

**Advising Parents on How to Confront School Bullying: Analysing Four Guidance Books
from Four Canadian Provinces**

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Abstract

This thesis uses discourse analysis and shows the ways in which definitions of bullying are socially constructed. Analyzing four parent guides from four different Canadian provinces, the thesis explores how prevalent bullying prevention programs in schools may only give us one way of understanding bullying and block alternative ways of understanding it. My approach is first to investigate what prevention programs in schools suggest in order to eradicate bullying. I have chosen four guidance books from four provinces in Canada (BC, Alberta, Quebec, and Nova Scotia), to understand how bullying is often understood in Canada.

Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2006) concept of visual communication, and Feminist Post-Structuralism (as discussed in the work of Bethune & Gonick 2017) comprise the primary theoretical frameworks of this thesis. The analysis of this thesis is based on textual analysis and image analysis. Additionally, the analysis identifies the connection between the text and the image and how they work together to deliver similar, or differing, messages about bullying. Five themes emerge from the analysis: bullying is defined in terms of gender; bullying is defined in a binary way (in terms of a bully and a victim); neoliberal rationality is invoked in the language of the parents' guides; bullying is understood to stem from students' differences; and children are constructed as inferior, in that they have no agency.

Dedication

To my mother, my father, my wife, my daughter, and my brothers and sisters for all of their love, support, patience and encouragement.

Acknowledgement

Special thanks go to my thesis supervisor, Dr. Marnina Gonick, whose guidance, support, and expertise helped me to reach this point of my research. I would like to extend heartfelt thanks to my committee member, Sandra Sawchuk for her advice, assistance, and encouragement throughout this project. My sincere and deepest thanks go to my mother, father, wife, daughter, brothers and sisters, for their support and patience throughout my studies.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Why I am interested in the topic

As an educator, researcher, and social justice advocate, I am dedicated to providing a safe learning environment for all students where everyone has a chance to flourish and achieve his/her potential. During my M.Ed. studies at Lakehead University, I learned a great deal about students' issues. The M.Ed. courses broadened my understanding of students' issues in schools, and what motivates and hinders their learning. A positive school climate where everyone is liked, respected, and encouraged, is one of the factors that fosters students' learning and well-being. However, during my M.Ed. studies, learning about themes such as power imbalance, bullying, oppression, opened my eyes to how an increasing number of students are impacted while attending school.

Understanding those issues has awakened me to the often invisible forces that exist in schools. As a teacher, I should not only guide my students in their learning but also attend to their well-being. A student who is bullied in school, for example, may face difficulty in concentrating on his/her studies. Such a student may experience psychological issues such as depression (Coyne et al., 2006), isolation (Dellasega & Nixon, 2003), suicidal thoughts (Kim et al., 2005), and other issues that might pose a threat for their learning and health. Therefore, my role as a teacher is to educate myself as to what challenges my students might face, and what remedial strategies I might utilize. The purpose of education, as I see it, is not only to help students to get high grades in their subjects, but also to help them with their physical, social, and psychological needs.

My particular interest is to identify what might disrupt students' learning and well-being through accounting for the phenomena of bullying, and seek solutions through providing

programs, and raising awareness, among school staff, parents, and students. Bullying is one of the most disruptive phenomena among school students (Cowlin, 2010). It is one of the most challenging issues facing students today all over the world (Olweus, 1994). A large number of students drop out of school because of bullying (Lund et al., 2012). Further, in addition to common understandings of bullying, another type of bullying has become more topical in scholarly literature in recent years: namely, bullying in which girls have engaged. It has even been claimed, in the relevant literature, to be more harmful than direct physical bullying. Girls' bullying, which I shall discuss more fully below, will form a major element of the thesis.

My concerns about bullying led me to read a wide range of literature on bullying and I found that the problem may not lie in providing bullying prevention programs alone but also in how bullying is conceptualized and defined in prevalent school bullying programs.

Adopting a discourse analysis approach, I set out to discuss how definitions of bullying are socially constructed, and whether the way it is defined in prevalent bullying prevention programs in schools may only give us one way of understanding it, and block alternative accounts. Therefore, my approach has been to investigate what those prevalent prevention programs in schools suggest in order to eradicate bullying. More specifically, my focus was on guidance books that are designed for school staff, students, and parents to understand bullying dynamics. I focused particularly on guidance books that target parents for two reasons. One is that parents are assumed to be a key factor in bullying prevention. Providing them with these guides, it is suggested, gives them a better understanding of how to deal with school bullying. I want to find out what these guidance books say about bullying and whether they give parents a wide understanding of bullying phenomena in schools. I have chosen four guidance books from four provinces in Canada (BC, Alberta, Quebec, and Nova Scotia) because I believe these

guidance books would show how bullying is understood in Canada. I would also have the opportunity to compare these books to see how each document defines bullying. Do they all share similar thoughts on school bullying? Do some of them provide a better understanding of bullying than others?

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature Review

What is the dominant understanding of bullying, and how is it characterized? A definition that appears widely is summarized in the article written by Byers et al. (2011).

Bullying is a form of aggression that occurs when a person or persons make use of a power imbalance, with intent to cause hurt or harm to another person over a period of time. The perpetrator, wielding the power, enjoys the experience while the victim feels helpless, and often humiliated (p.105).

Such power could be obtained from individual characteristics, such as strength or size (Olweus, 1994); from knowing others' weaknesses (Sutton, Smith, & Swettenahm, 1999); or from having social advantages (Craig & Pepler, 2007).

Furthermore, now technology has allowed young students to harm each other more anonymously, at any time, and before a large number of spectators (Wong-Lo & Bullock, 2011). This kind of bullying is called *cyberbullying*. As Wirth (2016) notes, “[a] cyberbully may target their victims through the use of text messaging, social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter, chat rooms, blogs or e-mails” (p.10). Many young students in schools use electronic devices, such as laptops and cell phones, as well as a number of applications, such as Twitter, Facebook and Snapchat, from which to engage in bullying (Turner, 2014).

Much of the bullying literature creates three categories for understanding the phenomena of bullying: namely, bullies, victims, and bystanders (Sullivan, 2010). From this perspective, a bully is defined as an aggressive person, one who has a tendency toward bullying, who is impulsive, and does not have empathy toward victims (Sullivan, 2010). A victim is categorized as either weak and submissive, someone who reacts passively to bullying behaviour, or as a provocative victim who reacts to bullying behaviour aggressively (Sullivan, 2010). A bystander could play different roles in different bullying scenarios, such as being an assistant, someone who reinforces the bullying, or an onlooker (Sullivan, 2010). In other words, a bystander could support the bullying by either not trying to stop it, or by encouraging the bully, such as by laughing at the victim.

How does this dominant perspective account for why bullying occurs? Families and parents are assumed to have a causal relationship in regard to bullying. Bullies who grow up in aggressive families are more likely to be bullies (Farrington, 1993). Parental attachment is important, and a child who does not have parental support is more likely to be a bully (Rigby, 2008). Peer friendship and interaction is considered to be important for young students because it contributes to their self-concept and well-being (Cole & Cole, 2001). However, young people who have less self-esteem may engage in bullying behaviour because of their desire to fit in and be seen as important in their peer groups (Lewis, 2010), or because they derive excitement (Owens et al., 2000), or for many other reasons because of the pressure of peer groups.

Bullying behaviour has been claimed by many previous studies to affect students academically and emotionally. Victims of bullying often cannot concentrate on their studies, may not participate in school activities (Turner, 2014), and feel isolated (Dellasega & Nixon, 2003), and depressed (Coyne et al., 2006), to the point where some students commit suicide (Kim et al.,

2005). The consequences of indirect bullying (relational aggression), the form of bullying attributed particularly to girls, is often problematically described as more harmful than direct physical bullying. According to Ripley and O'Neil (2009), "relational aggression is psychological (social or emotional) aggression between people in relationships, whereby 'the group' is used as a weapon to hurt others. This aggression can take the form of gossip, rumours, social exclusion, manipulative friendships, and even negative body language" (p.1). As I will analyze in this thesis, that assumption draws on misogyny and tends to pathologize girls' relationships.

Based on the foregoing understandings of what bullying is, researchers have discussed proposals to prevent or respond to it. Bullies and victims, according to the dominant perspective, have both been shown to lack social skills, such that they are in need of education and training to improve those skills (d, 2014). A bully is understood as needing to develop healthy relationships and respect others. Victims need to be assertive in order to stand up for themselves and say "no" to bullying. Unable to say "stop," these adolescents are crippled by their own inhibitions and open themselves up for continued harassment and even systematic bullying (Cowlin, 2010). Bystanders need to be taught that they play an important role in bullying prevention, especially considering that 85–88% of bullying incidents occur in the presence of peers (Atlas & Pepler, 1998).

However, that account of bullying has been criticized by post-structuralist theorists (Khanna, 2013; Cheng, 2018; Thornberg, 2015; Schott & Sondergaard, 2014). They contend that it gives us a limited understanding, as it views bullying as a binary matter, where the bully holds power and the victim is passive and weak (Khanna, 2013). Cheng (2018) claims that theorizing bullying in terms of bullies or victims stemmed from psychological discourse, which theorizes

school bullying in terms of individual personality traits (Thornberg, 2015). This way of theorizing bullying places responsibility on individuals. It states that a person who bullies is aggressive and has a tendency to be violent, and that a victim is weak and passive (Schott & Sondergaard, 2014). Victims and bullies both lack social skills and are in need of education and training to improve those skills (Cheng, 2018). Therefore, bullying is based on individuals and individual psychology rather than on social structure and power.

Moreover, the conventional account and analysis of bullying has been criticized by psychologists, who have claimed that it has been conceptualized primarily from the male perspective. Some argue that bullying has been mainly defined as comprising physical forms such as hitting, kicking, etc. As a result of this conceptualization, the majority of research on bullying has concentrated on how students in schools use those physical forms (Byers et al., 2011). It has also been suggested that school policies on bullying have been focused on observing those physical forms and punishing students who use them (Limber & Small, 2003). They contend that a wider understanding – on the part of educators, researchers, and administrators - of how students bully each other has been diminished.

Physical bullying is understood as a male form of bullying (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). Psychologists believe that the male oriented definition of bullying has blocked our understanding of other forms of bullying. The use of physical power by the perpetrator of bullying is normalized in that it is more easily observed, and therefore punishment rules are usually already set to deter that form of aggression. Accordingly, there tends to be a clear policy in most schools that allows teachers to punish those students who use physical aggression. Therefore, it seems that direct bullying is controllable. When a student hits another student, this behaviour is easily observed by adults as they can see a student is physically injured (Henington et al., 1998). On the

contrary, indirect behaviour is difficult for adults to detect (Terranova et al., 2008, Gomes, 2007, Mishna, 2004). Psychologists argue that boys are usually socialized to be dominant and seek control, so their ways of aggression are mostly physical such as pushing, tripping, hitting and fighting (Bjorkqvist, 1994).

By contrast, girls are socialized to be cooperative and nurturing, and so their ways of aggression are relational (Bjorkqvist, 1994). Girls play more often in a small group, and this leads them to be more socially aware and skilled in how one's feelings are hurt. Therefore, breaking one's relationships and friendships is considered harmful for girls (Besag, 2006). This type of bullying is namely *relational aggression*.

However, the analysis according to which bullying is divided into male and female phenomena has been criticized by feminist post-structuralist theorists (Bethune & Gonick 2017). They claim that that problematic account of girl's conflict emerged from a simplistic understanding of evolutionary psychological that explains "how girls' relational approach to the world is connected with their tendency to relational aggression" (Bethune & Gonick 2017, p. 393). The development of the concept of relational aggression as a specifically girls' mode of bullying emerged as a result of the feminist theorist Carol Gilligan's (1982) critique of Kohlberg's moral developmental approach of moral reasoning. She argued that his approach toward theorizing moral development views women as inferior to men. Gilligan (1982) suggests that men and women have different moral reasonings in that men's moral development is based on justice ethics, whereas women's moral development is based on care ethics. Thus women experience the world in terms of kindness and care whereas men understand it in terms of justice and fairness (Gilligan, 1982). The concept of relational aggression was originally developed as a counter to the prevailing understanding that girls and women are not aggressive. It argues that

rather than being an absence of aggression, girls' aggression is just different than that of boys. However, what began as an inquiry into expanding the notion of aggression quickly became a way to denigrate girls. Bethune and Gonick (2017), as well as Ringrose (2006), argue that that way of theorizing women's connection to the world has led to conceptualizing girls' conflicts as "mean" and, therefore, to pathologizing girls' ways of socialization. Bethune and Gonick (2017) contend that understandings of "[g]irls' relational aggression is fuelled by the hugely successful 2004 Hollywood film, 'Mean Girls'" (Bethune & Gonick 2017, p.390), as well as by Wiseman's (2002) book, *Queen Bees and Wannabes*. The film and book, respectively, theorized the world of girls such that their identities are gained within their friendships and groupings, but dangerously so (Bethune & Gonick 2017). Moreover, Bethune and Gonick (2017) contend that mean girl discourse not only theorizes girls' and boys' experiences in different ways, it privileges boys' strategies of dealing with conflict – depicting them as healthy - whereas girls' strategies are portrayed as being problematic.

The theoretical framework

The theoretical framework of my thesis is based on a post-structuralist view of language. According to post-structuralist theory, language analyzes individual consciousness, power and meaning, and social organization. Actual forms of social organization, and social consequences, are determined through language (Weedon, 1997). Discourses are ways of constituting knowledge, together with the social practices, forms of subjectivity, and power relations (Weedon, 1997). Language gives us a certain way of understanding reality and of determining what constitutes knowledge (Weedon, 1997). At the same time language, and knowledge, are not neutral. While there is no meaning outside of language, discourses are fundamentally political, and they serve in turn to constitute social realities (Weedon, 1997). More importantly, knowledge

about social phenomena is restricted to those who have the power to define those phenomena (Weedon, 1997). That is the case in regard to bullying. How bullying is defined amounts to the construction of a social reality for students and parents as to the meaning of bullying. Students and parents will confront bullying based on such an understanding. Accordingly, the task of the thesis will be to disclose how bullying is constructed through discovering what discourses are used in the documents to be analyzed, as well as what the effects of those discourses might be.

Leighteizer (2006) states that “commonsense understandings of power tend to treat power as if it were a tangible thing, a commodity to be obtained, or a capacity imbued in a specific position or attached to a particular agent” (p. 29). Foucault (1989) argues that “power is a relation; power is not a thing” (p. 198); it is “a more-or-less organized, hierarchical, coordinated cluster of relations” (Foucault, 1980, p. 410). The thesis will be based on this account of power.

Accordingly, my assumption is that the way bullying is defined in the parental guides (to be studied in the thesis) are constructed by the language within those guides. Put another way, the language used in the guides shapes readers understanding of bullying. Moreover, parents’ understanding of bullying would be based on – or at least strongly influenced by - the language constructed in those guides. The thesis will be based on the post-structuralist understanding that discourses construct reality for people; and in this case discourses work together to conceptualize the meaning of bullying for parents. Moreover, the paper will turn to a feminist theoretical perspective to shed further light on issues that, it is expected, the guidebooks will bring up. Unlike the post-structuralist perspective, a feminist post-structuralist perspective gives women a voice as well as seeking to disrupt their subordinate position in society (Shaw, 2012). Unlike the Marxist perspective, which views women’s subordination in society as a result of capitalist revolution, a feminist post-structuralist perspective seeks to disrupt the assumption that women

are inferior to men (Tong & Botts, 2018). It seeks to disrupt the assumption that they are merely responsible for home tasks such as taking care of kids, seniors, and sick people (Weedon, 1997). Feminist post-structuralist lenses consider gender differences to be a dominant discourse among competing discourses in many kinds of texts (Baxter, 2003). Such lenses were used in order to analyze the four parental guides under study during the research phase. My approach was to look specifically at how girls are positioned in the guides, what languages and images are evoked in relation to girls and the issue of bullying.

My thesis is also based on an analysis of the ideology of neoliberalism. Bacchi (2009) states that “under the gaze of neoliberalism, the understanding of citizenship has shifted from an emphasis on rights to an emphasis on responsibilities,” and “from socialized management of risk to individualized risk management” (Bacchi, 2009, p. 83). Bethune and Gonick (2017) contend that “this demands a specific kind of subjectivity, one that is future oriented, flexible, mobile, and responsive to new forms of risk” (Bethune and Gonick 2017, p.399). They also claim that neo-liberal citizens “understand themselves as free to make choices about their lives, and...see themselves as autonomous subjects who are fully and solely responsible for those choices” (Bethune & Gonick 2017, p.399). Thus, my analysis has paid particular attention to how the ideology of neoliberalism is ingrained in the parental guidebooks.

Another part of the theoretical framework is based on a post-structural view of childhood. The post-structural theorists claim that identity is not fixed, as it is socially constructed (Butler, 1999; Davies, 2003; Naughton, 2005). Accordingly, post-structural theorists (e.g., Baker, 1998; Bloch, 1992; & Cannella, 2002) of childhood contend that the term “childhood” is socially constructed, where “the identity of the child is a social construction informed by particular moments in time, contexts, and cultures (Janzen & Schwartz, 2018, p.114). Moreover, language

used in policy documents is comprised of discourses that work together to maintain social power and limit our understanding of the world, and these discourses are found in institutions such as education (Foucault, 1997). Janzen and Schwartz (2018) have claimed that “discourses of children as deficient and deviant are common within the education system and shape the ways in which educators interact with and respond to children” (p.109). Therefore, my analysis has paid particular attention to the regimes of truth put forth regarding children, as I agree with the contention of Janzen and Schwartz (2018) that such regimes of truth amount to particular mechanisms of control and power.

Another aspect of the analysis is to look critically at how language is used in the guidance books that will be studied. Language gives us a certain way of understanding reality and of determining what constitutes knowledge (Weedon, 1997). At the same time, language, as well as knowledge, are not neutral. While there is no meaning outside of language, discourses are fundamentally political, and they serve in turn to constitute social realities (Weedon, 1997). That is the case in regard to bullying. How bullying is defined amounts to the construction of a social reality for students and parents as to the meaning of bullying. Students and parents will tend to confront bullying based on such an understanding. Accordingly, the task of the thesis will be to disclose how bullying is constructed through discovering what discourses are constructed in the documents to be analyzed, as well as what the effects of those discourses might be.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Data Collection

Considering the post-structuralist argument that language socially constructs discourses which construct the social reality for people, I am interested in critically examining how bullying

is defined in various jurisdictions. I have chosen four guides that are designed for parents on how to deal with school bullying. They have been published in four provinces in Canada (Nova Scotia, Quebec, Alberta, and British Columbia). These guides are: *Bullying and Cyberbullying: What We need to Know. A Reference for Parents and Guardians* (Buckie, 2013) produced through Communications Nova Scotia for the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. *Information guide for parents on School Violence and Bullying in Quebec* (Sebastien, n.d) produced by Desjardins Foundations and the Jasmin Roy Foundation; *Relational Aggression: A Guide for Parents and Teachers in Alberta* (Ripley & O’Neil, 2009) produced by The Society for Safe and Caring Schools and Communities; and *Call it Safe: A guide for Dealing with Bullying in Elementary Schools in British Columbia* (BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils, 2003) produced by the BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils (BCCPAC). A parent’s role has been claimed to be a key part in bullying intervention literature. Some studies have investigated the perceptions of parents on school bullying. Based on my research, it seems that no study has critically analyzed a parent’s guide on school bullying from a post-structural perspective. This paper would be the first to do that. The paper is the first to analyze parent’s guidance publications in different provinces in Canada, within a comparative context. It investigates how bullying is defined in each parents’ guide, and the similarities and differences between them, while also analyzing them in terms of the theoretical framework outlined above.

Data Analysis

The methods of analysis in this thesis are based on textual analysis and image analysis. As stated in Shaw (2012), text analysis “enables us to see the ways in which language traps us and to attend to see that which we normally do not see” (p. 76). In addition, Van Leeuwen (2008)

states that “[i]f images seem to just allude to things and never say them explicitly, we need to make these allusions explicit” (p.142). For this reason, images from the text will also comprise part of the analyzed material. My analysis will identify the connection between the text and the image and how they work together to deliver the same, or differing, messages about bullying.

Drawing on a post-structural view of language, I analyzed the language used in the parental guides. Language gives us a certain way of understanding reality and of determining what constitutes knowledge (Weedon, 1997). At the same time language, and knowledge, are not neutral. While there is no meaning outside of language, discourses are fundamentally political, and they serve in turn to constitute social realities (Weedon, 1997). Therefore, I have analyzed the understanding of bullying that parents are given from the guides. In particular, the focus was to examine the discourses that are prevalent in the publications. In turn, I considered the potential effects of those discourses on notion of gendered bullying, and the suggested recommendations to improve the accounts that they are based on.

Furthermore, the Foucaultian concept of governmentality will also be drawn upon throughout the thesis. Ayo (2012) claims that “Foucault was interested in how individuals are made into particular types of subjects” (p.100). Governmentality is a form of social control and political rule (Lupton, 1999) in which the subjectivities of individuals are formed and brought about” (Lupton, 1999). It is a form of social control that is neither coercive nor forceful (Lupton, 1999), but “equates the well-being or happiness or productiveness of individuals with behaviors that reinforce the social order”(Scheurich, 1994, p.306). One form of practicing governmentality is placing responsibility on individuals through discourses of responsibility and individual choices. Bethune and Gonick (2017) contend that discourses of responsibility and individual choices are understood to be disciplinary techniques used to place responsibility on individuals.

My analysis also pays particular attention to these discourses.

Another part of my thesis analysis is based on Foucault's (1979) account of regimes of truth. Ball (1993) claims that "policies exercise power through a *production* of 'truth' and 'knowledge', as discourses" (p. 14). Ball (1993) defines discourses as the "ways of thinking and speaking about aspects of reality" (p. 2). Foucault (1997) contended that regimes of truth normalize assumptions and serve the interests of those in positions of power.

Moreover, as Janzen and Schwartz (2018) state, "the regimes of truth that circulate about children, their behaviour, and 'managing' their (mis)behaviours are used to maintain the school's need for order and control" (p.111). They add, "when disorder or lack of control ensues, the problem is placed on the 'defectiveness' or problems with the child instead of on the system itself" (p.111). They conclude that "schools use disciplinary power to seek conformity and homogeneity and then impose corrective measures to eradicate differences" (p.111).

Furthermore, Janzen and Schwartz (2018) state that "schools are increasingly seen as institutions through which societal problems can be alleviated" (p.111). They also add that "through surveillance and measurement against 'norms,' schools use power to regulate children and standardize their behaviour, foreclosing alternate ways of being and of understanding the world" (p.111). They conclude that "the surveillance and regulation that exists in schools — legitimised through policy and operating as a "truth" — is a technology of power that risks excluding and marginalizing certain children from the public system that is meant to serve them" (Janzen & Schwartz, 2018, p.111). This thesis identifies what regimes of truths are legitimised regarding students' behaviours in the four parents' guides.

Furthermore, "one of the areas in which discourse plays an important role in the (re)production of inequality is that of race and ethnic relations" (Jahedi et al., 2014, p.32). The

following description is a brief summary of some of Van Dijk's (2000, 2004) outlined categories of ideological analysis of the representation of "Us versus Them."

Actor description: This means actors are described in ways that are based on our ideologies, such as describing members of in-group as are those who are positive and members of an out-group as those who are negative (Jahedi et al., 2014). Authority: This means when authorities are mentioned to support one's argument (Jahedi et al., 2014). My analysis will identify how the four parental guides address minorities by using Van Dijk's analysis of racism.

Moreover, I have used Kress and Van Leeuwen's concept (2006) of visual communication. Van Leeuwen (2008) states that "[i]f images seem to just allude to things and never say them explicitly, we need to make these allusions explicit" (p.142). So images in the text will also comprise part of the analyzed material. A study by Paniagua et al. (2007) summarizes Kress and Van Leeuwen's framework as follows. Kress and Van Leeuwen "established diverse kinds of meaning according to each of Halliday's functions. The different types of meanings are communicated through different semiotic resources. So, they are semiotic resources expressing representational meanings, interactive meaning, and compositional meaning" (p. 30).

Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2006) notion of communication and Feminist Post-Structuralism (primarily the work of Bethune & Gonick, 2017) comprise the primary theoretical frameworks of this thesis.

CHAPTER 4: Results

In this section, I will introduce why each of the four parental guidance books is important, as well as what their respective purposes are. Then I will state the findings of this research paper. This research paper will analyze four guidance books that are designed for parents on how to deal with school bullying in four Canadian provinces (Nova Scotia, Quebec, Alberta, and British Columbia). These guides are: *Bullying and Cyberbullying: What We need to Know. A Reference for Parents and Guardians* (Buckie, 2013) produced through Communications Nova Scotia for the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. *Information guide for parents on School Violence and Bullying in Quebec* (Sebastien, n.d) produced by Desjardins Foundations and the Jasmin Roy Foundation; *Relational Aggression: A Guide for Parents and Teachers in Alberta* (Ripley & O’Neil, 2009) produced by The Society for Safe and Caring Schools and Communities; and *Call it Safe: A guide for Dealing with Bullying in Elementary Schools in British Columbia* (BCCPAC, 2003) produced by the BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils (BCCPAC).

The purpose of the parental guidance book in Nova Scotia (Buckie, 2013) is to help parents make their children stay healthy and happy in their lives. The guide’s central message is that bullying is harmful for children, and by teaching parents what bullying is, what to watch, and what they should they do, they can help their children to overcome this harmful phenomenon. The guide provides this information to parents in four parts: general information about bullying (e.g., its definition, examples of various kinds of bullying, causes of bullying, etc); bullying at different age periods (early, elementary, and teenager years); resources for parents (e.g., tips on how to address bullying); what the Province of Nova Scotia doing to eradicate bullying (e.g. how it uses the law to investigate bullying, what schools are doing to eradicate bullying, etc).

The purpose of the parental guidance book in British Columbia (BCCPAC, 2003) is to provide parents with information on what they need to know about bullying in elementary schools in British Columbia, and how they can help their children with bullying, help others to understand parents' perspectives on bullying, and promote effective bullying programs. The guide explains what bullying is, characteristics of bullies, tips for parents to understand bullying, and how or when a child could be a bully or a victim. It also gives parents information on what they should know as to their own responsibilities. It provides them with a self-help guide and recommended readings.

The parental guidance book in the Province of Quebec (Sebastien, n.d) states that behaviours like disorders and violence are obstacles to students' academic success and that disruptive behaviours should be stopped in order for students to be successful. It contends that “[b]y putting a stop to bullying, we can create a more positive learning environment and teach children how to be good members of society” (p. 3). The guide provides parents with different ways to help their children stay, and succeed, in schools. The guide claims that there is a difference between conflict and violence and one of its goals is to help parents recognize this difference. The guide defines violence as “any use of force—verbal, written, physical, psychological or sexual—against any person, by an individual or a group, with intent to directly or indirectly wrong, injure or oppress that person by attacking his or her integrity, psychological or physical well-being, rights or property” (p. 8). It also defines bullying as “any repeated direct or indirect behaviour, comment, act or gesture, whether deliberate or not, including in cyberspace, which occurs in a context where there is a power imbalance between the persons concerned and which causes distress and injures, hurts, oppresses, intimidates or ostracizes” (p.13). The guide provides parents with strategies that help them to know what they should do when a child experiences an act of violence or

bullying.

The parental guidance book in Alberta (Ripley & O'Neil, 2009) suggests that while youth still use physical bullying, another type of bullying among youth has appeared of late that is hidden and hard for adults to detect. The Guide (Ripley & O'Neil, 2009) suggests that this phenomenon is harmful to victims because "it undermines some of the most significant personal needs and goals of youth: the need for social inclusion, a positive sense of esteem and identity, and the development of meaningful friendships" (p.1). Thus, this guide is designed to help parents understand the meaning of relational aggression - what it looks like, where it happens, and at what age it starts- to help them to protect their children from this type of aggression. It provides parents with scenarios that demonstrate the harmful effect of relational aggression on children, causes and effects of relational aggression, where it happens, and tips and strategies as to how to address it.

The findings of this research paper will reveal five themes: Bullying is defined in terms of gender; bullying is defined in a binary way (a bully and a victim); neoliberal rationality is invoked in the language of parents' guides; bullying is defined as stemming from students' differences; and children are constructed as inferior or without agency. This section will proceed to explain how and why this thesis has selected certain textual passages and images from the documents, describe the analysis, and explain the significance of the findings.

Bullying is Defined in Terms of Gender

I selected texts that seem to categorise bullying in terms of gender. I selected text and images that seem connected to each other in delivering the same, or differing, messages about bullying.

All four parental guides conceptualize bullying in terms of gender, where males and females are understood to bully in different ways. In other words, there are many instances in the guides that explicitly or implicitly tell the reader that girls' ways of bullying are indirect and relational whereas boys' bullying are direct and physical. Relational aggression was originally developed as a counter to the prevailing understanding that girls and women are not aggressive. It argues that, rather than an absence of aggression, girls' aggression is just different from boys' (Ringrose, 2006). This way of theorizing women's connection to the world has led to conceptualizing girls' conflicts as "mean" and, therefore, to pathologizing girls' ways of socialization (Bethune & Gonick, 2017; Ringrose, 2006).

According to the four parental guides, girls' ways of conflict, which are linked to relational aggression, are portrayed in a way that is more dangerous and harmful than boys' conflict. In some of the parental guides the images of girls present them as manipulative and sad, where their use of indirect aggression is dangerous and in need of adults' intervention.

The parental guide in Alberta (Ripley & O'Neil, 2009) states that relational aggression is exclusively a female phenomenon. It provides two examples of how girls bully each other relationally. The first example illustrates a scenario where a girl appears to be giving an invitation card to all her classmates to attend her birthday, except for one boy (p. 3). The guide's claim is that she does that purposefully in order to embarrass him in front of their classmates. The boy's face turns red and he feels humiliated. Another example in the same book implies relational aggression is a female phenomenon. It gives an example of a group of girls writing the word "bitch" on their classmate's sweater because they do not want her to belong to their group. The Alberta guide (Ripley & O'Neil, 2009) claims that girls learn this type of aggression because of

how they are socialized as females. It states that “the games that girls play generally require cooperation and talk, which provides a developmental basis for their style of aggression.” It continues, “Observe a group of girls playing 'house,' and note how the game requires complex roles that give the girls an opportunity to experiment with gender roles and mimic social interaction” (p. 5).

Another example that connects girls to indirect bullying is described in British Columbia’s guide (BCCPAC, 2003), as follows.

Gail and her friend Jane have spent a few minutes after class finishing some work and are gathering their belongings. When they reach the classroom door, they discover that a group of girls has gathered there. The hostile group glares menacingly at Jane. As the two friends pass through, Gail hears, “Look at her pants. Isn’t she a loser,” and other derogatory terms levelled at her friend. Unnerved, she and Jane leave as quickly as possible” (p.1).

This is an example that connects girls to covert aggression, where a group of girls relationally bully Jane by laughing at her pants.

The assumption that girls use relational aggression is not only portrayed in text in some of the parental guidance but also is portrayed in some of their images. In these images, it is obvious that girls are portrayed as using relational aggression. For example, girls are depicted to be using mobile phones and computers (Sebastien, n.d, p.24), which are linked to relational aggression, or are depicted walking in a group (Sebastien, n.d, on the last page), or their bodies are positioned in a way that suggests they are manipulative perpetrators of relational aggression (Buckie, p.13). The girls are thus positioned in a way that seems unhealthy and dangerous.

Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) argue that one of the signs best made clear through images are “symbolic structures.” In a symbolic structure, the identity meaning of a participant is defined. This comes to sight in some of the features depicted in an image, such as colour, clothing, gestures, and facial expressions (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006). In the Alberta parents' guide (Ripley & O’Neil, 2009, p.12) there is an image of a participant sitting in front of her computer, worrying about her problem. From the symbolic features of this participant - such as colour, clothes, gestures, face expressions - it is clear that the participant is a white girl. She is looking at her computer anxiously, putting her left hand on her forehead. Callow (2013) states that colours can create atmosphere and mood which in turn generate emotional responses in viewers. He adds that the effects of colour could be achieved through shades of dark and light. He contends that “the dark tone might stir up feelings of sorrow in the viewer, which may infer that the situation is heartbreaking for the participant” (p. 29). As is obvious from the image, the participant is not looking directly at the viewer. Based on the discussion by Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006), this kind of image is called an offer, where viewers can choose to look wherever they want in the photo. Therefore, looking critically at the image of the girl, together with the sadness and anxiety in her expression, the dark colour may stir up sad feelings in the viewer, which in turn “helps to enforce the atmosphere of sadness in this scene” (Callow, 2013, p. 44). This may indicate that it is girls who use cyberbullying to bully each other.

The point is more obvious in the case of the girl who is depicted in the Alberta parents' guide (Ripley & O’Neil, 2009, p.11-12), Chandra. She is presented as being relationally bullied by her friend, Megan. The two girls were best friends before their relationship turned sour. “Chandra began to receive insulting and threatening text messages from unknown senders, and stopped using the Internet” (p.11). Thus, by connecting the image in the Alberta parents' guide

(Ripley & O'Neil, 2009, p.12) to the text in the Alberta parents' guide (Ripley & O'Neil, 2009, p.11), it is clear that it is Chandra who is depicted as a victim of relational aggression.

Similarly, Nova Scotia's parents' guide (Buckie, 2013) states that there are different types of bullying and that cyberbullying is one of them. It defines cyberbullying as "using technology to bully someone" (p. 6), for example, through "image-sharing sites and apps" (p. 7). Connecting the idea of this quote to an image (p. 2) in the same book, it is obvious that this book's message is that it is girls who tend to use cyberbullying to bully each other. In the same book (p. 2), there is an image of a participant sitting in front of her computer. Her clothes, colour, and hair suggest that she is a white girl. This girl is depicted as a vulnerable victim as she appears from the back. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) claim that "to expose ones' back to someone is also to make oneself vulnerable" (p.144). Thus, this indicates that both the quote (on p.7) and the image (on p.2) in Nova Scotia's parents' guide work together to deliver the same message that girls relationally aggress each other online. Similarly, in the same book, the same message is communicated by connecting an image (p. 2) to a text stated in the same book (p. 20-21). That is, there is an image (p. 2) of two participants whose physical features - such as hair, skin colour, and clothes (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006) – make clear that they are two white girls. The first one is leaning her body down and looking somewhere to the right direction and laughing. This is called an offer (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006). It seems to me as a viewer that the girl appears as though she is doing something wrong and feels happy about it at the same time. Similarly, the girl behind her is looking directly at the viewer and laughing. This is called a demand, where a protagonist appears to ask something from viewers (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006). Such direct contact with the viewer, Callow (2013) insists, "is a powerful visual feature and the effects can vary from aggression or authority, through to entreating or piteous" (2013, p.49). The same guide

categorizes bullying into four types: physical bullying, social bullying, verbal bullying, and cyberbullying. It gives an example of social bullying as “repeatedly laughing or making faces when a certain child talks” (p. 21). This suggests that social bullying and relational bullying is connected to girls, as is obvious from looking at the images of the two girls who appear laughing.

Similarly, in the same book (p. 42), there is an image of a group of participants whose physical features - such as skin colour, long hair, and clothes - indicate that they are white girls. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) claim that elements of the picture could be made salient by representing them in a way that attracts the viewer’s attention. This could be achieved through contrasts in colour, size, background, etc (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006). Thus, from the image of these participants, it seems that the girl who is placed in the center is portrayed as a leader and the other girls are followers. She is showing them something on her mobile and they look at it intently. It is also can be inferred that the central girl is depicted as a “queen bee,” a girl who is placed at the top hierarchy of the group, and where everyone in the group will exert themselves to gain her favour (Wiseman, 2002). Connecting the idea depicted in an image to another idea in a text to deliver the same message about girls use of relational aggression is also made clear here. For example, in instructing parents on bullying incidents, there is a quote the Nova Scotia’s parents’ guide (p. 42), stated next to the image:

Your teen forgot her phone. When you pick it up to take it to her you notice a series of texts on the screen. Curious, you begin reading. The texts are from your daughter’s friend. She complains of getting hurtful e-mails and text messages and has seen embarrassing comments posted about her online. The friend is asking your daughter for advice (Buckie, 2013, p.42).

This is a further evidence that shows how text and images work together to deliver the same message regarding how girls use relational aggression.

In the Quebec parents' guide (Sebastien, n.d), on the last page, there is an image of a group of participants. These participants are identified by physical appearances - such as bodies, hair, and clothes – which show that they are group of girls are walking together and laughing. The following analysis is based on Kress and Van's Leeuwen (2006) view of compositional meaning, which refers to how elements are organized in an image. One category of compositional meaning is information value, which refers to the placement of things in the image and how that placement implies different meanings. On the horizontal axis, the element that is placed on the right side is represented as problematic, whereas the element that is placed on the left side of the image is commonsensical; and on the vertical axis, the element placed on the top side is represented as the ideal, whereas the element placed on the bottom side is represented as real (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006). In the image from the Quebec publication (Sebastien, n.d), it is clear that a white girl is placed at the centre and she is putting her right hand inside the left hand of another girl, whose skin colour means that she is of person of colour, and they are followed by a group of girls behind them. The suggestion is that the girl at the centre is the leader (or queen bee). From their positions and the laughing expressions on their faces, it seems that they are perpetrators of relational aggression.

Moreover, we observe the connection of the idea depicted in an image to another idea in a text to deliver the same message about girls' use of relational aggression in the Quebec parents' guide (Sebastien, n.d). For example, on page 34, in describing some characteristics of bullies, the Quebec parental guide (Sebastien, n.d) claims that “for bullies, having power over others enables them to win the approval of others, to draw attention, to feel important, to impress, to feel some

sense of control or to feel powerful.” It adds, “remember that bullying is a relationship problem and that 9 times out of 10, the aggression is committed in front of witnesses” (p. 34). It concludes, “this enables bullies to draw attention” (p. 34). Connecting the message of this quote to the image of a group of girls, it is obvious that girls are depicted as having an unhealthy relationship, and they are using their friendship and group dynamics to aggress upon each other. In (p. 4) in the Quebec’s parents’ guide (Sebastien, n.d), there is an image of three participants whose identities are identified by physical features - such as skin colour, clothes, and hair - as a girl of colour and two white girls. As is clear, the girls are standing in a line waiting for their school bus. The girl of colour is made prominent by her large photo size and she appears to be standing in the centre. This girl smiles and looks at the viewer. This is demanding (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006) and as a viewer it seems to me that this girl is portrayed in this image as a demanding victim. I feel that she is pleading with me and I feel helpless because I do not know how to help her. The two white girls standing behind her are portrayed in a different way. They seem to be looking elsewhere, toward the right direction. This is called an offer (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006), and it can be inferred that they are portrayed as perpetrators because their facial expressions suggest that they are aggressive.

Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) discuss framing, which differentiates the composition of things or elements in the image on the basis of whether they are disconnected or connected. Disconnection can occur through such variables as contrasts of colour, empty spaces between elements; connection occurs through colour, similarities, blanks between elements, etc. It is obvious that the disconnection between the girl of colour and the two white girls are made through the contrasts of their skin colour and their clothes, and facial expressions, where the girl of colour is smiling and the other girls appear to be aggressive. The image seems to show the girl of colour is

portrayed as a victim whereas the two white girls are portrayed as perpetrators. Moreover, there is a quote posted on this image that states: “I respect the differences and opinions of others just like I want people to respect my differences and opinions” (p. 4). The message of this quote seems to contradict what the photograph portrays, or vice-versa. Instead, it seems to deliver another message that suggests that the white girls are perpetrators and girls of colour are victims. What is more, in instructing parents on how aggressors choose victims, the Quebec parents’ guide (Sebastien, n.d) contends that aggressors may choose “children who appear different and therefore easy targets for teasing (e.g. given their weight, skin colour, disability)” (p. 33). The statement would reinforce the suggestion that the white girls in the image noted above are portrayed as aggressors and that the girl of colour is depicted as an easy target for teasing.

In the same book (p. 24), there is an image of three participants who can be identified by physical appearances - such as skin colour, clothes, and hair - two white girls, and a girl of colour. The girl of colour is again more prominent because of the size of her photo, and that she is placed at the centre. Similar to the previous image analyzed, it can be inferred that the girl of colour in this image is portrayed as a victim, and the other white girls are perpetrators. Relevant again is Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2006) discussion of framing. The contrasts of skin colour, clothing, and facial expressions suggest the disconnection between the girl of colour and the two white girls. Moreover, all the participants appear to be looking somewhere, which means they are illustrating an offer (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006), and it is clear that the white girls are smiling and the girl of colour is anxious. That suggests that the white girls are portrayed as perpetrators whereas the girl of colour is portrayed as a victim. The sad facial expression on the girl of colour implies that she is worried about what she is watching, and in turn the viewer sees an atmosphere of sadness in the image (Callow, 2013). Moreover, the idea depicted in the image is reinforced by

what the text states, in terms of girls' use of relational aggression. The Quebec's parents' guide (Sebastien, n.d, p.24) states that "with one click, the bomb is dropped, causing inevitable damage to the individual who gets hit. Nothing is as lasting as the written word" (p. 24). Similarly, "cyberbullying can use many different means," such as "sexting on cell phones (sharing of messages and photos)" (p. 26). This suggests that the girl depicted looking at her mobile, feeling sad, is receiving an annoying message from the two girls behind her, or that the girls are using relational aggression to harm each other.

In the Nova Scotia's parents' guide (Buckie, 2013, p.13), there is an image of a participant whose physical features - such as skin colour, hair, and clothes - suggest that she is a white, middle class girl. The girl appears looking up at the viewer from a lower scene. This is called a high angle perspective. "High angles can be used to create a sense of power over participants that are low down" (Callow, 2013, p. 60). Callow contends that the high angle works to emphasise how vulnerable and small the protagonist is in the image. He claims that "as a viewer, the angle also makes me feel a little dizzy and lightheaded, which helps me to empathise with the protagonist's situation" (Callow, 2013, p. 45). Similarly, as a viewer, the depiction of the girl in the image from that angle makes me feel a little dizzy and that she is helpless, in a dangerous situation, and needs help. It seems that this image tells parents that girls are in danger and need to be rescued.

On the same page, there is a photo of four participants whose physical features indicate that they are two girls and two boys, and it seems that all of them are looking at their mobile phones. However, the girl on the right side is made more prominent by the red colour of her sweater and her body position (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006). This is an "offer" image, in my interpretation (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006). She is holding her phone on her right hand, moving her face toward her legs, leaning her left hand on her knee in a manipulative way, and looking at

the viewer with a laughing face. As a viewer, it appears that this girl is doing something wrong and that she is presented as a perpetrator. The same goes for the other girl, who is holding her phone intensely by her two hands and gathering her feet under her body. It is clear that the positions of the two girls are placed in contrast to those of the two boys, who appear to be sitting up straight, looking calmly at their phones. This suggests that girls are more interested in using relational aggression with their mobiles. Depicting girls' images in this way also portrays girls as those who are "going in a wrong direction," whereas boys are headed towards a good direction. The assumption is that girls' ways of friendships are unhealthy whereas boys' are healthy (Bethune & Gonick, 2017).

Furthermore, text in image can be compared, where the point concerns the use of relational aggression. For example, Nova Scotia's parents' guide (Buckie, 2013) contains the statement that, "[i]n junior high and high school, technology becomes an important part of a teen's social life" (p. 30). It adds that "teens also use social networks to talk about problems in their lives ranging from the trivial to the serious" (p. 30). While this can be helpful to teens, "the same information [that they share] can be used to bully them" (p. 30). The guide notes examples of cyberbullying, such as "repeatedly sending mean or threatening e-mails or text messages to a certain teen," or "spreading gossip, rumors, or secrets about a certain teen" (p. 33). It seems that these texts are generally used to describe cyberbullying among teens. However, to look critically at the previous image in Nova Scotia's parents' guide (Buckie, 2013, p.13), there it seems that indirect aggression is connected to girls. There the two girls in the image are portrayed as manipulative, whereas the boys are portrayed as being more straightforward or direct. Moreover, the same guide states other examples of cyberbullying, such as "repeatedly sending mean or threatening e-mails or text messages to a certain teen" (p. 33). The way in which the girl in the image

(p.13) is holding her phone intensely with her two hands and gathering her feet under her body may indicate that she is sending mean messages to another teen. Similarly, that the other girl in the same photo who is holding her phone on her right hand, and leaning her left hand on her knee in a manipulative way, might suggest that she is spreading gossip and rumours about another teen and feeling excited about that activity. Thus, we suggest how texts and images work together to attach relation aggression to girls.

Nova Scotia's parents' guide (Buckie, 2013) contains another image that carries a similar point. In this book (p. 45), there is an image of a participant who holds a pencil and writes in a small notebook. There is not much information about the identity of this participant, but some physical features - such as skin colour, and manicured nails - indicate that she is a white girl. The photo is taken from a high angle and it works to emphasise how small and vulnerable the girl is (Callow, 2013). It implies that girls are in danger and in need of parents' intervention. The message of this image seems to be connected to a text stated in the same book (p. 29). In discussing the character of teen bullying, a statement in Nova Scotia's parents' guide (Buckie, 2013) contends that "teens are becoming more skilled in how they relate with one another" (p. 29). It adds, "they know which teens have more social power and can spot other teens' weaknesses" (p. 29). It concludes "their increased social skills and use of technology mean that bullying can be even harder for adults to see" (p. 29). Those quotations seem to refer to (or to be exemplified by) the image (p. 45) of a girl who is shown holding a pencil and writing in a small notebook. There seems to be symbolism in her writing in a small notebook, and she seems to be a female middle-class teenager. It seems, then, that the quotations indirectly connect using covert ways of bullying to girls.

Nova Scotia's parents guide (Buckie, 2013) contains another image (p. 51) of two participants. By identifying them by their physical appearances - such as colour, hair, and clothes - it is clear that the participants are two white girls. In the background we see keyboards, which suggests that they are looking at computers. The picture suggests to me that girls are depicted as using indirect ways of bullying, such as cyberbullying, to harm each other.

From the examples stated above, it is obvious that girls' ways of socialization are problematized. Bethune and Gonick (2017), as well as Ringrose (2006), argue that this way of theorizing women's connection to the world has led to conceptualizing girls' conflicts as "mean" and, therefore, to pathologizing girls' ways of socialization. Moreover, it privileges boys' strategies of dealing with conflict – depicting them as healthy - whereas girls' strategies are portrayed as being problematic (Bethune & Gonick 2017). The different perspectives on bullying, in turn, serve to portray women as inferior to men.

Bullying is Defined in a Binary Way

The second finding of this research paper is that defining bullying behaviour in a binary way, in terms of good/bad or bully/victim, characterizes the four parental guides. This section looks at how bullying is defined in the parental guides and identified the discourses that are prevalent in these guides. It selected texts that define bullying in specific ways. Shaw (2012) states that "in humanism, systems or structures are created of binary pairs or oppositions" (p. 75). He adds that "one side of the binary is defined by the absence of qualities or characteristics which are present in the other side, creating a dualism in which one side is afforded normality and the other side, in opposition, is relegated to deviance" (p. 75). This way of defining bullying in a binary logic is found in the documents. Bullying is categorized in the parental guides in terms of a

bully who has power and a victim who is weak. For example, British Columbia's parents' guide (BCCPAC, 2003) states that “bullies always have more power than victims. Their power comes from physical size, strength, status, and support within the peer group” (p.10). Similarly, the Quebec’s parents’ guide (Sebastien, n.d) contends that “for bullies, having power over others enables them to win the approval of others, to draw attention, to feel important, to impress, to feel some sense of control or to feel powerful” (p. 34). The latter guide also states that bullies possess other characteristics, such as refusing to comply with rules, and a need to dominate others. The implication is that the problem lies in the student who bullies. Indeed, something wrong in the bully's personality leads her or him to bully others.

The other binary that comes up in some parental guides concerns the given students who are bullied, the victims. A victim, as conceptualized in the parental guides, is a person who is weak and vulnerable to others. For example, in the Nova Scotia parents' guide (Buckie, 2013), we read that “children and youth who are bullied often feel powerless and risk being drawn into relationships in which they are abused” (p. 9). The same guide states that “research shows that children and youth who are bullied have some things in common.” It states that “children and youth who have at least one friend are less likely to be bullied” (p. 9). This indicates that a student is more likely to be bullied if she or he has few or no friends. Similarly, a statement in the Quebec parents’ guide (Sebastien, n.d) claims that “victims live in a climate of tension and confusion. They avoid talking about it and feel powerless.” Further, “because they can’t find a solution to the problem, they lose confidence in themselves.” Indeed, “sometimes, they even justify their attackers.” The guide concludes, “victims are shy, do not dare talk about their fears or distress and often think they are responsible for what happens to them” (p. 30). It seems obvious that the guides view the problem as lying in victims, whose characteristics or behaviour make

them vulnerable to be bullied. Khanna (2013) contends that “the current literature, written from a positivist perspective, codifies and essentializes victims as helpless, weak, and defenseless and obscures their expression of values, responses, and knowledge” (Khanna, 2013, p.54).

Looking critically at all the four parents’ guides, it is obvious that the definition of bullying is conceptualized in terms of two actors: the bully and the victim. This way of theorizing bullying has been understood to stem from a psychological approach, which views bullying as rooted in personal traits (Thornberg, 2015). The psychological discourse states that a person who bullies is aggressive and has a tendency to be violent, and that a victim is passive and weak (Schott & Sondergaard, 2014). Both bullies and victims lack social skills and are in need of education and training to improve those skills (Schott & Sondergaard, 2014). Moreover, framed in a psychological discourse that classifies individuals in such a way as to maintain social control, bullying is theorized in a positive/negative dichotomy, much as is the case with the good student/bad student dichotomy. Students are categorized as bullies and victims. The perpetrator is constantly punished and the victim is counselled (Valentine, 2014). This binary logic, however, does not allow for a broader understanding of bullying as a complex social phenomenon (Cheng, 2018), and makes it difficult to understand the complexities of interrelationships among individuals (Monk et al., 2008; Khanna, 2013).

Neoliberal Rationality is Invoked in the Language of the Parental Guidance Books

I selected texts that seem to use neoliberal disciplinary techniques used to place responsibility on parents. Discourses of responsibility and individual choices are understood to be disciplinary techniques used to place responsibility on individuals (Bethune & Gonick, 2017). This sort of logic is linked to neoliberal values. “Under the gaze of neoliberalism, the

understanding of citizenship has shifted from an emphasis on rights to an emphasis on responsibilities,” and “from socialized management of risk to individualized risk management” (Bacchi, 2009, p. 83,). As Foucault's (1989) concept of governmentality has it, according to neoliberalism's account of rationality, power is given to individuals in an indirect way.

The foregoing analysis suggests that discourses of responsibility and individual choices dominate the language of all four parental guides. Analysing the selected texts has revealed four strategies that some guidebooks use to place responsibility on parents.

The first strategy is that responsibility for bullying is often placed on parents by instructing a parent in a way that suggests that they are responsible for their children's bullying behaviours. Some parental guides instruct a parent in a way that suggests that they are responsible for their children's bullying behaviours. For instance, the parental guide in Nova Scotia (Buckie, 2013) argues that parents are major risk factors in regard to bullying behaviours, as it states that bullying starts from home. The guide states that “they have seen bullying in their own homes...a parent or sibling may bully them or others in the family” (p. 9). Another statement asserts that “children learn about relationships and behaviour by watching the adults around them...they learn how to use words by listening to the adults around them” (p.14). It concludes, “that is why it is important for you and all the adults who care for your child to be good role models” (p.14). Thus, parental guides attribute the reasons of students' bullying behaviours to their parents.

The second strategy that some guidebooks use to place responsibility on parents is that they instruct parents to monitor their own behaviour around their children and be role models. In many instances, the guides instruct parents to monitor their own behaviour around their children, and be role models. The guidance books give instructions to parents on how to identify bullying.

For example, Nova Scotia's parents guide (Buckie, 2013) states, "[W]atch how your children behave with others. If they need a reminder, find a private moment to talk about respectful behaviour" (p.11). The suggested reason for the instruction is that "most of all, children and youth learn by example." So parents are told, "Be a good role model. If you make a mistake—we all do—own up to it and apologize" (p.12). In the same book, there is a statement that instructs parents that "you are your child's first teacher" (p.14). It adds, "from the time your child is born you shape their behaviour" (p.14). That means that you can prevent bullying behaviours before they begin. It also adds that "you do this by modelling the behaviours you want to see in your child" (p.14). It concludes that "how you react to your child's behaviours teaches them how to behave with others" (p.14). Similarly, British Columbia's guide (BCCPAC, 2003) claims that "bullying can start at an early age, even among 2-3 year olds." It continues, "If left unchecked, it will get worse as the child gets older. It is important for parents to act as early as possible" (p. 2). It also states that "children need to understand how important it is to report bullying. Parents can help by showing them where to go for help when something goes wrong at school, and what action to expect" (p. 3). In the same book, parents would read: "Your child and the school need your support to effectively address bullying, and to provide a safe place for all students and staff." It continues, "you can help by remaining calm and working with the school to find out why your child bullies others." It concludes, "You may also work with your child to find ways to make amends to the victim" (p. 7). This way of using language with parents have been linked to neoliberal rationality of placing responsibility on individuals (Roy, 2008).

Using moral terms is the third technique that some guidebooks use to place responsibility on parents. Another disciplinary technique observed within the guides is that the responsibility is constructed in moral terms (e.g what one should do) (Roy, 2008). Moral obligation is a

disciplinary technique used to inculcate responsibility in individuals (Roy, 2008). For instance, in Nova Scotia parents' guide (Buckie, 2013) states, "[A]s a parent, you can help to prevent bullying by teaching your children how to be caring of others, get along, deal with angry feelings, and be assertive without being aggressive in standing up for themselves" (p. 3).

Using cautionary tales (e.g. take responsibility or suffer the consequences) is the fourth strategy of placing responsibility on parents. Another disciplinary technique is summed up by the motto, "Take responsibility or suffer the consequences" (Roy, 2008, p.469). For example, Quebec's parents guide states (Sebastien, n.d), "If you want your children to become responsible and self-reliant witnesses and citizens, teach them to: Not laugh at what they say, keep a neutral attitude, show the support for the victim, show their disapproval by seeking help for victims or expressing their positions to the current situation, put themselves to the victim's shoes (empathy) which will prevent them from becoming accomplices" (p. 37).

The fourth technique that some guidebooks use to place responsibility on parents is by stating bullying in a risk behaviour to create a sense of urgency. In her article, "Understanding health promotion in a neoliberal climate and the making of health conscious citizens" (2012), Ayo (2012) claims that neoliberal ideology legitimizes health promotion strategies, and places responsibility on individuals to monitor their own health and protect themselves from harm. Ayo (2012) states that, "[a]ccording to Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary, a risk can be defined as 'the possibility of loss or injury'" (p.103). However, "it is the imminence of such harm, the potentiality for life threatening chronic diseases that legitimizes health promotion strategies" (Ayo, 2012, p.103). Ayo (2012) further claims that "the particular strength and effectiveness of deploying risks as a neoliberal tool, a technology of government indeed, is the impending harm that it implies, thus stimulating a sense of panic, a sense of urgency, and a sense that action must

be taken now” (Ayo, 2012, p.103). She also adds that “not only is it expected that prudent and responsible individuals will embrace the goods and services offered by the flourishing health industry as part of their reasonable service to themselves, but as well, as part of their duty of citizenship to the state” (Ayo, 2012, p.103). Ayo’s (2012) argument that neoliberalism's use of risk discourse, to place responsibility on individuals, seems relevant to my argument.

It seems that some parental guidance books use neoliberal rationality to tell parents that students are at risk on account of bullying and that they should take responsibility to protect them. It seems that the claims put forth in the books, to the effect that bullying is harmful for students and threatens their lives, are used to stimulate a sense of panic in parents, who would thus be encouraged to take responsibility to protect their children. The examples show that the books do that. I found the language used in some of these parental guidance books (particularly, Nova Scotia’s and Quebec’s) is more political, used in a rhetorical fashion to claim that students are at risk and that there is an urgent need for parents to intervene. Put another way, those books seem to use such a language strategy to warn parents that things would get worse if action is not taken. My sense as a reader is that this warning language evokes anxiety, and as a result I would start to believe their claims that students are at risk and that parents should intervene.

Situating bullying behaviour as a risk discourse is evident in some of the parents' guides. For instance, Nova Scotia’s (Buckie, 2013) states that “as a result of not learning the difference between right and wrong, they may do poorly in school, they may begin to use drugs and alcohol, and even begin to commit crimes” (p. 8). It continues, “these children have set themselves up for a lifetime of difficult relationships. They may even end up being bullied themselves” (p. 8). Similarly, Nova Scotia’s parents' guide (Buckie, 2013) insists that anxiety, depression, feeling sick, frequent headaches, loneliness, low self-esteem, skipping school or self-

harm are the effects of bullying on students. Similarly, for the Quebec's parents guide (Sebastien, n.d) which claims that "[U]nfortunately, there are serious consequences to bullying, ranging from loss of self-esteem to depression or other mental health disorders (anorexia, bulimia, self-mutilation, anxiety) and, in some cases, even suicide" (p. 33). This situates students' behaviour in a risk discourse, so that a given response is urgently needed.

The Bullying Phenomenon is Conceptualized in the Parental Guides as Being Determined by Students' Differences

I selected texts and images that seem to portray bullying that comes from students' differences. My analysis is based on Van Dijk's (1989) article, "Structures and Strategies of Discourse and Prejudice", particularly his analysis that discusses lexical choice and the use of identifying pronouns to address minority people. He claims that words such as "them," "those people," and "immigrant," suggest social distance. At one point the parents' guide in Nova Scotia (Buckie, 2013) states that "sometimes children and youth are bullied because they are seen as being different from their peers by the way they look, the way they act, or how they learn" (p. 9). The parents' guide in Quebec (Sebastien, n.d) notes that "xenophobia makes fun of or draws attention to skin colour, accent, and the fact that the individual comes from elsewhere" (p.15). The same books advise that readers "pay attention to teasing about a first or family name" (p.14). Similarly, in British Columbia's parents' guide (BCCPAC, 2003), there is a statement which asks whether "lookism" is prevalent. "Are students singled out on the basis of their clothing, apparent lack of affluence, or other features?" (p.13). Looking critically at those statements in the guides, as to how they connect bullying to students' differences, it is obvious that these guides suggest that students' differences can lead, unjustly, to bullying. Moreover, Van Dijk (1991) points out that

“minorities and immigrants are presented as a problem and threat, and are portrayed in association with crime, violence, conflict, unacceptable cultural differences, or other forms of deviance” (p. 33). Likewise, students who are different are portrayed in parents’ guides as those who will get bullied. Cheng (2018) states that claiming that students who are different - such as those with special needs, from specific backgrounds, or from First Nations - need help, and whose behaviours need character modification, implies that those students are more likely to be engaged in bullying incidents. She argues that “the policies construct them as the 'problem groups' with an implication that they are more inclined either to bully others or to be bullied” (p. 61). “[W]hen aspects of observable difference are constructed as risk factors, however, which are then attributed to social identities, or types of children, those children so labeled are often unable to (re)define themselves as less destructive forms” (Dei, 2008; Jacobson, 2013, as cited in Valentine, 2014, p. 91). Therefore, as it is clarified from few examples stated above these parental guides construct bullying as that comes from students’ differences which affect students who look different among their peers.

Furthermore, conceptualizing students’ differences as an element of school bullying is evident in many of the images of these parental guides. For instance, at the front page of Nova Scotia’s parents' guide (Buckie, 2013), there is an image of three participants. From identifying the identities of these participants by physical appearances - such as skin colour, hair, and clothes - it is clear that they are black girls. The photo is taken in a large size and is made salient by its placement in the centre of the guide. It seems that all of the participants are smiling and looking directly at the viewers. This is a demanding image (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006) because it suggests that they need help. They are thus portrayed as victims of bullying. Another image is placed on the same page on the right side. In this image, there are two participants who are smiling and

talking to each other. From their physical features, it is obvious that these students are a white boy and a black boy. However, the image is probably an attempt to connect students' differences to bullying. Looked at closely, the image shows the white boy smiling and looking at the black boy, who seems shy and looks down. The white boy is made salient in the image by placing him at the centre. He is engaged as an actor and black boy is not. The suggestion is that the student who is different is more likely to be victim, whereas the student who belongs to the dominant category in school, given that he is white, is more likely to be a perpetrator. The frame of the image focuses on the differences in the pigmentation on their skin.

In the same book (p. 5), there is an image of three participants placed on the right side of the page. The physical features of these participants - such as bodies, skin colour, clothes - make clear that they are a black boy and two white girls. However, analysing the way these participants are positioned gives the viewer a sense that bullying is purported to come from students' differences. For instance, the black boy is standing in the centre, which means he is the focus of the image, and the girls are standing beside him in a supportive way. That is, there is one white girl standing beside his right shoulder and the other girl is standing beside his left shoulder and all of them appear to be looking and smiling at the viewer. The white girl who is sitting beside his left shoulder is putting her right hand on his shoulder. The image marks a demanding, which suggests that the black student is in need of help. This may suggest that students of colour are portrayed as victims of bullying. The image again suggests that bullying is understood to stem from students' differences.

In the same book (p.13), there is an image of a participant playing in a park. From her physical appearance, it is obvious that she is girl of colour. This is a demanding image as the girl is leaning, smiling, and looking directly at the viewer. She appears as someone asking for help.

Similarly, there is a photo (p. 51) of one participant whose physical features depict him as a Chinese boy. He is holding books and looking smilingly at the viewer. This is a demand photo, where the participant appears to be asking for help. Similarly, there is a photo placed at the front page of Quebec's parents' guide (Sebastien, n.d) of one subject. The physical appearance of this participant demonstrates that he is a boy of colour. He appears to be looking directly at the viewer, with a sad face. This is a demanding image. It stirs up a sense of sympathy in the viewer. The image reinforces the assumption that bullying comes from students' differences and that those students who are different are more likely to be victims. In the same book (p. 4), there is an image, discussed above, where three participants wait for a bus. Again, the girl of colour appears to be looking smilingly at the viewer in a demanding way, and the other girls seem looking elsewhere with aggressive faces. This also reinforces the perception that white students are portrayed as perpetrators, and students of colour are portrayed as victims. Similarly, in the same book (p. 24), another image (discussed earlier), of a girl of colour who looks sadly and anxiously at her mobile - an offer image (Kress and Van, 2006) – in contrast to the other girls looking smilingly at their mobile, in a way that suggests they are doing something wrong. That image reinforces the earlier argument that bullying is depicted as determined by students' differences, and that students who are different are victims, whereas students from the dominant group are understood to be perpetrators. Therefore, these examples confirm my argument that the parental guides construct bullying as being caused by differences.

The meaning of difference is often associated with the meaning of deficiency (Heydon & Iannacci, 2008). According to a normative model, deficiency naturally lends itself to being pathologized (Colorado, 2018, p.24). Baker (2002) argues that by employing a system whereby we separate, segregate or extract students based on criteria for them being “at-risk,” “different,”

or “deficient,” the focus immediately gets put on trying to “perfect the defective” (Baker, 2002, p. 673). Colorado (2018) contends, moreover, that “pathologization of difference becomes a 'grand narrative' which paints all students with a broad brush of pre-determined responses” (p. 26).

Additionally, portraying students who are different as those who need help may give readers the impression that those students lack social skills and they are the reasons for bullying incidents. Van Dijk’s (1993) discussion of presuppositions is relevant here. Van Dijk (1993) contends that “presuppositions may be signaled in many ways in a discourse and represent the knowledge speech participants must share in order for a specific sentence to be meaningful” (p.110). He adds, “meanings may thus be conveyed without being explicitly stated” (Van Dijk, 1993, p.110). He gives an example that “when a corporate manager says that lacking qualifications of minority applicants need to be eliminated by additional educational programs, it is presupposed that such applicants *do* in fact have lacking qualifications” (Van Dijk, 1993, p.110). This applies to how students who are different are positioned in the parents' guides to be those who need help and in turn are constructed as problematic people who lack social skills. The point is demonstrated where the parental guides portray minority students as victims and in need of help.

Further, Van Dijk (1991) has argued that portraying students from minorities as different reinforces racism. He also contended that minorities are presented as threat and a problem and they are portrayed in association with violence and unacceptable cultural differences. Considering that claim, it is noteworthy that students who are different are portrayed in parents’ guides as those who cause bullying or whose characteristics cause bullying. They are thus understood to be a threat to school safety. In the texts and images in the parents’ guides

portraying students who are different as problematic would make readers assume that social problems come from those people. They would be socially constructed as problematic people. Van Dijk (1993) insists that “through repeated exposure to such biased models (for instance, about black crime or economic refugees), recipients of such discourse may without alternative sources of information generalize from such models and form equally biased, socially shared attitudes, such as ethnic prejudices” (p.101). Again, then, the guides construct bullying as that comes from students’ differences; and this in turn may suggest that those students are problematic or that bullying is caused by them.

The Parents’ Guides Construct Children as Inferior with No Agency

The identities of children are socially constructed (Janzen & Schwartz, 2018). This thesis examines how children’s identities are created and understood in the parents’ guides. Janzen and Schwartz (2018) claim that “discourses of children as deficient and deviant are common within the education system and shapes the ways in which educators interact with and respond to children” (p.109). I have paid particular attention to the regimes of truth held about children, being sensitive to how regimes of truth maintain particular mechanism of control and power.

I selected texts and images that seem to portray children as inferior and lacking in agency. Nova Scotia's guide (Buckie, 2013) constructs bullying in three different stages: the early years (from infancy to toddlers), elementary school, and teens. The guide claims that bullying behaviour develops in students as they grow up, and becomes more complicated as they get older. For example, it instructs parents on what bullying looks like in early years. We read that, “[j]ust as children at this age are learning to walk and talk, they are learning social skills such as waiting, sharing, and taking turns” (p.15). It adds, “children at this age are still learning to talk. They

don't yet have the words to express how they feel" (p.15). The guide suggests that parents should model their behaviour because this is the best time for children to learn good behaviours. The guide then describes the period from toddlers to preschool. At this stage, the guide claims that "[c]hildren...are beginning to enjoy social lives" (p.16). It continues "most importantly, they are learning how to get along with others and make friends" (p.16). The guide suggests that parents should help their children to cope with this period by talking with their children about what is going on in their daily lives.

At elementary school, the guide insists, students should become more independent as they start forming their friendships that become more important to them. The guide explains that at this stage students learn what hurts each others' feelings. The student defines bullying based on how his/her peers view it. The guides give some tips for parents to help their children learn to avoid being a part of bullying situations, such as teaching them to express their feelings. The third stage, which the Nova Scotia guide (Buckie, 2013) states is the most important one, is the teenage period. At that point "teens are becoming more skilled in how they relate with one another. They know which teens have more social power and can spot other teens' weaknesses. Their increased social skills and use of technology mean that bullying can be even harder for adults to see" (p. 29).

The categorizing of children into different developmental stages emerged from developmental psychology. The guide refers to students' ages in order to identify bullying. Janzen and Schwartz (2018) claim that "reference to a child's age and development highlights the influence of the field of developmental psychology in constructing the identity of the child within educational contexts" (p. 115). They add that "within this paradigm, the child is considered a fixed object, moving through linear and biologically predetermined stages, from incomplete (child) to

complete (adult)” (p. 115). Further, “developmental psychology has constructed an inadequate identity of the child as an object, void of a social context, essentialized, dehumanized, and defined by abstract conceptions of maturity or development” (Janzen and Schwartz, 2018, p.115). They conclude that “when children are constructed in such a decontextualized manner, we lose sight of children and their lives; their concrete experiences, their actual capabilities, their theories, feelings and hopes” (p. 115). Moreover, understanding students’ bullying from this psychological perspective might suggest that the various phenomena referred to amount to the same thing, that there are no significant differences between them. In other words, it seems that all of the actions referred to, taken by students who are of different ages, in different circumstances, can be considered as the same type of bullying. However, sometimes such behaviours can be interpreted in different ways, such as ways of learning (Colorado, 2018), or of resisting school practices (Leighteizer, 2006). Such behaviours may be more complicated and varied than a reductionist understanding would allow for.

The parental guides also construct students as belonging to a transitioning stage to adulthood. A quote from British Columbia's guide (BCCPAC, 2003) states that “bullying can start at an early age, even among 2-3 year olds. If left unchecked, it will get worse as the child gets older” (p.1). Nova Scotia’s parental guide (Buckie, 2013) indicates that “[b]ullying can lead to serious problems in adulthood” (p.10). Cannella (1997) states that “child development places the child in an 'always progressing' position and considers the child as 'a shadow of his/her future self” (Cannella, 1997, p. 62). “This focus on ever-continuing progress and development establishes a context in which many of us will never be satisfied, never feel worthy, never have advanced enough” (p. 63).

Furthermore, students are constructed in a way that suggests they do not have agency and

they need adults' help. For example, a statement from British Columbia's parental guide (BCCPAC, 2003) insists that "the school has the primary responsibility to act on your child's concerns about safety at school" (p. 5). Similarly, Nova Scotia's parental guide (Buckie, 2013) insists that parents should control their children's online time, stating that "[t]he best way to protect your child from cyberbullying is to control their online presence" (p.10). Additionally, students are constructed as those who lack knowledge about online safety and who forget or are not aware of the dangers of bullying that may occur online, so adults should remind or make them aware of that. This is demonstrated by a statement in Nova Scotia's parental guide (Buckie, 2013), which contends that "[children] sometimes forget that what they send in an e-mail or text message or post on social media can be seen by far more people" (p. 30). It adds that, "[t]hey also forget how easily they can lose control of such information" (p. 30). "An e-mail, text, photo, or video can 'go viral' when the recipient's privacy settings are wide open or when they choose to share it with others" (p. 30).

A further example is stated in British Columbia's guide (BCCPAC, 2003) that "students...have no special protection and must rely upon adults to keep them safe" (p.1). In the same book, a statement contends that "children who are bullied do not know how to respond to aggressive behaviour" (p.1). Children are also constructed as not being knowledgeable about online violence and should be taught and protected (p.1).

The presentation of young students with no agency is also clear in the guides' images. In Nova Scotia's guide (Buckie, 2013, p.1) there is an image of a group of children surrounded by a woman. From the position of the groups, it is clear that the woman is the actor and the children are the goal. She sits in the middle of the group, is talking, and they are obediently listening. The image reinforces the assumption that children are inferior to adults and they should listen to

adults' instructions. Similarly, in the same book (p. 5), there are two images that portray kids as inferior to adults. The image placed on the top right of page 5 seems to be a mother and her daughter. Looking critically at the image, it is clear that the power relation between a mother and her daughter is portrayed. The mother is leaning her body toward her daughter and gives her instructions. The daughter is sitting below her mother, looking at her and listening obediently. Similarly, another image is placed under that photo, presenting a daughter sitting on her mother's lap, and they are both looking at a computer. From their positions, it is clear that the mother is teaching her daughter about online safety.

Van Dijk (1989) contends that "parental control is generally enacted in parent-child talk in many ways" (p. 32). "The low status of children in stratified societies can keep them silent, forbid them to initiate or discuss certain topics, prevent them from interrupting, or require them to use a special deferential variety of speech" (Ervin-Tripp & Stage, 1985, p.68). Van Dijk (1989) also argues that "parents may also control child behaviour more directly, for example, through scolding, threatening, directing, or correcting children in speech" (p. 32). He adds, "more indirect forms of action control in parent-child exchanges may take the form of advice, requests, or inducements through promises." He concludes "these differences in parental control in talk have often been related class differences" (p. 32). British Columbia parents' guide states (BCCPAC, 2003) that, "[i]f your child is questioned by the police or other person in authority (e.g. the principal) about a bullying incident, your child has the right to have an adult present and to choose who that person will be" (p. 8). The implication is that children have no agency and need adults to advocate on their behalf.

The section has presented five themes. The first theme is that bullying is defined in terms of gender. I found that there are many instances in the guides that explicitly or implicitly tell the

reader that girls' ways of bullying are indirect and relational. This way of theorizing women's connection to the world has led to conceptualizing girls' conflicts as "mean" and, therefore, to pathologizing girls' ways of socialization. The second theme is that bullying is defined in a binary way (in terms of a bully and a victim). There are many instances in the parental guides that categorize bullying in terms of a bully who has power and a victim who is weak. This way of theorizing bullying does not allow for a broader understanding of bullying as a complex social phenomenon. The third theme is that neoliberal rationality is invoked in the language of the parents' guides. Discourses of responsibility and individual choices dominate the language of all four parental guides. Discourses of responsibility and individual choices are understood to be disciplinary techniques used to place responsibility on individuals (Bethune & Gonick 2017). The fourth theme is that bullying is understood to stem from students' differences. This way of theorizing bullying reinforces racism and suggests that students who look different are problematic and that bullying is caused by them. The final theme is that children are constructed as inferior, in that they have no agency. There are many instances that in the parental guides that refer to students' ages in order to identify bullying and that suggest they do not have agency and they need adult's help. This way of theorizing bullying reinforces the assumption that children are inferior to adults and shape the ways in which parents respond to children.

Discussion

The conceptualization of bullying in terms of a risk discourse seems to have emerged from public panic regarding students' violence (Cheng, 2018). More specifically, as Cheng (2018) writes of the Columbine High School shootings in 1999, the incident was widely reported in media and fueled people's panic about school violence. Cheng (2018) adds that such panic

tends to have led people to have knee-jerk reactions, and to devise punitive ways to deter individuals from committing school violence. The argument is that, public panic can be responded to as school administrators maintain order in schools by authoritarian means (Cheng, 2018). This psychological, individualized approach to bullying leads to a punishment culture, where students are blamed if they violate the boundaries set for punishment. Galitz and Robert (2014) suggest that this model is similar to a traditional justice system, where extrinsic pressures are used to punish or reward individuals' behaviours. They also claim that wider causes of problems are not addressed, as the system individualizes problems. Thus, there are questions as to the usefulness of the original psychological discourse that theorized universal school bullying, including young girls' bullying. It creates a system of punishing and modifying students' behaviours without looking more fully at their underlying causes.

Moreover, it seems that there is a similarity between the fear of school violence that emerged from the Columbine High School shootings in 1999 and the emergence of the mean girl discourse in legitimatizing the use of authoritarian strategies to combat bullying. The mean girl discourse was theorized in a way that fueled public panic about girls' friendships and competition, and led to a desire to punish mean girl behaviour. The mean girl discourse was theorized in a way that has caused public anxiety that requires adults' intervention.

Furthermore, it seems that there is a connection between inserting fear in publics about school violence and the emergence of neoliberalism's prevention programs to eradicate bullying. Bethune and Gonick (2017) contend that, "with girlhood positioned as an inherently risky experience, the task of managing this risk has led to the development of programmes for girls, seminars and workshops for teachers, books for parents, and curricula for schools" (p. 394).

Moreover, as Gonick (2006) discusses, the connection between shaping girls' identities

and neoliberal subjectivity can be shown through specific prevalent discourses. Gonick (2006) states that two dominant discourses -“girl power” and “reviving Ophelia”- organize the meaning of girlhood in such a way as to participate in a neoliberal view of girlhood. “Girl Power celebrates the fierce and aggressive potential of girls as well as reconstitution of girl culture as a positive force embracing self-expression through fashion, attitude, and a Do-It-Yourself (DIY) approach to cultural production” (p. 7). As such, power discourse urges girls to be assertive and responsible for improving themselves in society. On the other hand, “reviving Ophelia” discourse makes reference to a character in Shakespeare's Hamlet, who is weak and vulnerable, submissive, dependent, passive, obedient, and who kills herself because she cannot have her lover (Gonick, 2006). Gonick (2006) claims that the two discourses could be viewed from another perspective, where they are not seen to oppose each other. That is, they both contribute to the formation of neoliberalism's idealized view of girls as subjects. The former urges girls to adopt the individualistic position by making themselves become responsible in improving themselves as citizens. The latter attributes those whose failure to do so stems from personal reasons, such that they are thought to be in need of counselling or other forms of advice (Gonick, 2006). The emergence of the mean girl phenomenon is then just another discourse created to participate in neoliberalism's subjective account of girlhood. Gonick (2004) suggests that there is a similarity between the emergence of reviving Ophelia discourse, in the 1990s, and mean girl discourse, which emerged in 2000s, in that they both attempted to resolve a perceived crisis of girlhood. Gonick discusses how the latter replaced the former. That is, mean girl discourse is similar to reviving Ophelia discourse in that they both contribute to pathologizing girls' bullying, but the first attributed girls' crises to society, whereas the second attributes it to girls themselves.

The definition of bullying in the parents' guides is assumed to be universal and applicable

to all students. However, universalizing students' issues has been linked to making profits for education markets. Bethune and Gonick (2017) contend that, "as products geared towards a market, and thus, profitability, many of the resources intended for teachers, schools, and school boards are designed to generate sales (p. 396)." They add that, "[l]ike other markets, the education market benefits from a crisis (real or perceived) and must therefore produce the kind of solutions to educational problems that can be packaged and widely sold" (p. 396). They conclude that "because these programmes must be applicable in any school district or classroom, they must take an approach to bullying that rejects its sociocultural dimensions in favour of one rooted in universalising understandings of girlhood" (p. 396). There are deficiencies in the dominant definition of bullying, and therefore with the parents' guides that employ that definition.

The analysis of this research paper found some similarities and differences within four parental guidance books. For example, the parental guidance books in Quebec (Sebastien, n.d) and in Nova Scotia (Buckie, 2013) devote major attention to cyberbullying, and to the characteristics of bullies and victims. As to differences, some guidance books devote their contents exclusively to particular concerns. For example, the parental guidance book (Ripley & O'Neil, 2009) in Alberta exclusively concentrates on questions concerning relational aggression. It is also obvious from that account that some guidebooks connect relational aggression to how girls engage in conflict(s). Put another way, albeit indirectly, it simply gives an account of girls' relational aggression, where such bullying is understood to be engaged in by girls alone. Similarly, the major content of the parental guidance book in British Columbia (BCCPAC, 2003) focuses on teaching parents about what bullying looks like in elementary schools, children's rights, and policies that are meant to address bullying. On the other hand, the parental guidance

book in Nova Scotia (Buckie, 2013) gives much consideration to bullying at different ages. In turn, Quebec's guidance book (Sebastien, n.d) gives much more attention to differences between conflict and violence. It is obvious that each book devotes a major part of its content to what it believes the major issue of students' bullying. Again, one book contends that bullying is gendered, and social bullying is replacing physical aggression, whereas another claims that bullying is developmental and that parents should pay attention to how it could unfold from the period of children's early years through to adolescence. Those differences between the contents of the four parental guidance books suggest that there is no consensus agreement among these books as to the definition or the problems posed by bullying.

Bethune and Gonick (2017) discuss how class differences often show up in representations of in girls' aggression. For example, they found that 'meanness' is "constructed as normative of middle-class repressive" (p. 397) while "girl violence is marked as lower class"(p. 397). It seems that some parental guidance books (Quebec's and Nova Scotia's) which show images of girls do not address the class differences between them, or that suggest they all belong to the same social class. For example, in Quebec's guide (Sebastien, n.d), images depict girls as fashionable, wearing jewelry, modern clothes, etc. (p. 4. p.24). Where all girls are thus portrayed as belonging to a middle class background, guidebooks fail to identify important class differences, let alone grapple with how properly to portray and address such differences.

Conclusion

This thesis has presented a critical, comparative examination of the ways bullying is defined in four parental guidance books in four Canadian provinces (Nova Scotia, Quebec, Alberta, and British Columbia). The research paper began with a brief summary of the author's interest in the topic. It then provided a discussion of previous literature on bullying, where we

discussed such accounts as the dominant understanding and definition of bullying, causes and effects of bullying, as well as post-structuralists' and feminist post-structuralists' critiques of the dominant understanding of bullying. The theoretical framework of the research paper was established, as it was based on poststructuralist and feminist poststructuralist theories of critiquing language. The data collection was based on the four parental guidance books, in order to critically analyze parents' guides on school bullying from post-structural perspectives. The data analysis was based on both textual analysis and image analysis. Drawing on a post-structural view of language found in the respective guides, I inquired into their respective understandings of bullying and the advice or instruction given to parents. Certain types of discourse came to light in the different publications. Five themes emerged from the analysis, and are as follows: bullying is defined in terms of gender; bullying is defined in a binary way (in terms of a bully and a victim); neoliberal rationality is invoked in the language of the parents' guides; bullying is understood to stem from students' differences; and children are constructed as inferior, in that they have no agency. It is hoped that the analysis could help in future attempts to provide a more holistic and conscious account of bullying phenomena, which would help parents, children, and school communities to better address the topic.

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