these team sports?

With these main research questions in mind, purposeful sampling was utilized within this case study to explore the lived experiences of two adult, male, participants. Together, the researcher and the participants recreated and co-constructed their understandings and meanings of their lived experiences in relation to this phenomenon. Multiple in-depth, semi-structured, phenomenological interviews were utilized in order to achieve this goal. It was deemed that this approach both enhanced a better understanding of the participant's lived experiences, and better conveyed these lived experiences to the reader.

Research Findings

Reoccurring Themes

A total of fifteen themes were identified from the interviews conducted with John and Will. Seven themes within John's interview data and eight themes from Will's interview data. Appendix G provides a chart of these fifteen themes. Of these fifteen themes, five themes emerged throughout both sets of data transcripts. These five themes include: (1) bullying and social ostracizing has a cyclical nature; (2) normalizing bullying behaviour helps preserve the witness's "love for the game;" (3) an inadequate or lack of adult supervision provides opportunities for bullies; (4) an adult reluctance to intervene; and (5) an adult reflection on their inactions as bystanders.

Non-Reoccurring Themes

Additionally, five themes were unique and did not emerge across both sets of data. The reason these five themes were unique was due to John and Will's uniquely different experiences with teammate bullying. These five themes are: (1) skill deficits and perceived areas of weakness precipitates and fuels bullying behaviour; (2) presence of bystander effect among peers; (3) bullying diminishes the victim's "love for the game;" (4) peer support is valued by bully victims; and (5) hazing rituals have lasting results.

Themes unique to John's data. The following two themes emerged exclusively from his data: (1) skill deficits and perceived areas of weakness precipitates and fuels bullying behaviour; and (2) teammates were non-responsive to the bullying amongst other teammates.

Themes unique to Will's data. The following three themes emerged exclusively from his data: (1) bullying diminishes the victim's "love for the game;" (2) teammates who stand up for bullied victims are valued; and (3) hazing rituals have lasting results.

Setting The Theme For Teammate Bullying

An inadequate or lack of adult supervision provides opportunities for bullies. According to Smokowski and Kopasz (2005), this lack of adult supervision is the typical common denominator with school bullying. Furthermore, relevant research indicates that school bullying generally occurs close to school settings, with the school playground and the school hallways being the two most common locations for such confrontations (Beale & Scott, 2001). Kowalski, Limber, and Agatston (2008) support this finding,

stating that the school grounds are convenient settings for bullying, as is a setting that often lacks continual adult supervision.

Such also was the case with the teammate bullying. According to both John and Will's data, the bullying they witnessed typically occurred within the hockey arena dressing rooms. As is the case with school bullying, this particular location played a pivotal role due to the fact that it was both a convenient location for the teammate bullying to occur, and because it often lacked adult supervision.

An adult reluctance to intervene. Coaches are major stakeholders, as they play a vital role in leading the bench during games, organizing practices, developing skills, coming up with strategies, enhancing unity, and creating teamwork. Such is the case when it comes to this phenomenon of teammate bullying within organized team sports.

According to the data, the consequences can be disheartening when team coaches inadequately support the teams and individual players under their supervision. A lack of conduct management and player support played a reoccurring role in significant dressing room bullying in both sets of participant data. Both John and Will's perceptions concluded that the responsible adults within their teams did not adequately utilize their presence, power, and authority. A lack of communication, and an incompetent recognition or understanding of bullying on the coaches behalf led to excessive teammate victimization. As a result, the dressing room was an unsafe environment for all teammates.

Understandably, coaches make mistakes. At the same time, there must be a higher expectation from such adult stakeholders. Their presence must be made known. Their presence must be consistent. Their presence must cultivate an inviting and caring

persona to their individual players and to the team as a whole. As previously indicated in relevant literature, the detrimental physical and emotional effects of bullying are considerable (Hawker & Boulton, 2000; Kim, Leventhal, Koh, Hubbard, & Boyce, 2006; Mason, 2008; O'Moore & Kirkham, 2001; Rivers, 2004; Roland, 2002). Therefore, an awareness of these behaviours and their symptoms would allow them to both recognize and tackle this phenomenon head on.

Bullying diminishes the victim's "love for the game." As stated in Chapter Four, Will was victimized by teammates, whereas John never once recalled being bullied by teammates. It was obvious why this theme emerged from Will's data and not John's. The bullying that Will endured often led to times when he did not want to attend team games or practices. The bullying he experienced caused him to feel isolated, discouraged, and led to thoughts of quitting the game he loved. Moreover, the bullying also lead to physical encounters such as "*pushing...shoving...and punching.*"

Research done by Mason (2008), supports this finding, acknowledging that a single episode of bullying can cause noteworthy emotional, mental, and physical damage. Additional research reveals that victims of bullying may experience wide-ranging emotional difficulties such as stomach aches, headaches, anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, suicidal ideation, loneliness, and other health concerns (Hawker & Boulton, 2000; Kim, Leventhal, Koh, Hubbard, & Boyce, 2006; Mason, 2008; O'Moore & Kirkham, 2001; Roland, 2002).

The Cyclical Nature Of Teammate Bullying Behaviour

Bullying and social ostracizing has a cyclical nature. This theme was identified within both John and Will's interview data. This cyclical nature was reinforced

when the coaches failed to appropriately respond to the bullying that they knew was occurring on their teams. Simply put, by choosing not to intervene, the coaches were allowing the bullying to continue.

According to John, Joe did not have many friends on the team. Furthermore, John shared that many of Joe's poor social skills, such as "*picking his nose,*" smearing mucus, "*weird quirks...and twitches,*" and non-age appropriate conversations held him back from making peer connections. As a result, a combination of inappropriate behaviours, tardiness, poor social skills, and inferior hockey skills all contributed to Joe's victimization and teammate ostracizing. As a result of these correlations, a vicious circle was formed that perpetuated a cycle between Joe and his peers that included poor social choices, inappropriate behaviours, peer rejection, isolation, and teammate bullying.

Will's situation was much different; it was not his social skills that kept him from making peer connections. For Will, many bullying episodes transpired on the teams he played on due to social isolation from either being "*the new guy*" on the team, being the only under-aged player on the team, or as a direct result of the entrenched and divisive junior hockey class system that divided the rookies from the veterans. As a result, a bullying and social ostracizing cycle was formed between Will and his Pee Wee and Midget teammates, as well as between Will's Junior B rookie and veteran teammates.

Relevant literature supports many aspects of the bullying situations described by John and Will. According to Kaltiala-Heino, Rimpela, Rantanen, and Rimpela (2000), bullied adolescents often have few peer connections and smaller social networks. This was true for every bullying incident that was shared by my two participants. The identified victims were bullied by teammates who were outside of their "circle" of

friends. The reasons for this were varied in that the victim was either new to their respective teams, or had difficulties in making peer connections.

As a result of the bullying, the identified victim's development and self-esteem suffered throughout the hockey season (Mason, 2008; Merrell, Gueldner, Ross, & Isava, 2008). This lower self-esteem became a part of a vicious bullying cycle. Within this cycle, the individuals who were not accepted already suffered from what their teammates could have perceived as low self-esteem. For Will, being "*the new guy*" on his Pee Wee team and being the only underage player on the Midget team played a role in this cyclical self-esteem/bullying quandary. In Joe's case, he had a history of being isolated and bullied by his peers. As a result, it was this low self-esteem that increased their chances, and ultimately played a role in their bully victimization (Merrell et al., 2008; Patchin & Hinduja, 2006).

Roberts (2006) suggests that students who are at risk for bullying victimization often fit within one or more of the following six categories: (1) social isolates or outcasts; (2) students with transient school histories; (3) students who display poor social skills; (4) students who have an intense need to "fit in" no matter what the cost; (5) students who are defensive-less; and (6) those who are viewed as "different" by their peers. Such was the case for Joe, Eddie, Will, and the Junior B rookies.

Rief (2005) states that an individual's poor performance within a team sport environment often leads to addition ridicule and social rejection for children with pre-existing self-esteems and social difficulties. This was especially true when it came to Joe. School was an environment that produced much teasing, isolation, and bullying for him. According to John, much of Joe's organized team sport experiences merely added

to and intensified these difficulties. Perhaps, Joe would have benefited in participating within individual sports, rather than in organized team sports?

Peer support is valued by bully victims. As revealed in Will's data, he specifically knew what it was like to have bullying crush the satisfaction and enjoyment out of the game he loved. Additionally, he intimately knew the incredible feeling of having a teammate defend you in a setting that all too often brought pain and frustration.

For these reasons, this theme emerged in Will's data and not in John's. According to Campbell (2005), what happened to Will typically does not occur, as spectators typically do not intervene on behalf of the victim for fear of being the bully's next victim. Instead, what is more common is for spectators to "passively" approve the bullying they witness, which gives the bully(s) a steady dose of positive reinforcement (Batsche & Porter, 2006).

Hazing rituals have lasting results. Hazing rituals were unique to Will's data, as it was a theme that only Will experienced simply due to the fact that John never played Junior hockey. These graphic hazing events played a vital role in Will quitting hockey, choosing solo sports to participate in rather than organized team sports, and in not allowing his children to pursue hockey. The negative impact of these events eventually left Will to experience less satisfaction with hockey. This data is symmetrical to bystanders who experience classroom bullying, in that they feel less safe and less satisfaction with their school experience (Olweus et al., 1999). In Will's case, these experiences played a significant role with him quitting the game of hockey, a sport he passionately loved. Furthermore, these experiences have kept him and his wife from

allowing their children to play organized hockey, for fear of them experiencing potential initiation hazings.

An adult reflection on their inactions as bystanders. This reoccurring theme was passionately acknowledged within both sets of data, as both participants had strong, present day feelings in regards to their past bullying experiences. Both participants identified that they felt remorse over their nonexistent response to the bullying they witnessed.

For “*a thirteen-year-old*” John, bullying had become a normal part of life in a hockey dressing room. By the age of seventeen, the same had also occurred for Will since he “*had seen so much of it*” over the years. As both participants shared their recollections, it became evident that they both experienced regrets for their non-responsiveness to the teammate bullying. Will specifically expressed that he wished he had come to the rescue of these teammates and had given them the same “*awesome*” feelings he experienced when he played Midget hockey.

Furthermore, a sense of powerlessness was evident within both participants when witnessing this bullying. For them, knowing that the bullying was not okay, but feeling they could not do anything about it was frustrating. At times John and Will felt conflicted. There were moments when they wanted to intervene, but did not do so for fear of being victimized in the future. In many ways, both their laughter and non-responsiveness towards the bullying they witnessed was way of maintaining a sense of self-preservation.

Yet over the years, the feelings of regret did not become too burdensome for either Will or John, as their maturation and resilience allowed these difficult experiences

to become powerful teaching moments. Such was the case when John confronted and challenged the bullying being committed by his friend's brother. Both John and Will used these negative experiences of teammate bullying as valuable life lessons that changed them for the better. When it came to Will, he used the many negative aspects of teammate bullying, hazing, and alcohol abuse helped him "*grow up really quick.*" In fact, according to Will:

He did not mind that...he was bullied [because he] made it through [the bullying]. And it has helped [him]...as an adult. Being able to go through [the bullying] and coming out the other side on a positive note [is of great value].

The Impact of Normalizing Bullying Behaviour

Normalizing bullying behaviour helps maintain the witness's "love for the game." Once again, this theme was identified within both John and Will's interview data. Both participants acknowledged that the bullying they witnessed was divisive in terms of team building and cohesiveness. Merely witnessing the bullying did not affect their personal satisfaction of the game of hockey.

According to John, the bullying he witnessed was a normal part of life in the hockey dressing room. With Will, this data was a little more complicated. As a victim of bullying, there were many times that he did not want to attend team games or practices due to the bullying he endured. Furthermore, the bullying he received made being in the dressing room difficult and frustrating, often causing him to feel like "*an outsider.*" As a result, personally experiencing bullying had a direct influence on his satisfaction and enjoyment.

At the same time, according to Will, it was because of his previous victimization that the bullying he witnessed years later had no effect on his satisfaction and enjoyment of the game. For Will, he had become accustomed to teammate bullying and felt “*relieved*” and “*happy*” when other teammates were bullied.

Current, relevant literature supports Will’s feelings of relief and delight regarding the bullying he witnessed. According to Campbell (2005) individuals who witness bullying are frequently afraid that if they intervene they will become the next victim. For Will, to intercede could have resulted in his own victimization. Therefore, in light of this research, Will’s feelings of relief and delight are quite understandable.

Skill deficits and perceived areas of weakness precipitates and fuels bullying behaviour. As stated in Chapter Four, John shared that he and Ryan were two former teammates that were ruthlessly bullied, in part, because they were both isolated individuals who were the least skilled players on their respective teams. According to current, relevant literature a power imbalance typically exists between those who bully and those who are bullied. According to Mason (2008), there is a wide range of characteristics that indicate why the bully may feel superior to their victims; such characteristics include physical strength, competence, and confidence. Such was definitely the case with Joe, as he was seen as being “*a bad hockey player*” whose hockey skills and abilities being significantly behind that of his teammates.

For Will, this theme never appeared since that was never the case with the bullying he, nor his teammates experienced. In Will’s accounts, the individuals who were experiencing bullying, were victimized because they were new to the teams they were on and were lacking peer connections.

Presence of bystander effect among peers. John could not recall, he nor his teammates ever defending Joe or Ryan from the ruthless bullying that continually came their way. According to John, it appeared as though these two individuals were always isolated and outsiders from the rest of the group. Additionally, there appeared to be three groups of teammates within the teams John described. The first group being those who were bullied, the second group being those who did the bullying, and the third group being those who witnessed the bullying occur. According to John, he fit into this third group.

As John shared his stories, he could not remember his teammates ever defending or sticking up for his bullied teammates. Relevant, current literature supports why so many of his teammates remained non-responsive. According to Campbell (2005), spectators typically do not intervene for fear of being the bully's next victim.

Therefore, it is understandable as to why it was a theme within John's data, and not within Will's data. The reason for this was due to a teammate of Will's who defied the typical adolescent response of remaining quiet and who defended him in the dressing room. According to Will, this event was an "*awesome*" moment.

My Response To Bullying In Organized Team Sports

In chapter one, I stated that I could go on and on describing all that I had learned about myself, life, competition, respect, determination, perseverance, communication, and leadership through my many athletic and organized team sports activities I have been involved with over the course of my life. In many ways, much of who I am today was taught within the confines of the countless hockey arenas, soccer pitches, baseball diamonds, school gymnasiums, and locker rooms I have encountered.

In Chapter One, I also described a few of my many experiences with the topic of bullying; a topic that I promised myself many years ago to confront and oppose. As a result, much of this research has been inspired as my attempt to advocate on behalf of the many victims of bullies; more specifically those who have been bullied by their organized team sport teammates. Therefore, it was my hope to shed some additional light on this unfortunate phenomenon.

During John's interviews, I gained a rich understanding of what it was like for a typical, young adolescent boy from Saskatchewan, playing the game of hockey. The experiences John witnessed were very valuable to this study, as his hockey environment allowed him to witness upsetting acts of bullying, particularly Joe and Ryan's bullying accounts. His interviews provided much data on what it was like to witness extreme teammate bullying.

For John, the bullying he experienced had little to no affect on his organized team sport experiences. To this day, despite the bullying he witnessed, John still actively plays the game he loved as a child. His love and passion to share his gifts, talents, and abilities with his teammates is still evident. Furthermore, the unfortunate bullying he witnessed, allowed him to stand up against the bullying he later experienced in life, when he was more mature and confident in himself. As a result, the bullying he witnessed did not have an immediate or lasting effect on his hockey experiences.

Throughout Will's interviews, I also gained a greater understanding of what it was like for a typical, young adolescent boy from Saskatchewan, playing the game of hockey. The experiences that Will endured also provided rich, detailed data. His hockey environments were plagued with unfortunate events, which many times included being

bullied by teammates. His interviews also provided much data on being bullied, witnessing bullying, and witnessing hazing rituals.

In regards to Will, the bullying he experienced had an assortment of effects on his past hockey experiences and future athletic endeavors. As a victim, the bullying he endured from his teammates had a definite impact on Will's hockey experiences. Initially, these experiences discouraged, frustrated, and isolated Will. Fortunately, as he matured and moved on from one level of hockey to another, Will grew from his many bullying experiences. Eventually, his role as the victim became a thing of the past, and was replaced as the role of a witness. According to Will, this role was much easier to tolerate. In fact, as was the case with John, this role had little to no effect on Will's hockey experiences at the time.

Yet this "little to no affect" soon came to an end due to a combination of the many bullying episodes, alcohol abuse, and rookie hazings he witnessed. As a result, over the course of his first and only year of Junior B hockey, Will eventually quit the game of hockey for good. The impact of these many disheartening experiences caused him to evaluate what was most important to him and his family. Subsequently, Will now participates solely in "*solo-sports*" and has decided, along with his wife, that their children will not be given the opportunity to participate in organized youth hockey leagues. Therefore, in the end, the bullying and negative environment that Will witnessed eventually did have a lasting effect on his view of hockey.

According to Will, some of his worst memories in life have to do with his experiences with his hockey teammates. For obvious reasons, this makes sense. Yet in the same breath, Will went on to share that some of the best moments in life have also

been shared with many of those same teammates. As I consider this statement in light of my two guiding research questions, I am reminded that life does not always make sense.

Limitations Of The Study

This study has limitations. The goal was to interview the top two to three participants. Ultimately John and Will were the only participants to respond to the poster advertisements. Nonetheless, I felt as though I achieved saturation, as my questions were being answered. While there were unique themes between my participants, there also were common ones. This repetition found within these themes was very revealing. At the same time, the use of only two individual cases leaves this study vulnerable to criticism as this research approach lacks rigor and the possibility of generalization. In hindsight, the poster recruitment strategy used to attract appropriate candidates potentially allowed for this limitation.

Yin (2003) would debate that the findings found in this research are limited in their capacity and may not necessarily be generalized to the larger population. However, this exploratory study was intended to be specific rather than generalizable. The data that was acquired from the selected participants was purposefully intended to be a representation of those specific individuals.

Furthermore, limitations can be found within the semi-structured interviews that were used. The interview questions that were chosen did not undergo any pilot testing, therefore, the validity of any data gained through this case study must be taken into consideration. Nonetheless, the current study provides valuable insights that can begin to fill the gaps within the literature.

Recommendations For Further Research

As an individual who has actively been involved with a wide variety of such activities, on many different levels, I never really knew the seriousness of bullying within organized team sports as I do now. Further research is required to increase our understanding of teammate bullying with organized team sports. From this study, it is apparent that the bullying that occurred within organized team sport experiences is of utmost importance.

Furthermore, the following list shares some research questions that could further the research of this significant topic: (1) If bullying was eliminated from organized team sports, how would this affect our teams? (2) What are parent concerns regarding the bullying that occurs within organized team sports? (3) What are the differences between younger players' responses to bullying than older players' responses? (4) How could the meaningful response of coaches affect the victims of teammate bullying? (5) How do coaches respond when they believe one of their players is being bullied?

In order to address the low response numbers I encountered with my posters, I would encourage future researchers to add to my recruitment strategy. A possible example would be to informally address various adult sport teams during their practices or post-game. Through this process, research posters along with a brief explanation of the study could be personally presented to many potential candidates. Ideally, this strategy would reduce limitations I encountered.

Additionally, any future researchers are invited to take a quantitative approach to this phenomenon. Ideally, if data collection could be conducted using self-report surveys and anonymous questionnaires, the validity of this inquiry could be enhanced.

Concluding Thoughts

I began my journey searching the literature, looking for the effects and implications of childhood and adolescent bullying within organized team sports. The purpose of this study was to extend the research to include bullying within organized team sports. It did not take long to discover that the majority of bullying studies focused on cyberbullying and bullying within educational, school settings. As a result, my study soon became an exploratory case study on this phenomenon of bullying and organized team sports.

My goal was to evoke the many challenges, influences, and impact these bullying experiences had on my participants, both during those bullying episodes, and in the here and now. My desire was to discover how those bullying episodes affected my participants' current views of organized team sports. I did not realize how much I would learn.

Due to the amount of research already revealing the many negative affects of bullying, I wanted to delve into this topic, as a counsellor, coach, father, friend, mentor, participant, and fanatic of various organized team sports, in order to help make suggestions. Why? To help those who are victims. To help those who are bullies. To help make organized sports better. To make organized team sports more fun for all participants. To continue on with the promise I made to myself years ago: to do my part in ending bullying.

This study allowed me to recollect on my past experiences with bullying. It confronted me as I reexamined my own coaching philosophy during this temporary hiatus from being a hockey coach. It challenged me in how I parent my own children in regards

to their interactions with peers within the organized team sports they participate in. It even questions my desire to keep my son in hockey, the game both him and I are passionate about, or to encourage him to pursue other passions.

Ultimately, what I wanted to do was begin a conversation with coaches, parents, participants, and organized team sport associations about teammates bullying teammates. I wanted to be able to offer victims a voice. I wanted to be able to make bullies and adults accountable to each other. I wanted to offer methods and ideas on how to minimize bullying opportunities in team sport settings.

To those who coach organized team sports, be reminded your responsibility goes beyond the sport. Your role as the coach must go beyond teaching team specific skills. As a coach, one must build within their players leadership skills, teamwork, unity, responsibility, social skills, resilience, wisdom, perseverance, dedication, and so on. Therefore, all coaches should lead as examples. Speak out about the wrong messages you see and hear that come out of your players' actions and words. Speak up and praise those who are doing and saying that what is right. Let each and every player know, beyond a shadow of doubt that they have expectations that go way beyond showing up on time, and giving a "100% effort" in each and every game and practice.

As coaches, life skills should be just as important, if not more important than athletic skills and abilities. The way I see it, coaches have a responsibility to help each and every individual player that they coach. Their caring must go beyond the scoreboard. Coaches need to know that you care just as much about what occurs in your dressing room as you do about what happens during games and practices. Players must know that their coaches see them as individuals and not just as a number on the back of a jersey.

They need to know that their coaches see them as both an individual and as an integral part of the team, no matter their role, their position, or their athletic abilities and skills.

To those who are parents of children and adolescents who play organized team sports, communicate with your children. Find out what is happening in their dressing rooms and locker rooms when their coaches are not present. When negative social situations arise that require special attention, such as bullying episodes, respectfully talk to the coaches. Be in control of your emotions and together, come up with a solution that remedies the problem. Furthermore, encourage your children to be wise, forgiving, and tolerant leaders who are mindful of their words and actions within the team dressing rooms and benches. Teaching them to speak out against bullying and compassionate towards bully victims.

What I did not want to do was give hockey another “black eye.” Bullying occurs in many places, not just in hockey dressing rooms. It also occurs in school hallways, playgrounds, places of employment, within people’s homes, baseball diamonds, soccer pitches, basketball courts, football fields, and so on. In regards to this study, it just so happened that the participants who came forward were hockey players.

Ultimately, this research helped two young adults gain fresh perspectives from their past experiences and realize their admirable resilience. I truly believe that this process was both beneficial and therapeutic for John and Will, as it allowed them to verbalize and share their feelings surrounding their recollections on these lived experiences. Moreover, it allowed them to see the maturation and resilience that came out of their present understandings of these experiences. As a result, years removed from these bullying experiences, this study gave them opportunity to personally reflect on the

benefits and rewards they drew from them. This study was a way for them to see how they “grew” from these experiences rather than merely “going” through them so many years ago.

I believe that with this study, along with the extensive literature that already exists on bullying and coaching, there can be profound improvements for individuals who participate in organized team sports, their families, and the coaches who volunteer their time and effort.

Coach as Bystander: Some Concluding Thoughts

The following letter to a fictitious coach was created to summarize both personal reactions to reports of bullying in team locker rooms as well as those experienced and expressed by my research participants. One of the inherent strengths of qualitative research is that it can empower both the researcher and participants by giving a voice to them in a manner that is both constructive and potentially transformative. The fictitious “concerned player” in this letter is able to express clearly what many have felt but were unable to communicate. By closing with this emotive response to bullying that is obviously prevalent in team sports, the message is clear that inaction flames the fire that fuels the bully to continue with the relentless tormenting of the victim. Ignoring the evidence that bullying may be prevalent among team members is not only subversive but also leads to a distrust of adults who may have only paid lip service to addressing such systemic issues. This heartfelt plea from the player to the coach is designed to evoke an emotive response while also serving as a “call to action”. The question remains, what can you do to address this player’s concerns?

Dear Coach,

Thank you for your willingness to volunteer with our team. I appreciate the sacrifices you make so that I can play the game that I love. Every practice you faithfully show up and help develop our skills and abilities. Every game you are on our bench cheering us on. You celebrate when we score. You praise us when we make the “big play.” You run to our aid when we get hurt. You always applaud us for our hard work.

In every pre-game pep talk you stress teamwork, unity, and unselfishness play. You remind us that there is no “I” in “team.” You challenge us to play for the crests on the front of our jerseys and not the nameplates on our backs. Before every game we are asked to look at our teammates to our right, to our left, and across that room and are encourage us to play for each other!

However, do you realize what goes on between us when you are not around? Bullying! So many of our locker room interactions are 100% counterproductive to all that you are trying to instill within us. What happens behind closed doors when you and the other adults exit the locker room is bad! The verbal and physical abuse that I personally experience is relentless. It is like a cancer that saps my strength and devours my joy and passion for this game, the game that I love! The bullying produces so much hate, fear, bitterness, loneliness, and disrespect. It wreaks havoc and destroys all concept of team unity. As a result, your hopes and dreams for our team are all unattainable. They are too lofty.

Unfortunately, if you think it starts and ends with me, you are wrong. I know I am not the only one who is feeling this way. Others are also getting bullied. The way I see it, our team is dysfunctional and divided. It is comprised of four groups: the bullies; the victims; the bystanders who laugh; and the bystanders who quietly lower their heads and try to ignore the chaos. When it comes to the bullying, it is like clockwork. When you leave the room, I get bombarded with physical and verbal attacks. Honestly, I am not sure what is worse? Is it the shoves, jabs, and garbage that get thrown my way? Is it the demeaning insults, threats, and sneers that are hurled at me? Is it the humiliating laughter that is associated with it? Or is it the deafening silence from my other teammates who pretend all is normal? All I truly know is that I cannot take it anymore. If things do not change immediately, I have no other choice than to leave the team.

Yet, I am confounded as to how you cannot see any of this for yourself! I am befuddled as to how you appear to be so oblivious to all that is plaguing your team! I know that the majority of it happens behind closed doors, but coach, it is so obvious! How can you not hear what is going on when you are conversing outside our locker room door? What are you thinking when you hear both anger and laughter as you approach our room? Why is it that everything comes to an abrupt end when you open the door? Why is it that certain teammates scramble back to their seats with guilty looks on their faces while others are quietly sitting with looks of anger and pain on theirs as you enter the room?

At the beginning of the season I faintly remember you mentioning that you would not tolerate any bullying on your team. Yet I am confused and disappointed on how you can say this, then do nothing to determine whether or not any bullying is actually happening? Unfortunately I need to respectfully let you know that you have failed when it comes to your fulfillment of that statement. Coach, you have failed to ask us the right questions. You have failed to pay attention to that what is happening as you approach and enter our locker room. You have failed to supervise and protect us when we are at our most vulnerable, behind closed doors.

Perhaps the temptation will be there for you to ignore this letter. Perhaps you will want to pretend all that I have stated cannot possibly be happening on your team. Or think that we are all just “kids being kids” and all I need to do is “suck it up” and “grow a backbone” and let “what happens in the locker room stay in the locker room!” Please do not entertain any of those thoughts. Please do not add to the problem that already exists. Any silence or inaction on your behalf would be seen as cowardly and irresponsible. It would be a grave mistake to do anything other than tackle this bullying issue head-on. None-the-less, if such is the way you choose to respond, I want you to know that will I survive and grow in spite of you and your inability to effectively and properly coach a team sport!

Therefore coach, I implore you. Help stop the emotional negativity, physical aggression, and social cruelty. Fully engage yourself and help put a stop to our bullying problem. Be our leader. Incorporate character building

alongside skill development and physical conditioning. No longer just assume all is good. Promote a safe environment that will not condone bullying. Clearly communicate what is acceptable and unacceptable ways of treating one another. Clearly explain safe and confidential ways that we can report bullying. Provide to us a concrete understanding of what the consequences will be for bullying actions.

Coach, we are all here because we love this sport! We love to play it! We all love to win! We all want to improve and excel, but at what cost? Please send a message that will have resounding ramifications to all of the other victims on our team, to all future bully victims, to all who do the bullying, to all who silently witness the bullying, to all who laugh at the bullying, to all of our families, to yourself, and last but not least, to me.

In closing, you will most likely desire to meet with me and discuss this letter. I would greatly appreciate that. All I ask is that it is done in a discreet and confidential manner.

*Respectfully,
A Concerned Player*

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Appendix A: Invitation To Participate

Bullying and Team Sports: An Exploratory Case Study on Adults' Recollections

Are you an individual who, as a child, experienced or witnessed bullying in an organized team sport setting?

The term “bullying” is when one or more individuals repeatedly harm others by physical attack or by hurting other’s feelings through words, actions, or social exclusion

Can you relate to this? Does this sound familiar? If your answer is yes, you are invited to participate in a research study entitled “Bullying and Team Sports: An Exploratory Case Study on Adults' Recollections”

I am a U of S grad student in the School and Counselling Psychology program looking for 2 or more participants who meet the following criteria:

1. Male or female, above the age of 18.
2. You perceive yourself to fit the definition of ‘an individual who experienced or witnessed bullying in an organized team sport’
3. Able to commit up to 2-3 hours of your time to partake in an interview and a follow up meeting that will review the initial interview transcripts/data.

To thank you for your participation, you will receive a \$20 SportChek or Tim Hortons’ gift card (you get to choose) at the end of the second interview!

If you are interested, please contact Rick Janzen by email at rwj418@mail.usask.ca

*** This study has been reviewed by and has received approval through the U of S Research Ethics Office

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Appendix B: Screening Email

Dear _____,

I sincerely thank you for your initial interest in this study! In order to ensure you meet the participation criteria, I ask that you first, reply to this email providing answers for the following questions:

1. How old are you?
2. Have you ever participated in an organized team sport, and if yes, what sport?
3. When you participated in that organized team sport, did you ever witness or encounter situations where teammates bullied other teammates?
4. Are you able to commit to participating in the study by taking part in two interviews (no longer than 1-1.5 hours each)?

As I am hoping to study a specific population, I would like to inform you now that it is possible that I may face eliminating potential participants. Upon your reply, I will be in touch as soon as possible to let you know if you meet the participation criteria. If you do meet the criteria, I will hope to set up a time to meet you and hear about your experiences.

Again, I thank you for your time and interest thus far! I look forward to your response.

Rick

Appendix C: Interview Guide

Interview Questions and Probes

Interview One:

1. Could you tell me a little bit about your background? Possible Probes (*use only if the participant has difficulty articulating their experiences*):
 - How old are you?
 - Where did you grow up?
 - How long did you play the team sports?
 - What was a personal highlight from your participation?

2. Could you tell me a little bit about your involvement in organized team sports? Possible Probes (*use only if the participants has difficulty articulating their experiences*):
 - How many different organized team sports have you played?
 - Growing up, what was your favorite team sport to play?
 - How old were you when you played the team sports?
 - How long did you play team sports?
 - What did you like about the team sport you played? What did you not like about it?
 - What was a personal highlight from your participation? Can you think of any other?
 - What was a personal low from your participation? Can you think of any other?

3. You have identified that you witnessed/experienced bullying when you played organized team sports. Can you tell me about these experiences? Possible Probes (*use only if the participants has difficulty articulating their experiences*):
 - What types of bully behavior did you witness/experience?
 - How old were you?
 - Did you have a relationship with the bully?
 - Did you have a relationship with the victim?
 - What impact did the bullying have on you? Physically? Mentally? Emotionally? Socially?
 - What impact did the bullying have on your enjoyment level of the team sport?
 - How often do you think about these bullying experiences you witnessed?
 - Did your coaches know about the bullying?
 - If yes, what did your coaches do about the bullying?
 - Did parents or any other adult know about the bullying?

- If yes, what did the parents/adults do about the bullying?
 - Did the bullying ever stop?
 - If yes, what caused the bullying to stop?
 - Do you feel as though the bullying was handled appropriately?
 - Do you wish that the coaches did anything different in regards to the bullying on your team?
 - Do you wish that the parents/adults did anything different in regards to the bullying on your team?
4. What I'd like for you to do now is tell me about how you believe that those experiences of bullying behaviour have impacted your thoughts, feelings, and behaviours to this day. You can begin wherever you'd like and include or leave out whatever you'd like. There are no wrong answers; I am just interested in learning about your experience in regards to teammates bullying other teammates in organized team sports. Possible Probes (*use only if the participants have difficulty articulating their experiences*):
- How important was the sport to you?
 - How important were your teammates to you?
 - Did you ever keep in touch to any of your teammates from those days?
 - Did you ever talk about the bullying episodes you witnessed/experienced?
 - Was the team sport a community or a school based team?
 - What did your coaches do in response to the bullying episodes?
 - What did the parents do in response to the bullying episodes?
 - Did the bullying affect your level of enjoyment to the sport?
 - Did the bullying affect your level of commitment to the sport?
 - Did the bullying affect your level of commitment to your teammates?
 - Do you think the bullying you witnessed/experienced has had a lasting affect on you to this day? Has it had an affect on how you view team sports, or feel about team sports today?
 - Do you ever catch yourself thinking about those bullying episode? If yes, what do you think about?

Probes that may be needed throughout the interview:

- Could you tell me a story or give me an example to demonstrate what you just explained?
- Could you tell me more about that?
- How did you feel about that?
- What was that like for you?
- What do you mean?
- Can you tell me more about that?
- Do you have anything else to share?

Interview Two:

1. Have you had a chance to read over the copy of your transcript? Is there anything you would like to add, alter or delete from the transcript?
2. During today's meeting I would like to discuss with you themes that have surfaced throughout our previous interview. The following is a list of themes that have surfaced... Do you feel these themes are reflective of your experiences of teammates who bullied other teammates on your sport teams? If yes, how so? Is there anything you feel I may have missed/omitted?



Appendix D: Transcript Release Form

Bullying and Team Sports:

An Exploratory Case Study on Adults' Recollections

Transcript Release Form

I, _____, have reviewed the complete transcript of my personal interview in this study, and have been provided with the opportunity to add, alter, and delete information from the transcript as appropriate. I acknowledge that the transcript accurately reflects what I said in my personal interview with Rick Janzen. I hereby authorize the release of this transcript to Rick Janzen to be used in the manner described in the Consent Form. I have received a copy of this Transcript Release Form for my own records.

Name of Participant

Date

Signature of Participant

Signature of Researcher



Appendix E: Informed Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a research study entitled Bullying and Team Sports: An Exploratory Case Study on Adults' Recollections. Please read this form carefully, and feel free to ask any questions you might have about the study.

Project Title: Bullying and Team Sports: An Exploratory Case Study on Adults' Recollections

Researcher: Rick Janzen, M.Ed Candidate, Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education, University of Saskatchewan (Phone: 306-292-8550; Email: rwj418@mail.usask.ca)

Supervisor: Dr. Tim Claypool, Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education (Phone: 306-966-6931; Email: Tim.Claypool@usask.ca)

Purpose(s) and Objective(s) of the Research:

Bullying has been a hot topic of conversation for the past few decades. Research on this topic suggests that bullying can affect victims in a wide variety of ways. The purpose of this study is to evoke the lived experiences of individuals who have experienced bullying in organized team sport settings. This inquiry will be guided by the following two questions: How does bullying within team sports impact individuals' experiences? To what extent have these experiences influenced participants' views of these team sports? It is my desire to research both the past and existing effects these experiences have had on my participants. Ideally, such data will generate significant, positive conversations that will challenge and change organized team sport environments; ideally, incorporate important life skills, social skills, healthier attitudes, behaviour changes, and anti-bullying strategies alongside specific, individual, team strategies and skill training goals.

Procedures:

I am asking you to be one of two participants that take part in a minimum of two audio-recorded interviews that will be approximately 60 minutes each.

The first interview will consist of semi-structured questions related to your experiences and history on the topic of bullying in team sports. It will take place at an appropriate location that is at your convenience. My attempt will be for this interview process to look like a conversation where you will be given the opportunity to speak openly about your bullying experiences. With your permission, the interviews will be audio-recorded and will then be transcribed. Prior to the second interview, you would be provided with your own copy of this interview transcript.

At the time of the second interview, you will be provided with a document outlining the various themes and topics discovered within the first interview. My desire will be

for you to confirm the accuracy of these interpretations. If necessary, corrections and clarifications will occur here in order to maintain accurate and relevant data.

Please feel free to ask any questions regarding the procedures and goals of the study or your role.

Potential Risks:

Risks associated with this study are minimal. However, you may experience some discomfort discussing your experiences of bullying you witnessed between teammates in an organized team sport that you were a member of. As a result, these discussions may cause negative memories to re-surface. It is pertinent that you realize that you have the right to determine what we discuss and may refuse to answer any question. Furthermore, should you wish, you have the right at any time to request we terminate the interview and/or turn off the audio recorder. If your discomfort increases during the interview, you have the right to end the session. Should you experience discomfort as a result of our discussions, attached to this form is a list of counsellors you may contact to further discuss your emotional discomfort. If you have questions regarding these agencies, I would be happy to provide with any information you may need.

Potential Benefits:

Talking about your past experience of bullying that you witnessed may be beneficial for you as our discussions may provide you with a deeper understanding of these experiences. In addition, participating in this study will help provide an understanding of the impact bullying has in team sport settings. Your bullying experiences, as well as the extent those experiences had may help inform those in organized team sport circles, as well as the helping profession who counsel individuals in similar situations.

Confidentiality:

The data from this research project will be used for the purposes of my thesis. The findings may be published and may be presented at conferences; however, your identity will be kept confidential. To ensure your privacy, the audio recordings will be kept completely confidential and personally identifying information will be removed when reporting your data. Although I may report direct quotations from the interview, you will be given a pseudonym, and all identifying information will be removed from my report.

Storage of Data:

At the end of the research project, the results and associated material such as audio recordings and transcripts will be safeguarded and securely stored on campus at the University of Saskatchewan by my supervisor, Dr. Tim Claypool, for a minimum of five years. To protect your anonymity your signed consent forms will be stored in a separate location from the data records. When the data is no longer required, it will be appropriately destroyed.

Right to Withdraw:

Your participation is voluntary and you can answer only those questions that you are comfortable with. You may withdraw from the research project for any reason, at any

time without explanation or penalty of any sort. If you choose to withdraw, data collected will be deleted from the study and destroyed, if desired. Your right to withdraw data from the study will apply until the end of your second interview. After this date, it is possible that some form of research dissemination will have already occurred and it may not be possible to withdraw your data.

Follow up:

If you wish to obtain a copy of the completed study, please feel free to contact me at rwj418@mail.usask.ca or call my thesis supervisor, Dr. Tim Claypool at 306-966-6931.

Questions or Concerns:

If you have any questions concerning the study, please feel free to ask at any point. You are also free to contact the researcher at the email provided above if you have questions at a later time. The proposed research was reviewed and approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Research Ethics Committee on _____.

Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to the Behavioural Research Ethics Board through the Ethics Office at 306-966-2084. Out of town participants may call toll free at 866-966-2975.

Consent:

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understand the description provided; I have had an opportunity to ask questions and my/our questions have been answered. I consent to participate in the research project. A copy of this Consent Form has been given to me for my records.

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

Researcher's Signature

Date

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.



Appendix F: Counselling Services

Counselling Services

Should you experience any emotional anxiety or distress as a result of our interviews, below is a list of counselling services located in Saskatoon, SK.

University of Saskatchewan Student Health and Counselling Services

Place Riel (3rd Floor)
University of Saskatchewan
Saskatoon, SK
(306) 966-4920
<http://students.usask.ca/current/life/health/>
Fee: No charge for current students

Saskatoon Family Service

506 25th Street East
Saskatoon, SK S7K 4A7
(306) 244-0127
<http://www.familyservice.sk.ca>
Fee: sliding scale (dependent upon income)

Saskatoon Catholic Family Services

506 25th Street East
Saskatoon, SK S7K 4A7
(306) 244-7773
<http://www.cfssaskatoon.sk.ca>
Fee: sliding scale (dependent upon income)

Saskatoon Christian Counselling Services

617 3rd Ave. N.
Saskatoon SK S7K 2J8
(306) 244-9890
<http://www.saskatoonchristiancounsellingservices.com>
Fee: \$90/hour; however subsidy may be available

Adult Community Services

715 Queen Street (4th Floor)
Saskatoon SK S7K 4X4
(306) 655-7950
<http://www.saskatoonhealthregion.ca>
Fee: No charge

Appendix G: Research Themes Chart

Bullying and Team Sports:
An Exploratory Case Study on Adult's Recollections

Themes from John's Data

Bullying and social ostracizing have a cyclical nature

Normalizing bullying behaviour helps preserve the witness's "love for the game"

An inadequate or lack of adult supervision provides opportunities for bullying

An adult reluctance to intervene

An adult reflection on their inactions as bystanders

Skill deficit and perceived areas of weakness precipitates and fuels bullying behaviour

Teammates were non-responsive to the bullying amongst other teammates

Themes from Will's Data

Bullying and social ostracizing have a cyclical nature

Normalizing bullying behaviour helps preserve the witness's "love for the game"

An inadequate or lack of adult supervision provides opportunities for bullying

An adult reluctance to intervene

An adult reflection on their inactions as bystanders

Bullying diminishes the victim's "love for the game"

Teammates who stand up for bullied victims are valued

Hazing rituals have lasting results