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Experiences and Perceptions of School Principals Regarding School Safety Programs and Bullying

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Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Denise Lowe

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Walden University
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Abstract

Experiences and Perceptions of School Principals Regarding School Safety Programs and

Bullying

by

Denise Lowe

MA, Midwestern Baptist Theology Seminary, 2018

MS, National University, 1997

BA, Northern Arizona University, 1995

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Psychology

Walden University

August 2021

Abstract

Many researchers have documented the continued problem with safety in U.S. schools, which may be related to bullying. Though the most effective way to address bullying in schools is schoolwide programs, limited information is available relating to principals' views on safety programs in U.S. suburban high schools. Accordingly, this study included two research questions and eight interview questions to address the problem relating to safety programs and interventions with 12 principals in Catholic suburban high schools in Kansas and Missouri. Six distinctive themes emerged from the data based on participant answers to interview questions: effective safety intervention programs, mental health programs, title funding, parent involvement, language and communication strategies, and learned and effective strategies of other administrators relating to school safety. The perceptions and lived experiences of the administrators provided insight into informing existing or new ideas regarding intervention programs that may work effectively to keep students safe in school, which can lead to positive social change. New ideas, strategies, and examples are included in the study by participants who have an accumulation of 175 years of experience. This research is significant for administrators, teachers, students, and the communities who want effective safety programs identified.

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Dedication

My inspiration to conduct this study came from my many years of teaching in various states, on different levels, in public, private and magnet school. I have also experienced on the college and university levels. I dedicate the work to all educators who know what the true meaning of education, efficiency and ethics. Our job as educators is to educate the whole child according to Abraham Maslow (1954). Maslow's hierarch of needs was one of the first theories I learned as a novice educator. Maslow insists that safety, the second level of his hierarch, out of five levels on Maslow's pyramid in a need for a child to fully development. It is important for a child to feel safe in school in order for him or her to learn. I hope this study will add to the best teaching practices and teachers will get back to the basics by meeting the child's physiological needs, safety needs, love and belonging need, esteem, self-actualization, and self-transcendence. Sometimes, we have to go back to our foundation or beginning.

Additionally, I dedicate this work to all of my great educators: Dr. Rodney Ford, Dr. Sunni Liu, Dr. Bonnie Nastasi, Mrs. Patricia Wilson, Mrs. Marion O'Shea, Sr. Caroline, Sr. Joan, Dr. Michael Miller, Dr. Barry Winn and Dr. Larry Corinne. These educators have high integrity and they believe in educating the whole person. You are excellent educators who went beyond teaching in the classroom. They took the time to understand each student. I felt safe because these educators demonstrated the epitome of professionalism. This is an optional page for a dedication. If you include a dedication, use regular paragraph formatting as shown here (not centered, italicized, or otherwise formatted). If you do not wish to include this page, delete the heading and the body text.

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My gratitude is extended to my Walden professors who challenged me to develop my writing and research skills. I especially thank my chair Dr. Rodney Ford, Dr. Sunny Liu, and Dr. Bonnie Nastasi committee members for sharing their expertise. Additionally, I appreciate my Walden colleague, Karen Spader, your advice and motivation was always welcomed and taken to heart.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

School safety and bullying prevention in the United States is a common topic of discussion in the 21st century. According to the National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center, 5.7 million students are estimated to be a victim of bullying or are involved in bullying (Fried, 2009). The National Education Association survey estimates that every 7 minutes of every day in school, a student is a victim of bullying, and 85% of the time, there is no intervention by peers or adults (Cowan et al., 2013; Fried, 2009; National Association of School Psychologist, 2017). Because of the continuous rise of bullying incidents in U.S. schools, professionals have begun to take a closer look at reducing bullying and its relationship to safety programs in U.S. schools (NASP, 2017). The present study is intended to be an extension of these research efforts.

The process of making U.S. schools safe with school safety programs is a task that involves multiple elements and people (Devine & Cohen, 2007), and administrators are faced with creating effective safety programs, documenting incidents, and reporting information to the proper officials who may assist in dealing with specific school safety matters. The examination of school safety programs in Midwestern suburban high schools may help to identify characteristics and factors contributing to significant differences in effective safety programs. Additionally, administrators' lived experiences in connection with safety factors that may be important to them can help inform future program efforts.

This chapter provides a description of the present qualitative research project, an overview of the research design, and other aspects of the present study. Chapter 1

includes a discussion of the background, the problem, and the purpose. Also included is a discussion on the study's framework as well as definitions. The chapter ends with a discussion on the significance of the study and a summary.

Background

The most effective way to have safe schools is to develop and implement schoolwide programs for administrators and teachers to use consistently in the classroom (O'Brian et al., 2011). However, a gap of knowledge exists relating to the differences in school safety plans and how victims and perpetrators are assisted in schools during times of emergency. Further, courts expect schools to provide a physical environment conducive to the purpose of an education institution, yet the school may not be expected to ensure the guarantee of safety of students (Robers et al., 2010). The rights to safe schools include the safety of students and staff with protection against criminal activities such as bullying, student crime, and violence (Fried & Sosland, 2009). Adequate supervision can prevent potentially dangerous students being admitted to a school (Fried & Sosland, 2011), but some school personnel have been insufficiently aware of the degree of student bullying or victimization in school (Cedeno & Elias, 2011).

Though there are gaps in bullying prevention, some schools have safety programs that include effective strategies for safe and successful schools and provide strategies developed from student surveys (Smokowski et al., 2013). Some schools have also used student, educator, and school counseling reports to develop best practices for creating safe and successful schools (Cowan et al., 2013). The Olweus school safety program is effective and used in many U.S. schools (Calonge, 2015). The program includes some of

the same strategies as Kazdin's school-based intervention program (Kazdin et al., 2009), and its goals are to reduce and prevent bullying problems and to improve peer relationships in school (Fried et al, 2011). In Norway, the program has already shown a 50% reduction of bullying incidents after 2 years (Calonge, 2015).

Additionally, in 2007, 30 states had state policies that address harassment and intimidation, which required or recommended bullying related education, prevention efforts, and strategies for districts and all K-12 school levels (Calonge, 2015). However, though 45 states passed anti-bullying legislation, they differ from state to state (Fried et al., 2011). Since President Barack Obama's 2009 presidential campaign, the White House enacted "Ideals Education Ideas" for radical change, which included strategies to prevent bullying (Fried et al, 2011). Bullying prevention initiatives helped assess the school/community and tracking the progress of a school's improvement efforts (Calonge, 2015). There are also government efforts to enforce federal civil rights laws with respect to race, color, national origin, gender, disability, religion, and sexual orientation or gender identity, but there are no policies addressing bullying and LGBT issues (Castro, 2011). Bullying may come under the jurisdiction of human rights and law in some cases, but only when the officials find that the bully incidents are a repetitive behavior (Cornel & Limber, 2015). Because victims, bullies, and bystanders are all individually affected by peer and bullying social interaction (Smokowski et al., 2013), it was important to conduct this study to examine perceptions of school safety programs in addressing bullying.

Statement of the Problem

The lack of effective school safety programs in the United States makes it difficult for students to feel safe and to be secure and ready to adequately learn in school. School safety intervention programs have needed redevelopment since the 1990s (Fried, 2009). In addition, the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) has been conducting surveys evaluating principals on school safety issues for over a century to assist in getting an understanding on how to make schools safe. The present study is needed because the National School Safety Center and the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Community Oriented Policing Services have been working together since September 1999 on designing and delivering the nation's premiere school safety program that includes law enforcement services with limited success (Fried & Sosland, 2011; Stephens, 2002; Hanushek, 2018). But in 2007, the U.S. Department of Education released estimations that 1.5 million, or 2.9 %, of all school-age children are homeschooled because of bullying. In a recent survey, middle and high school students reported that school staff members were not doing enough to prevent bullying in their schools (O' Brennan et al., 2011). The National School Safety Center adheres to a philosophy that schools have two choices: (a) to create and maintain safe schools or (b) to return their institutions to safe, secure, and effective places of learning (as cited in Stephens, 2002).

The present study may offer additional findings to be considered as that development process unfolds. The research questions in the present study create a foundation from which to discuss strategies and other issues relating to school safety

using a phenomenological approach to understanding the lived experiences and perceptions of school principals. The results may assist in future studies that not only relate to school safety but may also have an influence on all areas concerning various preventive programs implemented on all levels of school administration and programming

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological research study was to examine principals'/administrators' experiences concerning school safety and bullying in Midwestern suburban high schools. Phenomenological research helped to identify participants' experiences related to the study topic (Creswell, 2009; Moustakas, 1994), and open-ended interviewing helped gather information on the perceptions and lived experiences of school administrators (Moustakas, 1994) who are tasked with school violence management issues. The interview questions employed in the present study are open-ended questions created by me with the intention of tapping into the lived experiences and perceptions of administrators who work with school safety issues and bullying as a primary part of their jobs. I analyzed the administrators' experiences and perceptions of school safety intervention programs and bullying in Midwestern suburban schools to see what is being done to assist in keeping U.S. schools safe (Neiman et al., 2009).

Research Questions

Research Question 1: What are the experiences and perceptions of suburban high school administrators/principals relating to safety interventions/programs in their respective schools?

Research Question 2: What are the perceptions of school administrators/principals relating to effective organized bullying school safety programs in suburban high schools?

Theoretical Framework for the Study

The theorists that I included in this research study is Bandura's (1977) theory called Social Learning Theory. Social Learning Theory is the process by which social influences alter people's thoughts, feelings and behaviors (Bandura, 1989). Also, Bruner's (1960) curriculum reform provides a process for teachers and student interventions to eliminate behaviors and reinforces appropriate behavior. The Second Step anti-bullying program, Olweus anti-bullying program and National Sources of Strength include social learning and curriculum reform.

Nature of the Study

I conducted a phenomenological study on administrators' perceptions on school safety in suburban Midwestern high schools with an emphasis on bullying. A phenomenological approach was the most appropriate of this qualitative strategy because it identifies the essences of human experiences about the phenomena described by participants in the study (Creswell, 2009), and I was interested in school safety intervention practices in suburban Midwest schools. The participants were high school

suburban administrators because the recent school shootings were in suburban schools with a bully emphasis. These administrators (i.e., principals, vice principals, and counselors) have first-hand knowledge of school safety practices and procedures. Through participants' responses regarding their experiences with school safety practices, I was able to identify the school's safety intervention program to learn what was working in the school with a sense of overall school safety. Findings of the present study provided information to assist in future school safety research for a different, larger population to benefit other schools.

Phenomenology is used to study perceptions or appearances from people's points of view (Willis, 2007). The methodology of phenomenological inquiry is focused on listening and interpreting the stories, experiences, and perceptions presented by the participants. In the present study, this methodology was used to examine the perception and lived experiences of principals and administrators regarding school safety programs in their suburban schools, which may provide insight into effective safety intervention programs through the subjective eyes of the participants (Willis, 2007). My objective was to have the participants reflect on their experiences and then relate those experiences to me to create a mutual understanding about the meanings of the experiences (Orgill, 2002). Therefore, it was important to ask follow up questions for better explanations (Barnard et al., 1999). It is also important for the researcher to ask questions and not to evaluate the answers as being right or wrong (Barnard et al., 1999). However, the researcher should show that they are really interested in getting the subjects to express themselves clearly (Sjöström & Dahlgren, 2002). The focus of these interviews about the

world of the interviewee is seek to and reveal his or her beliefs, values, reality, feelings, and experience of a phenomenon (Barnard et al., 1999).

In terms of analyzing qualitative data, the researcher examines the transcriptions of participants in terms of looking for similarities and differences between them (Orgill, 2002). During this process, I developed initial categories that describe different principals' experiences. I then developed categories that explain the variations in the data. Then, based on initial categories, I reexamined the transcripts to determine whether the categories were sufficiently descriptive and indicative of the data. This process of modification and data review continues until the modified categories seem to be consistent with the interview data.

Definitions of Terms

At school: In the school building, on school property, on a school bus, or going to or from school (Neiman et al., 2009).

Bullying: For the purposes of the present study, bullying is defined as any intentional gesture, or any written, verbal, or physical act or threat. Threats, including cyber bullying, can be sufficiently severe, persistent, or pervasive and create an intimidating, threatening, or abusive educational environment or workplace environment. Outcomes of this negative environment include (a) harming a student or staff member, whether physically or mentally; (b) damaging a student's or staff member's property; (c) placing a student or staff member in reasonable fear of damage to the student or staff member's property; or (d) any form of intimidation or harassment prohibited by the board of education in policies concerning bullying adopted pursuant to K.S.A. 72-8205€, and

amendments (Stopbullying.gov). Additionally, bullying is defined as a power imbalance that may include unwanted and aggressive behavior (Dorlen, 2019).

Combined schools: Schools that include all combinations of grades, including K–12 schools, other than primary, middle, and high school (Neiman et al., 2009).

Crime: Any violation of a statute or regulations or any act that the government has determined is injurious to the public, including felonies and misdemeanors. Such violations may or may not involve violence, and it may affect individuals or property (Neiman et al., 2009).

School safety: School-related activities where students are safe from violence, bullying, harassment, and substance use. Safe schools promote the protection of students from violence, exposure to weapons and threats, theft, bullying, and the sale or use of illegal substances on school grounds (American Institute for Research, 2018).

Victimization: A crime as it affects one person or household. For personal crimes, the number of victimizations is equal to the number of victims involved. The number of victimizations may be higher than the number of incidents because more than one person may be victimized during an incident (Neiman et al., 2009).

Assumptions, Scope, and Limitations

Assumptions

Because assumptions are so basic, the research problem is non-existent without it (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). In this study, there was an underlying assumption that school safety will continue to be an important issue for U.S. schools. Another assumption was that the interviewees were truthful when answering questions because of the

confidentiality was preserved. I also assumed that principals would be able to provide useful information to create data that may be useful for larger areas to assist with school safety and advanced bullying.

Scope

Previous studies on school safety and bullying focused on either students or teacher surveys, leaving a gap in the literature regarding advanced bullying (school shootings) or how bullying relates to mental illness. The scope of this study was to collect developed, formalized descriptions of safety programs in selected schools, review the relevant literature, and distribute the findings of the administrators (Streubert & Carpenter, 1999). I asked participants to engage in one interview lasting 30 to 60 minutes. I provided each participant with an identification code and questions to review. I offered the participants the opportunity for a follow-up to ensure clarity. Interviews took place in a larger study for initial instructions and to type answers. Then I met with each participant individually to clarify collected data.

Limitations

Several limitations are apparent for this study. For instance, it is difficult to replicate qualitative research because it occurs in the natural setting (Wiersma, 2000). Additionally, the process for this study was to conduct 14 principal interviews, but one participant canceled due to school emergencies, and another sent in typed answers without an interview with me. However, saturation was met after 12 interviews. Further, two participants stated that some faculty and students do not know what bullying is and need training to understand the issue, indicating that there are participants who view

bullying as more severe than other participants (i.e., school shooting). Finally, this study pertains to safety programs as they are implemented in U.S. schools; however, various limitations were considered because of management styles, counseling experiences, and school district policies, and procedures differ.

Significance of the Study

As applied to the present study, the significance to this research holds that administrators' perceptions on school safety in suburban high schools may provide useful information about their experiences on school safety interventions relating to bullying. Some specific findings from the seasoned administrators in this study may benefit other administrators, faculty, parents and community officials on ways to keep their student body safe.

Summary

In this chapter, I discussed the topic of making U.S. schools safe with effective school safety programs and bullying prevention. Chapter 2 presents relevant literature pertaining to the study topic. The review of the literature encompasses four areas. The first area is the multifaceted nature of bullying from background to long-term effects. Next, to provide an understanding of safety programs, I present a historical overview of effective safety programs. Third, a review of school safety programs is highlighted to acquaint readers with current methods used in the classroom. Finally, Chapter 2 presents the theoretical framework that is the foundation for behavior studies and basis for combating bullying.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The U.S. Department of Education released estimations in a 2007 study that 1.5 million, or 2.9 %, of all school-age children are home schooled because of bullying. Forty-six states have antibullying laws, with 45 of these states directing schools to adopt bully policies, though only 43 of the 46 states specified what constitutes bullying (You et al., 2008). Despite the laws, policies, and safety school programs, violence and bullying remains a major issue in schools (Jace, 2011). The purpose of this study was to evaluate intervention programs and bullying in suburban schools to see what is being done to keep U.S. schools safe (see Neiman et al., 2009).

Chapter 2 begins with the literature search strategy and relevant bullying definitions, characteristics, and the foundation theories. Next, the literature review covers literature on school safety in U.S. schools. Finally, the literature review ends with a summary and conclusion.

Literature Search Strategy

This review of the literature includes various books and articles obtained from the following databases: Psychology SAGE database, PsycINFO, PsycARTICLES, SocINDEX, Thoreau Multiple Data Search, and Google Search. I conducted a thorough search using the following key words: *bullying*, *bullying* and *victimization*, *bullying behaviors*, *bullying prevention programs*, *frequency of bullying in schools*, *school modifications for bullying*, *characteristics of bullies*, *school characteristics*, *crime and safety programs*, *funding for school bullying*, *school safety programs*, and *B. F. Skinner* and *operant conditioning*. This search was limited to the past 7 years but provides

information from previous years on foundational theories. Variables associated with this research from the NCES provided archival data information on Indicators of School Crime and Safety 2016 data for the 2015–2016 school year. This NCES archival data also includes definitions and the principal surveys for the public primary, middle, and high schools in the United States.

Theoretical Foundation

This study was informed by Skinner’s operant conditioning, Bandura’s Bobo Doll experiment, and Bruner’s human development theory. Theories, such as cognitive behavior, social learning, and coercion, guide most of the established intervention programs for behavior disorders in children (Mishna, 2012). Bullying is so complex that one theory cannot explain the individual, interpersonal or structural factors relating to the bully phenomenon (Mishna, 2012). Therefore, Skinner’s, Bandura’s, and Bruner’s works helped explain progressions for each developmental domain and the ranges of individual variations within each domain relating to behavior (bullying) and social learning.

Operant Conditioning Theory

Skinner created the term operant conditioning (McLeod, 2014). Skinner’s operant conditioning theory (reinforcing stimulus, negative reinforcement, shaping, and extinction) involves shaping behavior with appropriate behavior modifications (Boeree, 1998). Skinner’s theory suggests that learning appropriate behaviors is the beginning to change a behavior from the consequences of the behavior (Boeree, 1998). For example, a child repeats prosocial or undesirable behavior because they receive rewards for good

behavior and punishments for undesirable behavior (Boeree, 1998). Praising and rewarding is a positive reinforcer that strengthens a particular behavior (Pappas, 2014). Therefore, if the results in the positive reinforcer increase, the undesirable behavior repeats because the consequences are pleasant or satisfying, which is referred to as conditioning (Skinner, 1971).

There are three types of operant or responses that can follow behavior: (a) neutral operant, which refers to responses from the environment that neither increase nor decrease the probability of a behavior being repeated; (b) reinforcers, which relate to responses from the environment that increase the probability of a behavior being repeated; and (c) punishers, which relate to responses from the environment that decrease the likelihood of a behavior being repeated. Reinforcers can be positive or negative, and punishment weakens behavior (McLeod, 2014). Therefore, reinforcement is acquired by using the consequence of a behavior to strengthen the positive behavior and can also happen with undesirable behaviors as well (Pappas, 2014). Shaping is thus the process of reinforcement only for those approximations of the desired behavior (Krueger & Dayan, 2009; Skinner, 1971). This shaping through successive approximation requires a behavior management method for developing positive or good behavior. For example, the teacher rewards desired responses that are increasingly successive and similar to the desired or target response (Skinner, 1938).

Observational Learning Theory

Bandura (1973) reported people are not born with violent tendencies, but they learn aggression through observing other people. A motor skill is present naturally in a

growing child of preschool age, which makes preschoolers imitate what they see (Bandura, 1973, 1977). For example, the results of the Bobo Doll experiment showed that when the children were left alone in a room with the colorful inflated Bobo Doll, they imitated the abusive actions of hitting, kicking, and shoving the Bobo Doll that they witnessed and remembered from the previously viewed adult short film (“Bandura and Observational Learning,” n.d.).

Bandura’s (1977) observational learning is also called social learning theory. Social learning is the process by which social influences alter people’s thoughts, feelings, and behaviors (Bandura, 1989). The modeling process of observation learning asserts that children learn from their environment experiences (“Bandura and Observational Learning,” n.d.). Bandura (1925) discussed the process of observational learning that includes attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation, which again was shown through the Bobo Doll experiment (“Bandura and Observational Learning,” n.d.).

Curriculum Reform Education Framework

Bruner’s (1960) curriculum reform provides a process for teacher and student interventions to eliminate inappropriate behavior and to reinforce appropriate behavior. Bruner was influential among educators relating to curriculum reform projects primarily in the cognitive tradition. Bruner indicated that learning is an active process in which learners construct new ideas regarding concepts based on their current and or past knowledge (McLeod, 2008). Bruner’s discovery and inquiry learning consists of three models: (a) instructions must be concerned with the experiences and contexts that make the student willing and able to learn (readiness); (b) instruction must be structured easily

for the students to grasp (spiral organization); and (c) instruction should be designed to facilitate extrapolation and or fill in the gaps going beyond the information given (McLeod, 2008).

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts

Bully Phenomenon

Bullying has been present for a long time, and there are various studies concerned with describing the elements involved with bullying (Benitez & Justicia, 2006; Camodeca & Goossens, 2005; Monks et al., 2003; Rigby, 1997; Veenstra et al., 2005). Bullying for the purpose of this study was defined as intent to harm and continuous taunting over a period that becomes damaging to the self-esteem of the target (Fried & Sosland, 2011). This can involve teasing, threatening, or hitting (Banks, 2012), and is usually a repetitive abuse of power (Hymel & Swearer; Olweus, 1993; Sherrow, 2011). The asymmetry of power comes in forms of physical, psychological, and aggressive behaviors (Sherrow, 2011).

Additionally, individual school victimization characteristics may come from verbal harassment (Smokowski et al., 2013), which is another name for bullying (Cedeno & Elias, 2011). School victimization includes threats of physical harm, social isolation from daily activities, and rumors that may be true or false. Bullies chase victims to and from places that they are required to be (school); physical bullying includes punching the victim, using weapons, and rape (Cedeno & Elias, 2011; Kazdin et al., 2009).

Further, harassment is governed by state laws but is generally defined as a course of conduct that annoys, threatens, intimidates, alarms, or puts a person in fear of their

safety (Cornell & Limber, 2015). Harassment is unwanted, unwelcomed, and uninvited behavior that results in a hostile environment. Harassing behavior may include epithets, derogatory comments or slurs and lewd propositions, assault, impeding or blocking movement, offensive touching or any physical interference with normal work or movement, and visual insults such as derogatory posters or cartoons.

In distinguishing bullying and harassment, the most significant problem from a legal standpoint is that the power imbalance criteria are omitted from the definitions of bullying, and it is not the same explicit component as the legal definition of harassment (Limber, 2010). Although the federal law sometimes addresses cases of bullying, it is only when bullying and harassment discrimination overlap that the federally funded schools, colleges, and university have an obligation to resolve the harassment issue (U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, 2014). State laws, school districts, and school-level policies cannot work alone when it comes to bullying incidents (Duncan, 2010).

A large body of literature indicates an understanding of early adolescent bullying and provides an overview of a comprehensive set of interventions that can be implemented to support a whole-school approach to address bullying (McGrath et al., 2005; McGrath & Stanley, 2006a, 2006b). Implementing schoolwide programs are effective to address bullying by defining it and providing social norms relating to aggressive retaliation (O'Brian et al., 2011). Administration and teachers need to develop curriculum and schoolwide strategies for communicating prevention efforts for victims and bullies as well as implement anger management programs and teacher–parent

training with behavior strategies (O'Brian et al., 2011). This may include improving staff ratios, developing evidence-based standards for district-level policies, providing incentives for intra- and inter-agency collaboration, and support from multitiered systems of support (Cowan et al., 2013). However, it is not clear that these suggestions have their intended efficacy, which is why the purpose of the present study was to learn about these kinds of interventions from the perspective of those use these and other methods.

Characteristics of the Bully Phenomenon

Characteristics of bullying are similar in many studies, but there are differences (Benitez et al., 2006). In terms of victims, some believe they cannot control their environment, some believe others are more capable of handling various situations, some have overinvolved family members, some feel external factors have a more significant influence on them than internal control, and some have difficulty relating to peers (Kamia-Raj, 2015; Sanders & Phye, 2004). Bully victims are also at a higher risk of mental and physical health related issues, are absent from school frequently, have higher levels of anxiety through adulthood, have low self-worth, and feel the control of their life's rests on others (Fried et al., 2011). Key signs that a child is bullied are moodiness, withdrawal, anxiety about going to school, and sleep problems (Kazdin et al., 2009).

In terms of bullies, research had indicated that bullies have difficulty accepting criticism, have a need to be the center of attention, are more likely to drink alcohol and do drugs, have a 50% higher chance of being a victim of bullying, are at a higher risk for mental health problems, are antisocial as an adult, are more likely to use violence in their relationship, and are more likely to get in trouble with the law (Fried et al., 2011). Bullies

my come from home environments where families use physical punishment and children are taught to handle problems by hitting, and parental warmth may be lacking (Banks, 2012). Family violence encounters are prevalent in both the bully and the bully-victim's homes (McKenna et al., 2011). Further. Bullies who lack parental supervision have a significant deal of exposure to aggressive behaviors often have an impulsive temperament (Kazdin & Rottella, 2009). Family is the foundation of a child's training relating to societal norms (Benitez et al., 2006), and children acquire many skills through modeling behaviors from parents, peers, and the community environment (Calonge, 2015). Therefore, bullying is a learned behavior acquired from family and friends with similar bully behaviors (Fried et al., 2011). But there are no particular characteristics, shapes, or sizes of bullies (Strauss Esmay Associates, 2011).

Bullies pick on others many reasons, such as race, religion, or sexual orientation, and victims often have done nothing to provoke them (Espelage, 2010). Students often experience unfavorable treatment by peers because of their ethnicity (Bellmore, 2011). Additionally, children who have been bullied often bully others (Marini, 2011; Rose et al., 2011). However, no single reason for bullying exists among children. Children are bullied individually, sometimes by family members, peers in schools when away from adult supervision, and in school and community environments (Bellmore, 2011).

Research also says that boys and girls bully differently. Boys tend to be more aggressive, more accepting to bullying, and have a higher percentage of bullying (Hymel, 2011). Boys who bully have 8.4% higher aggressive behaviors than girl bullies (Nursel et al., 2013). Boys tend to report more bullying than girls, whereas girls report being a

victim of bullying more than boys (Hymel et al., 2015). Additionally, girls tend to bully other girls, in most instances indirectly through peer groups. Girls spread hurtful rumors, experience sexual bullying, and receive sexual messages from bullies (Vaillancourt et al., 2011). Although boys and girls engage in all forms of bullying, there are differences in bullying across sex, age, context, and culture (Hymel et al., 2015).

A student's age, family unity, the level of education, and occupation of the parent has had no bearings on bully impact (Nursel et al., 2013); thus, school bullying has caused emotional and physical harm to students on every grade level across the country. One example is the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, where the shooter was a former student who was troubled and had been expelled (Nursel et al., 2013). On December 14, 2012, twenty-six people were shot and killed at Sandy Hook Elementary by a 20-year-old former student who was described as having "had significant mental health issues that affected his ability to live a normal life and to interact with others" (Sandy Hook School Shooting, 2013 p. 2). Another example is it was the Virginia Tech College shooting in which the shooter was also reported to have mental health problems (Virginia Tech Shooting Leaves 32 Dead, 2007). In the Columbine High School massacre, both perpetrators were reported to have mental issues, but one was described as a "callously brutal mastermind" (These are the deadliest School Shooting in U.S. history, 2018) Despite the laws, policies, and safety school programs, violence and bullying remain significant issues in schools (Jace, 2011). Moreover, there is little research on the problem or how to approach best practices for effective bully prevention and overall safety in U.S. schools (Trump, 2018).

Health Issues Associated with Bullying

Rose, Espealage, Aragon, and Elliott (2011) and Shapiro (2010) reported researchers have documented various difficulties associated with bullying. Such difficulties include children suffering from psychological problems, such as anxiety, depression, loneliness, and post-traumatic stress that may heighten the risk of suicide. Bullies may experience peer rejection, behavior problems, anxiety, and have academic difficulties that are also associated with psychological issues (O'Brian et al., 2009; Rose et al., 2011). However, bullies often display character traits of being confident, fearless, and socially astute (Kazdin et al., 2009).

Trump (2012, 2018) referred to the Department of Education and the Department of Justice data to conclude that “1,183,700 violent crimes [were] committed in the 2007-2008 school years in American public schools. According to the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, at least 50% of children are bullied and 10% of these children are victims of bullying regularly (Nishima & Juvonen, 2005). The 1990s, the Columbine school shooting reports emphasized the seriousness of bullying when the shooters, Eric David Harris and Dylan Bennet Klebold's, initial report stressed that they were long-term victims of peer bullying (Swearer, 2010). Experts suggest isolation and rejection were risk factors relating to the Sandy Hook Elementary school shooter, Adam Peter Lanza, in Newton, Connecticut (Landau, 2012). Terry (2014) reported Jalen Russel, the North Carolina school shooter, had reported chronic bullying to school officials, parents and other family members continuously, including the day he shot his bully.

Terry stated bullying should not be considered just a part of growing up, and this phenomenon demands everyone's attention.

As Juvonen, Graham, and Schuster (2003) reported, bullying and being a victim of bullying has been recognized as a health problem. Children associated with these health issues have adjustment problems (Trofi, Farrington, Losel, & Loeber, 2011, 2014)—some include mental health issues and violent behaviors. McKenna, Hawk, Mullen, and Hertz (2011) stated multiple studies show an association between substance use, poor academic achievement, mental health, and bullying. However, Sroka (2013) reported some experts do not see bullying as a cause, but rather as a symptom of a mental health problem that stems from depression, suicide ideation, anxiety, anger, family violence, and substance abuse destructive behaviors. Moreover, bully victims are at a higher risk for displaying mental health problems that may involve delinquent behavior (Tobin, Schwartz, Gorman, & Abou-eeddine, 2005).

Short term effects of bullying include victims experiencing psychological problems, such as depression, anxiety, and eating disorders; other victims develop psychosomatic issues and bodily complaints, such as headaches or stomach aches before school, during, or after school when the victim faces the bully (Smokowski & Holland, 2005). Victims may also experience loneliness, humiliation, insecurity, loss of self-esteem, and thoughts of suicide (Smokowski & Holland, 2005).

According to Farrington and Trofi (2010), there are short- and long-term physical and mental health effects on children who bully and the bullied victim. Smokowski et al. (2013) reported both bullying and being a victim of bullying have been recognized as a

health problem. Gini and Pozzoli (2013) stated scientists found 14% of children who suffered repeated bullying from childhood to their teenage years ended up in prison as adults. Mental illnesses sometimes limit their opportunity to develop healthy or effective social skills. Moreover, bullying victims have a higher risk of displaying mental health problems that may involve delinquent behavior (Swearer, 2010). One of the most serious long-term effect of bullying is suicide (Hertz, Donato, & Wright, 2013).

The new wave of research on the effects of bullying proves that bullying leaves an imprint on a teenager's brain at a time when it is still developing (Athen, 2010).

Neurobiological research correlates extreme peer victimization and peer abuse to the release of cortisol (Vaillancourt et al., 2011), which increases when a person is exposed to a stressor (Miller, Chin, & Zhou, 2007) and may also be problematic if decreases in cortisol occur (Miller et al., 2007). Bullied children have demonstrated anxiousness, suicidal ideology, are struggling in school if they show up, carrying weapons, getting into fights, and using drugs (Anthes, 2010).

Antibullying Intervention and School Prevention

School bullying has been a documented problem for more than 150 years (Hymel & Swearer, 2015). The National School Safety Center reported bullying is persistent and underrated in the United States (Smokowski et al., 2013). Despite the new increasing need for safety programs in schools, policies and practice strategies are a team effort (Fried & Sosland, 2011). According to the principal surveys on School Crime and Safety 2010, data on the frequency of bullying, safety programs, and the use of behavior modification (disciplinary plan) may provide information to assist bullying issues in

students at all grade levels (Konishi, Hymel, Zumbo, & Li, 2010). Further, Konishi et al. (2010) stressed the importance of student-teacher connectedness and that this collaboration has proven to be an effective protective factor when combating bullying and raising academic achievement. O'Brian and Furlong (2010) also found students who report low student-teacher or school connectedness complain more peer victimization relating to bullying occurs.

Bradshaw, Sawyer, and O'Brian (2007) asserted school administrators are not accurate enough regarding the level of bullying. School principals may address bullying by (a) focusing on the school climate; (b) collecting data related to bullying; (c) raising awareness and seeking out bullying prevention early; (d) coordinating and integrating prevention efforts; (e) providing training on bullying itself; (f) responding consistently and appropriately when bullying happens; (g) establishing and enforcing clear rules and policies that address bullying; (h) increasing adult supervision; and (i) continuing these efforts. Other research suggests the most effective ways to combat bullying in schools are to implement schoolwide programs that define bullying and provide social norms relating to aggressive retaliation, and have teachers and administration develop curriculum and schoolwide strategies for communicating prevention efforts for victims and bullies (O'Brian et al., 2011). Such strategies include implementing anger management programs and implementing administrator, teacher, and parent training with positive behavior strategies (O'Brian et al., 2011). Cowan (2013) discussed specific effective school safety efforts and actions principals can take to promote safe and successful schools. The researcher stated policies and funding that support comprehensive school

safety and mental health efforts are critical to ensuring universal and long-term sustainability (Cowan, 2013).

Principals face a number of challenges when addressing bullying in schools. For example, staff and students have different views and perceptions on the extent of bullying (Bradshaw et al., 2007). Students are reluctant to report bullying to administrators and school officials because peers label them a tattler or snitch (Bradshaw et al., 2011). More importantly, 93% of the employees reported their school district implemented bully prevention programs and policy, but only 54% of the employees reported their bully prevention training related to bullying (O'Brian et al., 2011).

Educators and school officials report bullying from preschool to high school. Fried et al. (2011) provided relevant information about education and childcare program reporting that showed children demonstrate domination and aggression in early stages. If a bossy child is not taught how to manage his or her behavior, that child may become a bully (Fried et al., 2011).

The prevalence of frequent involvement in bullying has a timeline: it is said to increase during the elementary school years, peak during the middle school years, and decline in high school (OBrennan & Bradshaw, 2007). In 2007, students ages 12–18 (elementary, middle and high school) reported they were afraid because of attacks or harm done to them at school; 3% of students were afraid of attacks or harm away from school (BJS-Indicator 17). This same age group of students reported they avoided a school activity or one or more places in the school because of fear of attack or harm (BJS-Indicator 18). Research on bullying in various U.S. K–12 educational settings has

shown that bullies in elementary and middle school are on average more likely to take part in intimidating behaviors, eventually leading to more serious crimes in high school and adulthood (Smokowski et al., 2013). Fried et al. (2011) reported middle school is the foundation of peer-to-peer relationships. Bullying peaks from ages 11 to 14 (Fried et al., 2011). Robers, Zhang, and Truman (2010) asserted students ages 12 to 18 (elementary, middle and high school) were afraid because of attacks or harm done to them at school. Sroka (2013) found 3% of students were afraid of attacks or harm away from school. Students also reported they avoided a school activity or one or more places in the school because of fear of attack or harm (Sroka, 2013). Therefore, because school bullying can happen anywhere, it is important to be prepared and not afraid to seek assistance from family, peers, and adults (O'Brian et al., 2011; Sroka, 2013).

Researchers provide information on how often students report bullying in schools and what schools are doing to combat this. O'Brian et al. (2011) stated administrators, teachers, and parent's development curriculum and schoolwide strategies to assist in student communication and prevention efforts implemented for victims and bullies. Training should include both positive behavior strategies and student anger management strategies (O'Brian et al., 2011).

Ross and Horner (2008) addressed two issues relating to school bully programs: bullying is a costly problem in U.S. schools, and bully training is related to learning what a respectful behavior looks like and how to handle a disrespectful student. However, some bullying training programs do not address bullying and how to handle bully issues

(Ross et al., 2008). Ferguson, Miguel, Kilburn, and Sanchez (2007) asserted antibullying programs are too diverse and need to be more structured and similar across the states.

Cowan (2013) reported principals can take specific effective school safety efforts and actions to promote safe and successful schools; these actions should be implemented accurately and used consistently throughout the school. Mishna (2012) stated principals must develop or promote interventions based on research and information relating to effective programs and components that target particular issues. Although district administrators are responsible for the selection of the overall antibullying programs (Dowson, 2011), the outcomes of the antibullying program success remains uncertain (Ferguson et al., 2007). Reports show that half of the practitioners do not use scholarly references or federal registered data to change bullying interventions as needed (Farrington et al., 2009).

School violence disrupts the educational process, individuals, bystanders, and the surrounding community (Henry, 2000). The entire school and community need to have a total understanding of the consequential effects of bullying to better serve the needs of students (OBrennan & Bradshaw, 2006). Mixed reviews exist on the overall success results of bully-prevention efforts (Merrell, Guedner, Ross, & Isava, 2008; Rigby, 2006; Smith, Schneider, Smith, & Ananiadou, 2004). Researchers suggested that comprehensive programs are the best way to combat bullying (Brown, Birch, & Kancherla, 2005). Griffin and Gross (2004) contended the critical reason bully-prevention efforts suffer is because it is difficult to conceptualize and measure bullying. These programs focus on changing the dynamics of the school and the social norms of

the group (Brown et al., 2005). Cowan (2013) believed the best practices for creating safe and successful schools begins with fully integrated learning supports that include behavioral mental health and social services instruction and cohesive school management approaches to a multidisciplinary collaboration. Warren (2014) asserted schools should require students to seek an understanding of others' perspectives as a prerequisite to an effective classroom strategy. Myers (2003) stated to promote social cohesion, the teachers' enthusiasm and personal warmth assist in increasing student affinity in the classroom.

In addition, this research includes selected articles relating to bullying and safety programs. Fried and Sosland (2011) published several books on bullying and safety programs. O'Brian, Bradshaw, and Sawyer (2009) examined developmental differences in the social-emotional problems among bullies and frequent victims who were bullied. Vossekuil et al. (2000) researched the U.S. Safe School Initiative to provide an interim report on the prevention of targeted violence in schools.

The theory that the researcher used is operant conditioning developed by Skinner (1938) to study undesirable behavior by removing the reinforcer and replacing it with desirable behavior by reinforcement. This theory indicates that a person's behavior can be shaped. Shaping is an experimental process used in operant conditioning by which successive approximations of a target behavior are reinforced. Cowan, Vailancourt, Rossen, and Pollitt, (2013) also developed best practices for creating safe and successful schools. This framework is supported by educators who agree on employing a combined effort to address climate, school safety, and learning. As applied to my study, this theory

holds that my independent variable, bullying, influences the dependent variables, safety program components, behavior modifications, and urban location because creating a safe and orderly learning environment is essential when educating and preparing students to achieve their highest potential to contribute to society (Limber, 2010. Limber et al., 2004, 2006).

The purpose of the present study is to learn more about the lived experiences of school administrators regarding school safety programming with an emphasis on bullying. The purpose of this is to assist in creating a safe and orderly learning environment for students. Duncan's (2010) questions provide the basis for my research interview questions relating school safety, school safety programs and bullying. The interview questions on school safety were first implemented to report findings on crime and violence in U.S. public schools. The questions were initially designed and employed in the 2006 school year for the parent-teacher administration, parent-teacher organization, and school administrators to answer questions for concerned parents and faculty on the safety of their schools. This was the basis of the study. Other studies are conducted yearly by the NCES who developed and managed research within the Institute of Education Science and supported by the Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools of the U.S. Department of Education (NCES, 2017). Also, the School Survey on Crime and Safety requests public school principals to provide frequencies of incidents relating to attacks in schools, school programs, disciplinary actions, and policies implemented to prevent and reduce crime for safe schools, but this secondary data was not used because

of the restricted data unavailable to complete an accurate study. Therefore, Duncan's (2010) instrument was the best choice for this study.

School Safety

School Safety is defined as providing a safe, thriving environment for students to learn and staff to work (Homeland Security and Emergency Management, 2008).

According to author Ken Trump, communities across nation are concerned with dialogue on school safety due to the school shootings (2018). The National School Safety Center (2002) stated that a safe school is a place where the business of education can be conducted in a welcoming environment free of intimidation, violence and fear.

Principals are the leaders of their buildings and need the full support of the School Board and Superintendent of their district to make school safety high priority (Boyd, n.d.). The National School Safety Center asserted (2002) that it is important for administrators to recognize that no one person or group can ensure safe schools. The administrator's goal should be to encourage, promote and foster a safe and welcoming school climate (National School Safety Center, 2002). Moreover, safe schools cannot be created without safe communities. The two are closely related, therefore safe schools may be accomplished by collaboration with community leaders. An example provided is a local mall created a shopper's code of conduct for students.

Boyd (2018) asserted that a successful school safety plan is based on who manages and controls the plan and who in the community is in position to provide the funds; funding is important for the success of the safety plan. Once a safety plan is created, implemented and financed --administrators, faculty, staff, parents and student

need to train for the emergency (Trump, 2018). Zaher (2017) asserts that the safety plan needs to be ready at a moment's notice. One example of not being prepared is when a school principal stated roof of his school building was on fire, he had the students, faculty and staff evacuate, but he wasn't sure if everyone was out of the building (Zaher, 2017). Another example of not being prepared is the story of a small rural high school. A counselor had a boy student that she knew well because she was his guidance counselor. On the last day regular classes, the boy, drove home, got his gun and came back to school and killed a fellow classmate (Zaher, 2017). Trim (2014) states, the biggest threat to school safety is not the gun, it is the lack of prepared strategies to address the more pervasive safety problems. Schools need to have unplanned safety drills and they have to work their safety plans constantly (Zaher, 2017).

When faculty, staff, parents and students are involved with the safety plan and practices, the plan is better for all concerned because everyone's concerns are addressed (Boyd, 2018). Boyd (2018) stated that classified and certified staff play an intricate part creating and planning a detail safety plan that takes a long time to complete. Therefore, it is challenging to get the whole school to create, sustain and remain motivated to get it done.

School Safety Plans in Place

March of 2018, President Trump unveiled a gun control school safety plan that seeks to steer military vets and retired cops to provide firearm training for certain qualified school personnel (Schultz & Golding, 2018). Also, for technology and school violence prevention, President Trump requested Congress to pass legislation that was

pending to strengthen the background checks on gun buyers which is \$50 million dollar annually (Schultz and Golding, 2018). The Minnesota School Safety Center which is part of the Minnesota Department of Public Safety Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management has a Comprehensive School Safety Guide (2011). Its first safety guide, Model Crisis Management Policy and school's emergency procedures document was issued by the Minnesota Department of Education and the Minnesota Department of Public Safety in 1999. Since then, it was revised in 2005 and published in 2008. Minnesota's Comprehensive School Safety Guide includes an influx of examples, guides, procedures, resources and tools for this model for emergency planning (Homeland Security and Emergency Management, 2008).

Researchers who studied program development believe students, teachers, and parents should be surveyed in the initial phase of developing the program about bullying occurrences (American Federation of Teachers, 2000; Northwest Regional Education Laboratory, 2001; Olweus, 1996; Shellard, 2002). These surveys should ask questions about when, where, how, and with whom bullying occurs in that specific school district. Moreover, a committee of faculty and staff should thoroughly review the disparities between the students, teachers, and parents (American Federation of Teachers, 2000; Northwest Regional Education Laboratory, 2001; Olweus, 1996; Shellard, 2002).

The Missouri Center for Education Safety has emergency operation planning for K–12 schools to entrust and provide a safe and healthy learning environment. This plan includes the Five Preparedness Mission: Prevention, Protection, Mitigation, Response and Recovery (Missouri Center for Education Safety, 2016). Each year, Missouri holds a

Safe Schools and Colleges conference with many presentations and trainings: Assessing the Credibility of Treat Toward Schools, Behavior Issues on School Buses, Bomb Threats Management, Current Drug Trends 2016, Cyber Security, School Safety Legal updates, MO Behavior Risk Assessment, Litigating the Locker Room: Transgender Issues, Vulnerability Risk Hazard Assessment, and What is Safety Assessment (Missouri Center for Education Safety, 2016). In addition, Missouri has the Stopbullying.gov school site on each school web page that explains how to talk about bullying, prevention at school, working in the community, and a bully prevention training center (U.S. Health and Human Services, 2016; Vaillancourt & Edgerton, 2015). In Addition, Missouri provides set policies and rules for school staff that may assist in preventing bullying. A guide for various consequences for violations includes types of rules and policies, integrating rules and policies into school's culture, and an established reporting system. These bully prevention policies and rules clearly describe how students are to treat one another (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2016).

MCES (2016) held school safety workshops on updates to keep schools safe in the following cities in Missouri 2017: Springfield, Kansas City, Columbia, Kirksville, Cape Girardeau, and St. Charles. The workshops were scheduled from 9:00 am to 2:00 pm and the agenda included the following topics: school safety legal updates, CES program update, and what schools need to know about cyber security (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2016). Moreover, Stopbullying.gov provides a bullying prevention training course video and a Missouri school violence hotline for parents, educators, and law enforcement with four ways to report bullying: calling 866-748-7047,

using a 24/7 online reporting form, downloading the free MO Reportit App, or texting to 847411 using the keyword “Reportit” and including school name and city (Department of Social Services, Children’s Division, School Violence Hotline, 2015; U.S. Department of Education, 2011, 2014, 2015).

Behavior Modification Therapy and School Safety Programs

McLeod (2014) provides an overview of Skinner’s (1938, 1953) behavior modification therapy. The basis of this behavior modification therapy consists of making changes to the environmental events relating a person’s behavior (Pappas, 2014). The researcher further stated that the facilitator either ignores the negative behavior of the person or punishes the individual when he or she displays negative behavior (Pappas, 2014). McLeod (2014) noted sometimes the facilitator may have to employ the use of some behavior strategies with the individual that may change his or her behavior.

Behavior modification is primarily used in clinical and educational psychology for students with behavior and learning disabilities (Booth et al., 2015). McLeod (2014) and Martin (1988) provided examples to explain these behavior modification therapies that include token economy and behavior shaping. Booth et al. (2015) asserted that token economy is used specifically in primary and elementary schools. According to Clinger, Myles, Terry, and Dula (2015), in a traditional classroom, token economy applies to strategies relating to student management, rather than the learning content. However, Pappas (2014) reported Skinner believed the goals for educators were to train students in survival skills and to extinguish behaviors, such as bullying, to benefit self and society.

A standard set of classroom preparations exist to establish an effective behavior modification program. Depending on the age of the students in the class, reinforcement strategies can be used to maintain proper behavior (Calonge, 2015). Fried et al. (2009) asserted reinforcement strategies work best in groups when students are in the same grade level. The ideal numbers of students for behavior modification programs are 40–60 students or less (Fried et al., 2011). Kazdin et al. (2009) reported key factors to effectively eliminate bullying: (a) Increase awareness of bullying with an influx of meetings for bullies, parents, students, teachers, and victims; (b) Provide teacher incentives and more support and opportunities for students to get involved by changing the school environment; (c) Make the bully a key theme by providing regular class meetings and explicit school policies; (d) Convey clear classroom rules that say bullying is not allowed; (e) Have teachers continue to watch and check on past bully victims; (f) Administer student questionnaires and track bullying anonymously, as well as have schoolwide evaluations and monitoring; (g) Use buttons, posters, and mailings to keep everyone involved and the message salient; and (h) Interview students to continue the education process and evaluation program.

Cowan, Vailancourt, Rossen, and Pollitt (2013) reported the role of the school as a resource for antibullying is important to the larger community. Factors in the students' community environment outside of school that may include family circumstances, health and economic conditions are relevant and may influence students' behavior, life and learning (Banks, 2012). Basic strategies for antibullying involve parents and guardians,

educators, and leaders in the community who are a major part of the educational process (Cowan et al., 2013).

Farrington and Ttuti (2009) reviewed and meta-analyzed the effectiveness of programs designed to reduce bullying in schools. The researchers found 622 reports concerned with bully prevention and evaluated 44 out of 53 school-based antibullying programs relating to reducing bullying victimization (Farrington et al., 2009). Of these programs subjected to “systematic and empirical review (Ferguson et al., 2007), on average, the findings showed a 20–23% decrease in bullying and a 17–20% decrease in victimization (Farrington et al., 2009). According to Ferguson et al. (2009), traditional antibully programs follow the Olweus model.

Olweus developed the National Campaign for a Bully Prevention Program against bully behaviors because three Norwegian boys, ages 10 to 14, committed suicide because of severe bullying by their classmates (Calonge, 2015; Olweus, 1993). The Olweus program is considered effective and it made the best practices list (Osher & Dwyer, 2006). Within 2 years after Olweus introduced the systematic school-based bullying intervention, more than 50% of the bullying incidents declined (Calonge, 2015).

Olweus’s (1982) program included some of the same strategies as Kazdin’s school-based intervention program (Kazdin et al., 2009). Olweus’s (1982) bully program goals are to reduce and prevent bullying problems and to improve peer relationships in school (Fried et al., 2011).

The National School Safety Center noted that courts expect schools to provide a physical environment conducive to the purpose of an education institution, but the school

may not be expected to ensure the guarantee of safety of students (Robers, Zhang, & Truman, 2010). The rights to safe schools include the safety of students and staff with protection against criminal activities, such as bullying, student crime, and violence (Fried & Sosland, 2009). Adequate supervision can prevent or protect against potentially dangerous students who are identifiable as well as dangerous persons admitted to school in a negligent manner (Fried & Sosland, 2011). However, some school personnel were insufficiently aware or inattentively unaware of the degree of student bullying or victimization in school (Cedeno & Elias, 2011).

Smokowski et al. (2013) reported the National School Safety Center finds that prevention programs for victims, bullies, and bully-victims are all affected by peer and bullying interaction. Some school safety programs with effective strategies for safe and successful schools develop those strategies from student surveys (Smokowski et al., 2013). However, Cowan, Vailancourt, Rossen, and Pollitt (2013) used student, educator, and school counseling reports to developed best practices for creating safe and successful schools.

One out of five of the behavior interventions include mental health needs of students who are bullied (Kelly, 2011). According to Dowson (2011), bully intervention prevention programs, school counselors, and school psychologists state they have limited control of the selections of antibullying programs but have professional training in mental health interventions. Therefore, for a behavior modification program to be effective, the educator must break down the desired complex behavior into a number of small steps (Dowson, 2011).

In 2007, 30 states have policy trends that enact harassment, intimidation, and bullying legislation that requires or recommends bullying education, prevention, and strategies for districts and all school levels (Calonge, 2015). However, Fried et al. (2011) confirmed 45 states passed antibullying legislation but they differ from state to state. Since President Barack Obama's 2009 presidential campaign, the white house enacted education ideas for radical change that included strategies to prevent bullying (Fried et al., 2011). Moreover, the office of OCR's team of 600 attorneys, investigators, and staff in 12 regions across the nation are working diligently to ensure equal access to education by meeting the challenges to make schools safe and enforce civil rights laws (Ali, 2012). Kelly (2011) stated 20% of specific school district policies contain counseling provisions of some nonpunitive behavior interventions for students bullying others. The Colorado Trust provides templates by Bullying Prevention Initiatives developers for assessing the school or community and tracking progress of the school's improvement efforts (Calonge, 2015). Roekel (2012) notes that ending childhood bullying may come to criminalizing bullying worldwide.

According to Castro (2011), government efforts enforce federal civil rights laws with respect to race, color, national origin, gender, disability, religion, and sexual orientation, but no policies address bullying and LGBT issues. Cornell and Limber (2015) and Ali (2012) noted that the complexity of bullying and harassment overlaps. Bullying may come under the jurisdiction of human rights and laws in some cases, but only when the officials find that the bully incidents are a repetitive behavior (Ali, 2012). Ali asserted before teachers can educate the students in schools, they need to make

certain that students are safe. According to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, federal civil rights laws have no data to report on the following civil rights issues:

1. The frequency or amount of student-to-student bullying based on a federally protected criteria that is severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive enough to constitute prohibited harassment under federal law for any relevant time period (i.e., that which denies the relevant students' education opportunities);
2. The frequency or amount of such federally prohibited peer-to-peer harassment in subparagraph (a) that K–12 schools did know (or should have known) about and took or were alleged to have taken insufficient action to address.
3. The frequency or number of claims captured in subparagraph that were meritorious for any relevant time period.
4. The frequency or number of instances of harassment in subparagraph.
5. In which federal enforcement agencies played more than a tangential role in resolving a breakdown of such data for subparagraphs (a) and (b) of each class of students protected under federal law (e.g., severe and pervasive bullying that constitutes prohibited harassment based on race, color, national origin, gender, disability, failure to conform to stereotypes regarding the same). Data show changes in subparagraphs (a), (b), (c) and (d) over relevant time periods (e.g., 5- or 10-year intervals or any other relevant time periods). (Castro, 2011)

The school safety policy provides information on how to evaluate and implement actions to create school safety. The courts expect schools to provide a physical environment conducive to the purpose of an education institution (Cornell & Limber, 2015; Stephens, 2002). However, with the diversity of programs and limited knowledge of programs successes, the monies allocated to create a safer school environment School Safety and the efforts from the State and Federal Government (Sherman, 2000) may not guarantee safety of its students (Stephens, 2002).

Bullying has different levels: elementary, moderate and advanced levels. Because of the advanced level of bullying, the Government addresses school safety efforts. On March 14, 2018, Congress began working on school safety initiatives which is a month after the Marjory Stoneman High School shooting that killed 17 people. Immediately after the incident, parents and students rallied to have major changes and initiatives to combat this problem. Betsy DeVos is the Education Secretary for the Trump Administration who is tasked with the formation of a federal school safety plan. The commission will begin to review school safety programs and procedures throughout the country and collaborate on the best practices to implement for schools.

Some efforts include rigorous fair arm safety training and background checks for gun owners. Also, the Trump Administration have pushed for an enactment bipartisan titled "STOP School Violence Act that reauthorizes and amends the Secure our schools grant. The grant is for all states and it is a program that implements "proven" evidence risk. In Kansas, lawmakers have introduced a 5-million-dollar bill for state school safety efforts. Further, the standards must provide for, but aren't limited to:

1. Evaluation of the infrastructure of school buildings and attendance centers for compliance with the State Board's standards.
2. Training of school district employees on school safety and security policies and procedures and conducting student drills on emergency situations.
3. Procedures for notifying individuals located outside of the school building during emergency situations and maintaining communication with law enforcement agencies and others.
4. Procedures of securing school buildings during an emergency.
5. Procedures for emergency evacuation of school buildings, including evacuation routes and sites.
6. Procedures of recovery after an emergency cease.
7. Coordination and incorporation of school safety and security plans with existing school district emergency response plans.
8. Distribution of school safety and security plans for local law enforcement agencies and emergency management agencies.
9. Procedures in ensuring there is accountability for adopting and implementing the school safety and security plan.
10. The State Board must also identify the role of local law enforcement agencies and local emergency management agencies when partnering with school districts in the development and implementation of school safety

and security plans (Copyright 2018 Kansas Association of School Boards. All Rights Reserved).

School Funding

There are differences in school funding in the United States across the country (Biddle, 2002). U.S. funding comes from the federal, state, local sources and nearly half of the funds comes from local property taxes (Darling-Hammond & Post, 2000). Our state school systems generate large funding difference between the wealth (suburban) and impoverished communities (rural and urban). These differences exist from district to district. Suburban property taxes are tremendously higher than the urban property taxes and that is one of the reasons why funding for programs are limited and inadequate (National Center for Education Statistics, (2000b). (See appendix G)

Another reason for limited and inadequate funding in schools across the country is the flawed studies. Researchers, reviewers and others assert that the level of funding for schools does not make a difference or affect student achievement (Darling-Hammond et al, 2000; Rebell, Lindseth, and Hanushek, 2009). Some of the way's researchers make this argument is they base it off studies that show no changes in some school performances, assessments and surveys conducted by individuals who make school funding decisions solely by sources who are "hostile to public education" (Biddle, 2002, p. 3).

There are several school safety funding programs available since the Marjory Stoneman High School shooting: The Project Prevention Grant Program directed millions of dollars to school districts due to pervasive violence which assisted with the cost of

counseling and conflict resolution (Burke, 2018). Another program titled, Promoting School Resilience Grants is a federally funded school safety National Activities Grant which provides federal funds to local education agencies in communities that have “experienced significant civil unrest to address the comprehensive behavioral and mental health of students” (Burke, 2018). Further, there is the School Climate Transformation Grant created to assist with school training to improve behavioral outcomes of students and the 21st Century Community Learning Center Program Funding used for violence prevention (Burke, 2018).

Summary and Conclusion

While a large body of literature pertains to understanding school safety programs; prior studies provide an overview of a comprehensive set of interventions that can be implemented to support a whole-school approach to addressing bullying (Novick, 2013, Trump, 2018). This chapter included the literature on various safety programs that developed and involved effective best practices for creating safe and successful schools. These frameworks are supported by educators and theorists who agree in employing a combined effort to address bully behaviors and support school safety to assist in making students’ overall learning easier while in school.

For a behavior therapy program to be effective, the counselor/educator must break down the desired complex behavior into small steps. These steps include teaching students how, when, and where to report bullying behaviors. This may include counseling and conflict resolution strategies for students in the school and additional assistance for student’s mental health illness. Teachers then inform the student of all consequences and

making sure the counselor/teacher follows through with the process. Moreover, the process involves continued research, training, and discussion that involve the entire school faculty and staff, students, and parents or guardians. Prevention strategies should be in place because of potential problems. Creating procedures to help prevent situations is important, but educators and school officials need to make sure the procedures and strategies are consistent and constant. Because major laws relate to students' rights and teachers' responsibilities, providing appropriate treatment for students and reporting of situations related to possible victimization assist in making sure schools are safe.

The role of the school as a resource for anti-bullying is important to the larger community. Factors relating to the students' environment outside of school include family circumstances, community environment, and health and economic conditions. These factors are relevant and influence students' behavior, life, and learning. Therefore, the basic strategies for the anti-bullying should involve parents and guardians, educators, and leaders in the community for educational success. These groups should have a mandatory training as part of student enrollment for all schools.

Although the complexity of bullying and harassment overlaps, bullying may come under the jurisdiction of human rights and laws in some cases, but only when the officials find that the bully incidents are a repetitive behavior. A reason for the continued bullying revolving door syndrome relates to schools not having to investigate a bullying issue. When and if a student reports bullying, the school may address the incident casually or not at all.

Harassment related incidents, on the other hand, are backed by the established history of civil rights law based on years of advocacy movements. When and if a child reports harassment, every school official has a mandated responsibility to do something according to the law. Further, education officials involved with the school's safety must know and understand the state and federal laws, educate students and parents on the difference between bullying and harassment, and work to implement intervention programs. Teachers need to advise, train, direct, and encourage the student to come forward and report bullying and harassment incidents.

In conclusion, Chapter 2 provided a review of the relevant literature, a synopsis of literature relating to the school safety problems, and a preview of major sections of school safety practices and policies in place. The chapter covered bullying phenomena and Skinner's, Bandura's, and Bruner's theories and how they relate to the study. This chapter also included the practices and policies of school administrators' efforts on school safety that continue to be a work in progress.

Chapter 3: Research Method

In the United States, many students have reported that they are afraid to go to school because of school safety issues (Richmond, 2018). Though providing for safe schools is a national goal, the process of making schools safe with effective school safety programs is a complicated task (Devine & Cohen, 2007). To achieve a safe school, administrators must (a) protect the welfare of students, (b) create effective safety programs, and (c) document and report incidents to the proper officials when warranted (Kazlauskas, 2016). The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine the perception of high school administrations on school safety programs and bullying in suburban high schools such as what has and has not worked to keep students safe in school. I interviewed 12 high school administrators who have first-hand knowledge on the school safety matter.

Research Design and Rationale

I conducted a phenomenological study to answer two research questions:

Research Question 1: What are the experiences and perceptions of suburban high school administrators/principals relating to safety interventions/programs in their respective schools?

Research Question 2: What are the perceptions of school administrators/principals relating to effective organized bullying school safety programs in suburban high schools?

Phenomenology is a qualitative strategy in which the researcher identifies the essences of human experiences about a phenomenon as described by participants (Creswell, 2009). Epoche is important in phenomenological research, which entails

setting aside prejudgment for unbiased interview, so information cannot be felt to be known in advance or felt to be known without internal reflection and meaning (Moustakas, 1994). There are six types of phenomenology: descriptive phenomenology, phenomenology of essences, constitutive phenomenology, reductive phenomenology, phenomenology of appearance, and hermeneutical phenomenology (Spiegelberg, 1975). Descriptive phenomenology stimulates people's perception of lived experiences while emphasizing the richness of those experiences (Streubert & Carpenter, 1999), which involves an intuiting, analyzing, and describing (Brink & Wood, 1998). Second, the phenomenology of essences involves establishing patterns of relationships in the data (Streubert & Carpenter, 1999). Third, constitutive phenomenology describes the process in which the phenomena event takes shape in people's consciousness as they advance from first impression to a full picture (Streubert & Carpenter, 1999). Fourth, reductive phenomenology involves a critical self-examination of personal beliefs and an acknowledgment that the researcher has gained experience (Streubert & Carpenter, 1999). Fifth, phenomenology of appearances involves the researcher watching the phenomenon under study for ways it appears in different perspectives (Streubert & Carpenter, 1999). Lastly, hermeneutical phenomenology focuses on the world that the study participants subjectively experience (Maggs-Rapport, 2000).

There are certain advantages to the phenomenology qualitative research. It has been highly appropriate in research (Wimpenny & Gass, 2000). For example, it helps to understand human emotions such as anger, caring, effort, pain, powerlessness and rejection (Brink & Wood, 1999; Burns & Grove, 1998). Another advantage is that it tries

to uncover concealed meaning in the phenomenon narrative by paying attention to the embedded wording (Sorrell & Remond 1995, as cited in Maggs-Rapport, 2000). Moreover, as a research method, phenomenology is a critical, rigorous, systematic investigation of phenomena on principal interviews on school safety in suburban midwestern high schools (Streubert & Carpenter, 1999). Thus, I identified a phenomenological methodology as the best for this type of study (see Davidson, 2000; Jones, 2001). I used this methodology to expand awareness about a certain phenomenon (school safety programs; Streubert & Carpenter, 1999). The intention of this research was to gather data regarding the perspectives of research participants about the phenomenon of the safety programs and the contribution of education in this process.

I considered other research approaches prior to choosing a qualitative and phenomenological design. I considered using the quantitative method and reviewed secondary data from the School Survey on Crime and Safety. The School Survey on Crime and Safety is considered to be one of the most valid and reliable assessment instruments on School Crime and Safety in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). However, the primary data were confidential. Therefore, the qualitative phenomenological design is most appropriate for this study because it provides analysis of participants lived experiences related to the specific, definable phenomenon (Dawidowicz, 2018). I created two research questions and 10 questions for each participant to complete. The first two of the 10 questions were demonstrative questions, which involved identifying a portion of data to be archived but not analyzed (Lincoln et al, 1985; Nastasi, 2017). These two questions will provide how many years the

participant have been an administrator with information on school safety and the participant's title. The other eight interview questions and instrument was developed after reviewing the instrument—the 10 key research interview questions instrument, which was developed for the parent–teacher administration, parent–teacher organization, and school administrators to determine whether schools adequately provide a safe school for learning (see Appendices A & B; see also Duncan, 2010).

Role of the Researcher

I used a phenomenological approach to allow the participants to explain their experiences and perceptions regarding School Safety Programs and Bullying in their own words. Phenomenologists suggest that the researcher cannot be detached from their own presuppositions (Hammersley, 2000) because they have individual beliefs (Mouton & Marais, 1990). However, using the phenomenological approach was intended to limit possible researcher bias (Moustakas, 1994).

Recruitment, Participation, and Data Plan Analysis

I employed the phenomenological approach in the present study because it allowed participants (principals) to explain their perspectives and experience in their own words, which allowed me to seek a holistic understanding of their experiences with school safety programming and bullying in suburban high schools (Creswell, 2009). I analyzed the experiences of the 12 Catholic suburban high school administrators or principals or (vice principal, counselors, deans from the Archdioceses of St. Joseph school district) concerning school safety. The present research was designed to understand the lived experiences of the school administrations in the context of bullying

and the programs and ideas aimed at reducing bullying. For example, I examined whether there are consistencies or differences by the types of programs and interventions used in schools. Suburban schools were selected because many of the recent school shootings and violent events in schools took place in suburban schools.

Instrumentation

I created a data collection instrument for the interview questions, allowing participants to articulate their experiences, personal feelings, and thoughts about school safety intervention programs and bullying in suburban high school. This study's data collection instrument is based on the interview protocol by Castillo-Montoya (2016). The protocol included the following components: (a) use of a document with a heading, date, place, interviewer, interviewee assigned code number, and particular characteristics (for each participant); (b) instructions for the interviewee to read and follow to ensure standard procedures are for all participants, and (c) two ice breaker questions followed by eight interview questions. I also probed for participants to elaborate, explain, or follow-up on what they said. I audiotaped and typed answers while the participants responded so the questions were spaced between each question or typed the answers after the interview while in the building. Then I allowed the participant to review the document to make sure the answers to the questions are written accurately. I gave each participant a thank-you card to acknowledge time and a 20-dollar gift certificate for completing the interview. I documented additional information about the interview later that reflected information about the event that was interesting and or unusual (Castillo-Montoya, 2016; Creswell, 2009).

The data collection steps for this qualitative study included the boundaries for the study, the process of collecting information through semi structural interviews was useful when participants could not be directly interviewed. The researcher audiotaped the telephone interviews and used the internet email for online interview scheduling. In some instances, the researcher's presence may have biased responses and not all participants were equally articulate and perceptive, therefore the triangulation process appropriate for this study (Creswell, 2009). The researcher interviewed administrators twice a week and collect all data for the study in two months after approval from Walden University institution (Creswell, 2009).

Purposive sampling adopted to sample 12 suburban high school administrators. Purposive sampling is relevant for this study, because it identifies the essences of human high school experiences about the phenomena school safety described by participants (Creswell, 2009). Also, the purposive sampling allows for a smaller sample to be used because the administrators can provide an in-depth understanding about school safety programs and bullying (Creswell, 2009; Mason 2008).

Interview Questions:

1. What are your experiences with safety intervention/programs?
2. What intervention programs do you have in place for bullying in your school?
3. Do you think that your safety programs receive enough funding?

Elaborate on yes or no answer.

4. What is your perception of how the safety intervention programs assist your students, teachers, and parents? Please provide examples.
5. In your perception, what is the most the effective bullying safety intervention/ program in your school? If you only have one, please comment on its effectiveness.
6. What is your perception of your school counselors' experiences regarding your school's safety intervention/programs and bullying in your school?
7. What are some of the most valuable things you have learned working in the area of school safety that you think could be valuable to other people who work in this field.
8. What have you learned about school safety training for faculty and staff that may benefit principals and their schools?

This researcher transcribed (type) the interview responses to ensure the accuracy of the transcription. The researcher asked for clarification for each answer; this particular process allowed the participants to review their transcribed responses after the interview and make and adjustments (Shenton, 2004).

Trustworthiness

Credibility, which is similar to internal validity, was enhanced through the use of transcript review (Moustakas, 1994). Therefore, I allowed the participants to member check by reviewing their individual transcripts and make any changes prior to saving information for the study (Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas (1994) states that the purpose of establishing credibility is to ensure that the findings of interview review are accurate.

Further, the raw data reflects participants experiences and they are the only people qualified to confirm their individual accuracy (Moustakas, 1994). Because of this, the process prevents misinterpretation and ensures that the data are trustworthy (Nastasi, 2017).

Transferability, not equivalent to external validity, is designed to allow an audience and other researchers to determine whether it is reasonable to apply your study's methods and conditions to their research (Shenton, 2004). This sample comprise principals/administrators' participants of suburban high schools. Ethnicity and physical location are not a criterion for participation; however, I excluded administrator participants with less than three years of experience to ensure participants have experienced school safety issues that also include experience with bullying. Also, I provided thick description of detailed accounts of field experiences (Holloway, 1997). These criteria ensured that the information collected and the conclusions drawn are useful to a wider population of principals and school administrators (Nastasi, 2017).

This researcher, established dependability, or reliability, through the use of an audit trail (Moustakas, 1994). An audit trail is a transparent description of the researcher's steps taken from the start of a research project to the development and reporting of findings (Lincoln et al, 1985). I documented the data collection and analysis processes to explain the interpretation of the data which is an in-depth approach to illustrating that the findings are based on the participants' narratives and involve describing how the researcher collected and analyzed the data in a transparent manner (Moustaka, 1994). During the interviews, the researcher recorded the interviews, and all

transcripts' responses were verified to confirm the accuracy of responses. Shenton (2004) stated that it is the responsibility of the researcher to make sure that sufficient contextual information about fieldwork sites is provided and that the sufficient thick description of the phenomenon under investigation is provided to enable the reader to make such transfer. Thus, the dependability of the research should attempt to enable a future investigation to repeat the study if not necessarily to achieve the same results (Shenton, 2004). Therefore, this documentation process is intended to allow other researchers to repeat my research study. So, the goal is to ensure that all factors, including researcher bias, that could potentially affect the results are accounted for (Nastasi, 2017).

To ensure Prolonged Engagement, this researcher developed a rapport and trust between researcher and members to facilitate an understanding and co-construction of meaning while in suburban high school setting (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Nastasi, 2017). This allowed the researcher to also focus on the persistent observation which identifies those characteristics and elements in the suburban high school situation that are most relevant to the school safety problem including bullying (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Nastasi, 2017).

To promote content validity this researcher employed a strategy known as triangulation. To accomplish this, the research sought multiple perspectives; the research collected data from several administrators from various Missouri and Kansas Catholic private suburban high school locations. Also, three of the research interviews were face to face and the other were collected by telephone interviews. This study analyzed a coding process for the initial Ice Breaker coding questions. This type of coding was

chosen to provide information about the characteristic of the administrator and examine, compare and search for similarities and differences throughout the data. The eight questions will be separated with each question and then the answers from each participant in number order pattern. The basis for each answer will explain answers relating to perceptions and human experiences, the search for causes and explanations to the possible phenomenon, and finally, the platform to construct frameworks and processes (Creswell, 2009; Saldaña, 2009).

To conclude, a Triangulation of the participants and themes (principal, vice principal, counselor and Dean and years of experience) created new levels of understanding the existing knowledge by reviewing the interviews in a comparative analysis with the previous two levels of coding (Saldaña, 2009). This researcher created a spreadsheet to keep track of participants and years of experience interviews. Should the researcher need to follow-up to complete interview for any particular reason, the researcher will add a part B to spreadsheet and audio table with the interviewee's code and will add two dates on the spread sheet and interviewee's document with explanation relating to follow-up interview. A spreadsheet assisted in organizing questions and Sardana answers in the two categories (participants and years of experience; see Tables D1–D3).

Peer debriefing is said to be “a process of exposing oneself to a disinterested peer in a manner paralleling an analytical session”, this is done for the purpose of” exploring aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise remain only implicit within the inquirer's mind” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 308) So this researcher continued to have debriefings

by Chair and Committee members. Thus, Negative Case Analysis consisted of searching for and discussing elements of the data that do not support explanations that are emerging from data analysis (Creswell, 2009). Again, my Chair and Committee Members completed checks (Creswell, 2009).

I used reflexivity to establish confirmability or objectivity of the data. I kept a reflexive journal about my reactions of participants that is intended to establish transparency and mitigate researcher bias. Reflexive journals include the thinking and reactions of the researchers as they gather data (Moustakas, 1994; Nastasi, 2017). In the journal, I documented my responses of the interview, the participants, and the process I used to examine the data.

Ethical Procedures

After each participant agreed to be in the study, the researcher reviewed the informed consent process by asking the participant to send an email with telephone number and a selected time and date from my list to let me know that they are interested in participating in the study. Participation for the study is voluntary, so participants are free to end their interviews at any time without repercussions. If for some reason the participants felt symptoms of anxiety during or after the interviews, the researcher provided them with the name and contact information of Dissertation Chair, Dr. Rodney Ford as a referral source so that they could seek assistance. Participants are protected from harm and the findings are reported in an honest and professional manner without misrepresentation (Leedy and Ormond, 2005). The researcher briefly described the study and provided information in the consent form about the use of the iPhone Audio-

Recorder during the interview. At the conclusion of the interview, this researcher informed the participant that the participant may request a transcript to review the interview. The researcher plans to publish the findings of this study including research interpretation and cohesion in the form of a dissertation at the PhD level.

Summary

In summary, this phenomenological study was designed to interview the experience and perceptions of suburban Midwestern Principals/Administrations who have three years' experience of school safety programs relating to bullying. Participants were recruited through the Archdioceses of St. Joseph's, Missouri suburban Catholic high school participant pool, but the recruitment approach expanded after a month when an invitation letter was posted on selected participants school Facebook pages by superintended of schools after Walden IRB full approval. The intent was to recruit and interview 14 high school suburban administrators (Principals, Vice-Principals, Counselors and Deans) or to meet saturation. I used an audit trail and a reflexive journaling to enhance dependability and confirmability, to reduce the risk of bias, and to ensure that other researchers may replicate my research study.

The participants were chosen based on their administrative type status (Principal, Assistant Principal and their ability to fall into certain criteria (i.e., School Counselor or Dean). This study identified the connections currently missed in the education of teachers, students, and parents when implementing safety and bully programs, policies and procedures. Also, the descriptive phenomenological approach may provide an understanding of the student behaviors relating to safety, how the policies and laws effect

actions and efforts toward combating bullying behaviors, and in making sure that there are stringent consequences for every reported safety incident. The results of this study complimented other research done in this area and further educated others in this area. Chapter 4 discussed the results of the data and the findings. Lastly, Chapter 5 provided a detailed discussion of the entire study, a detailed account of the findings and its meanings, and the implication for social change for this research dissertation.

Chapter 4: Results

The primary purpose of this study was to understand the experiences and perceptions of administrators relating to school safety and bullying. These administrators include high school principals, vice principals, deans, and school counselors with 3 or more years of experience in their present position. The participants' experiences and perceptions added insight to the two research questions addressed in this study. By listening to interviews and analyzing the experiences and perceptions of these administrators, valuable information was obtained regarding safety interventions/programs in participating high schools. In addition, the administrators' perceptions relating to effective organized bullying school safety programs in suburban high schools were also obtained. Chapter 4 identifies the results from participant interviews. The information obtained regarding the two research questions are addressed in addition to the explication of supporting evidence and feedback from participants in the study.

Demographics of Participants

This first two questions were demographic questions. The first of the two was "What is your position/title?" In this study 41.7% of the participants are principals, 25% are counselors, 16.7 % are vice principals, and the other 16.7 % are deans. This study had 12 volunteer administrators who completed interview questions.

The second demographic question was "How many years have you been in your position?" The volunteer participant needed to have a minimum of 3 years' experience to participate in this study. I wanted participants to have an understanding of school safety

intervention programs and bullying. This study has two participants with 3 years' experience, one participant with 4 years' experience, one participant with 8 years' experience, one participant with 13 years of experience, one participant with 14 years' experience, one with 16 years' experience, two participants have 20 years of experience, one participant with 23 years of experience, and two participants with 26 years of experience.

Data Collection and Analysis

The results of this qualitative study are based on 12 participant interviews in suburban high schools in the Midwest from two different states (Kansas and Missouri) in the United States. All administrators voluntarily participated in the study. Principals of the Archdiocese of St. Joseph high schools were initially solicited through social media networking outlets by contacting superintendents for school districts approved to participate. Those superintendents and principals then contacted some of their colleagues, who also agreed to volunteer to be part of the study. Twelve participants in this study were recruited from nine different districts around the Midwest and in one large Archdiocese.

Participants in the present study were principals, vice principals, deans, or school counselors and have been in those high school roles for 3 or more years. Five were principals, two were vice principals, and some participants had dual roles. One held the position of principal, educator, and coach. One principal taught one class of advanced geometry and coached boys' and girls' basketball. The other dual positions identified by participants in this study included business, religious studies, English, and PE. More

information about the 12 interviewees and data analysis questions responses are included in Appendix D.

All 12 participants received the initial interview protocol information about the study questions. All interview questions were asked exactly as they were written. However, I often followed up the structured questions along with probing open-ended questions such as, “Would you elaborate?” “Would you give me an example?” or “What does that intervention program entail?” This was my way to get better understanding of the participants’ experiences and perceptions. The interview questions are as follows:

1. What are your experiences with safety intervention/programs?
2. What intervention programs do you have in place for bullying in your school?
3. Do you think that your safety programs receive enough funding? Elaborate on yes or no answer.
4. What is your perception of how the safety intervention programs assist your students, teachers, and parents? Please provide examples.
5. In your perception, what is the most the effective bullying safety intervention/ program in your school? If you only have one, please comment on its effectiveness.
6. What is your perception of your school counselors’ experiences regarding your school’s safety intervention/programs and bullying in your school?

7. What are some of the most valuable things you have learned working in the area of school safety that you think could be valuable to other people who work in this field.
8. What have you learned about school safety training for faculty and staff that may benefit principals and their schools?

All interviews were conducted during January and February 2021. Each participant was interviewed over the telephone, which was an effective and necessary way to communicate with participants due to COVID-19. The phone interviews, along with a created scripted presentation to each participant, also allowed for convenient transcription of the recorded interviews. Interviews were recorded and transcribed through recording on an Apple iPhone and transferred to a Dell laptop computer using a Microsoft Edge transcription application. Interviews were transcribed within a few days of the occurrence of the interviews. Three interviews were conducted on the school campus and were reviewed and discussed with participants. But because taping failed, I contacted participants to confirm notes. Interview times varied, but scheduling remained consistent, occurring daily 9:00am–12:00 pm CST Monday to Friday. I also took journal notes during each interview. Google Forms was used to consolidate data and provide graphs to use Word Cloud Generator by Monkey Learn for graphics.

Interview questions for this study were set in an Excel spreadsheet with moderator, theme code, moderator question and sequence of participants (see Appendix B). I provided each participant with a number. Participants were decided by a simple order of interviews for example, the first interview was with a vice principal, (01), the

second interview was with a counselor (02), and the third interview was with a principal (03). Interviews were initially set with individual interviews of each participant and all their answers. Then, I began to dissect the six themes created from interview questions by similarities and differences, providing an understanding of important concepts and interview strategies that work to keep students safe in school.

Unusual Circumstances

Conducting a pilot study can increase research quality for recruitment rate, participant retention levels, and participant eligibility criteria prior to actual study (Gudmundsdottir & Brock-Utne, 2010). The intent was to locate suburban public-school administrators at North Kansas City High school to pilot the interview questions. However, because participants were more difficult to find due to COVID-19, a pilot study was not conducted prior to the actual research interviews.

Further, I scheduled 15 interviews with the potential participants of the current study; however, one participant sent in answers without an interview, one participant canceled the interview session due to a school emergency, and one participant was an elementary principal (this study is for high school administrator). But the study met saturation after 12 interviews.

Results

In Chapter 2, six themes were presented around school safety intervention programs and bullying. The next section of this chapter describes participants' feedback related to each of these themes:

1. Effective safety intervention programs

2. Mental health—Need for counselors, psychologist, social workers
3. Title funding
4. Parent involvement
5. Language and communication strategies
6. Learned and effective strategies to share with other administrators—
Reporting, training follow up, student empowerment, personal relationship
with God, research/theory, and consistency

Themes 1, 2 3 and 4 answered the first research question: “What are the experiences and perceptions of suburban high school administrators/principals relating to safety interventions/programs in their respective schools?” Themes 5 and 6 addressed the second research question: “What are the perceptions of school administrators/principals relating to effective organized bullying school safety programs in suburban high schools?”

Theme 1: Safety Intervention Programs

Several safety intervention programs were discussed by the participants. Some programs were building schoolwide safety programs, and other programs were more narrow safety programs specifically relating to anti-bullying. Thus, administrators in this research study covered safety on a broad spectrum. Participant 10 said,

Programs are done in a multiple level [policy and procedures manual, suicide ideation, emergency plan]. We have student Anti-Bullying of (National Source of Strength Program). This program trains 70 students over 2 days to be school leaders (3 years of committed training) for students and faculty.

Further, Participant 10 stated,

There is a lot of insecurity about COVID-19. Many of our teachers have anxiety due to the pandemic. Our counselors provided teachers training for COVID and they developed lessons to assist students who had health issues so that they did not get behind. This consisted of online and zoom meetings for students.

Principal 09 listed various types of safety items and measures of safety strategies: building/physical statistical placement security; ID issued; various training (run, hide, fight back); social/emotional kids; suspending kids out with no violence; prevention—looking for early signs; SOS Program Inventory Questionnaire; and Second Step Training (online). Although this is a study for high school administrators, the Second Step Anti-Bullying program was also mentioned eight times from various participants. This program provides instruction on empathy and emotion management, with separate lessons for pre-K through eighth grade (<https://casel.org>).

Another participant stated that their safety intervention programs were done in multiple levels. There was a policies and procedures manual created that included the management of suicide ideation and an emergency plan. Catholic private high schools use a Catholic Archdiocese created policies and procedures manual to train their students. As stated earlier, the National Source of Strength is also used, which is targeted at preventing suicide, bullying, and substance abuse. According to Participant 10, this has been beneficial in this particular high school.

Three participants mentioned having experience working in public and private schools. It was stressed that the violence, bullying, and need for safety is far more

prevalent in the public school system compared to private schools. Since the Columbine High School massacre, schools have completed major school safety program remodeling. One of the participants stated that her school building was 4 years old and everything in the school was designed to keep students, teachers, and staff safe. Schools have cameras inside and out, bag scanners, technology that automatically locks doors, and bullet proof glass windows. Counselor 12 discussed the many safety changes since the Columbine High School Shootings:

I have worked in public and private schools. We have more things in place now as for as safety than what we had before. We have changed the building entrance.

Because of the many instances that have happened at other schools like Columbine High School many years ago. Visitors are buzzed in, they can enter in one door only, they need a scheduled appointment, and they cannot just roam the hallways like before. We also have bullet proof glass windows now.

Other safety intervention programs discussed in this study include Tri County Mental Health as a partnership to the school for students if a referral is need, the “Stop IT APP,” and emergency safety interventions. Counselor 03 mentioned Tri-County Mental Health Services, which serves the Kansas City Area counties of Clay, Platte and Ray County and is a nationally recognized behavioral health service: “Again, we are partner shipped with Tri County Mental Health. Our students also have ways to report bullying anonymously. Some bullying is just kidding around. Second Step program teaches our students how to communicate.”

Principal 06 said that the “Anti-Bullying App titled ‘Stop It’ allows students to report bullying incidents anonymously.” With the app, users can submit anonymous reports containing incidents, text, photos, or video. Administrators are then able to manage incidents in a backend management system called “DOCUMENT it,” which provides investigative tools to staff and faculty and allows them to message with the reporter. This way, the administrators can address issues instantly.

One participant also mentioned that emergency safety interventions are used when student demonstrate serious violence to themselves or others in school (Neuenswander, 2020). This indicated that there have been times when students posed immediate danger to themselves or others at school. Vice Principal 08 asserted,

We have (ESI) emergency safety intervention (which is used as a last resort) are seclusion and restraints used when the student presents a reasonable and immediate danger of physical harm to self or others.

Theme 2: Mental Health Intervention—Need for Counselors, Psychologist, Social Workers

Participants discussed mental health intervention as a possibility for students relating to anti-bully and other social and emotional issues. A mental health intervention can help a student through tragedy, trauma, or through any underlying untreated psychiatric disorder like bullying or vaping, as mentioned by one of the counselor participants in this study. Though it is an alternative to smoking, research suggests that vaping is bad for the heart and lungs and can raise blood pressure or even lead to a heart

attack with spikes in adrenaline and heart rate (“5 Vaping Facts You Need to Know,” n.d.).

Ideally, a counselor, therapist or intervention specialist of some kind is involved in guiding/helping convince a student to get mental health services or medical treatment. Participants stated that their counselors are respected, and their input is valued when making decisions about how to handle a student or students in a bullying incident. School counselors are important to the school body because the counselors create and implement the programs, lessons and trainings for students, faculty, and parents. Moreover, counselors are included in the discussions relating to bullying because they assist administrators in understand behaviors that may need other attention like mental health services. Further, additional counselors, social workers and psychologists have been needed in high schools because of fear of COVID-19, overall safety, and the various social and emotional issues today, according to participants in this study. This study discussed counselors who have their own practice, social workers, psychologists, and academic counselors.

In most cases, bullying can be handled appropriately with school disciplinary and counseling measures. However, bullying behaviors that also meet criteria for illegal behavior, such as assault or extortion are included. These types or matters should be dealt with as deemed appropriate for the circumstances and severity of the individual’s behavior.

Current research shows the implementation of a school counseling programs outlined by the American School Counselor Association have had a positive impact on

students. But these programs require qualified counselors and collaboration with school administration (Mehmood, 2020). Further, high school counselors are uniquely trained educators who understand and promote success for child and adolescent development, learning strategies, self-management and social skills (Mehmood, 2020). Counselors are also trained to service all diverse students in programs that support their important developmental period with emphasis in education, prevention and intervention activities integrated into all of students' lives. Moreover, the implemented counselor programs teach knowledge, attitudes and skills to students needed to acquire "academic, career and social/emotional development, which serve as the foundation for future success" (Mehmood, 2020).

Participants agreed that their high school counselors do not work in isolation; but rather they are integral to the total educational program. They provide a proactive program that engages student empowerment and includes leadership, advocacy and collaboration with school staff, administration and community/family members in the delivery of programs and activities to help students achieve success. High school counselors also collaborate with teachers and parents to assist with much need parent involvement as emphasized by research participants. Some counselors, like psychologist and social workers have their own private practice.

Psychologist's primary role in a School Psychology program is to train the next generation of leaders in research, teaching, clinical practice, and policy in psychology and education focused on solving significant societal challenges. Psychologists are prepared to accepted leadership positions in universities, preK-12 schools, and

community/hospital-based settings. Psychologist professionals are “data-driven, system-wide problem-solvers and change agents who work to address issues facing learners and youth of all ages” (Fagan & Wise, 2000).

School psychologists and school counselors have many overlapping duties. As such, the career titles are commonly confused. But they each have a unique role and scope of practice. School psychologists work to support students through various developmental and mental health issues on an individual level. They focus on assessing and testing students who may qualify for special services have an individual education plan. School counselors also touch on mental health issues, but they tend to work with the entire student population. Counselor’s work can also include crisis intervention and preparing students for future educational and professional experiences (Fagan & Wise, 2000).

School social workers are tasked with some of the same roles as school counselors and school psychologists. School Social Workers are also trained mental health professionals who can assist with mental health concerns, behavioral concerns, positive behavioral support, academic, and classroom support, consultation with teachers, parents, and administrators as well as provide individual and group counseling/therapy in a similar fashion as counselors and psychologist (Baker, 2003). Yet, a School social worker’s position is also specialized. School social workers are often called on to help students, families, and teachers address problems such as truancy, social withdrawal, overaggressive behaviors, rebelliousness, and the effects of special physical, emotional, or economic problems (Barker, 2003).

Principal 06 said,

Our Counselor works 30 hours a week. She had her own practice prior to working for our school; so, she is very knowledgeable. She runs the Peace Builders Program; she trains our teachers and she is very helpful and dedicated to assisting our students.

Principal 09 stated that his school needs more human resources, which consist of hiring Social Workers and Psychologist: “Counselors are essential. Our counselor is very involved, but we need more human resources—Social Workers and Psychologist.”

Principal 10 provided the types of counselors in the school and their specific roles: “We have an Academic Counselor, College Only Counselor and two social and emotional counselors. The social and emotional counselors’ jobs are reactive with an outward positive program.”

Principal 11 stated that the success of the school is due to his counselors:

Counselors are critical to the success in our programs. We include our counselor in all of our bullying reporting because there could be something else behind the bullying. Some other underlying issue that needs to be address as well. Our counselors see things that we may not see or understand.

Counselor 12 stated his school is blessed to have eight counselors:

We have five school counselors and three college counselors. We partner with other private schools and we beg, borrow and steal resources from one another.

We have a program title “Challenge Success.” Our students are evenly split with

the counselors and we have a unique way the students are assigned, keeping siblings together. We are blessed to have 8 counselors in our school.

Theme 3: Funding and Title Funding

Overall, 66.7% of participants answered yes to receiving enough funding for safety programs without any stipulations. One participant said yes, (8.3%) to their school receives enough funding, but the funds are not used appropriately. He stated that his school needs correct resources and there is a need for social workers and psychologist. There were three participants stating their school needs more counselors. Another (8.3%) said that their funding comes from private school tuition, parish tithes, some federal funding (Title IV) and public-school partnership funds that come in for special programs. One participant (8.3%) stated that their funds come from private school tuition and donors. Still another participant (8.3%) agrees funds come from school, church, donors, grants and Title IV federal funding.

Catholic Private Schools receive various types of funding. They receive school tuition for each student. Other funding discussed included alumni funding, private donations from church parishioners, community grants and donations and fund raisers. What this researcher learned was that the Catholic private high schools received Title Funding from the local district public schools. Title Funding from Federal Government for private schools is under Title I and Title IV for local educational agencies that are required to provide services for eligible private school students, as well as eligible public-school students. Title I, Part A are for the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Federal Government Title services must be provided to students, teachers, and families

and are determined after meaningful consultation with all private schools in the area.” Services must be: secular; neutral; and non-ideological” (Title I, Part A Program, 2018).

Title IV Funding from the Federal Government “is composed of two large block grant programs as well as discretionary grant and assistance programs meant to support the comprehensive needs of students in a variety of settings, strengthen family engagement, and bring America’s schools into the 21st century.” These funds can be used to increase access to comprehensive school counseling and psychological services, improve school safety and school climate, and strengthen parent and community engagement which was mentioned continuously by my participants in this study. According to the participants, school counselors and psychologists play a critical role in creating safe and supportive lessons and learning environments that promote student learning.

Counselor 03 stated,

Yes, we don’t have to worry about funding because we are a private school. Some of our funding comes from Tri- County Mental Health programs and we get Title 4 Funding from the Federal Government. The funding from North Kansas City Public school district who distributes funds for various safety programs. There is funding for COVID-19.

Principal #06 is concerned that the school is not getting the correct resources for safety and need social workers and Psychologist: “Yes, but what we need is get correct resources and the schools need Social Workers Psychologist.” Principal 09 stated, “Yes,

we get Title I funds from the Federal Government, grants from donors for the ‘Stop it’ program.”

According to Cornell & Limber (2015) school districts must use 20% of Title funding to improve student mental health, behavioral health, school climate and school safety. Title funding is proportionally distributed among school districts depending on school need. The public school in the Catholic suburban school district allocate the funds and this process works well for the schools.

Principal 10 discussed several programs that is eligible for Title I Funding:

The Anti-Bullying (National Sources of Strength Program) is research based. We also have a program titled STA (study, tutor, assemble) lead by counselors that we get funding for. Yes, we have donors, fund raisers and Title Funding from local public school in Olathe. The Anti-Bullying of (National Sources Strength Program) cost \$5000.00 a year.

Counselor 12 said,

Yes, we are blessed with funding. All we need to do is call the Alumni to get money for speaker to come in to discuss issues if we want. For example, a speaker we had used the example of asking if students would start drinking a random jug of water. The students answered and said they would not do that. The speaker told the students, drinking a random jug of water is the same thing with accepting random drugs. Drugs could harm you if they are not prescribed or used randomly. This speaker was effective with his analogy when presenting to our students.

Theme 4: Parent Involvement

Participants in this study agreed with research that states, “Parent involvement in education is crucial. No matter their income or background, students with involved parents are more likely to have higher grades and test scores, attend school regularly, have better social skills, show improved behavior, and adapt well to school (National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education, 2006).

Participants discussed that they used the family-centered approach where school administrators, teachers and counselors work closely with parents to welcome their involvement with their student. This also included weekly and monthly lessons for students and parents to recognize abuse and practice virtues that are taught and expected for our students to practice.

Counselor 03 said parents are included in their safety education:

We always tell students and teachers if they see something to tell us. The Second Step program teaches them how to communicate issues and problems appropriately. If they see something suspicious to tell us and they do. We have courses designed to educate students and teachers on Anti-Bullying, Alcohol, Drugs, Safety and Vaping. Parents are included in our safety education process and are involved once we get to that step in our process.

Principal 09 mentioned COVID-19 is an issue and agreed that the parent involvement is missing: “COVID-19 is an issue. Intervention programs are great, but we need more peer-to-peer intervention effectiveness. The parent piece is missing—parents

need to be more informed on overall school issues. Guided Question for safety intervention programs.”

Principal 11 said,

The ultimate goal is to change the student (bullies) behavior. Having the correct vocabulary is huge—it is important. We had a student just today who knew to first go to her teacher, then she was sent to the principal. When our conversation was over, she knew she could trust that we would handle the situation. Our Virtues Training Program is for teachers—adults to recognize abuse. There are monthly articles and lessons. Parents are trained on how to respond to their child when s/he tells them that they are being bullied. First, it is important for the parent to remain calm and to use certain steps to contact school official.

Counselor 12 said follow-up is an important part of school safety and that there is room for school safety growth:

So much of safety programs is all about the follow-up. Once a quarter we bring in speakers to train our students, teachers and parents on various safety issues. We do have room to grow when it comes to safety intervention programs in our school.

Theme 5: Language and Communication

Participants made it clear that students not only needed to understand what bullying is, but teaching students how to report bullying and use the correct Language is effective and beneficial in their high schools. The Second Step Program and the Stop It Application are two anti-bullying programs that includes training and lessons for

students, teachers, and parents. Lessons are assigned and set for students, faculty and parents to sign in and work at their own pace. More important, the incidents are tracked and used for faculty trainings.

As mentioned in chapter 2, “Harassment” is a term often used interchangeably with “bullying,” “but it has an established history in civil rights law and policy that precedes the fledgling laws and developing policies concerning bullying (Cornell & Limber, 2015, p. 336).” Since 1999, state legislatures have been active on bullying infractions in schools. “From 1990 to 2010, more than 120 bills were enacted by the states to introduce or amend education or criminal justice statutes that address bullying” (Cornell & Limber, 2015 p. 337). By 2015, after the continuous school shootings, every state had passed a law that directs school districts or individual schools to develop policies to address bullying. Some of the most common provisions relating to the anti-bullying policies include investigation and reporting of bullying, disciplinary actions for students’ infractions involved in bullying, faculty and staff training and intervention prevention efforts Cornell & Limber (2015).

Principal 02 is one of several participants who mentioned the Second Step program: We have a Second Step program that we follow to keep our school safe. This is a private school so we don’t allow bullying or evil behavior. If and when I need to remove a student from school that is what I do without hesitation.

Principal 06 asserted,

Teaching students about reporting and using the right Language is the most effective Bullying safety intervention program. Again, the “Stop It” App and

training allows students to report information so that the counselors and administrations understand the problem or issue and who is involved.

Dean 07 also mentioned how pleased their school is with the Second Step program:

Our schools seem pleased with the Second Step program. The Second Step program is a child safety program with a Second Step Child Protection Unit. It includes staff training, student lessons, and family materials to help schools build an informed community working to prevent abuse.

Principal 08 is another participant who agrees the Second Step program is effective: The Positive Behavioral Intervention Support and Second Step have proven to be effective for us. We track every incident which is beneficial to discuss in trainings.

Theme 6: Effective Strategies to Share with Other Administrators

Researcher asked participants what efforts and strategies were effective and what have they learned to pass on to their colleagues. Subjects repeated were as follows: Consistency, Personal Relationship with GOD, Reporting, Research/Theory, Student Empowerment, and Training/Follow-up. Consistency has been beneficial in educating and discipling students. When one is consistent, they are true to principles and policy. Consistency with principle and policy also demonstrates courage and strength in one's beliefs. Participants discussed the importance of showing trustworthiness to their student body. Participants who volunteered to interview for this study were Catholic suburban high school administrators. Two participants mentioned having God and or a personal relationship with God is important as a leader.

Principal O3 said,

Those who have a personal relationship with God include God in their daily lives. They pray to Him, read His word, and meditate on verses in an effort to get to know Him even better. This is what is needed day to day working with students. Those who have a personal relationship with God pray for wisdom (James 1:5), which is the most valuable asset we could ever have. They take their requests to Him, asking in Jesus' name (John 15:16). Jesus is the one who loves us enough to give His life for us (Romans 5:8), and He is the one who bridged the gap between us and God.

Several of the participants agreed that students need to have a personal relationship with God; that none of the efforts work without Godly characteristics (i.e., virtues or morals).

In relation to a need for more research and theory, administrators and faculty take an integrated, systems approach to academic, behavioral, and mental health, evidence-based practice with research aligned in prevention science, assessment, and intervention. Intervention created programs prepares students to integrate theory, research, and established methods of scientific inquiry into effective practice to engage in research and scholarly activities.

Several participants stated allowing student empowerment in their school is a step in the right direction. Trusting their students is important. Administrators believe in the ability of students guiding their own learning and their ability to lead their peers. By trusting their students to guided and lead intervention safety programs, administrators

create trusting environments, build cohesive relationships, and empower students to manage themselves in a family like environment.

Training and follow-up were also mentioned multiple times by participants in the study as a strategy that is needed. Participants stated that their school's trainings are not specific to one area, but schools could use additional trainings to make sure all faculty and staff understands school policies and procedures regarding all aspects of the training. Moreover, administrators request reports from faculty and staff to as follow-up procedures, by reporting lessons taught in the classrooms on what students learned during trainings. Participants in this study addressed concerns for the whole student body when they discussed the importance of safety training and follow-up.

Principal 06 emphasized importance of taking every concerning serious and reporting:

Take every concern seriously. If something is reported to you always act on all reports big and small things. I remember years ago not responding to an issue that I thought was small at the time and it escalated into something big. I learned from that mistake.

Counselor 12 said, "I think my response applies to everything. The parent component is very important. Parents need to be involved."

Dean 13 thought asking what is effective and what was learned to pass on is a good question:

That's a good question! Keeping students safe have become important because of safety concerns. What I appreciate about Catholic education over the last 20 years

is that the Catholic Schools require safety trainings. The training is not specific to one area, but covers safety driving, health and wellness, healthy sexual relationships, physical safety, fire and environment safety Catholic schools are really focused on safety for students overall.

Principal 02 stated, “Consistency is imperative along with making sure everyone is trained and on the same page. Also, leading by example. Again, you can’t do this without a personal relationship with God.”

Participants provided helpful answers to this question that reads as if their schools need more done to assist in particular areas for better safety in their schools. Such as, direct understanding of what Bullying looks like to them in their school. One particular school is training from created anti-bullying laws and books, but their training needs to be more detailed for faculty and staff to have an understanding. Counselor 05 said his faculty and staff need training on the definition of Bullying:

I think faculty and staff need to train on what Bullying is. The faculty train over bully laws and books, but they need to talk and understand the information covered. The school needs continuous training because everyone is not always on the same page of understanding safety and anti-bullying.

Likewise, Principal 09 said, “Board should know their facility and know their weak spots. Have simple procedures for faculty and staff to follow. Have regular practices and drills for school.” Principal 10 said, “Research and Theory on school safety have provided information used in the classroom/school. It gives the practical steps of how to work with it because research and theory provides credible proven information.” Principal 11 said,

Make your trainings ongoing. Circle back, look for what is working and what is not working. It is important to have consistent implementation of lessons and strategies. Provide a little bit of training once a month because it is need.

Summary

This chapter presented the results from interviews of twelve administrators who participated in “The Experience and Perceptions of High School Principals Regarding School Safety Programs and Bullying” study. Findings were presented in four sections that corresponded with the primary themes that emerged from the results. Categories within each theme helped to support and provide insight into six themes.

Administrators who served as participants in the present study included five principals, two vice principals, three counselors and two Deans. These participants elaborated on school safety intervention programs and bullying. All participants in this study clearly believed that school safety is an important on-going topic which concerns the entire school body. Learning experiences shared by six administrators shows an effort to continue to expound on furthering research, theory, training and follow-up. Feedback from the two participants also supported the notion that in order for schools to be appropriately safe, older school buildings need up-grades and remodeling to accommodate students with the current safety issues. Schools that have improved safety measure within their buildings, have included new building entrances, bullet proof windows, electronic automatic locked doors, cameras, Xray scanners, ID’s and advanced security. Those are only a few upgrades to assist in keeping students safe.

Participants discussed safety programs that were adopted from K- 8th grade programs; one specific program that was mentioned five times was the Second Step program. While high school counselors are important, respected and essential, participants requested a need for more counselors along with psychologists and social workers. This request lets me know that there is many mental health, social and emotional issues in the high schools. Further, two of the participants also stated that they have private and public-school experience and that the issues at the private school is not as severe as their public-school issue. Eight participants mentioned other safety intervention and anti-bullying program variations and how they were implemented; these proved to be effective and beneficial to students and faculty more than parents as shown on graph in appendix.

All Participants in this study recalled experiences and perceptions relating to various safety and anti-bullying programs that were created and or adopted from other effective well-known school safety programs such as Olweus Safety Program created and founded by Dan Olweus. Olweus (1931-2020) was involved in research and intervention work on bullying among school children and youth for over 40 years. The OBPP was first implemented and evaluated by Olweus in 1983 as part of a longitudinal study that followed approximately 2,500 school children (Olweus, 2005). What is remembered about the Olweus Anti Bullying program is that in 1983, after three adolescent boys in northern Norway committed suicide, most likely as a consequence of severe bullying by peers according to research, the country's Ministry of Education initiated a national campaign against bullying in schools. In that context, the first version of what has later

become known as the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program was developed. Olweus Anti-Bullying program was the only program from past history with research mentioned by participants in this study (Olweus, 2005). Two participants mentioned the Olweus anti-bullying program because it is evidenced based.

Second Step program was mentioned five times in this study by five participants. Second Step was founded by two young sisters, Vasundhara (22) and Riddhi Oswai (16) in 1985. The program began by exploring primary abuse prevention and developed the first edition of Second Step. Second Step provides instruction in social and emotional learning, for primary, elementary and middle school students, with units on skills for learning, empathy, emotion management, friendship skills, and problem solving. This program is so effective, the Catholic private school adopted this program and created an extension for high schoolers. The initial Second Step program contains separate sets of lessons for use in prekindergarten through eighth grade implemented in 22 to 28 weeks each year. Participants stated that the counselors came into the classroom monthly with lessons for students to complete in class and an activity for home (<https://casel.org>). Participant 07 said “by us having an evidence-based program in place, it makes our teachers confident in what we are doing with the faith foundation (religion daily) and they reteach lessons on anti-bullying. The Second Step program have a parent’s piece that has home activities.” Participant 08 stated that the “Second Step program is our school’s anti-bullying program with weekly lessons, online log in date and time and it is designed to get family/parents involved. Second Step allows participants to track every incident and use data in faculty and staff trainings.”

Anti-Bullying Intervention and School Prevention

The National Association of School Psychologists implemented a framework for safe and successful schools in 2013. Research confirms the most effective ways to combat bullying in schools include implementing schoolwide programs to define bullying and provide social norms relating to aggressive retaliation (O'Brian et al., 2011). Three participants in this study mentioned the importance of training students on the correct way to not only communicate, but the proper way to report bullying and violent incidents in school. Participant # 06 asserted that "teaching students about reporting and using the right Language is the most effective Bullying Safety Intervention Program. "Stop It" Application and training allows students to report information so that the counselors and administrators understand the problem or issue and who is involved."

The National Source of Strength is another research-based safety intervention program that costs \$5000.00 per year. Two participants in this study mentioned NSOS several times either by name or by basic reference to language communication. Administrations and teachers need to develop curriculum and schoolwide strategies for communicating prevention efforts for victims and bullies, as well as implement anger management programs and teacher-parent training with behavior strategies aimed at positive outcomes (O'Brian et al., 2011). Based on the literature, this may include improving staff ratio, developing evidence-based standards for district-level policies, providing incentives for intra- and interagency collaboration, and support from multitiered systems of support (Cowan et al., 2013). However, it is not clear that these suggestions have their intended efficacy. The purpose of the present study is to at

attempt to acquire more information about these kinds of interventions from the perspective of those who actively use these and other methods aimed at obtaining such positive outcomes.

What I learned from all participants' statements, is that State laws should protect all students from peer victimization, including harassment and bullying. Also, five participants in this study believe that the concept of bullying should be distinguished from peer aggression and harassment. Two participants discussed in length that students, faculty and staff need training on what bullying is because of research evidence regarding its differential impact and the need for differentiated prevention and intervention measures. Legislative definitions of bullying should encourage schools to use science-based measures and interventions that distinguish bullying from other forms of peer victimization. Students and parents should be educated about bullying and provided with multiple means of seeking help for it.

Given the reluctance of many children and youth when it comes to reporting bullying that they experience or witness, it is important that policies include provisions to increase the ease of reporting, such as anonymous reporting procedures as mentioned earlier like the "Stop it" application. Although, there are reporting programs in place, there should be a prompt and thorough investigation of suspected or reported bullying. As noted by the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, this should include "immediate intervention strategies for protecting the victim from additional bullying or retaliation notification to parents of the victim or reported victim of bullying and the alleged perpetrator, and, if appropriate, notification to law enforcement officials.

“Bullying should not be categorized as a criminal behavior because it varies so widely in form and severity. In most cases, bullying can be handled appropriately with school disciplinary and counseling measures.

However, bullying behaviors that also meet criteria for illegal behavior, such as assault or extortion, should be dealt with as deemed appropriate for the circumstances and severity of the behavior. When bullying behavior constitutes sexual harassment or a violation of civil rights in some other way, school authorities should be responsive to their legal obligations. Schools should not use zero-tolerance policies that assign harsh consequences for violating a school rule, regardless of the context or severity of behavior. Instead, there should be graduated consequences for bullying that are appropriate to the context and severity of the behavior and characteristics of the student(s). School policies should direct school staff to assess students who are bullied for possible mental health and academic problems and provide support and referrals for these students and their parents, as needed. Policies also should direct staff to provide support and referrals for students who engage in bullying. School policies should include provisions for training all staff to prevent, identify and respond appropriately to bullying. This training would include recognition of the overlap between bullying and illegal behavior. School policies should encourage the adoption of evidence-based strategies to guide prevention and intervention efforts. Schools should be leery of programs or strategies that are based on emotional appeals with no supporting evidence of effectiveness.

In conclusion, Chapter 4 included the subsections of relevant concepts of the research questions explored. Indicated participants characteristics, profiles, issues and

choices made created by researcher for the study. The instrument showed the interview guide and indicated the general focus of the interviews and a form of triggering stimulus for participants. It also depicted the steps for data analysis enlisting the categories, subcategories and themes relating to the results. Chapter 5 will depict the results and make an interpretation of the findings.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to understand the experiences and perceptions of school principals regarding school safety programs and bullying. This chapter includes a discussion of the two research questions, six themes, results and implications for various school administrators and educational leaders. The chapter concludes with recommendations for future research and a summary.

Interpretation of the Findings

Participants in this study are suburban Catholic high school leaders: principals, vice principals, counselors, and deans. Each selected high school administrator holds a specific position where they are responsible for students' safety while in school. Principals' roles involve providing strategic direction such as developing standardized curricula and revising policies and precures. Other important duties entail developing safety protocols and emergency response procedures (Dowd, 2018). Vice principals are employed in schools to assist the principal, overseeing daily activities and engaging with other staff members, students, and parents. They also often review budgets, plans, supervise staff, and ensure the school environment is safe (Bettersite, 2021).

A high school counselor assists students in making academic and career plans. They also help teenagers overcome barriers to success. They may work one-on-one with students experiencing personal problems, and they might also work on a larger scale to educate students about drug abuse, bullying or other significant issues high schoolers face (Brandman University, 2018).

Finally, the dean of students works with the principal in carrying out the school's academic and behavior programs. As a professional educator, the dean of students understands and responds to the challenges presented by our diverse student population. The dean of students also provides proactive leadership to engage all stakeholders in the delivery of programs and services to support the students' academic achievement, personal and social development. The dean of students works cooperatively with the principal, counselor, health coordinator, staff, students, and parents toward a positive school climate (Henderson, 2018). Therefore, each administrator's role entails a responsibility to ensure safety and protection for the student body.

In this study, two vice principals agreed that parents are involved and that there is an open-door policy for communication with parents, so they are informed about the resources to protect their students. Vice principals conveyed that parents are included to participate in their school activities and curriculum by social media, newsletters, trainings, and student homework assignments. Moreover, parents are welcome to register online to participate in the Second Step and National Source of Strength Anti-Bullying programs. Other participants in this study stated that there is a need for parent involvement; however, some parents are not involved for reasons that were not discussed in this study. Results regarding how safety intervention programs impact teachers and parents further showed that students and teachers are positively impacted by 83.3% and parents are positively impacted by 75%, though there was no indication why these numbers were not higher.

Additionally, the two deans in this study provided two different ways to state that their school programs in place are evidence-based programs. One stated that the programs make teachers confident in what is done with a faith-based foundation. The other dean stated that the students say their school feels like a family and discipline decreased over the past few years. Experiences and perception from four administrators addressing the same research problem allowed for multiple perspectives and theories for this study (Campbell & Fiske, 1959; Denzin, 1978; Mathison, 1988).

Further interpreting participants' answers, some were convergent, some were inconsistent, and some were contradictory. Convergence refers to data coming together to support one point (Mathison, 1988, p. 15). Interview Question 6 led to convergence: What is your perception of your school counselors' experiences regarding your school's safety intervention/programs and bullying in your school? All the participants in this study agreed that their counselors are essential to their schools counseling program. All the counselors are liked and respected. Counselors in the participants schools are tasked with implementing, teaching, and training students, faculty, and parents on various lessons pertaining to school safety. More importantly, counselors are included in assisting bullying incidents and reporting because incidents may involve mental health issues that requires the counselor's expertise.

Regarding inconsistency, or data that do not lead to a single point (Mathison, 1988, p. 15), administrators do not need to confirm a single position about this social phenomenon. Interview Question 7 illustrates this inconstancy: "What are some of the most valuable things you have learned working in the area of school safety that you think

could be valuable to other people who work in this field?” Participants’ answers for question seven are different, but the answers relate. One participant said, “take every concern seriously,” which indicated that an issue that seemed small later escalated into a huge problem. Another two administrators said to “establish trust with your students and faculty and have a safety plan prepared.” Training, follow up, and retraining was also mentioned several times by participants in this study. Administrators empower their students to lead, so they train their students to communicate effectively and efficiently, which can help a student get assistance as soon as they need it. Additionally, building relationships was mentioned by two participants.

Finally, contradiction are data that lead to opposing points or views (Mathison, 1988, p. 15). Contradiction for Question 2 (What intervention programs do you have in place for bullying) suggested that administrators in this particular Catholic private high school addressed intervention programs according to their position or role at the school. Additionally, resources or procedures are based on the order of steps in place to handle the bullying process. To achieve a safe school, administrators face a threefold responsibility of (a) protecting the welfare of students, (b) creating effective safety programs, and (c) documenting incidents and reporting information to the proper officials when warranted (Kingston et al., 2018).

Discussion of Results in Relation to Literature Review

The findings relate to the literature review in this study. Research confirmed that the most effective ways to combat bullying in schools include implementing schoolwide programs to define bullying and provide social norms relating to aggressive retaliation

(O'Brian et al., 2011). Based on participants' statements, state laws should protect all students from peer victimization, including harassment and bullying. Legislative definitions of bullying should encourage schools to use science-based measures and interventions that distinguish bullying from other forms of peer victimization. Participants in this study also suggested that the concept of bullying should be distinguished from peer aggression and harassment. Further, participants discussed in length that students, faculty, and staff need training on what bullying is. Fifty percent of participants in this study agreed that students and parents should be educated about bullying and provided with multiple means of seeking help for it. All participants in this study also indicated that given the reluctance of many children to report bullying that they experience or witness, it is important that policies include provisions to increase the ease of reporting such as anonymous reporting procedures. Programs like Second Step and National Source of Strength teach students how to accurately report bullying.

Further, participants in this study all indicated that not only are counselors essential in schools, there is a need for counselors, social workers, and psychologists in suburban high schools. Multiple studies show an association between substance use, poor academic achievement, mental health, and bullying (McKenna et al., 2011). However, some experts do not see bullying as a cause but rather as a symptom of a mental health problem that stems from depression, suicide ideation, anxiety, anger, family violence, and substance abuse destructive behaviors (Sroka, 2013).

Bullying and Safety Intervention Programs

A large body of literature indicates an understanding of early adolescent bullying and provides an overview of a comprehensive set of interventions that can be implemented to support a whole school approach to address bullying (McGrath et al., 2005; McGrath & Stanley, 2006a, 2006b). Three participants in this study discussed an anti-bullying program titled the “National Sources Strength Program,” which trains 70 students over 2 days to be school leaders (3 years of committed training), who are assigned to lead the student body in small groups on student relationship building. All participants in this study also recalled experiences and perceptions relating to various safety and anti-bullying programs that were created and or adopted from other effective well known school safety programs such as the Olweus Safety Program. This program was the only program from past history with research mentioned by participants in this study (Olweus, 2005). Two participants mentioned the Olweus anti-bullying program because it is evidence based.

Second Step anti-bullying program was mentioned five times in this study by five participants. Second Step was founded by two young sisters, Vasundhara (22) and Riddhi Oswai (16) in 1985. The program began by exploring primary abuse prevention and developed the first edition of Second Step. Second Step provides instruction in social and emotional learning, for primary, elementary, and middle school students, with units on skills for learning, empathy, emotion management, friendship skills, and problem solving. This program is so effective that the Catholic private school adopted this program and created an extension for high schoolers.

Mental Health Associated Bullying

Bullying and being a victim of bullying has been recognized as a health problem (Juvonen et al., 2003). Participant 03, a counselor in one of the high schools in this study, stated that his school has a partnership with Tri County Mental Health because of the various programs (suicide, alcohol, drugs, bullying) they have to assist adolescents. Participant 03 also stated that he wants his students to get assistance if they continue in his school or if they are no longer a student in the school, as children associated with these health issues have adjustment problems (Trofi et al., 2011, 2014) like mental health issues and violent behaviors. There is an association between substance use, poor academic achievement, mental health, and bullying (McKenna et al., 2011). Moreover, bully victims are at a higher risk for displaying mental health problems that may involve delinquent behavior (Tobin et al., 2005).

Participant 03 supported previous research that suggested short-term effects of bullying include victims experiencing psychological problems such as depression, anxiety, and eating disorders (Smokowski et al., 2005). Other victims develop psychosomatic issues and bodily complaints such as headaches or stomach aches before school, during, or after school when the victim faces the bully (Smokowski & Holland, 2005). Victims may also experience loneliness, humiliation, insecurity, loss of self-esteem, and thoughts of suicide (Smokowski & Holland, 2005). Participants 01, 02, and 03 stated that the counselor is always included in a bullying incident or report because there may be some underlying issues with the student that need immediate mental health

attention. More importantly, counselors are trained to listen for unstable mental health behaviors.

Relevant Funding Streams

All participants in this study reported while they agree that there is a sufficient amount of funding that comes from various areas, one participant said funding is not always allocated to the appropriate projects. Principal 09 stated that his school needs more human resources which consist of hiring Social Workers and Psychologist. There are several school safety funding programs available since the Marjory Stoneman High School shooting: The Project Prevention Grant Program directed millions of dollars to school districts due to pervasive violence which assisted with the cost of counseling and conflict resolution (Burke, 2018). Another program titled, Promoting School Resilience Grants is a federally funded school safety National Activities Grant which provides federal funds to local education agencies in communities that have “experienced significant civil unrest to address the comprehensive behavioral and mental health of students” (Burke, 2018). Further, there is the School Climate Transformation Grant created to assist with school training to improve behavioral outcomes of students and the 21st Century Community Learning Center Program Funding used for violence prevention (Burke, 2018). Because of the need of mental health programs in high school, two participants stated that there is a need for more counselors, social workers and psychologist.

Districts must use at least 20% of these funds on efforts to improve student mental and behavioral health, school climate, or school safety, which could include:

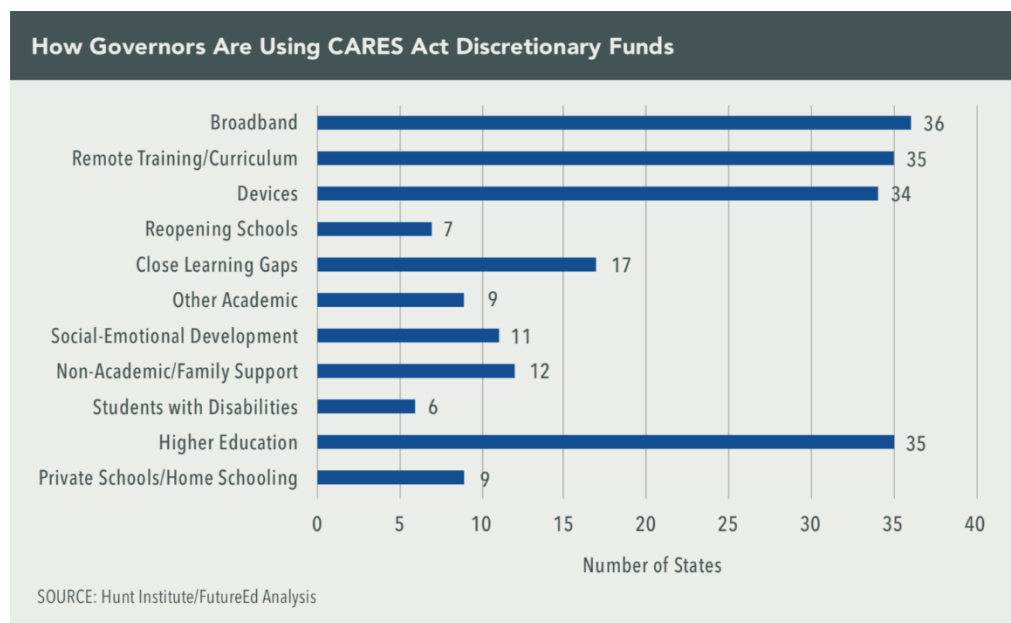
comprehensive school mental and behavioral health service delivery systems, trauma informed policies and practices, bullying and harassment prevention, social–emotional learning, improving school safety and school climate, mental health first aid training, and professional development activities (Cornell & Limber, 2015). Further, suburban private schools are allocated funds because some of their students receive grants and or low achievers or bused in from a low-income area.

Private school funding was also a point of contention in the Spring after the Biden and Harris election. Education Department developed guidance and then an interim rule released in July explaining how CARES Act dollars should be shared with private schools. Typically Title I dollars can flow to private school students for “equitable services,” such as tutoring, if the students are deemed low achieving and live in an attendance zone for a Title 1 public school. The initial guidance called for school districts to provide these services, including materials and equipment, to any students and teachers in non-public schools, regardless of whether the students are low-achieving or live in the right attendance zones. The share for private schools would have to be proportionate to the share of all students in the district attending such schools. The interim released in July gave school districts more flexibility, but ultimately directed more federal dollars to private institutions. In addition, at least four governors have devoted some of CARES Act discretionary funds to tax-credit scholarships for private schools, and other allow private schools to compete for grants. On August 21, a federal judge in Washington state put a temporary hold on DeVos’s rule, agreeing with state officials that sharing more federal aid with private schools could cause “irreparable

harm” to public schools. “The Department’s claim that the State faces only an economic injury, which ordinarily does not qualify as irreparable harm, is remarkably callous, and blind to the realities of this extraordinary pandemic and the very purpose of the CARES Act: to provide emergency relief where it is most needed,” Judge Barbara Rothstein wrote in her opinion. Source: U.S. Education Department. For notes on methodology, see the emergency relief fund calculations and governor’s fund calculations (Hunt Institution Future Ed Analysis; see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Explanation of CARES Act Distribution



Summary of Findings

School safety is a social determinant of health that goes beyond physical safety in schools across the United States (Cooper & Higgins, 2020). Student who attends schools with fewer health resources and mentioned in this study and more violence are more

likely to experience worsened physical and mental health, which can impact students learning and future success compared to students who attend schools with more resources and less violence. In this study, Catholic suburban high schools were selected. According to the participants, their schools have enough funding, but need more resources to successfully carry out their duties.

The findings of this qualitative study indicated that administrators' experiences and perceptions did have an impact on the implementation and impact of school safety interventions. The leadership skills displayed by the administrators with three years or more of implementation laid the foundation for participants' acceptance of the programs used in their schools and its implementation. Although empowered by the prospect and positive outcomes of the school safety program and its implementation, participants see more positive results with student behavior and the instructional time with counselor-led trainings. While the safety programs in place are effective, administrators are discouraged about the old school building that needs renovation and the fact that buildings are not totally protected with cameras, bullet-proof windows and automated locked doors for students' protection.

Limitations of the Study

This researcher intended to conduct 14 interviews in suburban public high schools. Because of COVID-19 pandemic approval to interview public school administrators was denied. However, I was approved to interview Catholic suburban high schools. I completed 12 interviews and met saturation because participants' responses became repetitive. Moreover, responses aligned with previous research

(Cooper et al (2020). Researcher saw patterns of themes emerge as early as participant (05); there were no new data to report once I reached interview participant (012).

Because the research of 12 participants, interviews were completed by four different administrators; data results were limited to an uneven number of principals, vice principals, counselors and deans of implementation. This researcher was unable to interview in schools due to COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, full impact results for school safety relating to bullying behavior, and the types of school safety programs used in suburban public high schools cannot be determined. The researcher, therefore, suggests completing another study after COVID is completely over. Since the Catholic schools have a low number of administrators, the number of participants was low.

Recommendations

Based on areas of concern the twelve participants in this study, reported that the need for counselors, social workers and psychologist, renovation of old buildings and more training on school safety for faculty are multiple facets could be conducted to begin to rectify this challenging issue. Moreover, schools could partnership with Mental Health Agency to assist in this endeavor.

The Administrators should consider training for the implementation process set by the school district to train faculty immediately as soon as possible to maintain fidelity. All faculty in the high school should receive training on bullying and what bullying is and the safety process in place for each school. Also, all schools should have the same training and understanding of school safety policies and procedures.

High schools should conduct in-service training for the entire staff utilizing everyone in the building including custodians, secretaries, teaching assistants, and cafeteria staff. This creates a more unified front schoolwide. Fidelity should be continuously checked. Administrators should consider conducting periodic teacher surveys to determine faculty and staff understanding of roles and responsibilities of understanding bullying and the process of school safety or evaluate for concerns/questions within the process. Fidelity should be checked as it provides ways to find problems and solutions. Evaluation of the Safety Intervention/Anti-Bullying program determines the fidelity and locates areas of weaknesses and strengths (Robbins & Antrim, 2013).

Participants acknowledge problems with the implementation process specifically with parent involvement which is an important piece for student success. By conducting a fidelity evaluation, school members could locate problems and solutions before the development of major complications. As mentioned by one of the principal participants in this study. The other schools or district leaders may benefit from having the same trainings and programs to make sure everyone is on the same page. Research has shown that the Second Step Anti-Bullying program and other similar programs can be a more effective approach to discipline tactics than traditional reactive and punitive approaches. Impacts from the implementation of such programs can improve not only student behavior, but also student achievement, teacher morale and effectiveness, and overall school climate. With the implementation of a new initiatives lead by Catholic private school counselors also comes a change in relationships among students and faculty and

trust of those implementing the program. These studies participants believe that acts of kindness and positive change affects our environment and culture.

Also, administrators need to reassess and adapt the plan to continue moving forward constantly. Second Step and National Source of Strengths open communication system was created to exchange ideas and concerns, engage in active listening, and promote an understanding of what bullying is for student, faculty and parents. Districts leaders can benefit from knowing these challenges and adopting strategies that have proven to work. Other district and school leaders could benefit from this study by examining how empowering student leadership and actions can either promote or hinder school safety interventions.

Administrators discussed experiences and perceptions about school safety program strategies can guide other district leaders in how to introduce best practices and follow through with implementation of the Second Step or NSS programs in districts or schools. This study can also provide insight into how administrators perceptions can impact the effectiveness of communicating bullying issues due to challenges faced with the reporting process. Also, Administrators can use this information to inform possible difficulties in the areas of old school buildings, continuous training, and fidelity in keeping students safe in school.

Recommendations for Further Studies

The inclusion of counselors in the implementation process of this study is an integral part of the research. Counselors are instrumental in suggesting strategies relating to behaviors such as bullying and usually make the determination of the next steps for the

student. A limiting factor in this study was the inconsistency of the safety programs of the participants within the schools. The researcher suggests choosing public school district with many administrators so that there is an even number of participants to answer the interview questions.

Social Change

As a seasoned educator, the researcher created curriculum and began creating a school safety board game for students to play in the classroom. This board game is based off current research and is designed with lessons for educators to continue the students learning process in the classroom. One of the participants mentioned assigning students research papers for students to learn about and present their infraction to their peers. That is where the idea came to include writing lessons and social studies projects for the game. I have designed four boards (one for elementary, middle, high school and the work place) and ideas on ways to play the game for students to get knowledge, have fun and train about school safety all at once.

This information may also be used to research and look for new ways to make improvements to protect students outside of the classroom. I plan to write articles for educators as new information on school safety is presented. Like many of anti-bullying programs, the created board game on safety intervention is designed for students, teachers, parents and administrators. Once the board game is complete, the next step is to design a computer game with various types of safety threats to assist with teaching students how to solve problems in a healthy way.

In this study, the Second Step Anti-Bullying program was mentioned five times by participants. The Second Step Anti-Bullying has found its place in elementary and middle schools and is now continued into high school; it has embedded itself into the high school curriculum to improve student communication, writing and safety. With student behavior problems increasing across the country, The Second Step Anti-Bullying Online Application is becoming more prominent in the educational world.

Most often, high school students with behavior issues are not provided safety programs designed for elementary and middle schools. As part of the philosophy on education, research on Second Step found the incorporation of its core beliefs on relationship building, the utilization of counselors, classroom management, and positive reinforcement. By interviewing participants in Catholic suburban high schools where there is a direct association with the safety program, the research project made a personal impact on the understanding, application, and outcomes of the implementation and impact of the Second Step Anti-Bullying program. Also, more relationships were formed with students, teachers, parents and administrators encouraging communication about Second Step and collaboration with problems and solutions for students and sustaining professional relationships.

Conclusion

The present research was designed to interview and understand the lived experiences and perceptions of the school administrations in the context of safety intervention programs and bullying. Programs and ideas were aimed at reducing bullying. Recent school shootings (Santa Fe High School (2018); STEM School Highland

Ranch (2019); Saugus High School (2019) continue to state the reason for the shootings were because of bullying. From this study, future research that may provide additional benefits to safe schools are gun control, new or major upgrades on old school buildings and mental health departments in schools.

Based on this study, school policies should reflect best practices informed by scientific research, so I recommend greater reliance on evidence-based practices and rejection of disciplinary practices that are known to be ineffective. Because bullying behavior is so widespread and so varied in form and severity, reliance on criminal sanctions would be ill-advised. A strategy that combines education, consistent school-based interventions and policy reform that includes funds to upgrade old school buildings that leads to safety and positive social change would seem most appropriate. I suggest that policymakers and legislators affirm that safety in education institutions is a student's right and must for all students, and to recognize that bullying is an impediment to that right.

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Appendix A: Research Data Analysis Participant Interview Speech

How are You today? Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study.

I will begin recording our interview. (start Zoom or allow audio, press record at the bottom)

I am Denise Lowe, Walden University Psychology PhD Student Candidate. The title of this research study is “The Experience and Perceptions of School Principals Regarding School Safety Programs and Bullying”

There are a total of 10 Interview questions that include the 2 demographic questions. This interview is 30 to 60 minutes long.

We will now begin the interview questions:

1. What is your position title?
2. How many years have you been in this position?
3. What are your experiences with safety intervention/programs?
4. What intervention programs do you have in place for bullying in your school?
5. Do you think that your safety programs receive enough funding?
6. What is your perception of how the safety intervention programs assist your students, teachers, and parents? Please provide examples.
7. In your perception, what is the most the effective bullying safety intervention/program in your school? If you only have one, please comment on its effectiveness.
8. What is your perception of your school counselors’ experiences regarding your school’s safety intervention/programs and bullying in your school?
9. What are some of the most valuable things you have learned working in the area of school safety that you think could be valuable to other people who work in this field.
10. What have you learned about school safety training for faculty and staff that may benefit principals and their schools?

This ends the interview.

Do you have any questions?

Thank you for this interview.

What address would you like me to send your \$20.00 Visa Gift Card?

Appendix B: Data Analysis Strategy

Traditional Aspects Relating to School Safety/Intervention Programs	Evolving Aspects Influenced by External Events	Radical Aspects Defined by School Districts
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Vary Your Safety Drills 2. Discuss Emergency Plans during Staff meetings 3. Assign Emergency Responsibility among staff. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Empowering Students 2. Know your Campus 3. Research 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. School Policies and Procedures (Training) 2. Old Building (Renovation) 3. Parent Involvement

Appendix C: Participant Information

How many years have you been a principal or administrator?

- A. 3 to 5 years
- B. 5 to 10 years
- C. Over 10 years

What is your administrative position?

- A. Principal
- B. Vice Principal
- C. Dean
- D. Counselor
- E. Other

Participants No.	Years as Administrator	Administrative Position	School No.	Safety Intervention Programs
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
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Appendix D: Interview Questions and Tables

Table D1*Safety Intervention Q & A*

	Theme Code	Moderator Question	
	Safety Intervention programs	1.What are your experiences with safety intervention/programs?	
Participant			Sequence #
Principal #09		Building/Physical statistical placement security; I D issued; Various Training (Run, Hide, Fight Back); Social/Emotional Kids; Suspending Kids out with no violence; Prevention—Looking for Early Signs; SOS Program Inventory Questionnaire; Second Step Training (online).	1
Principal #10		Programs are done in multiple level (policies and procedures manual, suicide ideation, emergency plan. We have student Anti-Bullying of (National Sources Strength Program). This program trains 70 students over 2 days to be school leaders (3 years of committed training)	2
Counselor #12		I have worked in public and private schools. We have more things in place now as for as safety then what we had before. We have changed the building entrance. Because of the many instances that have happen at other schools like Columbine High School many years ago. Visitors are buzzed in, they can enter in one door only, they have to have an appointment and they cannot just roam the hallways like before. We also have bullet proof glass windows now.	3

Table D2*Mental Health Q & A*

	Theme Code	Moderator Question	
	Mental Health	2. What intervention programs do you have in place for bullying?	
Participant			Sequence #
Counselor #03		Again, we are partner shipped with Tri County Mental Health. Our students also have ways to report bullying anonymously. Some bullying is just kidding around. Second Step program teaches our students how to communicate.	1
Principal # 06		Anti-Bullying Alp titled “Stop It” students are able to report bullying incidents anonymously.	2
Vice Principal #08		We have (ESI)Emergency Safety Intervention (which is used as a last resort); (PBIS) Positive Behavior Intervention Support; and Second Step Anti-Bullying program.	3
Principal #10		The Anti-Bullying (National Sources of Strength Program) is research based. We also have a program titled STA (study, tutor, assemble) lead by counselors	4

Table D3*Title Funding Q & A*

Theme Code	Moderator Question	
Title Funding	3. Do you think your safety programs receive enough funding?	
Participant		Sequence #
Counselor #03	Yes, we don't have to worry about funding because we are a private school. Some of our funding comes from Tri- County Mental Health programs and we get Title 9 Funding from the Federal Government. The funding comes from North Kansas City Public school district who distributes funds for various safety programs. There is funding for COVID-19.	1
Principal #06	Yes, but what we need is get correct resources and the schools need Social Workers and Psychologist.	2
Principal #09	Yes, we get Title I funds from the Federal Government, grants from donors for the "Stop it" program.	3
Principal #10	The Anti-Bullying (National Sources of Strength Program) is research based. We also have a program titled STA (study, tutor, assemble) lead by counselors. Yes, we have donors, fund raisers and Title Funding from local public school in Olathe. The Anti-Bullying of (National Sources Strength Program) cost \$5000.00 a year.	4
Counselor#12	Yes, we are blessed with funding. All we need to do is call the Alumni to get money for speaker to come in to discuss issues if we want. For example, a speaker we had used the example of asking if students would start drinking a random jug of water. The students say would not do that. That is the same thing with drugs the speaker said. Drugs could harm you if they are not prescribed or used randomly.	5

Table D4*Parent Involvement Q & A*

	Theme Code	Moderator Question	
	Parent Involvement	4. What is your perception of how the safety intervention programs assist your students, teachers, and parents? Please provide examples.	
Participant			Sequence #
Counselor #03		We always tell students and teachers if they see something to tell us. The Second Step program teaches them how to communicate issues and problems appropriately. If they see something suspicious to tell us and they do. We have courses designed to educate students and teachers on Anti-Bullying, Alcohol, Drugs, Safety and Vaping. Parents are included in our safety education process and are involved once we get to that step in our process.	1
Principal #09		COVID-19 is an issue. Intervention programs are great, but we need more peer-to-peer intervention effectiveness. Parent piece is missing—parents need to be more informed on overall school issues. Guided Question for safety intervention programs.	2
Principal # 11		The ultimate goal is to change the student(bullies) behavior. Having the correct vocabulary is huge—it is important. We had a student just today who knew to first go to her teacher, then she was sent to the principal. When our conversation was over, she knew she could trust that we would handle the situation. Our Virtues Training Program is for teacher—adults to recognize abuse. There are monthly articles and lessons. Parents are trained on how to respond to their child when s/he tells them that they are being bullied. First, it is important for the parent to remain calm and to use certain steps to contact school official, etc.	3
Counselor #12		So much of safety programs is all about the follow-up. Once a quarter we bring in speakers to train our students, teachers and parents on various safety issues. We do have room to grow when it comes to safety intervention programs in our school.	4

Table D5*Language Communication Q & A*

Theme Code	Moderator Question	
Language Communication	5. In your perception, what is the most effective bullying safety intervention/program in your school? If you only have one, please comment on its effectiveness.	
Participant		Sequence #
Principal #02	We have a Step program that we follow to keep our school safe. This is a private school so we don't allow bullying or evil behavior. If and when I need to remove a student from school that is what I do without hesitation.	1
Principal #06	Teaching students about reporting and using the right Language is the most effective Bullying safety intervention program. Again, the "Stop It" Alp and training allows students to report information so that the counselors and administrations understand the problem or issue and who is involved.	2
Dean #07	Our schools seem pleased with the 2nd Step program. The Second Step program is a child safety program with the Second Step Child Protection Unit. It includes staff training, student lessons, and family materials to help schools build an informed community working to prevent abuse.	3
Vice Principal #08	The Positive Behavioral Intervention Support and Second Step have proven to be effective for us. We track every incident which is beneficial to discuss in trainings.	4

Table D6*Need Counselors, Psychologist, and Social Workers Q & A*

Theme Code	Moderator Question	
Need Counselors, Psychologist, Social Workers	6. What is your perception of your school counselors' experiences regarding your school's safety intervention/programs and bullying in your school?	
Participant		Sequence #
Principal #06	Our Counselor works 30 hours a week. She had her own practice prior to working for our school so she is very knowledgeable. She runs the Peace Builders Program; she trains our teachers and she is very helpful and dedicated to assisting our students.	1
Principal #09	Counselors are essential. Our counselor is very involved but we need more human resources—Social Workers and Psychologist.	2
Principal #10	We have an Academic Counselor, College Only Counselor and two social and emotional counselors. The social and emotional counselors' jobs are reactive with an outward positive program.	3
Principal #11	Counselors are critical to the success in our programs. We include our counselor in all of our bullying reporting because there could be something else behind the bullying. Some other underlying issue that needs to be address as well. Our counselors see things that we may not see or understand.	4
Counselor #12	We have 5 school counselors and 3 college counselors. We partner with other private schools and we beg, borrow and steal resources from one another. We have a program title "Challenge Success." Our students are evenly split with the counselors and we have a unique way the students are assigned, keeping siblings together. We are blessed to have 8 counselors in our school.	5

Table D7*Reporting, Training, Follow Up, and Student Empowerment Q & A*

	Theme Code	Moderator Question	
	Reporting, Training, Follow- up, Student Empowerment	7. What are some of the most valuable things you have learned working in the area of school safety that you think could be valuable to other people who work in this field?	
Participant			Sequence #
Principal #06		Take every concern seriously. If something is reported to you always act on all reports big and small things. I remember years ago not responding to an issue that I thought was small at the time and it escalated into something big. I learned from that mistake.	1
Counselor #12		I think my response applies to everything. The parent component is very important. Parents need to be involved.	2
Dean #13		That's a good question! Keeping students safe have become important because of safety concerns. What I appreciate about Catholic education over the last 20 years is that the Catholic Schools require safety trainings. The training is not specific to one area, but covers safety driving, health and wellness, healthy sexual relationships, physical safety, fire and environment safety Catholic schools are really focused on safety for students overall.	

Table D8*Consistency, Leading, Research/Theory, God*

	Theme Code	Moderator Question	
	Consistency, Leading, Research Theory, God	8.What have you learned about school safety training for faculty and staff that may benefit principals and their schools?	
Participant			Sequence #
Principal #02		Consistency is imperative along with making sure everyone is trained and on the same page. Also, leading by example. Again, you can't do this without a personal relationship with God.	1
Counselor #05		I think faculty and staff need to train on what Bullying is. The faculty and staff go over bully laws and books, they need to talk and understand the information covered. The school needs continuous training because everyone is not always on the same page of understanding safety and anti-bullying.	2
Principal #09		Board should know their facility and know their weak spots. Have simple procedures for faculty and staff to follow. Have regular practices and drills for school.	
Principal #10		Research and Theory on school safety have provided information used in the classroom/school. It gives the practical steps of how to work with it because research and theory provides credible proven information.	3
Principal #11		Make your trainings ongoing. Circle back, look for what is working and not working. It is important to have consistent implementation of lessons and strategies. Provide a little bit of training once a month because it is need.	4