

2015

The Effect of Bullying Prevention Programs on the Perceptions of Bullying Among Female Youth

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Karen Tokarick

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Walden University
2015

Abstract

The Effect of Bullying Prevention Programs on the Perceptions of Bullying Among

Female Youth

by

Karen E. Tokarick

M.S., Walden University, 2007

B.A., Cedar Crest College, 1993

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

Bullying has become a widespread social issue. Previous research has focused on both genders and various grade levels; it has shown that programs reduce bullying and improve social climates and attitudes toward academics. The effect of these programs, specifically on female youth, has not been studied. This study addressed the effect of bullying prevention programs on perceptions of bullying among female youth in Grades 5-7 in 2 schools in rural eastern Pennsylvania. One school utilized a prevention program while the other did not. Teachers and administrators were also interviewed to gain insight regarding their perceived effectiveness of the program. The main research question examined if prevention programs resulted in reductions in the perceptions of peer bullying among female youth in Grades 5-7. Telephone interviews with 30 students were conducted to assess if bullying programs alter perceptions of bullying. The theoretical bases of social learning theory and general aggression model were used to determine if programs altered perceptions of bullying. Bullying perceptions of participants from both schools were compared. An ethnographic design was employed, using partial grounded theory as the primary methods of research. Data were reviewed and codes were determined based upon the frequency of responses to interview questions. Results showed that bullying was prevalent in both schools; however, the prevention program did not alter perceptions of bullying, indicating problems with program implementation. The current research provides insights for school administrators regarding changes needed in program implementation to improve students' perceptions and possibly reduce bullying among this population.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Theoretical, Empirical, and Methodological Rationale

Bullying behavior across all age, gender, and ethnic categories continues to be a social issue in need of attention and additional research. Greene (2006) defined bullying as a form of aggression that is intended to harm or cause distress in the victim and where there is a perceived or actual power imbalance between the perpetrator and the victim. In addition to this definition, Greene (2006) also noted that these behaviors are only classified as bullying if they occur repeatedly over time. The American Psychological Association (APA; 2007) noted that the bullying is geared toward those who are either younger or weaker than the bully.

Approximately 30% of youth in the United States are estimated to be involved in bullying behaviors, which includes bullying others, being bullied, or both (National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center, n.d.). Although individuals may be aware of the prevalence of bullying, often attempts to reduce this behavior are unsuccessful without the implementation of programs geared toward making positive changes. The National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center (n.d.) noted that when there is a school-wide commitment to end bullying, the rate of unacceptable bullying behaviors can be reduced by up to 50%. Approaches such as raising awareness about bullying, increasing teacher and parent involvement and supervision, forming clear rules regarding bullying, and providing support and protection for all students in the school and classroom settings have shown to be effective in reducing bullying (National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center, n.d.). Prevention programs provide all of these components.

According to the U.S. Department of Education and Institute of Educational Sciences, the National Center for Education Statistics administered the National Crime Victimization Survey of 2007 to students ages 12–18 (Institute for Educational Sciences [IES], 2009). Part of this survey was to determine if had been bullied during the school year. Results showed that 32% of the students had been victimized by bullies.

These statistics were broken down further, indicating that among the students who reported being bullied during school that year, 79% noted that they had been bullied inside the school and 23% stated that they were bullied outside of the school building but on school grounds (IES, 2009). In addition, 8% of the students reported being bullied on the school bus. Statistics from The National Crime Victimization Survey of 2009 also indicated that 9% of the victimized students suffered injuries as a result of being pushed, shoved, tripped, or spit on. The frequency of bullying was documented as follows: 63% were bullied once or twice during the school year, 21% were bullied once or twice a month, 10% reported being bullied once or twice a week, and 7% reported being bullied almost daily (IES, 2009). This survey also indicated that 36% of the students who were victimized by bullies notified a teacher or another adult at school regarding the incident (IES, 2009).

Based upon these statistics, the victimization of youth during school hours has become a significant problem (IES, 2009). The statistics in this study were not broken down into categories of gender to provide an overview of the rates of bullying among female youth. The statistics, however, did indicate that the students reported the incidents to adults within the school setting. My study provides additional information about the rates of bullying for female youth and whether or not the implementation of

bullying prevention programs assists in reducing this issue as well as prompts students to inform adults of the issues. I studied bullying among this population through interviews and observation. The purpose of this study was to determine if the prevention programs in some schools reduce the rate of incidents for this age group versus schools that do not implement a bullying prevention program.

Social learning theory was the theoretical foundation for this study because this area of psychology addresses behavioral issues, problems that occur in the social setting, and the impact of interventions on behaviors (APA, 2007). The issue of bullying meets all of these criteria. The behavioral issues under study were the bullying incidents that occur among female youth. The social settings that pertained to this research were two rural middle schools in eastern Pennsylvania. The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of the bullying prevention interventions on bullying behaviors of the targeted population. In Chapter 2, I will provide a more detailed discussion regarding bullying characteristics and behaviors, gender issues, and research on intervention programs.

Statement of the Problem

Bullying prevention programs exist to assist school personnel with handling bullying in an effective and consistent manner. Research has shown that bullying prevention programs have effectively reduced the level of bullying in schools (Olweus, 2003). Some schools utilize these programs but others do not. Schools that do not utilize bullying prevention programs may be failing to provide students with the education and opportunities available to reduce bullying issues that impact their educational and social experiences. The problem addressed in this study is that the lack of implementation of

anti-bullying programs at the middle school level has possibly provided grounds for an increase in bullying incidences among female youth.

The significance of this study was to determine if program implementation is effective in reducing bullying in this population. The failure to address this issue in schools can be detrimental to the students. Bullying often leads to long term consequences for the victims. Bullying among youth can lead to long term effects on their social and emotional development. This can lead teenagers to feel tense, anxious, and afraid and also affect their academic performance (Alikasifoglu et al., 2007). Bullying that occurs over an extended period of time can impact self-esteem and feelings of self-worth. It can lead to social isolation, depression, and increased anxiety. Addressing this issue can possibly assist in making necessary changes to reduce the incidents and increase the knowledge of the students, school officials, and the public.

Research Questions

I established the following research questions to provide valuable information, upon completion of the study, on this under-researched, problematic social issue regarding this vulnerable population. The primary research questions specifically targeted the prevention programs: How does the implementation of in-school bullying prevention programs in rural middle schools in rural eastern Pennsylvania influence perceptions of bullying behavior among female youth in Grades 5–7? How is bullying perceived and understood by teachers and administrators in schools with bullying prevention programs versus in schools without bullying prevention programs? Prior to the study, I reviewed school policies to determine which schools utilize prevention

programs and which schools did not implement such programs. I chose one school from each category and asked administrators, faculty, and students to participate in the study.

In addition to these two main research questions, I gathered additional information regarding the bullying issues that middle school, female youth face and the aspects of bullying prevention programs that are viewed as most effective by students and faculty: How do female students perceive and understand bullying in Grades 5–7 in schools with bullying prevention programs versus in schools without bullying prevention programs? I used this additional information to support and help answer the research questions. I will provide information regarding data collection in Chapter 3.

Purpose of the Study

Researchers have provided evidence that bullying exists among both male and female students (Olweus, 2003). The purpose of this study was to research the effectiveness of bullying prevention programs on bullying behaviors among female, middle school students in rural eastern Pennsylvania. I hypothesized that schools who implemented bullying prevention programs would show less bullying behaviors among female youth. The focus of this study was on female youth because this particular population had not received much attention in the literature. Bullying appeared to be a prevalent issue in the rural schools of eastern Pennsylvania as evidenced by the adoption of bullying policies and prevention programs in some local school districts (Usalis, 2009). The prevalence of bullying in rural middle schools needed to be assessed to determine if there was a need for change in the way bullying is addressed in local schools.

This study was intended to provide valuable information regarding bullying behavior and the effect of interventions and prevention on decreasing this social issue. Educators have developed programs to assist schools with addressing these bullying issues. Many schools implement bullying prevention strategies, policies, or programs to address bullying in these settings. Unfortunately, the literature suggests that the effectiveness of these implementations is largely unknown due to the lack of systematic research evaluations and documentation of results (Olweus, 2003).

Much of the literature focuses on the differences between bullying behavior. For instance, boys are reported to bully other students more often than girls; however, girls bully in a different manner (Olweus, 2003). Boys tend to pick up on social stereotypes of being athletic, strong, and macho (Fanning, 2002). These social perceptions lead boys to utilize more physical forms of bullying such as hitting, punching, slapping, and pushing (Nansel et al., 2001). Boys also engage in yelling and assertions of status and dominance (Craig & Pepler, 2003). Girls use more subtle and indirect means of harassment, including exclusion, rumors, and manipulation of others (Olweus, 2003). Girls have a tendency to bully others through the use of peer groups rather than bullying an individual directly (Beran, 2006). Researchers have shown that girls are more likely to share hurtful information about the targeted child with others, create mean names about the bullying victim, gossip, and assure that the victim knows he/she is being rejected from the peer group (Beran, 2006). These forms of bullying are known as relational bullying because they affect relationships and friendships (Beran, 2006). Social manipulation is frequent in female bullying and can be seen through the use of telling lies, betraying trust, passing

notes, ignoring, or excluding the victim (Aluede, Adeleke, Omoike, & Afen-Akpaida, 2008).

Female youth at the middle school level were the focus of this research due to the nature of their bullying behavior and my desire to gather information particularly pertaining to females instead of assessing the bullying behaviors among male and female youth combined. Since females and males use different methods of bullying (Olweus, 2003), it is possible that they also respond differently to intervention programs. Participation in prevention programs could provide female youth with an increased understanding of their behaviors and the effects of bullying on others, leading to the reduction in bullying rates.

In order to gain information regarding the response of individual genders on program effectiveness, it is necessary to study the genders separately. Once society obtains information about how to address bullying in a gender-specific manner, the information can be used to take action to reduce the overall rate of bullying in schools. The information gained from this research can provide school administrators with additional knowledge regarding the effectiveness of their programs or the need to implement prevention strategies.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework is derived from the social learning perspective. The principle behind the social learning perspective is that human beings are not born with tendencies to act aggressively; these behaviors are acquired through complex forms of social behavior (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). The study of social behavior involves several variables including the actions and characteristics of other people, cognitive

processes, environmental variables, cultural issues, and biological factors (Baron, Byrne, & Branscombe, 2006).

Researchers have used the general aggression model and drive theories of aggression to assess bullying behavior. The general aggression model is a more modern theory that suggests aggression is triggered by a wide range of variables that may increase physiological arousal, impact affective states such as hostile feelings, and influence cognitions that can lead to thoughts and acts of aggression (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). One school utilized a bullying prevention program while the other did not have a specific program in place. Aggression is triggered by a wide range of variables influencing arousal, affective stages, and cognitions (Anderson & Bushman, 2002).

Drive theories of aggression are based upon the concept that aggression is a behavior that results from an impulse created by an innate need (Smith, 2008). The most well known drive theory of aggression is the frustration–aggression hypothesis. This hypothesis links aggression and frustration in a cause and effect relationship where frustration leads to aggression and aggression leads to an increase in frustration (Smith, 2008). Drive theories of aggression assist with assessing the impact of external conditions and how they are linked to motivating individuals to harm others.

The social learning perspective, general aggression model, and drive theories of aggression stem from the field of social psychology. Social psychology is a discipline concerned with gaining an understanding of the nature and the causes of individual behavior and thought as they relate to social situations (Baron et al., 2006). My study was intended to improve the understanding of the nature of bullying among the female youth population, increase knowledge regarding the causes of the behaviors, and

determine if the implementation of prevention programs into the students' school environments impacted the bullying behavior.

Social behavior can be influenced through interventions and education. Research on the topic of bullying fits into the realm of social psychology as it involves the interactions between individuals. The characteristics of individuals are key components in this social problem, as are the environmental and cultural factors. The actions of others, and interactions with others, can influence a person's behavior (Baron et al., 2006).

Social Learning Theory

Bullying can be viewed through various models and perspectives of social learning theories. According to the social learning view, children acquire negative attitudes toward certain social groups from the influences and views that are expressed by those around them (Baron et al., 2006). Based upon the social learning perspective, human beings are not born with a predisposition of aggressive responses. These responses are acquired through direct behavior or by observing the behaviors of others (Anderson & Bushman, 2002).

Social learning theory concepts, such as how individuals view the social world, and the development and change of individual expectations, assist researchers in understanding how aggressive behavior is learned behavior (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). The consequences of a behavior and the subsequent frequency of the behavior are stressed by social learning theory (Tapper & Boulton, 2005). Henry (2004) reported that the bulk of theoretical information on aggression has focused on issues related to

childhood relationships as well as relationships between internal cognitive processes and external behavior.

The social learning theory can also be helpful with increasing an understanding of how roles are acquired, enforced, and sustained. These positions can also be viewed through role theory. Role theory examines how people behave by studying individuals' social positions in relation to the behaviors that others expect from them (Fast, Fanelli, & Salen, 2003). One role that relates to bullying and aggression is that of peer mediators. Fast et al. (2003) noted that peer mediation within school environments has been well documented, and researchers have speculated that these forms of positive role assignments have an effective influence on aggressive children. The use of bullying prevention programs in the schools can assist with the identification of such roles and provide students with resources to address their concerns. Social learning theory and role theory are well known for their contribution to assisting researchers with understanding people in their environments.

In relation to the social learning theory, the social interaction theory also interprets aggression as socially influenced behavior (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). Anderson and Bushman (2002) explained that according to the social interaction theory, aggressive acts are motivated by ultimate goals. Aggressive behaviors may be driven by the need to obtain something of value, retaliation over injustice, or to obtain a particular social identity (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). Bullying behaviors are often viewed as a means of gaining something from another; typically the bully seeks power.

General Aggression Model

The general aggression model provides concepts and insights into aggressive behavior that I considered when analyzing the data collected regarding female youth bullying because it offers a broader range of theories on aggressive behavior. According to Anderson and Bushman (2002), the general aggression model was designed to combine multiple smaller theories of aggression into a unified theory. For example, concepts of Fraise's theory of emotion (Ahmed, 2002) may be included in the general aggression model. Ahmed (1992) described Fraise's theory of emotion, which indicates that emotion is a response to a situation for which the individual is not prepared, leading to the possibility of aggressive behavior in unexpected circumstances.

Advantages of the general aggression model over several smaller theories include a better explanation of aggression based upon multiple motives, the provision of broader insights regarding child rearing and development, and more comprehensively designed interventions to address aggression (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). Overall, the general aggression model provides a greater compilation of knowledge and information to address this issue (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). Key features of the general aggression model are based upon knowledge structures and how these structures are developed and used in the perception, interpretation, decision making process, and action pertaining to aggressive behavior (Anderson & Bushman, 2002).

Operational Definitions

The following terms are used throughout this study. I have included definitions in this section to explain the context of the terms as they relate to the subject of bullying. A common problem with understanding bullying is that there are multiple definitions and

contexts that lead to confusion when determining the existence, or incidents, of bullying. In addition, I included the terms used to describe the conceptual framework to explain how these theories and models relate to bullying behaviors.

Bullying: Persistent threatening and aggressive behavior directed toward other people, especially those who are smaller or weaker (APA, 2007).

Drive theories of aggression: Also known as *classical psychoanalysis*, referring to the libido, stages of psychosexual development, and id instincts (drives; APA, 2007); refers to aggression being driven by basic instincts.

General aggression model: Designed to combine multiple smaller theories of aggression into a unified theory (Anderson & Bushman, 2002); a dynamic, social cognitive, developmental model that includes individual, situational, and biological components based upon social learning and social cognitive theories; provides an understanding of how social behavior is controlled by internal self-regulating processes and underlying learning and developmental processes (Anderson & Carnagey, 2004).

Physical bullying: Physical acts such as hitting, shoving, pushing, tripping, spitting, kicking, or damaging the victim's property (Aluede et al., 2008).

Relational bullying: Damages relationships through the use of more indirect means such as gossiping, spreading rumors, making racial slurs, name calling, and exclusion of social groups; primarily used by females (Aluede et al., 2008).

Social learning theory: The general view that learning is largely, or wholly, due to social interactions with others (APA, 2007); behavior is assumed to be developed and regulated by external stimulus events (the influence of others), external reinforcement (praise, blame, or reward), and by the effects of cognitive processes.

Verbal bullying: Using words to hurt and humiliate the victim; acts may include name calling, insults, teasing, and taunting (Aluede et al., 2008).

Assumptions and Limitations

Assumptions

Previous research has studied bullying behavior, characteristics of bullying behavior, and the use of bullying prevention programs in school settings. This particular research intended to study a specific gender and the effect of bullying programs on female youth of perceptions bullying behavior. I assumed that bullying is an issue in the rural middle schools of eastern PA and that female youth have an experience with bullying. I also assumed that bullying prevention programs influence bullying behavior in schools (Edmondson & Hoover, 2008). Based upon past research, I assumed this study would show that bullying prevention programs in middle schools could positively impact the bullying issues that occur among female youth (Olweus, 2005). In regards to the research and design of this study, the assumption was that the students and faculty would be capable of participating in the interviews and that the answers provided would be genuine.

Bullying programs are intended to provide insight and education to students, school personnel, and administrators (Whitted & Dupper, 2005). They provide information regarding the characteristics of bullies and victims as well as the effects of bullying on the victims (Hirschstein, Van Schoiack, Frey, Snell, & MacKenzie, 2007). I hoped that educating students and staff would prompt positive changes in the school setting leading to the reduction of bullying behavior and an increased understanding

among students regarding the short and long term effects of bullying, for both the bully and the victim.

Limitations

The primary limitation of this study was that the results could not be generalized to other populations, or across genders, in reference to the effect of bullying prevention programs on social perceptions. The research was intended to specifically study the characteristics and concerns of female youth in rural middle schools and was limited to a specific geographical location. Therefore, information regarding how program implementation impacts other age groups, gender, or locations are not expected to produce the same results.

The process of selection and self-deselection could possibly result in a biased sample. Student participants were required to have parental consent, but they were also required to give assent to participate in the study. Some students may have chosen not to participate due to either being a victim or a perpetrator of bullying. As a result, students might only have agreed to participate in the study if they had not had any direct experiences with bullying in the school setting. This must be considered a limitation.

Another limitation of the study was that only two school districts were included in the study. This did not allow for a broad representation of the local schools or the female youth population. Future research could be conducted including a larger sampling of female youth and conducted in a greater amount of school districts to provide a more comprehensive overview of the research.

Some schools have implemented a zero tolerance program against bullying; however, some have not. I designed the interview questions to obtain information

regarding the levels of bullying in the schools involved in the study. There were no questions related to whether or not incidents have been reported, especially during teacher interviews. This was intended to reduce the risk of participants being pressured to provide inaccurate information or comment on the violation of any laws or policies. This needs to be considered as a limitation due to the questionable responses during the interview process.

There were many school districts throughout the part eastern Pennsylvania used for this study that break down the student population into three buildings such as elementary (K–4), middle (5–8) and high school (9–12). However, some of the districts only have an elementary (K–6) and Jr/Sr High buildings (7–12). I gained cooperation from schools that have Grades 5–7 contained in the same building to avoid potential influence from lower or higher grades on the results of the study.

This study was conducted in a rural setting. The majority of the students are bussed to and from school due to the locations of the schools. In order to conduct the study efficiently, I interviewed participants over the telephone. If interviews were scheduled after school, or in the evenings, there may be issues of parental transportation that would prevent students from participating in the project. Many individuals rely on bus transportation to and from school, and therefore requesting that students be brought to the school during nonschool hours may not have been possible. It was important not to disrupt the students academics during the school day. Therefore, the telephone interviews were conducted during after school hours. This provided the opportunity for interested students to participate without worry of transportation issues and also increase privacy and confidentiality.

The primary limitations associated with conducting telephone interviews was that there were chances that the participants may be unavailable when the researcher called, there was no way to verify that the person on the other end of the phone was the intended participant, and there was no way to monitor if the participant was being coached in any way by others in the home during the interview.

There are many bullying prevention programs available for school usage. There may be differences in the delivery of the programs in the schools. These differences could have altered the effectiveness of the programs between schools. The ideal situation would be to include multiple schools that consistently implement the same program in the same manner. It may also be beneficial to conduct the study over a more extensive period of time. This could allow future researchers to assess any noticeable changes that occurred as a result of the programs.

Significance of the Study

Researchers have addressed bullying across all age groups and genders. There is, however, a gap in the literature specifically related to female youth and the bullying issues that face this population. The literature provides information about bullying across both genders, including characteristics and incident rates (Steinman & Carlyle, 2006); however, it fails to specifically target the population used in this study. The literature also provides information regarding the various prevention programs (Frey et al., 2005; Olweus, 2005; Rock, Hammond, & Rasmussen, 2004), but does not address the impact on this population.

In this study, I intended to gather information regarding the effect of bullying interventions in schools to assist in determining the effectiveness of these programs on

the perceptions of students, faculty, and administrators on this issue. Information regarding program effectiveness can be forwarded to school administrators across the county. This information can provide valuable feedback and prompt the implementation of bullying prevention programs where they do not currently exist, lead to changes in already existing programs to improve effectiveness, or encourage continued implementation.

The significance of this study is that it can increase the knowledge of students, teachers, administrators, the public, and program specialists regarding the nature of bullying behavior and the impact of the current prevention programs utilized in local schools. The more education individuals receive regarding this important social issue, the better the schools and community can work toward the overall well being of children. This study only pertained to female, middle school students. Future research, however, can be conducted to specifically study male students, different age groups, or different cultures.

Overview

The participants for this study were female youth who were actively enrolled in rural school districts in Eastern Pennsylvania. Included in the study is information obtained through interviews of school faculty. The study was intended to assess the effectiveness of the identified programs on this particular culture sharing group. It was not intended to obtain information regarding male bullying perceptions, or the perceptions of younger children. Additional research questions will address viewpoints of the faculty and school administrators that work with this population.

In Chapter 2, I will provide a review of the literature pertaining to the issue of bullying and bullying prevention programs. I will also provide information regarding a variety of prevention programs and research associated with the implementation of these programs in various settings and locations. I will also note the various types of bullying and differences in bullying related to gender. I will discuss the effects of bullying and aggression on youth populations and the characteristics and risks of bullying.

Chapter 3 will encompass the research design of the study and provide information to substantiate a qualitative study. I will discuss measures of ethical protection of the participants, details regarding the administration of the data collection tools, and the sampling procedures. I will also address additional information regarding the eligibility of participants and the overall population in Chapter 3. I will provide details about issues related to the confidentiality of the participants, data collection techniques, and data analysis to ensure a general overview of the study

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter provides an overview of the literature that pertains to the subject of bullying in schools and bullying prevention programs that are implemented in the school systems. The majority of the studies noted in the literature review assessed bullying prevention programs in middle and high schools across the country. The studies mentioned vary in regards to the specific concepts under observation. Some intended to view teachers' perceptions of intervention methods, others looked at the behaviors of the students, and there were studies that evaluated the effectiveness of prevention programs in general. The literature review also will provide information regarding the sociopsychological issues, influences, characteristics, and risks of bullying behaviors. The majority of the studies in this chapter targeted bullying at the middle school level and all of the studies included both male and female students.

The literature review is broken down into specific sections that identify important aspects of bullying. The section on the effects of bullying and aggression will describe basic issues that impact the victims of bullying. The section on the characteristics and risks of bullying will identify the basic principles of bullying and the risks associated with these behaviors for both the bullies and the victims. A review of the bullying prevention programs will provide an overview of programs that have been utilized in various school settings as well as discussions regarding the findings.

The majority of the information obtained for the literature review was located using EBSCO databases, accessed through the Walden University Library home page. I searched these databases, including PsycARTICLES, PsycINFO, and SocINDEX, using keywords to find peer reviewed journal articles pertinent to the subject being studied.

Examples of keywords include: *bullying, adolescent bullying, school violence, bullying prevention programs, aggression, female aggression, social learning perspective, general aggression model, social interventions, and Olweus*. I reviewed the journal articles to find pertinent information that could be used to support the theoretical framework and research questions for the study.

I also used other sources such as the *APA Dictionary of Psychology* (APA, 2007) throughout the literature review to assist in identifying terms and concepts. I obtained the most recent bullying statistics by searching the World Wide Web using keywords (e.g., *bullying statistics, school violence statistics, and educational statistics*) and reviewing data from the National Center for Education (IES, 2009).

Related Research and Literature Review

Throughout the past decade, there has been a significant increase in the awareness and concern of the presence and impact of bullying of children in U.S. schools (Coyle, 2008). Coyle noted that the focus of research has been on the rate of bullying and victimization, the psychosocial issues related to this issue, and determining the most effective ways to implement prevention and intervention methods in the schools to reduce bullying incidents. Olweus (2003) reported that researchers only began systematically studying this issue of bullying during the 1970s. Unfortunately, research at that time was focused primarily in Scandinavia (Olweus, 2003).

The majority of bullying research that has been completed is based upon the evaluation of various intervention programs. Some of these programs include Olweus' Bullying Prevention Program (Olweus, 2005), Steps to Respect (Frey et al., 2005), Expect Respect, and Bully Busters (Rock et al., 2004). These programs focused on

middle and high school students and include information addressing sexual harassment, physical aggression, and issues related to anger management (Rock et al., 2004).

Previous research on bullying has indicated that the act of bullying for middle school students decreases over time, although some studies have also shown that bullying increases with age (Carlyle & Steinman, 2007). A common link between these views is that although bullying behavior has a tendency to peak from early to late adolescence, research shows that the prevalence rates peak temporarily during the middle school years (Carlyle & Steinman, 2007). A study by Jeffrey, Miller, and Linn (2001) showed that in the absence of a whole school prevention program, approximately half the students were bullied by fifth grade and the majority of students were bullied by eighth grade. This supports the previous research suggesting the increase of bullying behavior with age.

According to a national study of bullying, 13% of sixth grade students reported being bullied at least once per week (Orpinas, Horne, & Staniszewski, 2003). In a study by Jeffrey et al. (2001), conducted with middle school students ($n = 470$), results indicated that the majority of the students who had been bullied by sixth grade and seventh grade showed the highest bullying rate. By the time students reached eighth grade, bullying was considered a normative experience (Jeffrey et al., 2001).

Olthof and Goossens (2008) reported that both the bullying behavior of adolescents and being an adolescent victim of bullying are predictors of maladjustment at a later age. Bullying in adolescence has been linked with at risk behaviors and conduct problems (Young & Sweeting, 2004). Carlyle and Steinman (2007) commented that adolescent victims of bullying behaviors are also at a higher risk of socio psychological harm, including depression. Whereas these researchers have studied both genders,

Young and Sweeting (2004) stated that research has found that girls more consistently experience psychological distress from adolescence onward.

Olthof and Goossens (2008) proposed that one of the most basic needs that underlie human behavior is the desire and need to be recognized and accepted by others.

Larkin (2007) challenged that researchers have not considered the use of violence and aggression in maintaining relationships within adolescent peer cultures. Peer cultures include school groups, such as clubs, organizations, and sports teams. Much of the characteristic bullying behavior that occurs at the middle and high school levels is said to result from relationships among these groups within the peer structure (Larkin, 2007).

Olthof and Goossens (2008) inferred that bullying is a group process.

Characteristics and Risks of Bullying

Bullying behavior can be viewed from a variety of different perspectives. One constant component of school bullying is that it is a growing social problem in which children utilize power balances to dominate or harm others in a physical, social, or emotional manner (Frey et al., 2005). The need for power may result from the basic human desire to belong (Olthof & Goossens, 2008).

Much of the literature focuses on gender differences in types of bullying behavior. Females and males engage in different forms of bullying behavior. For instance, boys are reported to bully other students more often than girls; however, girls bully in a different manner (Olweus, 2003). Females use more subtle and indirect means of harassment which may include exclusion, rumors, and manipulation of others (Olweus, 2003). It is important to understand the differences in bullying behavior between genders; however,

it is also important to gain a greater understanding of bullying as it relates to individual genders.

Whitted and Dupper (2005) reported that bullying can be direct or indirect. Direct bullying refers to incidents such as physical or verbal aggression while indirect bullying refers to issues such as threats, name calling, rumors, and isolation. Research has suggested that both males and females use both direct and indirect aggression (Steinman & Carlyle, 2006). In regards to victimization, males experience more direct aggression while females experience more indirect aggression (Steinman & Carlyle, 2006). Steinman and Carlyle (2006) have noted that although gender differences have been noted regarding the types of bullying typically used and received, caution should be exercised in labeling either type a male or female problem.

Bullies typically harass certain individuals or groups using a variety of negative actions (Rock et al., 2004). Victims of indirect bullying are subject to purposeful actions that socially exclude or ruin their reputation or status leading to a lack of socialization with peers (Whitted & Dupper, 2005). The process of social isolation of victims is known as relational aggression. This type of aggression is frequently used by female bullies. Whitted and Dupper (2005) further indicated that racial and sexual bullying are two other forms that occur in the school settings. Racial bullying can be viewed as racial slurs, graffiti, cultural comments, and other offensive comments. Sexual bullying includes incidents of jokes, pictures, starting rumors, physically intrusive behaviors, or forcing someone to engage in sexual behaviors (Whitted & Dupper, 2005).

Researchers have assisted in understanding human nature, relationships, and social interactions. They have also helped to understand aggressive behavior, basic

needs, and cultural influence. All of this information was valuable to my research to assist in understanding the rationale of bullying behavior. The next step in the process was to narrow the research and address individual genders to determine how bullying and interventions impact specific populations. My study targeted female youth in the process of narrowing research.

Effects of Bullying and Aggression

One key feature of bullying is that it most often occurs in the presence of others. Individuals who observe bullying behaviors, referred to as bystanders, are often also affected by the incidents. Jeffrey et al. (2001) indicated that for bullies, victims, and bystanders of bullying incidents, bullying is a social experience that can carry long-term social, emotional, developmental, and academic implications. Longitudinal studies have suggested that bullying is considered a risk factor leading to conduct problems and other violent behaviors (Alikasifoglu et al., 2007). In addition, victims of bullying were noted as at risk for the development of mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideations (Alikasifoglu et al., 2007). Victims often develop psychosomatic symptoms such as headaches, stomach aches, and sleeping difficulties and struggle with issues of loneliness, isolation, and refusal to attend school. Bullying victims tend to seek out peers who experience similar issues, and they tend to lack the interpersonal skills needed to develop friendships that protect them from victimization (Rock et al., 2004).

Female youth, at the middle school level, were the focus of this research. I chose this population to provide information regarding how female youth, specifically, may experience bullying and respond to intervention programs. This will assist in assessing

the characteristics and pertinent issues that females in this particular age category are facing in the school setting.

Review of Bullying Prevention Programs

Research regarding intervention programs to address bullying in schools has gained popularity. The programs are designed to provide students with training to address this issue from both a psychological and sociological perspective (Arostegui & Arraez, 2005). Jeffrey et al. (2001) stated that in order for the interventions of peers to be effective in addressing bullying behavior, bullying must be defined for the students and the students must be provided with strategies for intervening.

Researchers have increased the knowledge of the effective elements of prevention programs in the school setting attempting to address children as individuals and alter the culture of the school setting. Whitted and Dupper (2005) reported that the most effective prevention programs involve multilevel strategies that target bullies, victims, bystanders, communities, and families. Multilevel strategies of these prevention programs also involve the school teachers and administrators. The concept of using multilevel strategies is important in research for both statistical and conceptual reasons. Shinn (2003) noted that focusing on only one component, such as the teachers, without taking into account other influential factors, such as the organizations and communities of which they are part, may lead to errors of inference.

The identification of the factors involved in school bullying is an essential component of the development and implementation of bullying intervention programs (Whitted & Dupper, 2005). Studies have suggested that school bullying is frequently demonstrated in unstructured school settings, such as the playground or the lunchroom

(Leff, Power, Costigan, & Manz, 2003). These environmental issues need to be taken into consideration when monitoring and addressing issues of bullying. Although many issues arise during unstructured school time, not all of these issues may be considered bullying. Intervention strategies that are used to address other typical childhood conflicts may not apply, or be effective, with bullying behavior. Interventions such as conflict resolution, peer mediation, and increasing self-esteem have been found ineffective with bullies because bullying behaviors are not the result of social skills deficits but stem from an imbalance of power (Whitted & Dupper, 2005).

Pearl and Dulaney (2006) suggested that one approach in bullying prevention programs is to befriend the children and teach ways to support victims and alleviate future distress and victimization. Pearl and Dulaney assessed the impact of a bullying prevention program on the depressive symptoms and prosocial behavior of fifth grade students. They asked children to complete the Peer Relations Questionnaire, the Children's Depression Inventory, and the Prosocial Tendencies Scale to determine if any changes occurred as a result of participation in a bullying prevention program. This particular study involved participants from six schools, only targeted fifth grade students, and included both male and female students. The six schools were divided into two groups, three suburban parochial schools and three public schools. Pearl and Dulaney indicated that there were multiple ethnic groups included in the population. In addition, this study was based upon a 45-minute presentation program on bullying. The study showed that there was no significant change in the scores of the children following participation (Pearl & Dulaney, 2006). The authors indicated that further research

regarding the effects of victimization and the effectiveness of bullying prevention programs is warranted (Pearl & Dulaney, 2006).

Olweus reported that the systematic study of bullying was initially focused on schools in Scandinavia (Olweus, 2003). Olweus was one of the forerunners of bullying prevention and developed the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program. The program was developed in 1970 in Sweden and evaluated in Norway in the 1980s (Forgatch, 2003). During the 1980s and 1990s, bullying research began to attract more attention in other countries, eventually spreading to the United States (Olweus, 2003). Due to decades of extensive research on this program, the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program was selected as one of 10 blueprint programs by a special committee to be implemented in communities across the United States (Forgatch, 2003).

Olweus (2003) used the Bully/Victim Questionnaire that he created to obtain his data in many countries. Data were collected regarding the rates of bullying prior to the implementation of intervention programs. Results of the questionnaire were compared to determine prevalence rates among the countries and cultures involved in the study. Data from other countries was compared with the data collected in Scandinavia since this was the initial location of Olweus' research. Results showed that bullying outside of Scandinavia exist at similar, or higher, prevalence rates (Olweus, 2003). Olweus' studies showed dramatic increases in the number of students victimized by bullies and determined this increase to be caused by negative societal developments (Olweus, 2003). The results of these comparisons are questionable due to possible language barriers, students' concepts of bullying behavior, and the various settings in which the studies occurred.

Olweus (2005) conducted several studies regarding the effects of his bullying prevention programs in the schools where they have been implemented. Olweus reported that studies conducted in elementary schools (Grades 4–7) showed significant reductions in the victim/bully problems (Olweus, 2005). Aside from the typical victim/bully problems, Olweus (2003) also noted that there were improvements in the social climate within the classes, reductions in general antisocial behavior, and an improved attitude toward school and homework. The length of interventions ranged from 8–20 months of participation in the program. This differs greatly from the study completed by Pearl and Dulaney (2006). In this study, Pearl and Dulaney only presented bullying prevention to the students for 45 minutes. Olweus' (2003) program was implemented throughout the school year. It may be possible to conclude that the programs are more effective for the students when presented over an extended period of time.

Olweus launched the New National Initiative against Bullying in which more than 100 schools and 21,000 students participated (Olweus, 2005). In comparison to my study, Olweus' programs were implemented in a large number of schools with an enormous number of participants whereas my study was much smaller. Also, as noted in prior studies, the population of Olweus' studies included both males and females.

In another study that evaluated a school-based violence intervention program, Edmondson and Hoover (2008) assessed the perception of student behavior, reported implementation of the curricular lessons associated with the prevention program, and gauged the changes that occurred in the school atmosphere as a result of the implementation of the program. The program under evaluation was developed based upon the prevention programs of Olweus (Edmondson & Hoover, 2008). The program

was evaluated over a 3-year period and the data collected were primarily obtained through the use of evaluations by teachers regarding program effectiveness. The study involved implementation in four schools with 631 students, male and female. Edmondson and Hoover (2008) reported that during the 3-year program implementation, there was a positive change in student behavior; however, the referral rates to the principal stayed the same. The authors failed to present the limitations to the study or provide information regarding the implications for practice.

Crothers and Kolbert (2004) conducted a mixed-methods study to determine if there was a difference in preferences between teachers and students regarding anti-bullying strategies. The researchers also intended to determine the methods that teachers found to be most effective when intervening in bullying situations. The researchers compared middle school students' and teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of intervention and prevention strategies. This particular study was completed in one middle school, and the participants ($n = 285$) were students from Grades 6 through 8 (Crothers & Kolbert, 2004). Teaching faculty ($n = 37$) were also involved (Crothers & Kolbert, 2004). The students were male and female, equally represented, and the majority of the students were of Caucasian descent.

Through the use of surveys and interviews, Crothers and Kolbert (2004) determined that teachers were much more optimistic regarding the use of bullying prevention and intervention strategies than the students. They also determined that students are less likely to seek the assistance of teachers when being bullied. When teachers fail to intervene in bullying situations, the children who engage in aggressive behaviors may misinterpret the lack of intervention as approval of their actions and

consider these behaviors socially acceptable. Two major limitations of this study are that only one school participated in the study and that the assessment tool used to survey the participants was developed by the researchers and may be considered biased.

Mishna (2004) conducted a qualitative study to investigate children's experiences of victimization by bullying, compare the perspectives of the children with the perspectives of their parents and educators, and also to explore the interactions between children and adults as they relate to victimization by peers. Mishna's (2004) study was one of the first qualitative assessments regarding the perceptions of victimized children and their parents and teachers. The study involved surveying students in Grades 4 and 5 ($n = 61$) and conducting individual interviews of children, parents, and school personnel (Mishna, 2004).

According to Mishna (2004), two primary themes emerged from the study. The first theme was that there is a difference between an individual's cognitive perception of bullying and being able to identify an incident of bullying (Mishna, 2004). The second theme that emerged was the prevalence of bullying among friends (Mishna, 2004). The overall pattern that was noted by Mishna (2004) was that bullying is very difficult to define.

Mishna's (2004) study coincides with a comment by Coyle (2008) who noted that the social-ecological perspective of bullying views the issue as a complex interaction between individuals, peers, communities, family, school, and culture. Mishna (2004) reported that few qualitative studies have been done to examine the victimization of children or their parents and educators. Mishna further reported that in order to develop

effective interventions, increased understanding of the views of the children and adults is a key component.

Mishna (2004) stated that little is known about the dynamics of school bullying relationships and that aside from the input of parents and educators, school administrators are considered key informants to provide data related to the school culture and attitudes. This particular group of individuals, however, is seldom included in research (Mishna, 2004). Overall, the study provided interesting perspectives regarding bullying, the victimization of children who have been bullied, and the perspectives of parents and educators. Mishna (2004) noted that difficulties with defining bullying may influence how individuals perceive acts of bullying. There was indication that some of the most common forms of bullying, such as exclusion, are often overlooked as these behaviors are not viewed as bullying (Mishna, 2004). Therefore the emotional damage of the victims, as a result of these acts, receives no attention. There were points made referencing the gaps in research which could inspire future research.

One of the gaps mentioned by Mishna (2004) included the minimal amount of research that has been conducted on children who are victimized rather than on the children who bully. Mishna (2004) also noted that school administrators are rarely involved in research; however, they are considered key individuals in providing information regarding school culture and attitudes. Future research should address the perspectives and roles of the teachers since they have been identified as the individuals girls turn to for support (Mishna, 2004). Additional research on bullying could focus on the perspectives from these important individuals and add valuable knowledge to the base of information previous research has provided. My study adds to this knowledge base by

studying the effect of bullying prevention programs on bullying behaviors and perceptions of female youth.

Hirschstein et al. (2007) conducted another study that assessed bullying prevention programs; they examined relationships between teachers' implementation of a bullying prevention program and student outcomes. The program, Steps to Respect, was implemented for students ($n = 549$) in third through sixth grade classrooms of two suburban school districts (Hirschstein et al., 2007). The criterion for inclusion in the program was outlined, as were the overall goals of the program, which was aimed at reducing school bullying problems. In order to participate, a minimum of 80% of school staff had to vote in agreement to participate in the study. All staff had to attend program training. All third through sixth grade teachers had to implement the program curricula in the classroom. Schools refrained from introducing similar intervention programs during the study. The last criterion for inclusion was that a minimum of 45 minutes of recess had to be scheduled for the children on a daily basis (Hirschstein et al., 2007).

The researchers determined that students who received high quality lessons associated with the bullying programs reported more victimization and a greater perceived difficulty of responding in an assertive manner to bullies (Hirschstein et al., 2007). Observations, however, indicated no increase in bullying behavior. One limitation of this study was the teachers' possible generalization of lesson deliverance and their faithfulness of executing the program lessons. These issues may have affected the results of the study.

Aside from the different approaches of the above mentioned programs, bullying preventions programs need to take into account the culture and climate of the school

setting where programs are implemented. Coyle (2008) defined school culture as the values, beliefs, rules, behaviors, and symbols of a school. The culture of a school is an integral component to be considered when implementing a program designed to promote any type of change as it can either assist or hinder the progress of the programs (Coyle, 2008).

Program effectiveness, based upon school culture, has been the subject of many research projects. Coyle (2008) reported that in cultures where students feel alienated, sense a lack of academic and emotional support from teachers, and do not sense an overall concern for student wellbeing, there are higher levels of school violence. Certain types of bullying, such as physical aggression, may be considered violent behavior. School cultures characterized by a more positive sense of support and belonging provide a better environment to reduce levels of school violence and bullying. The successful development of intervention programs, therefore, must target changing the overall culture of the school (Whitted & Dupper, 2005).

Summary

There were many similarities among the studies mentioned above. This research was intended to study the effectiveness of bullying prevention programs in middle schools. The primary differences addressing the gaps in literature are comparing schools that implement bullying prevention programs with schools that do not, and the population studied. The study targeted only female youth. This provided the opportunity to focus on characteristics of this specific gender, their response to bullying behavior, and how they responded to prevention programs. The study allowed for a more detailed account

of issues that female youth face in a time when bullying has become an increasingly widespread social problem.

Researchers studied many facets of the implementation of bullying prevention programs, however, the effects of school intervention programs on students has not received much attention. As noted by Jeffrey et al. (2001), there is a need to address gender role differences in bullying behavior and incorporate this information into the development of school bullying prevention programs in order to improve the effectiveness of these programs. Obtaining information regarding the effectiveness of programs from viewpoints of a specific gender can provide valuable knowledge to be used in future development of bullying prevention and intervention programs.

Chapter 3: Research Methods

Introduction

This study focused on the bullying behaviors of female middle school students in rural eastern Pennsylvania and the effectiveness of bullying prevention programs on the reduction of these behaviors. I chose a specific rural county as the area under study due to convenience and my increased awareness of bullying issues in the local school districts. The eastern PA County chosen is primarily a rural area, and therefore the chosen schools were from rural districts.

This study was based upon a qualitative research design that utilized interviews as the primary source of data collection. Data analysis was based upon principles of ethnography and grounded theory. I was responsible for the collection of data and the data analysis.

Chapter 3 will outline the ethical measures to ensure the protection of participants as well as the assurance of confidentiality throughout the study. In addition, I will provide in depth information regarding sampling procedures, the inclusion and exclusion of participants, and the procedures for consent to participate. I will explain the types of data collection tools in detail, including how I administered the tools to the participants. Finally in this chapter, I will summarize the procedures regarding the analysis of data and provide detailed information pertaining to the methods that I used in the analysis such as data managing and coding.

In this chapter, I will provide an overview of the pertinent information and techniques that were necessary to conduct the study. I used the collected data to determine if the implementation of bullying prevention programs impacts the bullying

behavior of the population under study. In addition in this chapter, I will provide the basic information needed for future researchers to duplicate the study.

Research Paradigm

Qualitative Research Design

There are five primary research traditions used in qualitative studies: narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study (Creswell, 2007). Within these five traditions, there are several similarities and differences. Each approach follows the same basic steps beginning with the identification of the research problem. The logical progression of the process includes the determination of the research questions, collection of the data, analysis of the data, and the development of the research report (Creswell, 2007). The first step in conducting any of these traditions is the determination of which research approach will be most appropriate in examining the research problem or study. In this study, I utilized ethnography and grounded theory. I will discuss information pertaining to these research approaches in the next section.

Qualitative data is often expressed as descriptions of behaviors or experiences (APA, 2007). Qualitative research involves a more hands on approach in the field of social sciences regarding the observation, collection, and interpretation of a social issue that can be viewed as a worldwide problem. Interactions among people, gender differences, race, economic differences, and individual differences are all examples of issues that would be appropriate for qualitative studies because they deal with problems of a particular group or population (Creswell, 2007). Data collected directly from these individuals can lend valuable information to the assessment of the issues at hand.

In regards to data collection, qualitative research methods tend to rely more on open-ended techniques including observation, interviewing, and recording of past information that has been collected on the topic studied. The data collection process is driven by the research questions and the interactions that occur within the natural environment. There are also times during qualitative research that the questions may change as different themes emerge. Nastasi and Schensul (2005) commented that the analysis and interpretation of data begins with the initial data collection, continues with the collection of subsequent data collection, and also requires the input of the participants. Multiple sources of data, known as triangulation, are used in qualitative designs to best represent the perspectives of the targeted population and the phenomenon (Nastasi & Schensul, 2005). Qualitative researchers continue the data collection process to the point of saturation. The researchers are the primary instruments of data collection. The quality of the data is dependent on the observation, interviewing, evidence gathering, and analyzing techniques and knowledge of the researcher (Nastasi & Schensul, 2005).

Research questions regarding the needs, concerns, thoughts, and impact of social situations can also be answered using this method. Qualitative research methods, field conditions, and objectives often make it difficult to control for issues like random error, participant error, and environmental issues that may impact the study. During the process of this study, I took care to avoid bias and maintained consistent conditions regarding the completion of interviews.

Rationale for Use of Qualitative Research Design and Methods

This study was qualitative in nature. The research was intended to study the effect in-school bullying prevention programs have on the perceptions of female youth

regarding bullying behavior versus the perceptions of female youth in middle schools that do not implement these programs. The research questions associated with this topic included assessing perceptions of bullying behaviors among female youth, how faculty and administrative populations perceive the issue of bullying in schools with versus schools without bullying prevention programs. Qualitative research was helpful in answering these questions because it provided the opportunity to utilize the views of the group and data collected from the population associated with the study. Qualitative methods also allowed the use of interviews of the students and faculty to obtain pertinent information.

This type of research design best fits this study because the issue addressed was a social problem concerning a group of individuals who were immediately involved with the bullying problem. I began this qualitative research with assumptions regarding the social issue and utilized the expertise of the individuals and/or groups immediately involved with the issue to gather information and establish patterns or themes, as recommended by Creswell (2007). I collected data in a natural setting, another characteristic of a qualitative study, because the focus was on the perspectives and thoughts of the female population being studied. As the researcher, I was actively involved in the data collection and interpretations.

Ethnographic Research Components

There is a lengthy list of options regarding the different types of ethnographic research that can be conducted: confessional, life history, feminist, visual, realist, and critical (Creswell, 2007). The focus of ethnography is on a culture-sharing group. The ethnographic approach allowed me to gather information from individual research

participants such as students, teachers, and other school personnel. The end result of the ethnographic study was the compilation of information into a report that detailed the patterns and values of the female youth culture-sharing group, targeting Grades 5–7.

Ethnography typically utilizes a large amount of interviews (20 – 60) in order to gather enough information to fully develop the model or theory (Creswell, 2007). In this study, I completed an adequate amount of interviews across all grade levels with students from each class, including those who participated in bullying prevention programs and those who did not participate in such interventions. Targeting a minimum of five students from each grade of each school to be interviewed, I conducted 30 total student interviews (15 interviews per school). In addition, two teachers per grade from each school were interviewed; therefore, 12 teacher interviews were conducted. This provided detailed information sampling each grade level under each circumstance. This also provided a total of 42 interviews (student and faculty), consistent with an ethnographic study.

Similar to other approaches, ethnographers seek out themes within the data collected and analyze the data based upon descriptions of the group and the determined themes (Creswell, 2007). As part of the ethnographic research component of the study, I used description, analysis, and interpretation of the specified culture-sharing group to analyze data. The female students who comprised the cultural group are described in detail to include information regarding the social setting (school), participants (female youth), and events (bullying) under study. As I gathered and reviewed the data, I analyzed the information for themes and other patterns (classifying stage). I have displayed findings using figures and tables in order to provide pertinent information at a

glance, highlighting the important components of the research. I interpreted the data to assess and make sense of the findings regarding how bullying is addressed within each culture and to identify the differences between the two cultures (prevention versus non prevention group).

Grounded Theory Research Components

Grounded theory can focus on individuals or groups and is driven by the generation or discovery of theory development that is “grounded” in the data obtained from the participants who experienced the process under study (Creswell, 2007).

Different from other approaches, grounded theory employs the use of coding to analyze data. Data for this study was gathered through individual interviews conducted with students and school staff.

Scott and Howell (2008) described grounded theory as a qualitative tradition based upon compared concepts. I found this model beneficial when studying bullying as it related to the female youth social groups, support networks of school staff, and issues of power and communication. From the grounded theory approach, I identified open coding categories. This occurred when similar data was grouped and labeled as part of this comparative process (Scott & Howell, 2008). Open coding entails reviewing text transcribed from interviews, field notes, and documents to determine categories that are supported by the text (Creswell, 2007). I categorized the concepts and linked them according to relationships; a process known as axial coding (Scott & Howell, 2008). For example, certain categories related to aggressive drive theories may have emerged. If necessary, grounded theory allows for larger categories to be broken down into smaller

subcategories called “properties” that represent certain aspects of the broader category (Creswell, 2007).

Research Design

Research Methods

Context of study. I conducted this study in a rural county in eastern Pennsylvania. The county population is approximately 147,063 based upon a statistical update completed in 2012 (Schuylkill County, Pennsylvania, n.d.). Schools included in this study were from rural areas of this county. For clarification purposes it is important to note that each school district included in the study consisted of one elementary, middle, and high school building. Some districts divide the primary and secondary grades into three buildings while other districts divide the grades into two school buildings (Elementary and Jr/Sr High). The Jr/Sr High buildings contained Grades 7 through 12. I selected schools for participation that contained Grades 5-7 in the same building (See Table 1).

I reviewed demographical information about the various school districts in the county to assess populations and determine which schools utilize in-school bullying prevention programs in their curriculum. Maximum variation was the primary sampling strategy I used in this study. This involved determining the differential criteria that between the schools or participants being studied and then choosing the schools or participants based upon these different criteria (Creswell, 2007). In this study, the differential criteria included the population, location, and whether or not the schools implemented bullying prevention programs. I chose two middle schools for participation in this study. Both schools had similar populations; however, they differed in program

implementation (one that used a bullying program and one that did not). These qualifications were necessary for comparison purposes. Intervention programs differed in the two schools selected to participate. The primary criteria for the schools that implemented prevention programs was that the students and faculty were being provided with education regarding bullying and that there were guidelines in place within the district to address issues of bullying.

I gathered information about the school districts from public records to determine eligibility for participation in the study. After narrowing down the prospective schools, I contacted the school district administrators to explain the specifics of the study and invited the schools to participate. Information regarding the research was sent to the school administrators for review. I provided information to the districts including, in written form, the purpose, specifics, and procedures of the study. Once I determined which schools would be participating, the school officials able to legally sign letters of cooperation were mailed the appropriate forms along with a self-addressed, stamped envelope for return to myself. If any of the schools chose not to participate; it would have been replaced by another school with similar qualifying characteristics.

Upon receiving acceptance from the schools to conduct the study, and letters of cooperation obtained, I personally met with the administrators to determine procedures for mailing letters to the legal guardians of the targeted population, including letters of consent. I requested that the schools print out address labels for parents or guardians of female students. I suggested supplying the school with labels and compensating for the cost of the ink used in the printing process. I supplied the school districts with self-addressed, stamped, and stuffed envelopes that only required the schools to affix address

labels and place them in the mail. All responses from parents/guardians regarding their child's participation were returned to me using the self-addressed stamped envelopes. The school was no longer involved in the selection process after the letters were sent.

Upon receipt of the consent forms from parents/guardians, I compiled a list of eligible students who were chosen to participate. I did not provide this list to the schools in order to maintain confidentiality of the participants. I assigned each participating student number and numbers were randomly chosen in order to choose students to participate in the interview process. I conducted interviews with students over the telephone in order to maintain a higher level of confidentiality and anonymity. I provided parents with a time frame during which interviews would be conducted. In addition to the parental consent form, students were required to return the assent forms as well prior to selection for participation in the study (See Appendix E). I requested that parents review the assent forms with their child prior to returning the consent/assent forms and participating in the interview. Prior to the interviews, I gave each student the opportunity to ask any questions that pertained to the study and their participation in the research. The assent process took approximately 15 minutes depending on the student's questions and understanding of the process. At no time did I have face to face contact with the students. I reviewed the assent forms with the students to assure their understanding of the study and what was expected of them. Students had the option to assent or decline participation in the study prior to starting the interview. I asked each student to find a private location in their residence to complete the interview process to increase privacy.

I e-mailed information regarding the study and the faculty consent form to the teachers to maintain confidentiality and eliminate paper copies identifying participants names. I provided my e-mail address and requested that any teacher interested in participating in the study respond via e-mail and provide a date and time that I could contact them to schedule an interview. I obtained oral consent over the telephone from teachers who agreed to participate in the study. I conducted the teacher interviews over the phone and each interview was recorded and transcribed at a later date.

Data was collected over the phone through interviews with students and faculty after school hours. Other data collection, such as principal and administration interviews, occurred within the individual school settings. I conducted these interviews during late afternoon and evening hours.

Role of the researcher. Throughout this study, I was the primary instrument for data collection. I interviewed the participants and completed the analysis of the data collected. I was the sole administrator of interviews, data collector, and the only individual involved in the analysis of the data.

I worked in conjunction with the school administrator to determine individuals who were eligible to participate in the interview process, based upon inclusion criteria for this aspect of the study. Following the receipt of parental consent forms and student assent forms, I assigned numbers to the students names and randomly chose numbers for participation in the interview process. I provided the parents of selected participants with a time frame (dates and hours) during which the interviews may occur. Conducting interviews over the telephone reduced risks for the student participants that other students

may identify them as participants, increased confidentiality, and provided a safer and more comfortable environment.

In regards to the faculty, I asked the principal of each school for a list of email addresses of the faculty who meet the inclusion criteria for the study. I e-mailed each teacher information regarding the study and a copy of the teacher consent form. I requested that teachers responded via e-mail if interested in participating in the study. When a teacher agreed to an interview, a date and time was scheduled to conduct the interview over the telephone. I obtained oral consent from the teacher at the time of the interview. I scheduled interviews for teachers during a time that did not interfere with their teaching responsibilities. Interview information was not shared with anyone, including school administration. I did not identify the names of interviewed participants in the analysis or results. I number coded all participants for identification purposes and to maintain confidentiality.

Interviews were conducted over telephone and I had no direct contact with the students or faculty during this part of the process. The names of the participants were not associated with any of the data collection results. This provided anonymity for the participants and eliminated any bias when I analyzed the data. In order to control for researcher bias or conflicts of interest when conducting interviews, I assured that I was neither directly nor indirectly familiar with the participants that were chosen. Students, with whom I was familiar, either on a personal basis, or through the aspects of my current or previous employment, were not eligible for participation in the study.

Measures for Ethical Protection of Participants

Bersoff (2003) commented that the biomedical and behavioral sciences have a long history of a lack of concern for the ethics and morality of conducting research. It is important to assess all aspects of a study, especially pertaining to vulnerable populations, to assure that participants are not taken advantage of or subject to any unnecessary risks or other circumstances that may impact their wellbeing. Following IRB approval, I gathered the necessary information to begin the study. Information regarding the purpose of the study, as well as parental consent forms and student assent forms, were provided to the parents of the intended population (See Appendices A and E). Only students who had returned signed, parental consent forms and student assent forms were eligible to participate in the study.

The parental consent form provided information about me and the general purpose of the study. I provided background information to assist in explaining the need for further research in this area. I explained procedures for the interview process as well as the potential risks and benefits of the research. Legal guardians were provided my contact information so that the lines of communication remained open for questions or concerns. Contact information for the University, Chairperson, and Human Subjects Review Board was also provided. The information provided stressed that students could feel free to withdraw participation from the study at any time with no penalties. Aside from the informational page, I attached a separate page for the parent/guardian to sign and return. This informed consent form provided the opportunity for the legal guardian to allow participation in the interview or to decline participation in the study.

The targeted population for this study was female youth in Grades 5-7. Due to the population, participants were all students and under the age of 17. Students provided the primary data, however, the teachers' interviews provided additional information regarding their perception of the bullying issue and prevention effectiveness.

Within this population, there may have been individuals who were mentally/emotionally or economically disadvantaged. It was unethical to exclude these individuals from the study, as they are students at the school who are part of the culture-sharing group under study. All individuals deserved the right to participate in the study if desired. These individuals could be subject to the phenomenon being studied (bullying) as a result of these disadvantages and could provide valuable information regarding this important topic. Due to the fact that this study was intended for female youth, special thought was given to this vulnerable population (minors under the age of 17). I provided information to the students and parents regarding the purpose of the research. The issues of anonymity and confidentiality were stressed with the students to ensure their awareness of the procedures and how their answers would be kept confidential. Only students who assented were included in the study. I informed students of the opportunity to change their mind regarding participation at any point during the study. I analyzed information disclosed during interviews and at no time were the students' names disclosed. All students' privacy was respected.

As previously stated, the possibility existed that, within the population, individuals with mental/emotional disability might be included as participants. I provided all students with the same information regarding the procedures and purpose of the research. If there were mentally/emotionally disabled individuals included in the

targeted population who required additional information or explanation regarding the study in order to make an informed decision regarding assent to participate, I provided the additional instruction.

Individuals with economic disadvantages were also a possibility within the targeted population. Economically disadvantaged individuals were provided the same information and opportunities to participate as all other students. There were no rewards or compensation regarding participation. This eliminated the pressure of the students to participate in effort to gain rewards or monetary gifts for participation.

The nature of this study had the potential to cause emotional stress on the participants. Prior to the study, resources and information regarding bullying and local counseling centers was provided to the parents, students, and faculty. In the event that any of the participants struggled with issues of bullying, or other related issues, as a result of the study, I reminded the participants of appropriate steps and resources to use to properly address the concerns. In addition, if participants experienced distress, they were reminded of the availability of school counselors as a resource as well as the list of counseling centers provided. I informed each participant that if immediate assistance would be required; parents would be provided with information to receive immediate assistance for their child.

I successfully completed the training for the participation of human subjects in research and am aware of the state laws and federal regulations regarding the targeted population. In addition, I am aware of the mandated reporting laws. In the event that a situation should have arisen during the course of the research that required additional attention or reporting, information regarding the situation would have been forwarded to

the proper authorities. Issues of confidentiality were applied to all aspects of this the research plan.

The initial proposal and Institutional Review Board application were submitted to the proper individuals for review. Information was provided regarding the participation of human participants in the study. Issues that pertained to ethical principles, inclusion and exclusion criteria, population and sample information were discussed. All paperwork and electronic data will be maintained for a period of 7 years after which all will be destroyed.

Participants/Sample

Sampling procedure. The study utilized students, teachers, and school administrators to obtain information related to the effectiveness of bullying prevention programs and how these programs affected perceptions of the female youth population. Only the female students in Grades 5-7 were eligible for participation in the student interviews. Based upon the rural location of this study, the class average was approximately 25 students per homeroom as determined by my involvement in the local schools. There were approximately 4 homerooms per grade level indicating a projection of 100 students per grade. It was estimated that the male/female ratio was evenly distributed among each grade (see Table 1), and therefore, the number of females per grade level was predicted to be in the vicinity of 50 students. Three grades per school were included in the study (Grades 5, 6, and 7) and therefore approximately 150 female students per middle school were given the opportunity to participate. Overall, between two middle schools, the total number of students eligible to participate in the interview

process was expected to total approximately 300 female students. Of these 300 students, 15 students per school were asked to participate in interviews.

Understanding that not all students would return permission/consent forms, and not all may assent to participation, the actual number of eligible participants was expected to be lower than the estimated sample size. The number of students provided the opportunity for participation allowed for an adequate number of parental consent and student assent forms returned to meet the targeted number of interviews. A total number of 15 students per school (5 female students per grade) were asked to participate in interviews providing an overall total of 30 student interviews. The number of interviews was determined to allow a small sampling from each grade level.

In addition to student interviews, six faculty members per school (two per grade) were also interviewed for a total of 12 between the two participating schools. I interviewed the principal of each selected school and the administrator totaling 4 administrative interviews. These individuals (faculty, principals, and administrators) were interviewed to obtain information regarding their views of program effectiveness, or views regarding the issues of bullying within the female youth population.

Table 1 provides information regarding the demographic information of the school districts in eastern Pennsylvania considered for participation in this study. The information in this Table provides information regarding the populations of each school district in the county where the study was conducted, the gender populations, the percentage of females per district, and the populations of each grade level included in the study. In addition, Table 1 shows the districts that have Grades 5-7 contained in one

building. This information was helpful when I was approximating the number of females per school to be included in the study.

Interviews. I randomly selected students to participate in interviews. Once parental permission and student assent were received, I conducted all student interviews over the telephone. This was done to reduce the likelihood that information shared by the student would become subject to rumor, provided to others in the school or community setting, and therefore reduced the risk of undue emotional, verbal or physical repercussions or stress by peers or school staff. I conducted faculty interviews over the telephone after school hours as to not interfere with their teaching. Interviews with school principals and administrators were conducted during the school day when it was convenient for them. Anonymity of these individuals, in regards to the information provided in the analysis and report of findings, was maintained. The information was used to assess bullying issues among female youth and thoughts concerning the effectiveness of prevention programs as they related to this population.

Consent to participate. Following the schools acceptance to participate in the study, I met with administrative staff to determine the best way to distribute informational letters and informed consent forms to the legal guardians of all female students in grades 5 through 7 of the two participating middle school buildings. Student assent forms were included. Information explaining the purpose of the study were sent to the legal guardians of all female youth attending the participating schools. The informational letter for the parents/legal guardians of the students and the informed consent form that needed to be signed and returned to track eligible participants can be found in Appendix A. Student assent forms can be found in Appendix E. In addition to

these forms, a list of local counseling centers was included with the information sent to the parents/guardians should a need for counseling have arisen as a result of participation in the study (Appendix A).

Table 1

Eastern PA School District Demographics for Grades 5-7

| | | | | | | | | |
|----------|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------------|
| School A | 317 | 159 | 158 | 50% | 103 | 113 | 101 | 5th - 7th |
| School B | 319 | 160 | 159 | 50% | 44 | 0 | 0 | K - 5th |
| School C | 696 | 362 | 323 | 46% | 122 | 0 | 0 | K - 5th |
| School D | 245 | 112 | 128 | 52% | 45 | 0 | 0 | K - 5th |
| School E | 730 | 379 | 350 | 48% | 0 | 238 | 228 | 6th - 8th |
| School F | 342 | 163 | 179 | 52% | 104 | 77 | 82 | 5th - 8th |
| School G | 505 | 271 | 234 | 46% | 77 | 88 | 0 | 1st - 6th |
| School H | 555 | 286 | 269 | 48% | 0 | 0 | 92 | 7th - 12th |
| School I | 876 | 476 | 400 | 46% | 123 | 127 | 0 | K - 6th |
| School J | 1120 | 586 | 534 | 48% | 0 | 0 | 188 | 7 - 12th |
| School K | 539 | 302 | 237 | 44% | 138 | 122 | 124 | 5th - 8th |
| School L | 837 | 425 | 412 | 49% | 216 | 196 | 208 | 5th - 8th |
| School M | 557 | 276 | 281 | 50% | 57 | 67 | 72 | K - 8th |
| School N | 578 | 278 | 300 | 52% | 69 | 75 | 0 | K - 6th |
| School O | 559 | 280 | 279 | 50% | 0 | 0 | 94 | 7th - 12th |
| School P | 529 | 262 | 263 | 50% | 76 | 0 | 0 | K - 5th |
| School Q | 488 | 250 | 234 | 48% | 0 | 158 | 163 | 6th - 8th |
| School R | 319 | 166 | 153 | 48% | 41 | 49 | 0 | K - 6th |
| School S | 107 | 44 | 63 | 59% | 11 | 16 | 0 | K - 6th |
| School T | 478 | 265 | 213 | 45% | 0 | 0 | 83 | 7th - 12th |
| School U | 555 | 290 | 256 | 46% | 80 | 90 | 0 | K - 6th |
| School V | 491 | 250 | 231 | 47% | 0 | 0 | 91 | 7th - 12th |

Note. Yellow denotes school districts that have Grades 5–7 contained in one building.

The information was distributed and returned to my attention. I kept track of the students who were permitted to participate in the study. Guardians had the option to allow or decline students' participation in the interview process. The school was not notified of those eligible to participate based on returned consent forms in an effort to

maintain confidentiality and anonymity of the participants. A deadline was established for return of the informed consent papers.

Following the date for the informed consent and assent forms to be returned, interviews were conducted with students and faculty (See Appendices B & C). Interviews were used to obtain information regarding their views of program effectiveness, or views regarding the issues of bullying within the female youth population.

Inclusion criteria. The main inclusion criteria for participation was that only students with returned informed consent forms were eligible for participation in the interview process. Other inclusion criteria were: students must physically attend school in one of the two middle school buildings, students must be female, English speaking, must reside with a parent/guardian who can give consent to participate, and must be enrolled in Grades 5-7. Students who assented to participation, and had written permission of a legal guardian, could participate. Individuals were identified as meeting the inclusion criteria based upon school records and parental consent.

Exclusion criteria. Specific exclusion criteria were identified regarding student participation. Students without consent forms were not eligible to participate. Students who did not physically attend classes in the school building were also not eligible (ex. home school). The rationale for this criteria was that students would be questioned regarding the effects of in-school bullying prevention programs (or lack thereof), and students who were not physically present would not have the first hand experience or knowledge of the information requested. Non english speaking students were also excluded from the targeted population due to possible issues regarding the translation

process and possible alteration of the student's actual thoughts. After I gathered a list of eligible students to participate, information was obtained regarding which of the students did not speak English and they were removed from the selection process. In addition, students who resided outside of the home in a residential facility or group home were not permitted to participate due to requiring parental consent and the nature of confidentiality. I identified students for exclusion by tracking the informed consent forms and school records.

Confidentiality. I discussed issues of confidentiality with all interview participants prior to the interview process. In a case where issues would arise during the course of the study regarding concerns for a particular student or situation, the issue would be discussed with the participant and dealt with appropriately as per the student's wishes as to not violate the realm of confidentiality or trust of the participant. Prior to the study, I provided resources and information regarding bullying and local counseling centers to the parents, students, and faculty. In the event that any of the participants struggled with issues of bullying, or other related issues, as a result of the study, participants were reminded of steps to take and resources to use as tools to properly address the concerns.

Data Collection

The method of data collection that was used in this study was personal interviews with students, faculty, and administrators. I created the tools that were used to collect the data. The interview process tied into the ethnographic tradition. The number of student interviews conducted met the general characteristics of ethnography. A total of 30

student interviews and 12 faculty interviews were conducted. This provided a sampling from each grade and school participating in the study.

Through interviews, I was able to receive first hand, personal viewpoints regarding the topic of bullying and intervention programs, as well as obtaining information regarding the perceptions of these issues. Interviews with students were conducted one-on-one over the telephone after school hours. Interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes. Telephone interviews helped me ensure privacy for the participants and provided the students the opportunity to comfortably express their thoughts and concerns without fear of repercussions. I received consent and recorded all interviews with a tape recorder so the interviews could be transcribed for review at a later date. I used the data collected to assess the issues of bullying among female youth and thoughts concerning the effectiveness of prevention programs as they related to this population.

Students were randomly selected to participate in interviews. Names of students who met the eligibility criteria, and had parental consent, were given numbers and the numbers were randomly chosen to develop a list of students to be interviewed. If a student changed her mind and did not wish to participate, I chose another student number at random as a replacement.

The purpose of the interviews was to gather information regarding bullying in the school, the impact of the bullying prevention program (or lack thereof), and the students perception of the problem. It was not necessary for the student to be a victim of bullying in order to provide her perceptions of the issue or viewpoints regarding the effectiveness of the prevention program. I conducted interviews using questions that provided the

opportunity for discussion regarding the bullying issue. Students were asked to discuss their experiences with bullying. Students who attended the school that did not implement a prevention program were asked similar questions with the exception of questions related to the prevention programs. Following the completion of interviews, I transcribed and reviewed the data. I explained to the students that they might be questioned again at a later date if any parts of the interview required clarification, in an effort to not misinterpret the student's responses. I assessed and compared the data collected from the interviews to determine any significant themes or differences within and between schools that utilize programs, versus schools that do not.

School faculty members were interviewed over the telephone, at a time that did not interfere with their teaching responsibilities, to assess their perception of the bullying issues and effectiveness of bullying prevention programs. I asked each school principal and superintendent to participate in an interview in effort to gain the administrative perspective of this significant issue. I encouraged discussions regarding bullying behaviors of the targeted population and how bullying is perceived by school administrators. The anonymity of all individuals, in regards to the information provided, was maintained. I have provided the interview protocols for the students and faculty in Appendices B and C.

The research questions were answered using data collected from interviews. Devers and Frankel (2001) stated that research questions must be appropriate for your field and relevant to those you hope will read your report and findings. I obtained the information to address research questions from students, teachers, and school

administrators. One school that utilized a prevention program was compared to one school that did not implement bullying prevention into their curriculum.

Data Analysis

This study utilized an ethnographic and partial grounded theory approach. Therefore, there was a combination of data analysis approaches involved in this study. Data managing was used to help create and organize files for the data collected. Since some of the data collection was obtained through interviews, reading and memoing was used to highlight important notes and assist in identifying initial codes. Coding was used to help organize and categorize the data to support the results and conclusions of the study.

I recorded and transcribed all interviews in order to accurately review and analyze the information gathered. Once transcribed, the data was coded to determine themes that emerged. Notes were reviewed and coded accordingly to provide additional data used to support or discover themes in the research.

The data analysis software package, HyperRESEARCH (ResearchWare, 2008), was used to assist with the coding process and analysis of the data. This particular package is used for the analysis of qualitative research and enables the researcher to code and retrieve information, build theories, and analyze data (ResearchWare, 2008). HyperRESEARCH provides the opportunity for the researcher to code specific data, assist with determining the emergence of themes, and allow the researcher to provide a definition of the codes to aid in the coding process and analysis (ResearchWare, 2008). HyperRESEARCH also provides the ability for code mapping to develop graphic representations of the relationships among codes (ResearchWare, 2008). In addition, this

software program is capable of performing an in-depth analysis of the coded data to determine if the collected data supports the hypothesis and research questions. Since this study used grounded theory and ethnography, the coding and theory building components were important.

Verification of Trustworthiness/Authenticity

Nastasi and Schensul (2005) provided a detailed list of the characteristics of qualitative research, as they relate to the quality of the data, verification and trustworthiness. The characteristics include: context, sampling techniques, data collection, analysis, interpretation, reporting, researcher-participant roles, theory and tactic knowledge, collection techniques, and ensuring trustworthiness. Multiple sources of data are used in qualitative designs to represent the perspectives of the targeted population and to provide corroborating evidence to support the findings (Creswell, 2007). Qualitative researchers continue the data collection process to the point of saturation.

I used several strategies in effort to insure the quality and verification of the research findings. Prolonged engagement was used during analysis. This occurred as I spent a minimum of two months collecting data and completing the research. This time span was adequate to assure that the maximum amount of information required was collected to understand how bullying behavior impacts the female youth population and the effectiveness of prevention programs. During the research process, I maintained a reflective journal in order to track personal thoughts, impressions, biases, and even questions that arise.

Through the use of member checking, I discussed the data obtained during the interview process with the female youth participant to ensure that the data, views, and perceptions that had been documented were accurate and correct. This was done by restating or summarizing information provided by the participant and then questioning the participant to determine accuracy. Thick description was provided so that the process of the study, participants, context, and any other pertinent information could be made available to other researchers and those interested in the research.

Data Interpretation

Interpretations of the data were based on models and perspectives of the social learning theory. As previously discussed, the general principle behind the social learning theory is that human beings are not born with tendencies to act aggressively toward others; these behaviors are acquired through complex forms of social behavior. Social behaviors such as direct experiences and observations are common methods of learning. Orpinas et al. (2003) discussed the use of the social learning theory in regards to consequences for bullying behavior indicating that the consequences should be certain, immediate, directly related to the behavior, and teach correct behavior. Bullying prevention programs are intended to reduce the bullying incidents and educate students and faculty on proper social behaviors regarding bullying.

The general aggression model is also based upon principles of the social learning theory. According to this model, aggression is triggered by a wide range of variables that influence arousal, affective stages, and cognitions (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). The drive theories of aggression, assessing the impact of external conditions and how they are linked to motivating individuals to harm or injure others, were also explored during the

study. Bullying may involve physical aggression, verbal aggression, or emotional trauma. These acts of aggression can be viewed through various models and perspectives of social learning theories. Dixon (2008) reported that the primary theories used in the study of bullying behavior are based in sociology, social psychology, sociobiology, systemic thinking, and psychodynamic psychology.

Through the process of reviewing these theoretical perspectives, I was able to determine themes that emerged related to the issues of bullying that were present in the schools under study. I coded the data according to the emerging themes and the results were analyzed. The perspectives helped guide the interpretations because the components of bullying behavior that emerged as themes were discussed through the viewpoints of these theories. For instance, the social learning perspective may assist in explaining how or why students bully others based upon information that is gathered through interviews. Students may have reported that they bully because this is typical behavior at home. They may have stated that they are witness to this type of behavior and it has become part of how they act. Students may have also reported that they belong to a group that bullies others, and therefore they also bully in effort to belong. This relates to the drive theory of aggression. In either situation, the behavior was learned through social interactions with others. Information gathered from the interviews could be broken into themes according to theoretical perspectives.

Previous research that has been completed regarding the implementation of bullying prevention programs in schools can be useful in current and future studies in this area. The information gathered from these studies can be utilized to determine what forms of analysis were effective, how the information was broken down and coded in

previous studies, and what gaps need to be studied in order to provide new and valuable knowledge to the already existing database. For example, reviewing the study by Dixon (2008) provided information regarding the coding of interview transcripts into themes and the analysis of the relationships between the themes. Information from the Dixon (2008) study support similar themes that emerged in this study. Differences in interpretation exist due to the differences between the existing research studies and this study. I found that the previous research assisted in supporting similar concepts and themes that emerged, and also assisted when analyzing points that emerged as significant differences between past and present research.

Interviews were utilized in this study to obtain valuable information and perspectives of the students and faculty on the issues of bullying as well as the significance and effectiveness of the prevention programs. Once the interview process had been completed, I comprised summaries to help analyze the results of these data collection techniques. Descriptions were provided about the functions and organizational functions of the culture-sharing group (for each school involved in the study). These groups were then compared to determine similarities and differences assisting in the processing of information regarding program effectiveness. Casual network diagrams could be included as part of the interpretation of data. Casual network designs are similar to flowcharts. They allow the researcher to order events, concepts, behaviors, and other components of a cultural scene or group to help show how one influences the other (Schensul, Schensul & LeCompote, 1999). It was important to discuss the demographics of the schools that participated in the study. This helped provide the reader with

characteristic information regarding the culture-sharing groups and help reflect the participants' perspectives as they relate to each individual school group.

Dissemination of Findings

There are several approaches that need to be employed to disseminate the findings to the targeted audiences as well as different audiences. Bellamy, Bledsoe and Traube (2006) discussed several barriers related to the dissemination of findings and results. One of the barriers discussed was the lag time between the development of the research and the dissemination of the evidence (Bellamy et al., 2006). The shorter the period of time between the research and the presentation, the more pertinent the information to the immediate research community and public. Upon completion and approval of this study, the information will be disseminated to the stakeholders.

Bellamy et al. (2006) also discussed the importance of breaking down the knowledge barrier, or general lack of awareness, regarding the proposed topic of the study. The use of descriptive information, such as the culture-sharing group, setting, bullying issues, prevalence rates, and level of social concern may draw the attention of those who may otherwise be unaware of the importance of such a study. The provision of adequate information about the dynamics, context, and culture of the population can reduce concerns that other researchers have regarding the methodology fitting within the confines of their available populations or settings.

Language is also an important part of the writing process when targeting specific audiences. In order to draw, and retain, the attention of the audiences, I have defined and written this study in language that is understandable. If the school districts desire, the findings can be posted in the school newsletters that will directly reach the students and

parents. The ultimate goal is to have the research published in professional journals.

This will assist in reaching others interested in this topic.

This research is intended to target multiple audiences. Foremost, it is primarily intended to target school policy developers, program developers, school administration, teachers and researchers. In addition to these audiences, the hope is that the information will also provide students, parents, and the lay community in general, with valuable information regarding the seriousness of this issue.

The research questions I have identified in this study are pertinent to the school administrators as they address the support of these individuals and the effect of the implementation of the programs under study. The first question targeted the program developers and policy developers because it relates to how the implemented programs affect bullying behavior. This study involved the participation of administrators, teachers and students; therefore the study may become of interest to similar populations to determine if there is a similarity between this study and their particular settings and population. Since bullying has become an increasingly widespread social problem, it would be beneficial to provide information regarding the issue to the general public to increase their awareness of the importance of bullying prevention programs, the nature of the bullying issue, and the prevalence in local schools. The names of the school districts that consented to participate in the study remain anonymous in effort to protect the reputation of the schools.

Conclusion

Schools are considered a special and integral environment for research as they encompass issues of social injustice and bullying behavior across all ages, reaching a

peak during middle school years (Merrell, Gueldner, Ross & Isava, 2008). This research was designed to study the effects of the implementation of bullying prevention programs on female middle school students while viewing aspects of this issue from a social psychology perspective. In doing so, the effects of environment, culture, peer influence, and policies were under review.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine if the utilization of bullying prevention programs in local middle schools had an impact on bullying issues of female adolescents in Grades 5–7. I chose two schools to participate in the study, one that implements the Olweus Bullying Prevention program and one that does not utilize any specific program. I conducted interviews of students, faculty, and administrators to gather the data for the study.

I formulated the following research questions to determine if bullying prevention programs have a significant impact on this population. The primary research question specifically targeted the prevention programs. The main research question was to identify how the implementation of in-school bullying prevention programs, in rural middle schools in eastern Pennsylvania, influence perceptions of bullying behavior among female youth in Grades 5–7. Supporting the main research question, the second research question was directed at how bullying is perceived and understood by teachers and administrators in schools with bullying prevention programs versus schools without bullying prevention programs.

In this chapter, I will provide detailed information about the research that was completed to answer the research questions. I will discuss the setting and demographics of the study to provide a brief background regarding the population under study. Details regarding the data collection process and analysis of data will follow. I also provide an overview of the procedures followed to obtain approval to complete the study, the actual process of data collection, and the analysis of the data collected through interviews. I

then provide evidence of trustworthiness and then the results of the study, including coding procedures, themes, and frequencies supporting the research questions. Chapter 4 will conclude with a summary of the data, analysis, and results.

Setting

I conducted this study in a rural county in eastern Pennsylvania. The county population is approximately 147,063 based upon a statistical update completed in 2012 (Schuylkill County, Pennsylvania, n.d.). The two school districts that agreed to participate in the study were School K and School A. Both districts are located in the same rural county in eastern Pennsylvania.

I discussed initial information regarding this study with the superintendents of both middle schools. During the time frame between School K agreeing to participate, and the interviews with the School K administrators, a new person was employed as superintendent of this district. The new superintendent was willing to participate. However, she was not as familiar with the dynamics of the middle school population as the previous administrator, due to her only being with the district for a short time.

The superintendent for School A was reluctant to give consent to participate in the study. Following a presentation at an open board meeting for the district, the school board voted 100% to participate in the study viewing it as a positive experience for the district and student population. Following approval, all information was forwarded to the building principal.

Demographics

School K has a population of 539 students. This population is comprised of 302 male and 237 female students. The focus of this study was on female students.

Therefore, approximately 44% of the student body was considered for participation in the study. School K contains Grades 5, 6, and 7 in the same building. Grade 8 is also taught in this district middle school. This district utilizes the Ulweus Bullying Prevention program throughout their district.

School A has a population of 317 students of which 159 were male and 158 were female. Approximately 50% of the population was considered for participation in the study. School A contains only Grades 5, 6, and 7 in the building. This school does not implement a specific prevention program in their buildings. Bullying is addressed through guidance classes and special programs.

These two schools were included in the selection process due to locations (both rural), population size, and due to both housing Grades 5–7 in the same building. The distance between School K and School A is approximately 13 miles. Additional demographic information pertaining to all school districts in this rural county can be found in Table 1 in Chapter 3.

Data Collection

I chose two schools in rural eastern Pennsylvania to participate in the research study. I asked several school districts to participate in the study based upon demographics. A key factor for eligibility was that each school needed to have Grades 5 through 7 in the same building. This eligibility requirement was to ensure that the data would not be impacted by the influence of older students (high school) on the bullying issues of middle school students under study.

I contacted the guidance counselors of each district middle school to inquire about whether or not their school utilized a bullying prevention program. I took notes during

discussions with guidance counselors so that information could be reviewed and referenced at a later time. All notes were kept in a notebook specifically designated for this study.

Following the determination of which schools would be appropriate for participation in the study, I sent out e-mails to the district superintendents explaining the study and asking if they would be willing to participate. Only five districts actually met the criteria for the study. Of these five districts, only three responded stating a willingness to participate. Fortunately, two of the districts that responded met the requirements for participation. The third school district met the criteria with the exception that Grades Kindergarten through 8 were all in the same building. This school district was not chosen to participate based upon the desire to choose two districts that were most similar.

I asked School A to be a part of the research study because they did not utilize an actual bullying prevention program. Bullying issues in this district are addressed through guidance classes and other special programs. I asked School K to participate since they actively use the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program in their schools. Both schools were similar in population size and setting. Compared to other schools in the county, Schools A and K were closest in population size once all other criteria were considered. School K had a population of 539 and School A had a population of 317. In addition, School A teaches Grades 5 through 7 while School K teaches Grades 5 through 8. Therefore, these two schools both contained the grades of interest for the study without a wider range of younger or older students in the same building to impact behaviors.

I mailed a letter of cooperation to the superintendent of School K. The superintendent electronically signed the letter and forwarded it to the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB). The superintendent of School A had reservations regarding giving permission for participation in the study, and therefore I had to meet with the school board to explain the purpose of the study and how the data would be collected. The school board members unanimously agreed to participate in the study and permission was granted at the meeting. The letter of cooperation was forwarded to the superintendent following the meeting, was electronically signed, and forwarded to the IRB. The IRB emailed approval to proceed with the data collection for both districts. The IRB approval number provided was 01-29-13-0101921.

Following IRB approval, I contacted each middle school from the two participating districts to obtain the number of female students in Grades 5 through 7 in order to compile the information that needed to be mailed to the parents/guardians. School K had 173 female students and School A had 149 female students that met the inclusion criteria to participate in the study in Grades 5–7. Informed consent letters and signature pages for the parents/guardians, child assent forms and signature pages, and a referral list of local counseling agencies were collated and placed in individually stamped envelopes along with a stamped return envelope. I provided the stuffed envelopes to each school where they were addressed by a school representative and mailed to the families of eligible female students. All responses were returned directly to me, and school personnel had no indication of who chose to participate in the study.

The number of responses from each district was rather low. I received 22 responses from School K students/parents (13%) and 25 from School A students/parents

(17%). Upon review of the information received, I excluded three responses due to being personally familiar with the students (one from School K and two from School A). One response was eliminated from the list of possible participants due to the child's refusing to participate. A total of 47 responses were received between both school districts. The responses were separated into districts and grade levels. The response total can be found in Table 2.

Table 2

Response Totals

| | School K | School A | TOTAL |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------|
| Total per school | 22 | 25 | 47 |
| 5th Grade | 8 | 11 | 19 |
| 6th Grade | 9 | 7 | 16 |
| 7th Grade | 5 | 7 | 12 |

I placed each response in a plain envelope and numbered it. I then randomly selected five numbers from each section to determine the participants who would be contacted to schedule interviews (five students from each grade level in each district). I chose a total of 15 students per district to participate, equaling 30 student interviews. I contacted the parents and scheduled interviews.

The principal of each school granted permission for the school secretary to forward an e-mail to each teacher in Grades 5–7 explaining the research study and asking their willingness to participate in an interview. I sent an e-mail to the secretaries and it

was forwarded to the appropriate teachers. Upon receipt of the teachers' responses, I developed a list of names of those willing to participate listed according to the grade they teach. Twelve teachers responded to requests for participation in interviews (two per grade level/per school). I interviewed two teachers from each grade from each school district. In addition to the student and faculty interviews, I also contacted the superintendent and principal from each middle school for an interview, which was conducted via telephone at their convenience.

I conducted student interviews first. As I contacted each parent and asked when their student would be available for a telephone interview, I recorded the student's first name, time of the interview, and phone number on a computer-generated calendar page. At the time of the interview, I called the number and asked to speak with the parent to obtain final confirmation of consent to conduct the interview. The student was then placed on the phone. I reminded both the parent and student that the interview was being recorded for future transcription and reference. I reviewed with the student the student assent form that was sent in the mail that each student participant signed and returned. I read a script to each student participant prior to conducting the interview (see Appendix B).

I stressed confidentiality to each individual as well as the importance of not mentioning the names of any other students or specific bullying situations. Upon receiving final assent from the student, I proceeded with the interview questions as outlined in Appendix B. I recorded each interview using a cassette recorder and labeled interview tapes with a number corresponding to the student's number used in the selection process.

I reviewed the list of teachers who were willing to participate prior to contacting them to schedule interviews. Two teachers per grade responded to the e-mails that I sent regarding the study. Therefore, I chose all of the teachers who responded to participate in order to fulfill the requirements for the number of faculty interviews needed. This was unfortunate because the number of responses did not provide the opportunity to draw a sample from a larger pool of eligible participants. A faculty consent form (Appendix F) and a referral list of local counseling agencies were e-mailed to each teacher indicating that verbal consent would be accepted at the time of the interview to eliminate any paper documentation of their participation.

I contacted each teacher directly and added the date and time of each interview to the computer-generated calendar. I contacted each teacher on the designated day and time via telephone to complete the interview. I reviewed the consent form with the faculty members and obtained verbal consent prior to the interviews. I conducted each faculty interview over the telephone after school hours so there was no interference with the teacher's primary responsibilities during the school day. I reminded each teacher at the start of the interview that the interview would be recorded for future transcription and reference. I also reminded teachers that their participation in the interview process would remain confidential and the school district would receive no notification regarding their willingness to participate in the study, therefore not impacting their jobs. I recorded faculty interviews using a standard cassette recorder. I asked all the teachers the same questions as listed in Appendix C. I identified each tape by the teacher's grade and whether it was a bullying prevention or non-bullying prevention program school.

I mailed administrator consent forms (Appendix G) and a referral list of local counseling agencies to each participating administrator with a stamped and addressed return envelope. The consents were returned directly to me. Following the receipt of the consent forms and completion of the student and faculty interviews, I contacted the superintendent and principal from each school district for the final interviews. I conducted each interview over the telephone and recorded the interviews using the standard cassette recorder. I identified the tape recordings of these interviews as Superintendent or Principal followed by the terms bullying or non-bullying prevention school district. I interviewed each administrator using the questions outlined in Appendix D.

I conducted student, faculty, and administrative interviews over the telephone during a one month period of time. Upon completion of the interview process, I reviewed and transcribed each interview onto data sheets for assessment. I separated the data sheets into categories based upon the grade, type of responses (ex. student, faculty, administrator), and if the responses were from a bullying or non-bullying prevention school. The number of interviews conducted during this study can be found in Table 3. The table indicates the number of students, faculty, and administrators from each school who consented to participate and completed interviews.

Table 3

Number of Interviews Conducted

| | Students | Faculty | Administrators |
|---|----------|---------|----------------|
| Bullying Prevention (School K) | 15 | 6 | 2 |
| Non-Bullying Prevention (School A) | 15 | 6 | 2 |
| Total | 30 | 12 | 4 |

Data Analysis

I separated data sheets into groups according to the type of interview (student, faculty, administration) and school (bullying or non-bullying). I reviewed the responses to all interview questions and took notes comparing the responses from each group interviewed. Interview questions for students, faculty, and administrators can be viewed in Appendices B, C, and D respectively. I used the notes and review of interview sheets to determine specific themes that emerged throughout the interview process. I used these themes in the coding process.

Themes that emerged during the student interviews were verbal, cyber, physical, and emotional bullying as well as recognizing that bullying was a problem in their school (Bullying YES) or that it was not conceived as a problem (Bullying NO). I determined faculty interview themes to be: consequences deter bullying, do not deter bullying, cyber, emotional, physical, and verbal bullying, if bullying was identified as a problem (Problem YES), not a problem (Problem NO), effectiveness of the program (if

applicable), and if protocol is followed. Themes for the administrative interviews did not emerge as there were only two interviews from each district and the responses varied.

I coded the data using the software program HyperRESEARCH 3.5.2.

HyperRESEARCH is a computer software program used for conducting qualitative research or qualitative data analysis. HyperRESEARCH enables the researcher to code data, retrieve material from sources, build theories, and analyze data (ResearchWare, 2008). I found the specific codes used when analyzing the student interviews were verbal, physical, emotional, cyber, problem yes, and problem no. I identified these codes during the process of reviewing student responses from individual data sheets and tallying student responses to interview questions. The subjects that students mentioned most often were used as codes when running the HyperRESEARCH program. In addition, I identified codes based upon information that was needed to answer the research questions. I added responses from the individual data sheets as sources in the HyperRESEARCH program so that the data could be coded and analyzed. As the data was reviewed, I coded each student response that indicated a specific type of bullying. The types of bullying were cyber, emotional, physical, and verbal. In addition, I coded the data sheets to indicate whether students felt that bullying was a prevalent issue in their schools.

I used the information that was gathered and coded accordingly to assist with answering the research question about how the implementation of in-school bullying prevention programs in rural middle schools in eastern Pennsylvania influence perceptions of bullying behavior among female youth in Grades 5-7. I also used the data to determine how bullying is perceived and understood by female students in Grades 5-7

in schools with versus schools without programs. I compared the student responses between the two school districts to determine if there was a difference in perception of bullying behavior for those who were exposed to a bullying prevention program versus those who were not.

I separated all of the teacher's interview sheets into two groups based on the presence of a bullying prevention program in the school in which they teach. I reviewed the responses and noted the themes that emerged throughout the interviews. Using HyperRESEARCH 3.5.2, I added the teacher interview data sheets as cases in the study. The data was coded using this software. The codes that were utilized to analyze the teachers' data were prevalence, verbal, emotional, physical, verbal, cyber, and frequency.

The data collected from the teacher interviews was used to answer the second research question about how is bullying perceived and understood by teachers and administrators in schools with prevention programs versus schools without. I compared the data from both school settings and analyzed it for similarities and differences. I compared perceptions of the prevalence of bullying behaviors, types of bullying witnessed, and effectiveness of programs.

I collected data from the Principal and Superintendent from each school. I analyzed the interview responses to determine if there were significant differences or similarities in perceptions by administrators regarding the issue of bullying. I also used the information collected to determine if the school with a bullying prevention program felt the program was effective in reducing bullying, and if the other school felt that their methods were sufficient in handling this issue without a specific program in place. I used this data to help answer the second research question. It was difficult to analyze the

administrative responses due to the limited number of interviews conducted and the variety of responses received. I found limited consistency among responses to the administrative questions.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

I utilized several strategies throughout this study in effort to insure the quality and verification of the research findings. The credibility strategies I used were prolonged engagement, triangulation, member checking, and maintaining a reflective journal. I collected data over a two month period of time. During this time, I conducted personal telephone interviews with students, faculty, and administrative personnel. I assured the time dedicated to the collection of data was adequate to assure that the maximum amount of information required was collected in order to understand how bullying behavior impacts the female youth population and the effectiveness of prevention programs. During the research process, I maintained a reflective journal to track personal thoughts, impressions, biases, and questions that arose. This journal was also helpful for me to organize information and keep track of results and conflicts that became apparent during the research process.

I used member checking during interviews with participants to ensure that the data, views, and perceptions that were documented were accurate and understood. I accomplished this by restating or summarizing information provided by each participant and then questioning the participant to determine accuracy using their own comments. Member checking assisted me with the verification of information that was received to assure that there were no misunderstandings and therefore misinterpretations of data

during analysis. Member checking was useful in helping to identify themes throughout the collection of data.

Another form of validation of credibility that I used in this study was triangulation. There were three different groups of participants used in the collection of data: students, faculty, and administration. The students were the most valuable providers of data because they provided information directly from the point of view of the population addressed in this study. The faculty sources were able to add a different perspective on the bullying issue and bullying prevention. Faculty were the primary people in charge of implementing policies and procedures during such incidents and addressing this issue with the students. I discovered some conflicts regarding the effectiveness of utilizing prevention programs and of whether bullying was an ongoing issue from the administrative and faculty standpoint. Administrators were able to answer questions pertaining to policies and procedures as outlined in the districts guidelines for handling bullying issues. The triangulation of data provided me with a better overall representation about bullying and the impact of prevention programs.

Transferability

I used thick description in this study to assist readers with transferring information to other settings. Thick description also allows readers to determine if the findings of this study can be transferred to other settings due to the shared characteristics. I described the participants' eligibility requirements in detail and discussed how only those individuals meeting all eligibility requirements were considered for participation in the study. The settings used in this study were two school districts; however, the interviews were conducted via telephone in an effort to minimize risk to the participants and help

maintain anonymity. I provided the population size of the schools, as well as the general location. Therefore, readers could determine if other schools are similar in size and location to the middle schools that participated in this study and decide if the data and results may be transferrable to other locations.

Dependability

Throughout this study, I compiled detailed notes in a research notebook to be used for review and compilation of data. I conducted all interviews via telephone and recorded them using a cassette recorder. I transcribed each of the interviews so that the information could be reviewed for emerging themes and coding purposes. I categorized the responses from the interviews by sources (student, faculty, and administration) and documented the responses in charts for ease of coding purposes and analysis. I completed the coding process by reviewing the interview responses and identifying common and frequent themes and wording.

Confirmability

The districts that were chosen to participate in this study were familiar to me; however, there were no personal ties to either district that would skew the results due to bias. As a resident of the county where the study took place, there was potential for me to be familiar with some of the participants. The study was designed to eliminate this situation and potential for bias by not permitting anyone with whom I was familiar (either personally or through work) to participate in the study. Triangulation was used throughout this study to draw data from different sources. I was able to maintain neutrality and assure the findings of the study were shaped by the participants and not personal bias, motivation, or interest.

Results

I analyzed the data collected from the student interviews using coding. I listed the frequency of codes that emerged throughout the student responses in Table 4. The numbers reported in Table 4 indicate the number of times students reported witnessing the four main categories of bullying and the number of students who thought that bullying was a problem (Problem YES or Problem NO). I have provided the mean and standard deviation of the coded results in Table 5.

Results show that in both districts, regardless of the utilization of a bullying prevention program, emotional bullying is the most frequently witnessed form of bullying among female youth in Grades 5-7. Throughout the student responses in both districts, a total of 31 issues regarding emotional bullying were reported. This was followed, in frequency, by verbal aggression, physical aggression, and cyber bullying.

Table 4

Frequency of Results from Student Responses per HyperRESEARCH 3.5.2

| Code | Non-Bullying Prevention School | Bullying Prevention School | Total |
|--------------------|---|---------------------------------------|--------------|
| Verbal | 6 | 12 | 18 |
| Physical | 2 | 4 | 6 |
| Emotional | 18 | 13 | 31 |
| Cyber | 2 | 3 | 5 |
| Problem YES | 9 | 10 | 19 |
| Problem NO | 6 | 5 | 11 |

Table 5

Mean and Standard Deviation of Coded Results of Students

| Code | Total | Min | Max | Mean | Std Dev |
|------------------------|--------------|------------|------------|-------------|----------------|
| Verbal | 18 | 6 | 12 | 9 | 4.243 |
| Physical | 6 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 1.414 |
| Emotional | 31 | 13 | 18 | 15.5 | 3.536 |
| Cyber | 5 | 2 | 3 | 2.5 | .707 |
| Problem YES | 19 | 9 | 10 | 9.5 | .707 |
| Problem NO | 11 | 5 | 6 | 5.5 | .707 |

The majority of student responses indicated that emotional and verbal bullying are the two most often witnessed forms of female bullying. When asked what types of bullying students have seen girls engage in, a student from School A (non-bullying prevention) stated, “Texting things about people and showing their friends, drawing pictures of people and passing them around, making fun of people.” Another student commented, “Harassment, making fun of the way you dress, or your hair, or inviting everyone to do something but one person.” This was consistent with previous research, as noted in the literature review, that females use more subtle and indirect means of harassment which may include exclusion, rumors, and manipulation of others (Olweus, 2003). A 5th grade student responded, “Ignoring people, making other kids mad at them, name calling.” It is also worthy to note that the school with a bullying prevention program reported a higher rate of verbal bullying while the non-bullying prevention school reported a higher rate of emotional bullying.

A total of 15 students were interviewed from each school district. The recognition of a bullying problem was fairly equal in both school districts with a mean of 9.5 students reporting that a problem exists while 5.5 did not see a problem (Table 5). In both districts, the majority of the students interviewed agreed that a problem exists (11 students did not see a problem while 19 said bullying is a problem in their school).

Further analysis of the data indicated that all students had a basic understanding of what bullying means, while some gave more in depth responses than others. A 5th grade student defined bullying as “When people hurt you.”, while a 6th grade student from the same school stated “Bullying can be anything that hurts another person and makes them afraid for some reason, like saying terrible things to them, calling them names, making fun of them, threatening them, or fighting.” Out of the 30 student interviews conducted, all but one student reported witnessing incidents of bullying during school. Half of the student participants (15) felt that certain groups of students are bullied more than others, such as younger kids, less popular kids, and those students who are different in regards to athletic ability, financial status, or physical attributes (40% from the non-bullying prevention school and 60% from the bullying prevention school). Some student responses from School K (bullying prevention school) were, “The popular kids bully the unpopular kids.”, and “It seems like the kids who don’t have a lot of money, or who aren’t really good in school get picked on more.” This may indicate a heightened awareness of this issue from those students who participate in regular bullying prevention programs.

The majority of students participating in the study who attend the bullying prevention school reported that they do not feel bullying prevention programs in the

school help to reduce the amount of bullying among girls (73%). When I specifically asked if the bullying prevention program makes a difference in reducing the level of bullying in school, a 5th grade student stated, “No because it still happens anyway.” while a 7th grade student commented, “No because as long as there is something to fight about, or boys to fight over, there will be bullying.” Although the responses may indicate that the students are more aware of the issue, it appears as though the students do not find the programs helpful in reducing the issue. Data also showed that 53% of the students from the bullying prevention school viewed that bullying is worse among girls, while only 40% of the girls from the non-bullying prevention school felt it was worse among girls.

I reviewed the data and took notes on the teacher responses to indicate the majority of responses and basic themes. The second research question was designed to determine how bullying was perceived and understood by teachers and administrators in schools with prevention programs versus schools without prevention programs. In order to answer this question, it was important to assess how teachers viewed the issue of bullying and bullying prevention in their respective school districts.

In Table 6, I provided data results related to coded teacher responses pertinent to answering this research question. I interviewed six teachers from each district. Sixty-seven percent of the teachers in the bullying prevention school felt it was a prevalent issue while 100% of the teachers in the non-bullying prevention school felt it was prevalent. This may be an indicator that the program in place may be reducing the degree of bullying behaviors occurring and witnessed by the teachers where there is an active program in place. On the contrary, it is important to note that none of the teachers who institute the bullying program stated that it was effective in improving the understanding

of this issue among female students. It is also important to note that only 5/6 of these teachers claim the protocol is always followed when bullying occurs.

The frequency of results from teachers (Table 6) show that 83% of the teachers from both districts do not feel that the consequences issued for bullying behaviors deter continued behavior. The types of bullying behavior witnessed by teachers in both districts is consistent with previous research indicating that females typically engage in more passive types of bullying behavior (Olweus, 2003). The data collected from teachers shows that the majority of the incidents of female bullying are emotional and verbal in nature. Based on the total calculated teacher responses, there are more forms of emotional bullying witnessed, followed by verbal bullying.

The totals pertaining to emotional, verbal, cyber, and physical bullying found in Table 6 are based upon how often the teachers referred to these types of bullying when I asked what types of bullying they witness during school. Therefore some of the totals exceed the number of teachers interviewed. For example, only 6 teachers from the bullying prevention school were interviewed; however, when asked what forms of bullying they witness in the school setting, the number for emotional bullying is 10. This was due to the teachers reporting witnessing different types of emotional bullying, such as social isolation, telling secrets, and humiliation. A 7th grade teacher from School K responded, “Girls tend to ignore and exclude other girls from social activities, shun them in passing, and name calling. There are very seldom any acts of physical aggression.” This counts as three frequencies all under the code for emotional bullying.

I was only able to assess program effectiveness through the responses of the teachers and administrators who were part of the prevention school population. Based on

the data collected, only one teacher felt that the program was effective in reducing bullying behaviors among females in the school setting. This teacher stated, “When I have the chance to share personal experiences with my students I think it is fairly effective but I don’t know how much they really listen to me. Also, I do still tend to have issues with my girls no matter what year, such as this year they were going to guidance about saying each other likes so and so and they were upset with each other.” In both school districts, I found that the majority of teachers felt that the protocol in place to address bullying issues is ineffective due to the protocol not being followed. “Many of the students either deny that they were involved or they aren’t reported by the teachers.” The protocol in both districts involves confronting the student, contacting guidance or the building Principal, and issuing consequences. In Table 7, I have provided additional data results regarding the totals, mean, and standard deviation of the results.

Table 6

Frequencies of Results from Teacher Interviews (prevention and non-prevention)

| Code | Bullying Prev. School (n=6) | Non-Bullying School (n=6) | Total (n=12) |
|----------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Consequences Deter | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| Consequences Do Not Deter | 4 | 6 | 10 |
| Cyber | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Emotional | 10 | 7 | 17 |
| Physical | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Verbal | 6 | 7 | 13 |

| | | | |
|----------------------------|---|-----|----|
| Problem NO | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| Problem YES | 4 | 6 | 10 |
| Program Effective | 1 | n/a | 1 |
| Program Ineffective | 4 | n/a | 4 |
| Sometimes Effective | 1 | n/a | 1 |
| Protocol Followed | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| Not Followed | 4 | 5 | 9 |

Table 7

Mean and Standard Deviation of Coded Results of Teachers

| Code | Total | Min | Max | Mean | Std Dev |
|------------------------------------|--------------|------------|------------|-------------|----------------|
| Consequences Deter | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1.414 |
| Consequences Do Not Deter | 10 | 4 | 6 | 5 | 1.414 |
| Cyber | 2 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 1.414 |
| Emotional | 17 | 7 | 10 | 8.5 | 2.121 |
| Physical | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0.5 | .707 |
| Verbal | 13 | 6 | 7 | 6.5 | .707 |
| Problem NO | 2 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 1.414 |
| Problem YES | 10 | 4 | 6 | 5 | 1.414 |
| Program Effective | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0.5 | .707 |
| Program Ineffective | 4 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 2.828 |
| Program Sometimes Effective | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0.5 | .707 |
| Protocol Followed | 3 | 1 | 2 | 1.5 | .707 |
| Protocol Not Followed | 9 | 4 | 5 | 4.5 | .707 |

I charted administrative interview responses in the same manner as the student and teacher interview data. I analyzed the responses to identify themes. The results of these responses provided a general overview of the Superintendents and Principals views of bullying in their districts. I only conducted four interviews, two from each school. I did not utilize HyperRESEARCH 3.5.2 when analyzing the administrative responses due to the limited number of interviews and the types of interview questions to which they responded.

It is interesting to note that there are several conflicts in responses between the Principal and the Superintendent from the same school regarding the effectiveness, prevalence, and how bullying issues are handled. I asked all administrators if they felt that bullying has become a prevalent issue in their schools. The Superintendents felt that this was not a prevalent issue. The Principals' responses were difficult to compare due to the one stating that "it is an overused word", while the other felt that it was a problem. When I asked the Principal to elaborate on bullying being an "overused word", the participant clarified that some people use the term bullying in situations that do not meet the criteria of bullying, or to try to get others in trouble. Responses regarding how often bullying between females was witnessed indicated that the Superintendents rarely witnessed any of these acts, most likely due to the nature of their job and limited interaction with the student population.

Another area of conflict in responses that I noted pertained to the protocol of how to address bullying when an issue would arise. It appeared as though the protocol is not consistent regarding who is to address these situations. This lends some insight into the teachers' responses about how the protocol is not always followed. According to district

policies, there is a formal protocol in place in both school districts; however, based upon responses from faculty during interviews, the understanding and implementation of the protocol is not understood or carried out by all individuals in the same manner.

Areas that were consistent across administrative responses include the existence of in house bullying prevention policies and that bullying appears to be equal between genders. Another similarity was that no programming is offered to educate parents of bullying behaviors. Bullying may occur equally among males and females; however, administration also acknowledged that the types of bullying are different. For instance, girls tend to engage in more passive forms of bullying behavior (such as name calling or social isolation) while boys may engage in more physical forms of bullying.

Summary

After I analyzed all of the data collected through interviews with students, faculty, and administration, the findings were used to address the research questions. The main goal of this study was to determine how the implementation of in-school bullying prevention programs in rural middle schools in eastern Pennsylvania influenced the perceptions of bullying behavior among female youth in Grades 5-7. To answer this research question, I collected data through interviews with students from two school districts: a district that implemented an in-school bullying prevention program and a school that did not utilize a specific program.

Based upon data that I collected, the students' perceptions on bullying from both schools were very similar. All of the students had a basic understanding of the definition and characteristics of bullying. Every student interviewed stated that they have witnessed girls bullying other female students during school hours. Students from both districts

identified forms of emotional, verbal, physical, and cyber bullying that have been witnessed in school. The percentage of students who felt that bullying was a significant problem in their school was also similar between schools. Sixty percent of the students (9 out of 15) from the non-bullying prevention school reported that bullying was a significant problem in their school, while 67% (10 out of 15) from the bullying prevention school noted that bullying was a problem.

I hypothesized that the students who attended the district that utilized a bullying prevention program would have a stronger perception of the bullying issue and that bullying would not be as prevalent an issue as the other school. Since the student responses to interview questions (Appendix B) were very similar, I concluded that the implementation of a bullying prevention program does not have a significant impact on the perceptions of bullying behavior among female youth in Grades 5-7.

The second research question addressed in this study was how bullying is perceived and understood by teachers and administrators in schools with bullying prevention programs versus schools without bullying prevention programs. It is interesting to note that the results of faculty and administrator interviews varied greatly within schools. For example, the principal of the non-bullying prevention school viewed bullying as a huge issue while the superintendent did not feel it was a major issue. In addition, the principal did not feel that the current policies were effective in addressing the issue, but the superintendent felt that it was adequate. When administrators of the bullying prevention school were asked if they implemented a zero tolerance policy on bullying, the principal said “no” while the superintendent said “yes”.

There seemed to be some negativity in faculty responses regarding the policies and procedures to address bullying issues, in both districts. Teachers from both schools commented that the policies are not followed as they should be and that some students who bully do not receive the same treatment as others. Many of the teachers' responses indicated that there were conflicts in understanding the protocol for bullying.

Overall, the data I collected from faculty and administrators from both schools showed that their perception and understanding of bullying were similar. Interestingly, four out of six faculty who implemented the bullying prevention program felt that the program was ineffective in addressing this serious issue. Bullying was perceived as an ongoing problem in both schools (100% in the non-bullying prevention school, and 67% in the bullying prevention school). This indicates that the presence of an in-school bullying prevention program does not alter the perceptions or understanding of the bullying issue among faculty and administration.

In Chapter 5, I have provided an overview describing the purpose and nature of the study. The overview is followed by an interpretation of the findings, a discussion regarding limitations of the study, and recommendations for future research. In the final chapter, I have also identified the implication of this study for positive social change and conclusions based on the data collected.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to research the effectiveness of bullying prevention programs on bullying behaviors among adolescent, female, middle school students in rural eastern Pennsylvania. This study was also intended to determine if the utilization of an in-school bullying prevention program increases the awareness and understanding of bullying among this population. I hypothesized that schools who implement bullying prevention programs show less bullying behaviors among female youth.

I conducted the study through telephone interviews of students, faculty, and administrators of two middle schools in eastern Pennsylvania. I chose the schools based on certain criteria including demographics, population, and the grades taught in each school building. It was important to utilize two school districts that were similar in size and location (rural). The schools that met the criteria had Grades 5, 6, and 7 all in the same building. This criterion was necessary to try and reduce the impact of older high school students on the targeted age group. I directly contacted each school district that was eligible to participate based on the other criteria to determine if they utilized a bullying prevention program in their schools. This study required one school district that utilized a bullying prevention program and one that did not.

Following the collection of the demographics of all districts in a rural county in eastern Pennsylvania and the determination of who utilized bullying prevention programs, I contacted administrators via e-mail to provide information regarding the study and ask if they would be willing to participate. Only 5 of 22 schools out of the 11 districts in the county met the criteria. I received limited responses from the schools that

I notified. Of these responses, I was able to find one school that implements a bullying prevention school and one that did not to satisfy the needs of the study. The administrators of these two schools, School A and School K, electronically signed letters of cooperation and all information was forwarded to the IRB for approval.

Upon approval, I sent letters to all parents/guardians of eligible student participants via the school secretary. The letters contained informed consent forms, student assent forms, a list of local counseling agencies, and a return envelope. All responses were mailed directly to me so the school had no information regarding who consented to participate in the study. In addition to the student interviews, I contacted faculty for each school via e-mail and asked them to participate in an interview. I also interviewed the principal and superintendent for each school. I conducted all interviews via telephone after school hours. The interviews conducted totaled 30 student, 12 faculty, and 4 administrative interviews. I analyzed the data collected from these interviews and used them to answer the research questions.

Research Questions

The primary research questions were specifically intended to target the effectiveness of prevention programs. There were two main research questions addressed throughout this study. How does the implementation of in-school bullying prevention programs in rural middle schools in eastern Pennsylvania influence perceptions of bullying behavior among female youth in Grades 5–7? How is bullying perceived and understood by teachers and administrators in schools with bullying prevention programs versus schools without bullying prevention programs?

In addition to these two main research questions, I gathered additional information regarding the bullying issues that middle school, female youth face and the aspects of bullying prevention programs that are viewed as most effective by students and faculty. I gathered this information to answer the question, “How is bullying perceived and understood by female students in Grades 5–7 in schools with bullying prevention programs versus schools without bullying prevention programs?” This additional information was used to support and help answer the primary research questions.

Summary of the Findings

I gathered data from both a school that utilized a bullying prevention program and a school that did not actively use a particular program. The bullying program used was Olweus. Olweus (2003) used the Bully/Victim Questionnaire that he created to obtain his data in many countries where data was collected regarding the rates of bullying prior to the implementation of intervention programs. Results of the questionnaire were compared to determine prevalence rates among the countries and cultures involved in the study.

In this study, the school that did not implement a specific program only addressed the issue of bullying during guidance class. Through the research, I determined that the primary forms of female bullying at the middle school level were emotional bullying and verbal bullying. This was consistent with research noted in Chapter 2.

Student Findings

Recognition by students that a bullying problem with females exists in their school was fairly equal between both schools involved in the study where the majority noted that a problem exists. Students from both schools were able to provide a general

definition of bullying, although some were more in depth than others. For example, when I asked how they would define bullying, a student from the non-bullying prevention school stated “When a person is mean to you” (non-bullying school student). A student from the bullying prevention school responded “Bullying can be anything that hurts another person and makes them afraid for some reason, like saying terrible things to them, calling them names, making fun of them, threatening them, or fighting” (bullying school student). The students were also able to identify certain groups of female students who were considered targets for bullying. When I asked if there are certain groups of students that are targeted by female bullies, some of the responses were, “Yes. The more popular kids are usually meaner to the less popular kids” (bullying school student), and “Yes, Kids who don’t really belong to a group get made fun of sometimes” (non-bullying school student). These targeted groups included less popular students, younger students, those who were not in the higher level classes and students who were lacking athletic ability.

During the interviews I conducted, the student participants were able to provide a list of places in the school where bullying was a more prevalent issue. These locations included the lunchroom, hallways, gym, at the lockers, and during unstructured free time. Based on these responses, I assumed that the majority of bullying behavior occurred where teachers were either not present, or less likely to witness acts of bullying.

I asked students what suggestions they had to help reduce the amount of bullying behavior by female students. Of all the student responses, 67% of the non-bullying prevention students and 47% of the bullying prevention school students commented that there should be more strict consequences. Additional suggestions noted were more

education on bullying, more attention by faculty, no cell phones during school and consistent and fair consequences for everyone.

I collected data from the student participants to answer the first research question, as well as the supporting question, pertaining to the perceptions and understanding of bullying behavior among female youth. Although it was anticipated that students attending the school where there is an active bullying prevention program in place would have a greater understanding of this issue, I found that the perceptions in both school districts were very similar. Both sets of students expressed that there was a problem with female bullying in their schools and have witnessed bullying by female students.

The primary differences I noted between student responses from the two schools was that students who attend the non-bullying school were not all aware that they do not utilize an actual bullying program, while students from the bullying prevention school were aware of the implementation of the program in their school. The students were also consistent with reporting that those who participate in the Olweus program receive regular bullying education whereas the majority of the other school's students reported not receiving education on this issue.

Teacher Findings

I asked teachers from both districts their thoughts regarding the bullying issues that occurred in their schools. One of the comments from a teacher from the bullying prevention school was, "The bullying is a means to gain something from another student and sometimes it's even just to gain attention" (7th grade teacher response). Other generalized comments I received from bullying prevention school teachers were that the issues in their school are no different from other schools, that most bullying stems from

jealousy, adolescents are immature, and that the kids need to learn better coping skills to make this stop.

Teachers from the school that did not utilize a bullying prevention program felt that bullying was to be expected but not to the extent that they are witnessing it, that girls need to learn to control their emotions, and that not enough is done about it. One teacher responded, “I don’t feel as though the bullying that occurs in our school is above and beyond what other schools experience; however, it is still disturbing how some of the kids treat one another” (7th grade teacher response). In my opinion, these responses indicated a general consensus that the teachers are able to identify some of the issues that lead to bullying behavior, and that bullying is being experienced with or without a prevention program.

All of the teachers from the non-bullying prevention school indicated that bullying has become a prevalent issue in their school and felt that the implementation of a bullying program would be helpful. Most of the teachers who utilize the Olweus program also felt bullying is a prevalent issue; however, the majority of them did not feel that the program was effective in improving the understanding of this issue among female students. Students from both schools reportedly receive bullying education; however, the extent of the education and frequency varies between schools. The majority of the teachers from both school districts also noted witnessing bullying behaviors between females 1-3 times per week. All but one teacher from both districts reported witnessing female bullying during school hours.

During the interviews with the teachers, I noticed a change in tone from the teachers when asked what the protocol is and if it is always followed. It appeared that all

of the teachers had their own general protocol, and that protocol is most often not followed for a variety of reasons. Some teachers noted that only some teachers follow the protocol. “I am sure some teachers don’t follow it. Maybe they are busy or not as invested as another teacher” (5th grade teacher response). Some noted that they are too busy to stop and deal with every issue that arises. “If we reported every act of mean behavior that happened in a day we would never get any work done” (7th grade teacher response). Other teachers claimed that some students are given special treatment and therefore things are not reported as indicated by the comment, “Some students are able to get away with more.” (6th grade teacher response). Overall, the majority of teachers reported that the protocol is not followed.

Administrative Findings

I found this to be an interesting analysis of findings due to multiple conflicts between the principal and superintendent of the same schools. In the non-bullying school, the principal expressed that the current policies in place are not effective in addressing this issue, while the superintendent felt they were adequate. The principal felt bullying has become a prevalent issue however the superintendent did not. An additional conflict in this district included the protocol to be followed when an incident occurs. These conflicts raise questions regarding the level of knowledge of the superintendent about the issues that lower level administrators are dealing with and the effectiveness of the policies in place.

I also noted that there were some conflicts in responses from the administration of the bullying prevention school. These responses primarily involved protocol and the existence of support programs for victims of bullying. Overall, responses from the

principal and superintendent of the bullying prevention school were fairly similar. Both felt that the program used to address bullying is sufficient in educating the students and improving their understanding of this issue. Neither the superintendent nor the principal felt that bullying has become a prevalent issue in their school.

Overall, the data I obtained through the interview process did not provide sufficient evidence to support that the utilization of a bullying prevention program makes a significant difference in the perceptions and understanding of bullying within this age group and gender. My findings were fairly consistent among the students, faculty, and administration. Perhaps a larger sampling of the student population and faculty would have provided more information to support the idea that utilizing a bullying prevention program helps reduce bullying among this age group and gender.

Interpretation of the Findings

In answering the first research question, the implementation of in-school bullying prevention programs does not seem to have a significant impact on the perceptions of bullying behavior among female youth in Grades 5 through 7. The data collected between both schools was fairly consistent. I expected to find that students who participated in the bullying prevention program would have a greater understanding of this issue and the program would influence/reduce the rate of bullying. Students in this school (73%) indicated that they did not feel that the program makes a difference in reducing the rate of bullying in their school. Teachers from this district did not feel that the program was effective in improving the understanding of this issue among female students. When questioned about the effectiveness of the bullying prevention program, one teacher responded “No. It is a ‘looks good on paper’ program designed to protect the

district in the event that someone would sue the school district for not having an anti-bullying program and having anti-bullying education available for our students” (5th grade teacher response). Data for this question is not available for the non-bullying prevention school because this question was not included in the interview due to the absence of an actual program.

The data reporting the frequency of incidents, types of bullying, and recognition that bullying is an issue in their school was fairly consistent between the bullying and non-bullying prevention schools. Students from both schools reported the most frequent forms of bullying are verbal and emotional bullying. The majority of students from both schools also reported that bullying is a problem in their schools.

The data that I collected to address the second research question also did not provide adequate information to show a difference in the perceptions and understanding by teachers and administrators in schools with prevention programs versus schools without. The data showed that the majority of the teachers from both districts had similar perceptions of this issue. Although some teachers appeared to be more negative in their responses, it seemed as though the teachers from both districts concurred that bullying is a prevalent issue. In response to a question of whether bullying has become a prevalent issue in the school, one teacher responded, “No. People claim that bullying is a major issue. In actuality, they just like to use the ‘bullying’ term as a buzzword if they think their children have some sort of problem in school with a teacher, student, or both” (5th grade teacher response).

The responses indicated that the teachers are all facing the same issues and they are basically being addressed in the same manner. It is important to note that the teachers

who implement the Olweus program feel that the program is ineffective in their school. This may be due in part to the failure to follow through with protocol and consequences as outlined in the program. In general, bullying is perceived and understood the same in both schools. The programming does not seem to have had a significant impact.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is derived from the social learning perspective. Anderson & Bushman (2002) stated that the basic principle behind the social learning perspective is that human beings are not born with tendencies to act aggressively; these behaviors are acquired through complex forms of social behavior. The actions and characteristics of other people, cognitive processes, environmental variables, cultural issues, and biological factors all play a role in social behavior (Baron, Byrne & Branscombe, 2006). I utilized the concept of the social learning perspective in my analysis of responses regarding bullying behaviors witnessed by participants.

I also utilized the general aggression model and drive theories of aggression to assess bullying behavior throughout this study. The general aggression model suggests that aggression is triggered by a wide range of variables that may increase physiological arousal, impact affective states such as hostile feelings, and influence cognitions that can lead to thoughts and acts of aggression (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). Acts of bullying are aggressive in nature whether it is in the form of verbal aggression, physical aggression, or more indirect aggressive acts such as emotional bullying. Individuals who bully others may do so as a means of control, attention, anger, or jealousy (Anderson & Bushman, 2002).

Some teachers' responses from the school district that utilizes a bullying prevention program were that bullying issues are, "...immature adolescents at work" and that "Kids need to learn coping skills from their parents or guardians and man up and stand up for themselves". Another teacher from that district noted, "Most of the bullying that occurs in our school seems to stem from jealousy, or kids who are lacking self-esteem, and therefore torment others." Teachers from the non-bullying prevention school noted that girls need to learn to control their emotions and stop lashing out at other students and bullying innocent girls. These comments support the general aggression model in that acts of bullying were associated with immaturity, lack of self-esteem, lack of coping skills, emotions, and jealousy (Anderson & Bushman, 2002).

Drive theories of aggression are based upon the concept that aggression is a behavior that results from an impulse created by an innate need (Smith, 2008). The most well-known drive theory of aggression is the frustration-aggression hypothesis. This hypothesis links aggression and frustration in a cause and effect relationship where frustration leads to aggression and aggression leads to an increase in frustration (Smith, 2008). Drive theories of aggression assist with assessing the impact of external conditions and how they are linked to motivating individuals to harm others. In this study, such frustration may stem from issues of jealousy, lack of attention, poor self-esteem, or a lack of emotional well-being. All of these issues were mentioned during interviews as part of the reasons why students bully, or are bullied, in the schools. These feelings of frustration that result may be linked to the acts of bullying toward other individuals in effort to fulfill a need that is otherwise unmet.

The social learning perspective, general aggression model, and drive theories of aggression stem from the field of social psychology. Social psychology is a discipline concerned with gaining an understanding of the nature and the causes of individual behavior and thought as they relate to social situations (Baron et al., 2006). This study was intended to assess the awareness of bullying issues among female youth, gain insight into student, teacher, and administrator perceptions of bullying, and determine if the implementation of prevention programs, into the students' school environments, impact the bullying behavior.

Limitations of the Study

I provided information about the study, informed consent forms, and student assent forms to the schools for mailing to all female students in Grades 5 through 7 who met the criteria of the study. If the parents and students desired to be included in the interview selection process, they signed the consent forms and mailed them directly to me so the school had no information regarding who may be participating. The information was mailed to the households instead of being sent home with the students in effort to assure the information was seen by the parents.

Although the information was mailed directly to the students' homes, there were limited responses for participation in the study. As a result, most of the students who responded were included in order to fulfill the number of interviews required for the study. Some students returned the consents refusing to participate.

A similar issue arose with teacher interviews. Two teachers from each grade level, per school, were interviewed. I sent e-mails to the teachers to gather a pool of possible participants. I received a limited number of teacher responses as well. If this

study is replicated in the future, it would be beneficial to have a larger number of potential participants to increase the possible responses. A larger pool of participants would provide the opportunity to conduct a larger number of interviews. This would provide a greater number of responses to the interview questions allowing for more detailed coding of responses. In turn, a larger number of interviews would enhance the validity of the results making the results of the study more generalizable.

One of the limitations in this study was the method in which I conducted the interviews. I collected the data for this study through telephone interviews with students, teachers, and administrative personnel from two schools in two different districts. I completed the interviews by phone in effort to maintain the anonymity of the participants and also to make participation easier. The collection of data via telephone did not allow me to verify that the interviewee was actually the desired participant. There is a possibility that the person providing the answers to the interview questions may have been another individual. It is also a possibility that the person answering the questions was being coached by someone in the background and not providing their own thoughts or ideas.

I allowed an adequate amount of time for gathering data from all participants. Interviews lasted between 30 minutes to 45 minutes. During this time, I explained the purpose of the study and participants were given the opportunity to deny participation. The time allotted for the interviews was sufficient to assure that all interview questions were answered and also provided time for member checking. I utilized member checking during interviews with participants to ensure that the data, views, and perceptions that I documented were accurate and understood. This was done by restating or summarizing

information provided by each participant and then questioning the participant to determine accuracy using their own comments.

I recorded and the data collected during interviews and the also maintained a detailed research notebook for review during the identification of emerging themes and coding purposes. Although triangulation was utilized, and was helpful regarding gathering information and representing thoughts from all sources, I feel that a larger sampling of the student, faculty, and administrative populations could have provided a better representation of the effectiveness of bullying prevention programs. It was difficult to identify codes with such a small sampling of participants. The themes that emerged and coding process could have been much different with a larger sample, especially regarding the administrative interviews. This may have resulted in a more accurate account of bullying issues in the schools and how the implementation of a bullying program makes a difference. This study did not produce the results I had anticipated. If more schools were involved in the study, the results may have been different. I anticipated that the school utilizing a bullying prevention program would have shown a decrease in the rate of bullying in that school and also an increased awareness of the issue.

Recommendations

Although this study only pertains to female, middle school students, future research can be conducted to specifically study male students or different age groups. There were many issues throughout this study that raised my awareness of things that should be done differently, if the study is repeated in the future. Utilizing only two schools in this study did not allow me to collect enough data to significantly determine if

bullying prevention programs effectively influence the perceptions of bullying behavior among female youth in Grades 5-7.

I conducted interviews with 15 students from each school; 5 from each grade level, totaling 30 student interviews. Only 6 faculty members per school were interviewed (2 from each grade level). In hindsight, the information I gathered did not provide a strong enough representation of the perceptions and influence of the bullying prevention program versus no program. If more than two school districts participated in the study, the comparison between the program versus non-program schools would have also provided a larger database to be analyzed and the results may have been much different. A larger population would have increased the possibility of a greater response from parents and students for participation. I received a limited number of responses when information was distributed only to the two school districts. If a larger number of interviews were conducted, there would have been a better sampling of perceptions and information on bullying. Due to the small sample size, the results could not be determined and are therefore not reliable.

If the study is reproduced, it is also recommended that facility observations be conducted to obtain first-hand knowledge of the incidents that may be occurring as well as the faculty responses to the incidents of bullying. I conducted interviews via telephone for reasons of confidentiality, not interfering with academics, and privacy. If there is an ethically appropriate way to conduct interviews in person, I believe this would also be more effective. There was no way of knowing if the privacy and confidentiality of the student responses was upheld via telephone. The students could have been on

speakerphone in their homes, and there is the possibility of others being present and coaching the student at the time of the interview.

All informed consent forms were returned directly to me. Interestingly, one student made a point to let me know how unwilling she was to participate. At the top of the parental informed consent, she wrote, "I don't want to take the sevy (as spelled by the student)!" At the bottom of the consent form, she wrote, "NO it's stupid no one cares and you will never prevent bullying there will always be mean people." On the back of the Child Assent form was written "No I don't want to (underlined)". To drive her point home a bit further, she wrote on the back of the envelope, "No I would not like to be interviewed". I found this response a bit extreme. It would be interesting to have insight into this child's background regarding bullying. It is this type of reaction to this topic that further indicates a need to continue to study this area and prompt increased awareness and prevention of bullying.

I chose this topic of my research for several reasons including ongoing witnessing of bullying in school districts where I provide services, knowledge of the impact it has on students, and my children's personal issues with bullying when they were in this age range. I do not feel that any personal past experiences impacted my ability to conduct the research in an unbiased manner. Some of the consent forms that were returned were from individuals with whom I was familiar through work or social events. These individuals were not included in the study to prevent bias. Although I believe that in person interviews would have been better, I feel that conducting interviews via telephone helped to provide a more relaxed environment for the students and also prevented any means of researcher influence over the participants.

I have always felt that bullying has grown progressively worse over the years and has become a more prevalent issue in the schools. Research has confirmed my suspicions, and hopefully increasing social awareness of this issue will help improve how this issue is addressed in the home, school, and community. Bullying prevention is going to be an ongoing process.

Implications for Social Change

This study was conducted to gather information regarding bullying behaviors on female youth. Research has addressed bullying across all age groups and genders; however there is a gap in the literature specifically related to female youth and the bullying issues that face this population. The information I gathered from this study can be used to improve awareness of the bullying issue within this population. The comparison of perceptions of bullying and bullying behaviors noted by faculty and female students in a school that uses a bullying prevention program versus one that does not provides valuable information regarding the effectiveness of the program in improving knowledge and reducing behaviors.

Information regarding program effectiveness, as determined in this study, can be forwarded to school administrators across the county. I anticipated that the results of this study would find that the implementation of a bullying prevention program improved students' knowledge of this issue, positively influenced perception of this issue among faculty and administrators, and provide insight into how these programs influence bullying behavior. On the contrary, it appears that the perceptions and influence of the bullying prevention program did not really differ between schools. There were issues with following protocol and consistency. The general feeling from faculty in the bullying

prevention district was that the program was ineffective in improving the understanding of this issue among female students. Teachers who did not have a program to follow seemed to feel a program would be helpful, while faculty who had the program in place felt the opposite.

In regards to implications of social change, this is valuable because it indicates that in order for the program to be effective, all must adhere to the protocol and there must be consistency regarding consequences and handling bullying issues. It is imperative that the administration meet regularly with their faculty to determine problems with the implementation of the program, faculty attitudes, and assist with correcting issues to make the program more effective. Feedback to the districts who participated in this study can assist with calling attention to this issue and hopefully assist in improving the effectiveness of the program and reducing bullying behaviors. In the event that the school that does not yet utilize such a program decides to look into the implementation of a bullying program, this information will be important so that administrators can avoid similar issues that seem to have contributed to the ineffectiveness of the program in the other school.

Sharing results of this study with the community and schools who participated will help increase awareness of this important issue among our female youth. The information provided in this study may also assist the bullying prevention school with improving their understanding of why the program is less effective than expected so that necessary changes can be made. The more education individuals receive regarding this important social issue, the better the schools and community can work toward the overall well-being of children.

Conclusion

Olweus (2003) reported that researchers began to systematically study the issue of bullying during the 1970s. A study by Jeffrey, Miller and Linn (2001) showed that in the absence of a whole school prevention program, approximately half the students were bullied by fifth grade and the majority of students were bullied by eighth grade. Schools utilizing bullying prevention programs showed a reduction in bullying behavior compared to schools implementing such programs (Jeffrey, Miller & Lynn, 2001). These statements confirm two important things: bullying has been identified as an issue prompting research for many decades, and the implementation of bullying prevention programs have proven effective in reducing bullying at the middle school level.

Although this study did not produce the results I anticipated, showing an increase in awareness and reduction in bullying between a school with a prevention program and a school that does not utilize a program, researchers should continue to study the effectiveness of these programs. Research can continue to assist with determining why some programs are successful and why some have limited effectiveness. In my opinion, any information gathered to assist our youth with combating this ongoing social issue is time well spent.

Researchers have established that positive school climates serve to reduce both the frequency of bullying behaviors and their negative effects (White, LaSalle, Ashby & Meyers, 2014). The family/home environment, school climate, and community factors significantly predict involvement for bullies and victims indicating the important role social context plays in the development and maintenance of bullying (Cook et al., 2010). This study was designed to gather data pertaining to adolescent females in the school

setting; however, research has shown that it is a widespread problem among all age and gender groups. The establishment of the fact that bullying behaviors and victimization are impacted by the school, home, and community environment lends credibility to the ongoing need to educate society on the impact this issue is having on our youth.

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Appendix A: Informed Consent

Parents of _____ Middle School Students,

My name is Karen Tokarick and I am a doctoral student at Walden University. I am conducting a research study as part of my educational journey and would like to provide you with some information regarding the study.

Bullying behavior across all age, gender, and ethnic categories continues to be a social issue in need of attention and research. Many are unaware of the significant problem this has become in our children's schools. Bullying prevention programs are just one way that this important issue can be addressed with children during the course of the school year in effort to reduce the incidents that occur. Some school districts have bullying prevention programs built into their curriculums, while others do not. There is limited research on the bullying behavior of female youth and further research would be beneficial to determine the effect of prevention programs on the bullying behaviors and perceptions of bullying of this group of individuals.

This research study is intended to gather information from female students in grades 5-7 in your child's school. If given permission to participate, your student will be given the opportunity, during after school hours, to participate in an interview regarding bullying in her school. She has the right to refuse participation. In the event that she does participate, she has the right to change her mind at any time and end her participation with no penalty or negative consequences.

Five girls from each grade (5-7) will be randomly selected to participate in a one-on-one interview with me to discuss in more detail the student's perceptions of bullying and the intervention procedures and policies that are in place to protect your child. Therefore, your child may NOT be selected because of the small number of participants and the random selection. The information gathered during this interview will be tape recorded in order to transcribe the interview to written form upon conclusion of the interview. This allows me to provide undivided attention to your child and the interview process. Upon typing up the interview, the audio tape will be destroyed. If your child is chosen to be interviewed, her name will not be associated with any of the information provided in the final research analysis or results. The only individual who will have access to the information your child shares is myself.

Your child's confidentiality is of the utmost importance. Due to confidentiality, information gathered during the interview will not be shared with anyone unless it pertains to your child's well-being, health, or safety. It is important for you to be aware that in the event your child discloses information regarding harming herself or others, the mandated reporter laws must be followed. This includes the need to report any pertinent information to the proper authorities. In addition, confidentiality will be stressed to your child during the assent process. There is a chance that other students may become aware of your child's participation in the study, especially if your child shares the information with peers or adults. Hopefully completing the interviews after school via telephone will help reduce these chances.

The interview process will require a minimal amount of your child's time. The interview (if selected) will only take a maximum of forty-five minutes. Since the research will not be conducted during the school day, your child will not miss any academic time.

Interviews will be conducted via telephone. Participation in this study is voluntary.

There will be no compensation or rewards for participation in the study.

There are minimal risks associated with this study. The only foreseeable risks involved include your child remembering and discussing possible incidents of bullying behavior. In the event that your child experiences any distress as a result of the research process, she may terminate her involvement, discuss the issue with me, or other resources will be made available to further discuss the issue (including counselors in the area). A list of local, low cost, counseling agencies is attached in case your child would need to talk to anyone about bullying issues. This study will be beneficial for school administrators, parents, students, and the general public. Information gained from this study can provide valuable information regarding the rate of female bullying in our schools, the prevalence in our community, and whether changes in our school's policies would be helpful to better address this issue. Included with this letter is a list of resources and local counseling centers that can provide additional assistance to any individuals requiring more information or assistance with bullying related issues.

The interview questions will not ask the students to report specific incidents of bullying or mention the bullies by name; however I do want to provide a reminder of the school's bullying reporting policy and procedure. The School District is committed to

making the school a safe place free from any kinds of bullying for all students, workers, and others who may visit the school. Any student in the district who bullies others will be punished and might be kicked out of school. Each student is supposed to respect others and to make sure there is no bullying. Students and parents/guardians should make all reports about bullying to the school (principal, teacher, guidance counselor, etc.) The school person who was told about the problem should then tell a supervisor. A Bully Tip Line has been created to make reports without leaving your name. Any student who wishes to report a bullying incident, either as a victim of bullying or if you have seen someone else being bullied, can call 1-866-346-2581.

If you have any questions regarding the research, or the involvement of your child in the research process, you can contact me directly at (570-573-5011) between the hours of 9am and 4pm. Additional questions regarding this study can be addressed by contacting Dr. Adrienne Bey (Dissertation Chairperson). If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you.

Walden University's approval number for this study is 01-29-13-0101921 and it expires on January 28, 2014.

I

f you agree to your child participating in this research study, please sign the attached form and return it to me no later than (date to be returned). You are welcome to maintain a copy of the signed consent form for your records. Included is an assent form for your child. Please take the time to review this form with your child prior to the interview.

Thank You,

Karen Tokarick

PhD Student

Walden University

Here are a few examples of interview questions:

- How would you define bullying?
- Have you ever seen females bullying other students during school? Yes or No.
- What types of bullying have you seen girls engage in during school?
(Ex. fighting, name calling, excluding, rumors, text, internet)
- If you saw someone else being bullied, what would you do?
- Do you think bullying prevention programs in your school help to reduce the amount of bullying among girls?

Informed Consent Form

I have received information regarding the research study that will be completed at my child's school pertaining to bullying and bullying prevention programs.

_____ I am in agreement with my child participating in the research study, including an individual telephone interview if selected.

Child's Name / Grade

Signature of Parent or Legal Guardian

Phone Number

Referral List of Local Counseling Agencies

This referral list is provided as a general service to help make parents aware of local community resources outside of the school setting that are available to provide counseling in regard to bullying or any other challenge.

ACCESS Services

340 South Liberty Street, Suite 2
Orwigsburg, PA
570-366-5096

Child and Family Support Services

437 North Center Street
Pottsville, PA
570-622-9860

Psychological Associates of Schuylkill County

454 North Claude A. Lord Blvd.
Pottsville, PA
570-622-1025

SARCC

17 Westwood Place
Pottsville, PA
570-628-2965

Appendix B: Interview Protocol for Students

The following script will be read to all student participants prior to the interview:

“The purpose of this interview is to help me learn more about your school and find out if bullying programs are helpful. I am not allowed to talk to you about any specific bullies or specific bullying problems that have happened to you. During the interview, if you start to give the names of any specific people, or specific things that have happened, I will have to stop you to keep the interview on the right track. This is important for your privacy and the privacy of others. If you have any specific bullying problems that you would like to discuss, or if you would like to report the name of someone who has bullied you, I suggest that you talk to your parent/guardian, school guidance counselor, or another adult. I have given your parent/guardian a list of counselors in the area that could also help you. Do you understand that we cannot discuss any specific names or incidents of bullying?”

Interview Questions:

1. How would you define bullying?
2. A bully is a person who picks on or hurts other people through their words and actions. Some examples of bullying are hitting, name calling, threatening, teasing, and/or not letting others be involved in groups or activities. Bullying may also occur through email and text messaging. Based on this definition, do you think there is a problem with bullying among girls in your school? Yes or No.
3. Have you ever seen females bullying other students during school? Yes or No.
4. What types of bullying have you seen girls engage in during school (Ex. Aggressive, name calling, excluding, rumors, text, internet)?

5. Do you think that there are certain groups of students that are targeted by female bullies? If yes, could you name the types of groups you feel are bullied (without giving specific names of people)?
6. If you saw another female student being bullied during school, what would you do?
7. What do you usually do if you see others being bullied during school?
8. Where does bullying occur most often during school hours?
9. Do you think that bullying is worse among girls, boys, or equal?
10. Bullying prevention programs are sometimes used in schools to help students learn about what bullying is and how it affects others. These programs were also created to help lower levels of bullying that may happen in your school. Teachers and/or guidance counselors teach students about bullying and what to do if you or one of your peers is being bullied. Based on this definition, do you think you have a bullying prevention program in your school?
11. Do you think bullying prevention programs in your school help to reduce the amount of bullying among girls?
12. Do you receive education regarding bullying during school hours (ie. guidance class, assemblies, in-class discussions)?
13. If your school has a prevention program, do you think the program makes a difference in reducing the level of bullying in your school? Why or why not?
14. What suggestions do you have to help reduce the amount of bullying behavior by female students?

Appendix C: Interview Protocol for Teachers

1. Does your school district implement a bullying prevention program at the middle school level?
2. If yes, do you feel that the program is effective in improving the understanding of this issue among female students?
3. If there is no bullying prevention program utilized in your school, do you think it would be beneficial to implement one?
4. Do the students receive bullying awareness education during school hours?
5. How would you define bullying?
6. Do you feel that bullying had become a prevalent issue in your school?
7. Do you think that more bullying incidents occur between adolescent females, males, or equally between both genders?
8. What are your thoughts on bullying issues that occur in your school?
9. Have you witnessed bullying behaviors by female students toward other students?
10. What types of bullying behaviors have you witnessed by female students?
11. How often would you say you witness bullying behaviors by female students?
12. What is the protocol to be followed when students are caught bullying other students?
13. Do you think that the protocol is always followed? Why or why not?
14. Do you think that the consequences for bullying help deter bullying behavior?
15. What suggestions do you have to assist in reducing the rate of bullying by female students?

Appendix D: Interview Protocol for Administrators

1. How do you define bullying?
2. Does your school district implement a zero tolerance bullying prevention policy? What is the policy?
3. Does your school bring in outside resources to talk with students and staff about bullying?
4. Are there district policies that define and promote a bully free school environment?
5. Do you feel that the policies that are currently in place are effective in educating students and faculties on the issue of bullying?
6. Do you feel that the implementation of prevention policies and programs have made (or would make) a significant difference?
7. If yes, do you feel that the program is effective in improving the understanding of this issue among female students?
8. Do you feel that bullying had become a prevalent issue in your school?
9. Do you think that more bullying incidents occur between adolescent females, males, or equally between both genders?
10. What types of bullying behaviors have you witnessed by female students?
11. How often would you say you witness bullying behaviors by female students?
12. Are there clear and concise school and classroom rules against bullying that are provided to students, parents and staff (ie. posted in building, in newsletter, school handbook)?
13. Are there support programs for both students who are targets of bullying and bullies?
14. Do all school personnel (teachers, administrators, and other school staff) participate in bullying prevention training? If yes, what type of training?
15. If there is an incident of bullying, or suspected bullying behavior, who receives the report and what action is taken?

16. Does the district (or individual school building) provide bullying prevention programs for parents?
17. Do you feel that there has been a significant increase in bullying behavior among female youth in your district over the past two years? If so, what changes have you noticed?
18. If your school utilizes a bullying prevention program, do you feel your district could benefit from changes in the bullying prevention policy, if so what changes?

Appendix E: Student Assent Form

ASSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS AGED 7-17

Hello, my name is Karen Tokarick and I am doing a research project to learn about whether bullying prevention programs work and also to learn about bullying in your school. I would like you to be a part of my project by answering some questions about your school and bullying. I am sending out a lot of letters to students in grades 5-7 and I can only pick 5 students girls from each grade. There is a chance that you might NOT be called to talk with me because only five students will be chosen from each grade level. Everyone who is interested in participating will be given a special number and only five numbers will be picked. If you are chosen to participate, I would like you to have all of the important information about the project. You may be picked for this project because you are a female student in this school district, you are in grades 5, 6, or 7, and your parent/guardian has agreed to let you participate in this study. I want you to learn about the project before you decide if you want to be in it.

WHO I AM:

I am a student at Walden University. I am currently working on my doctoral degree in Health Psychology.

ABOUT THE PROJECT:

If you agree to be in this project, you may be asked to:

- Talk to me over the phone to discuss issues of bullying.
- The interview will last about 45 minutes.
- The interview will be recorded so that I can make a copy of it in writing at a later time.

IT'S YOUR CHOICE:

You don't have to be in this project if you don't want to be. You won't get into trouble with me, your school principal, or your teachers if you say no. If you decide now

that you want to join the project, you can still change your mind later. If you want to skip some parts of the project, including questions during the interview, just tell me.

Being in this project might make you think about times when you or your friends were bullied. You may have thoughts or feelings that make you angry or sad. But this project might help others by letting them know the importance of bullying, that it does happen in schools, and help the people who work in the schools and others learn how to handle these situations better.

You will not be given anything if you agree to be a part of this project. You will not be given any money or rewards in school. It is important for you to know that talking about bullying may make you feel uncomfortable at times, may lead to remembering times when you were bullied or have seen other's being bullied, and may cause other feelings (such as anger, sadness, or fear). If you feel uncomfortable or upset, there are people who can help you with what you are feeling.

PRIVACY:

Everything you tell me during this project will be kept private. That means that no one else will know your name or what answers you gave. The only time I have to tell someone is if I learn about something that could hurt you or someone else. If you give any information about hurting yourself or someone else, I must tell someone to help protect you and/or the other person.

ASKING QUESTIONS:

You can ask me any questions about the project. If you think of a question later, you or your parents can reach me at _____. You will also have the chance to ask questions before the phone interview. If you or your parents would like to ask my university a question, you can contact my Dissertation Chairperson, Dr. Adrienne Bey. Her phone number is _____. Walden University's approval number for this study is 01-29-13-0101921 and it expires on January 28, 2014.

I will give you a copy of this form.

Here are a few examples of interview questions:

- ✓ How would you define bullying?

- ✓ Have you ever seen females bullying other students during school? Yes or No.

- ✓ What types of bullying have you seen girls engage in during school?
(Ex. fighting, name calling, excluding, rumors, text, internet)
- ✓ If you saw someone else being bullied, what would you do?

- ✓ Do you think bullying prevention programs in your school help to reduce the amount of bullying among girls?

Please sign your name on the form below if you want to join this project and return it to me with the parental consent form in the self-addressed stamped envelope.

Sincerely,

Karen Tokarick

PhD Student

Walden University

Student Assent Form

(Please return to the researcher with the parental consent form)

Name of Child _____

Child Signature _____

Date _____

Phone Number _____

Researcher Signature _____

Appendix F: Teacher Consent Form

Hello, my name is Karen Tokarick and I am doing a research project to learn about the impact of bullying prevention programs, and the issue of bullying in your school. I am inviting you to join my project. You have been selected as a possible participant because you are a full time teacher in this district and teach within the grade levels that are the focus of this project. It is important for you to know that I am sending requests out to all of the teachers but only two from each grade level will be selected at random to actually participate in the study. Therefore, even if you agree to participate, there is a possibility that you may not be chosen.

WHO I AM:

I am a student at Walden University. I am currently working on my doctoral degree in Health Psychology.

ABOUT THE PROJECT:

If you agree to participate in this project, you will be asked to:

- Participate in an individual interview via telephone at your convenience to discuss issues of bullying and bullying prevention programs (if your school has a program in place).
 - The interview will last approximately 45 minutes.
 - The interview will be audio recorded for transcription at a later time.

IT'S YOUR CHOICE:

You don't have to participate in the interview process if you do not want to. There will be no consequences if you choose to deny participation. If you decide now that you want to join the project, you can still change your mind later. If you do not feel comfortable answering some of the interview questions, you do not have to do so.

This project might help others by letting them know the importance of bullying, that is does exist in the school setting, and help school personnel and society learn how to handle these situations better.

There will be no compensation for your participation in this project. There will be no monetary rewards or employment related rewards.

PRIVACY:

Everything you tell me during this project will be kept private. That means that no one else will know your name or what answers you gave. In addition, information provided

during the interview process will be analyzed to assist in determining the level of bullying issues in the school in which you teach. You will not be asked if you have reported the incidents that you have witnessed. This is to assist in protecting you, personally and professionally, from any disclosure of the possible violation of any policies or laws.

EXAMPLES OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

- ✓ Does your school district implement a bullying prevention program at the middle school level?
- ✓ If yes, do you feel that the program is effective in improving the understanding of this issue among female students?
- ✓ If there is no bullying prevention program utilized in your school, do you think it would be beneficial to implement one?
- ✓ Do the students receive bullying awareness education during school hours?
- ✓ How would you define bullying?

ASKING QUESTIONS:

You can ask me any questions you want now. If you think of a question later, you can reach me at _____. If you would like to ask my university a question, you can contact my Dissertation Chairperson, Dr. Adrienne Bey. Her phone number is _____. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Walden University's approval number for this study is 01-29-13-0101921 and it expires on January 28, 2014.

I have e-mailed you this form to assist with maintaining your privacy so that no one will know if you decide to participate in the interview. Prior to the interview process, all participants will be provided with resources and local counseling centers that can provide additional assistance to any individuals requiring more information or assistance with bullying related issues. If you wish to participate, please e-mail me at _____ and provide me with a date and time to contact you to schedule an interview. I will accept your oral consent over the phone to eliminate any paper documentation that you are giving consent.

Thank You,
Karen Tokarick, PhD Student

Referral List of Local Counseling Agencies

This referral list is provided as a general service to help make parents aware of local community resources outside of the school setting that are available to provide counseling in regard to bullying or any other challenge.

ACCESS Services

340 South Liberty Street, Suite 2
Orwigsburg, PA
570-366-5096

Child and Family Support Services

437 North Center Street
Pottsville, PA
570-622-9860

Psychological Associates of Schuylkill County

454 North Claude A. Lord Blvd.
Pottsville, PA
570-622-1025

SARCC

17 Westwood Place
Pottsville, PA
570-628-2965

Appendix G: Principal/Administrator Consent Form

Hello, my name is Karen Tokarick and I am doing a research project to learn about the impact of bullying prevention programs, and the issue of bullying in your school. I am inviting you to join my project. You have been selected to participate because you are the Principal at the school where this project is being conducted and an integral part of the school district.

WHO I AM:

I am a student at Walden University. I am currently working on my doctoral degree in Health Psychology.

ABOUT THE PROJECT:

If you agree to participate in this project, you will be asked to:

- Participate in an individual interview to discuss issues of bullying and bullying prevention programs (if your school has a program in place).
 - The interview will last approximately 45 minutes.
 - The interview will be audio recorded for transcription at a later time.
- Maintain confidentiality of the names of students and faculty chosen to participate in the study

IT'S YOUR CHOICE:

You don't have to participate in the interview process if you do not want to. There will be no consequences if you choose to deny participation. If you decide now that you want to join the project, you can still change your mind later. If you do not feel comfortable answering some of the interview questions, you do not have to do so.

This project might help others by letting them know the importance of bullying, that is does exist in the school setting, and help school personnel and society learn how to handle these situations better.

There will be no compensation for your participation in this project. There will be no monetary rewards or employment related rewards.

PRIVACY:

Everything you tell me during this project will be kept private. That means that no one else will know your name or what answers you gave.

EXAMPLES OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

- ✓ Are there district policies that define and promote a bully free school environment?
- ✓ Do you feel that the policies that are currently in place are effective in educating students and faculties on the issue of bullying?
- ✓ Do you feel that the implementation of prevention policies and programs have made (or would make) a significant difference?
- ✓ If yes, do you feel that the program is effective in improving the understanding of this issue among female students?
- ✓ Do you feel that bullying had become a prevalent issue in your school?

ASKING QUESTIONS:

You can ask me any questions you want now. If you think of a question later, you can reach me at _____. If you would like to ask my university a question, you can contact my Dissertation Chairperson, Dr. Adrienne Bey. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is _____, extension 1210. Walden University's approval number for this study is 01-29-13-0101921 and it expires on January 28, 2014.

I will give you a copy of this form.

Please sign your name below if you consent to participate in this project.

Name of Principal/Administrator

(Please circle above if Principal or Administrator)

Principal's Signature _____

Date _____

Researcher Signature _____

Curriculum Vitae

KAREN E. TOKARICK

EDUCATION:

Cedar Crest College, Allentown, PA

B.A. in Psychology, May 1993

MS from Walden University in Psychology, May 2007

Pursuing PhD in Health Psychology, Walden University, May 2007-present

Major related courses: Principles of Helping Relationships, Behavior Modification, Abnormal Psychology, Systems of Psychotherapy, Exceptional Child, Personality Theory, Lifespan Development, Learning, Research Design, Biopsychology, Statistics, Tests and Measurements, Cognitive Psychology, Psychology of the Personality, Clinical Neuropsychology, Cognitive Psychological Assessment.

QUALIFICATIONS, SKILLS & ADDITIONAL TRAINING:

HIV training. Effects of Abuse/Neglect on Child Development. Legal issues. Child Protective Services Training. Effects of Separation and Placement. Risk Assessments. Casework Process and Case Planning. Mental Health/Mental Retardation. Adolescent Involvement in Occult Activities. Family Assessment. Basic Behavior Management. Family Preservation. CPR Training. Safe Physical Management. Adolescent Suicide. Therapeutic Issues in Child Sexual Abuse Cases. At-Risk Youths. Understanding Psychological Evaluations. Sexuality of Children: Healthy Sexual Behaviors. Adult Psychopathology. Civility in the Workplace. Interviewing Adolescents Exhibiting Oppositional/Defiant Behaviors. Services to Single Parents. Recognizing Common Emotional and Behavioral Disorders of Children. Impact Theory. Medical/Legal Conference. Restorative Justice. PTSD in Adolescents. Introduction to Group Counseling. Solutions for the Treatment Resistant Clients. Respect Workshop. School Violence. Sexual Aggression in Adolescents. Emotional Abuse. Certified in Functional Behavioral Assessment and Treatment Plan Development.

EXPERIENCE:

ACCESS Services, Behavioral Specialist Consultant and Mobile Therapist, Orwigsburg, PA:

Observe and assess behavioral issues in home, school, and community settings, assess needs for treatment, develop treatment plans to address behavioral goals, provide mobile therapy to adolescents and children, engage families in therapy to address behavioral concerns, facilitate ISPT meetings to address needs for continued services and/or request recommended services, participate in psychological evaluations for requested services, supervise therapeutic staff support personnel, oversee the implementation of the treatment plan, provide

crisis intervention counseling, consult with treatment team regarding behavioral concerns, maintain contact with other service providers to ensure consistency of service delivery, complete case notes and documentation of services and behavioral issues. October 2013- Present.

Youth Advocate Programs, Inc., Behavioral Specialist Consultant and Mobile Therapist, Frackville, PA:

Write treatment plans to address behavioral goals, provide mobile therapy to adolescents and children, facilitate ISPT meetings to request recommended services, Participate in psychological evaluations for requested services, supervise therapeutic staff support personnel and oversee the implementation of the treatment plan, provide crisis intervention counseling, complete case notes and documentation of services and behavioral issues. Feb 2009- June 2013.

Progressions, Behavioral Specialist Consultant, Pottsville, PA:

Write treatment plans to address behavioral goals, provide mobile therapy to adolescents and children, facilitate ISPT meetings to request recommended services, Participate in psychological evaluations for requested services, supervise therapeutic staff support personnel and oversee the implementation of the treatment plan, provide crisis intervention counseling, complete case notes and documentation of services and behavioral issues. May 2007- May 2009.

Sexual Assault Counselor. Rape and Victim Assistance Center of Schuylkill County. Pottsville, PA:

Provide confidential supportive counseling, guidance and direct support services to child and adult victims/families of sexual assault and non- domestic violent crimes. Accompany victims and their families during hospital procedures, Police interviews & Court proceedings. Assess cases at the intake level to assure appropriate services are provided and/or referrals are made. Assist Victims in preparing for legal proceedings. Participate in development and provision of public and educational programs. Mandated reporting in cases of child sexual assault. Coordinate services with other agencies to best meet the needs of the client. Remain available for 24 hour Hotline calls and crisis counseling. Design agency publications for community awareness and use in school programs. March 2000 – May 2007.

Schuylkill County Children and Youth Services. Pottsville. P A:

Develop treatment plans, goals and objectives. Refer individuals to community resources. Provide protective services to children and their families. Assure the safety of children. Assess families for agency services. Initiate child abuse investigations. Counsel individuals. Teach basic parenting skills. Assess children's behavioral issues. Monitor family's participation and cooperation with recommended services. Assist individuals in reaching established goals. Provide support for families. Remove children from poor environments when necessary. Coordinate services with foster parents and other placement resources. Assist individuals with improving coping skills. Teach appropriate forms of discipline.

Utilize crisis intervention skills. Document all contacts and interventions with families. Transport clients when necessary.

March 1995 - March 2000

Child Care Worker. Bethany Children's Home. Womelsdorf. PA:

Provide structure, discipline, guidance, and direction to the boys and girls.

Helped maintain daily routine within the cottage structure. Assured that chores and other cottage assignments were completed. Documented daily activities in log book. Transported individuals when necessary. Maintained contact with administrator, social workers, and other staff concerning the children.

Remained available at all times for individual counseling.

June 1993 - March 1995

Mental Health Worker (Intern). Wiley House. Temple. PA:

Identified and addressed social/emotional needs of clients. Prepared treatment plans and reviews for presenting problems. Implemented methods of treatment based upon the client's specific needs. Remained in contact with families and other agencies, if involved, to discuss clients' progress or problems.

January 1993 - May 1993