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The Impact of Faith-Based Organizations on Schools and Families for Prevention of Bullying and Youth Violence

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Abstract

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by

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

The lack of research regarding the potential relationship between the reduction of bullying through participation in faith-based organizations may have failed to expand available bullying intervention methods. Faith-based organizations could assist in reducing bullying via moral instruction, boundary-setting guidance, social engagement techniques, and understanding social engagement with the bully's parents. This study explored the relationship between bullying and involvement in faith-based activities through (a) discovering the association between the reduction of bullying incidence or inclinations and faith-based activities, and (b) identifying the mechanisms responsible for the suppression of bullying orientations and behaviors through faith-based activities. The theoretical construct of the study was Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory and its 5 level classification of diverse social contexts (i.e. microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem). This theory was utilized in the creation of the central research questions of the study. The data for the questions was gathered through one-on-one interviews with (a) 11 adolescents, (b) 6 parents, and (c) 3 church officials. The interviews were transcribed, and codes and themes identified. The sample group for the research was ninth grade students enrolled at a school in the Midwest. The study found that parents felt more responsible for their influence on their child's attitude toward violence over faith-based activity. However, the organizations were also shown to be effective in contributing to strengthened social relationships and decreased bullying incidences. This study may contribute to social change by providing insight into bullying prevention and mitigation.

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to life and memory of Shirley L. Thomas and Wilma Lowe.

These two women believed in me and helped me to succeed in my journey. This

milestone in my life is because of them. I will forever love and cherish them for their

sacrifice. To my loving wife Courtney, who has been there through many obstacles, this

represents one of the many challenges we have faced together. Thank you for your

support, love, and encouragement on this journey. To my mom Carolyn, and family,

thank you for all of your support, encouragement and acts of love on this journey. Your

kindness and love will never be forgotten. To the Jefferson City Church of God in Christ,

I appreciate the opportunity to serve as the Youth Pastor where this topic was actually

birthed. Helping young people navigate life's journey to be productive citizens, and

ultimately to be who God has called you to be, has been one of the greatest opportunities

in my life.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Various incidents of shootings on campuses, in cities, or movie theatres show that there is a lot of youth violence in America (Anderson et al., 2010; Todd, 2015). Youth violence, in some cases, starts at an early age, in certain cases during infancy and preschool years (King et al., 2016). Youth violence can be any acts that cause physical, mental, or emotional harm. Acts such as shootings and assaults can lead to injuries that can be very severe or even lead to death. Youth violence affects not only the victim but also the aggressor and others who witness the abuse (King et al., 2016). Youth violence is a very serious matter with far-reaching impact detrimental to society.

Youth violence affects the economic, health, and mental well-being of those in the community involved (Gentile, 2014). In young people between the ages of 15–24, the second leading cause of death is homicide (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014). According to the Centers for Disease and Control Prevention (2014), 8,500 lives in that age group are lost each year to homicide, with suicide being the third leading cause of death, claiming 4,140 lives. Regarding youth violence, there is no one solution that can solve every problem. However, violence may be reduced with strategies that involve the community, government, and faith-based organizations through intervention, prevention, and treatment.

Background

While considered undesirable behavior, current research shows that bullying is a very prominent occurrence at the primary and secondary school levels (Burton, Lepp,

Morrison, & O'Toole, 2015). In addition, bullying articulates that the advantage in youth having influence over other youth is peer grouping. "Peer grouping is an intervention that allows all persons to be responsible for everyone's wellbeing" (Veenstra, et al., 2014, p.2). This would allow teachers to change the norm of the classroom, the norm of students' behavior that relates to the moral judgments of students in such a way that bullying would become more of a low status behavior instead of being more of the societal norm. Furthermore, peer grouping demonstrates how "teachers may be ineffective since they only intervene in about four per cent of bullying incidents" (Veenstra et al., 2014, p.2).

Additional research has shown the importance of relationships between children and their parents in preventing bullying behavior in children (Espelage, 2014). Parents are responsible for their children. However, parental practices, attitudes, and behaviors are all linked to the youth and how they interact, whether aggressively or non-aggressively. This suggests that weak parental supervision is associated with peer violence. According to Meyers et al. (2013), negative parenting is connected with poor regulation of emotions in children. Children with emotion dysregulation usually end up either in tears or acting out in anger. Also, Shetgiri, Lin, Avila, & Flores (2012) posited that parental behavior and characteristics influence children in terms of bullying. This aspect of training and education for parents is the essential component of effective intervention to decrease bullying. Faith-based organizations are sites at which parental engagement can be increased, because parents and children—including those who are bullies, or at risk of being bullies—often attend churches or other religious sites together.

Faith-based organizations model an environment in which entire families enter into not only a religious rite but a prosocial engagement with each other and with community members. Therefore, in theory, faith-based organizations at a grassroots level or through structured programs might decrease bullying by increasing the engagement of parents.

Other research defines bullying as a social process that went wrong instead of considering the bullies as individuals in need of psychological treatment (Greene, 2006). It further communicates that conflicts between what is going on at home and school are considered to be unhealthy. In urban communities, if children feel abandoned, they find a sense of safety in a created community. These created communities could be and often are gangs and cliques that will emerge dominant in that child's life. Affluent schools may drive youth to overachieve in academic performance (Greene, 2006). Children pushed to over-achieve may engage in behavior that will win the approval of peers, teachers, and others. This struggle to succeed leads to a competitive nature, which may lead to gossip and rumors about a child's disposition.

In a competitive environment, when students' optimal achievement is not attained, children may act out, behaving in contrast to socially accepted norms and potentially causing harm to themselves based on fear (Schott & Søndergaard, 2014; Twemlow & Sacco, 2013). Also, Twemlow & Sacco (2013) argued that children require a clear signal that shows them how to live and behave so that learning can take place. Faith-based organizations have long been recognized as sites at which moral instruction and prosocial boundaries are provided to children. However, the relationship between

participation in faith-based organizations and bullying reduction has not yet been examined in the research literature.

Bullies are stereotyped and categorized as "social misfits, poor communicators, and insensitive to the feelings of others" (Rhodes, Pullen, Vickers, Clegg, & Pitsis, 2010, p.99). Whether in the workplace or schools, society creates an environment for youth to be competitive and seek approval from superior persons. Organizational and work conditions have been seen as an environment conducive to rising interpersonal conflicts that escalate to bullying (Rhodes et al., 2010). Bullying is an act of violence. Violence deprives individuals of a life of freedom. However, Rhodes et al., 2010 do acknowledge the underlying gap, where there is a set core of values instilled in organizations to change the behavior based on these societal issues and concerns in regards to bullying.

Another approach to this issue is legislative action. According to Rhodes et al., (2010), there have been 19 U.S. states and many other countries that have adopted anti-bullying legislation. Legislative action is appropriate and needed; however, until the root cause, the core beliefs and values of the family, is addressed, this issue will continue to aflict society. The core values and beliefs of society stem from individual values and beliefs based on religious ones (Stokes, Baker, & Lichy, 2016). These personal beliefs serve as the foundation for behavioural norms and the laws that govern society. According to Kalman (2013), psychology alone does not offer a solution to countermand the impact of bullying. Implementation of antibullying programs and laws through legal chains and law enforcement have not been entirely successful, especially because these

interventions occur once a child attends school. Much of a child's behavior development occurs before attending school. Intervention must occur before a child is sent to school.

Bullying has many forms, and there are many reasons for why it exists. As previously stated, due to some students not being inculcated with societal, they may try to control the situation by bullying. If a child cannot read and others are making fun of him, that child may begin to bully to compensate and control the reactions of others. According to Vickers (2011), bullies often become social performers on the job as well in schools, in both cases in order to take control of their situations.

Finally, bullying in society and in the workplace has now taken residence within a culture that is beginning to breed or collect others to have the same as the bully. Moreover, Rhodes et al. (2010) discusses bullying as a culture within a culture, a society within a society. For example, Rhodes et al. examined the issue of bullying more closely in terms of the overall ethical responsibility of an organization. These researchers then suggested that organizations are scrutinized by the manner in which they handle incidents of bullying, which helps them from fostering a negative environment which might allow these undesired behaviors. In turn, morale is increased and trust is strengthened when members of any organization are confident that incidents of bullying will be handled swiftly and seriously.

Faith can serve as the behavior guide when authority figures are not present. If more of the core values are instilled and taught to youth, less bullying, less depression, and less medication and higher levels of self-esteem can appear to be evident. The core principles of faith-based ideals set the foundation for more accountability and

understanding across peer groups. As the majority of research into bullying prevention is based on psychological triggers, there is a gap in the literature in regard to preventing bullying from occurring. Raising children with core values based in faith principles may mitigate the problem before it occurs. Faith-based organizations provide a range of resources that can contribute to the mental health of the entire family. Within the practices of these organizations are tools such as counseling, workshops, preventative measure classes, and ultimately prayer, which may provide healing for the body and the family. Incorporating faith-based principles into training for parents in raising their children may offers alternative ways for children to confront circumstances that do not result in the mistreatment of others.

Problem Statement

The problem is that the nature of the relationship between participation in faith-based organizations and bullying reduction is not known. Specifically, it is not known whether participation in faith-based organizations lowers the number of bullying occurrences; it is also not known what, if such participation indeed mitigate bullying, the mechanisms are for it doing so. Some plausible mechanisms for bullying reduction through participation in faith-based organizations are (a) moral instruction of the bully, (b) boundary-setting for the bully, (c) social engagement of the bully, or (d) social engagement of the bully's parents. Because faith-based organizations have not been formally studied in terms of their relationship to bullying, faith-based organizations themselves do not know whether they should embrace formal anti-bullying programs and initiatives, and, if so, what form such programs and initiatives ought to take.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory case study was to research the relationship between involvement in faith-based activities and bullying, specifically in terms of (a) discovering whether participation in faith-based activities is associated with lowered incidents of, or inclinations toward, bullying; and (b) identifying what mechanisms, if any, might be responsible for the ability of faith-based activities to suppress bullying behaviors and orientations. This purpose was achieved through the analysis of data from a sample of ninth graders in Jefferson City, Missouri.

Research Questions

RQ1: Does participation in faith-based activities and programs reduce inclinations toward, or practice of, bullying?

RQ2: If participation in faith-based activities and programs reduces inclinations toward, or practice of, bullying, what are the mechanisms by which such reduction occurs?

Theoretical Framework for the Study

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory classifies five close levels that can represent diverse social contexts. These social contexts are microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. These social contexts build upon the next, each making a case that continues into the other structures. Bronfenbrenner (1979) called these social contexts nested structures, which describe these various facets of the environment of the child. Within this model, the child is

viewed as being in their own social ecology. Each system demonstrates how the structure affects family, culture, friends, and the community.

A microsystem demonstrates how children's behavior unfolds in various environments. It shows the pattern of the child's development. It is a "pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given setting with particular physical and material characteristics" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p.22). It denotes the social relationships that children have with parents, siblings, peers, and teachers, whether at home, school, or in the neighborhood. In this social context children adopt different roles, which are explicit to each relationship. "The simultaneous and dynamic interactions of the child's relationships within different microsystems contribute to the development of the child's social identity" (Mercado-Crespo, 2013).

A mesosystem demonstrates the social connections that children have created through one of the microsystems. Through the social connections, a mesosystem expresses how the role of children relates from one relationship to the next, from school, church, home, and in the community. "The norms that dominate at each of those contexts may influence the child's behaviorand affect the mesosystem level relationship of these contexts" (Mercado-Crespo, 2013). Barboza et al. (2009) discussed the joint contributions of two or more microsystems and how they can be instrumental in bringing a positive influence in the development of a child's process and development.

Exosystems are events that arise in settings where a child will be affected even if they are not directly participating in the event. This context refers to the community and

the influence that it has on children's behavior. In any community, the norms that affect

the community will ultimately affect the children. "Situations that occur among teacher

unions locally may affect the enforcement of policies and guidelines that affect children's

experiences at school; changes in parents' experiences at work may affect the time they

spend with their children" (Mercado-Crespo, 2013). Macrosystems, however,

demonstrate the larger or more distant institutions. Macrosystem relates to the

establishment of the social norms, beliefs, ideologies, and socioeconomic status. As a

child develops, these influences will be affected by the microsytem, mesosystem, and

exosystems.

The chronosystem refers to the effect that time has on behaviors. This context

emphasizes the dynamic of the child's ecology. Bronfenbrenner (1979) identifies the

interactions between the child and their environment. Many influences can positively or

negatively affect a child's development, as implied.

The phenomenon of bullying is one that psychologists have tried to understand

and legislatures have tried to combat by creating laws that have been unable to fully

address and solve the issue. According to Orel (2013), students of the LGBT community

have experienced this phenomenon, and studies have been completed to try to understand

this problem. However, it is still a rampant issue in society. Policy makers have

attempted to legislate this issue; however, there is no solution yet. "In July 2011, the

Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) and the National Center for Lesbian Rights

(NCLR) filed suit against the Anoka-Hennepin School District in Minnesota, alleging

that the school's policies regarding sexual orientation led to an epidemic of anti-gay and

gender-based harassment. In filing this suit, the SPLC and NCLR followed in the footsteps of other advocates who attempted to use litigation to combat anti-gay bullying" (Orel, 2013 p.578).

Adamonienė and Astromskienė, (2013) discussed a movement in Europe where youth are being encouraged to contribute to sustainable developments in society and are being encouraged to further cherish their values. "Cherishing of common civil values is concurrent from personal value principles of every member of society" (Adamonienė & Astromskienė, 2013 p. 472). Despite the separation of church and state in many democratic cultures, societal core values seems to be rooted in religious beliefs.

Some theoretical approaches to public policy are the rationalistic approach, the incrementalist approach, and mixed scanning approach. Decision-making models help to drive public policy in creating legislation and policies that can be used to help citizens to govern themselves in society. In the rationalistic approach, the first step is for the decision maker is made aware of the problem (Etzioni, 1967). After the problem has been identified, then a goal is suggested, and alternative means for solving the problem are cautiously measured. By doing so, the decision-maker chooses an alternative method based on its merit with reference to the state of affairs they choose. "Social decision-making centers, it is pointed out, frequently do not have a specific, agreed upon set of values that could provide the criteria for evaluating alternatives" (Etzioni, 1967, p. 385). Values are merely fluid and are affected by the decisions made. Etzioni (1967) further discussed that the rational approach will be rejected in the sense that decision-makers do not have adequate time and resources to devote to the research and evaluation of the

policy through this particular method. This method is "unrealistic and undesirable" (Etzioni, 1967, p. 386).

Etzioni (1967) deemed the rational approach too demanding for decision-makers. However, the incremental approach is considered less demanding on decision makers. "Influenced by the free competition model of economics, incrementalism rejects the notion that policies can be guided in terms of central institutions of a society expressing the collective good" (Etzioni, 1967 p.387). In addition, policies are a balance of compromise amongst societal partisans. However, Etzioni (1967) argued that poor decisions are those that never reach a compromise and are amended later. Incrementalism as a normative model suggests that consent amongst partisans is not the preferred approach. "In the first place, decisions so reached would, of necessity, reflect the interests of the most powerful, since partisans invariably differ in their respective power positions; demands of the underprivileged and politically unorganized would be underrepresented" (Etzioni 1967 p. 387). Secondly, incrementalism would focus on short term goals and seek limited change in past policies. It would neglect basic innovations. While small steps to lead to substantial change, this approach does not provide anything to reach that goal. These steps would be either circular or dispersing motions ultimately leading back to nowhere (Etzioni, 1967).

Etzioni (1967) found that decision-making requires being able to choose between incremental decisions that determine or assume major fundamental outcomes and determining that the cumulative sum from those incremental decisions will be shaped by another decision that is fundamental as well. "Thus, while the incrementalism model

holds that decision-making involves a choice between the two kinds of decision-making models, it should be noted that (a) most incremental decisions specify or anticipate fundamental decisions, and (b) the cumulative value of the incremental decisions is greatly affected by the related fundamental decision" (Etzioni, 1967 p. 388). For example, it is a fundamental decision in the state of Missouri that the budget has be balanced each year by the legislature. However, the incremental decision is based on how much funding each particular state agency receives in order to balance that budget. "These incremental changes are often the unfolding of trends initiated at critical turning points at which fundamental decisions were made" (Etzioni, 1967 p. 388). Incrementalists' decisions tend to be remedial, meaning that small steps are taken toward a conclusion or right decision. Also, courses of decisions are altered when there is evidence of wrong direction. "But if the decision-maker evaluates his incremental decisions and small steps, which he must do if he is to decide whether or not the direction is right, his judgment will be greatly affected by the evaluative criteria he applies" (Etzioni, 1967 p. 388).

The mixed-scanning approach is a more active societal decision-making model. This particular model requires two sets of mechanics. These mechanics are "high-order, fundamental policy-making processes which set basic directions and incremental processes which prepare for fundamental decisions and work them out after they have been reached" (Etzioni, 1967 p. 388). This model provides both realistic strategies developed by policymakers and effective strategies for followers to carry out. This model provides two lenses. The first model is a broad angle that would cover all parts of the sky.

The second would be able to zero-in on the area that is exposed by the first camera. This allows for examiners to review this exposed area more in-depth. "The strategy combines a detailed (rationalistic) examination of some sectors-which, unlike the exhaustive examination of the entire area, is feasible-with a "truncated" review of other sectors," (Etzioni, 1967 p. 389). Effective decision-making requires periodic or set intervals. "Reality cannot be assumed to be structured in straight lines where each step towards a goal leads directly to another and where the accumulation of small steps in effect solves the problem" (Etzioni, 1967 p. 389). Therefore, mixed-scanning combines various levels of strategic decision-making the practice. It also has set criteria for situations when various levels need to be emphasized. "Each of the two elements in mixed-scanning helps to reduce the effects of the particular shortcomings of the other; incrementalism reduces the unrealistic aspects of rationalism by limiting the details required in fundamental decisions, and contextualizing rationalism helps to overcome the conservative slant of incrementalism by exploring longer-run alternatives" (Etzioni, 1967 p. 389).

Because neither lawmakers nor policy makers are capable to determine the result of problems on an ongoing basis, lawmakers in Jefferson City, Missouri, have rendered a state policy that will allow for various school districts to determine their own policy in regard to bullying. On a district-by-district level, the policy can be reviewed, analyzed, discussed, and revised based on the accuracy and effectiveness of the policy. As the mixed-scanning model has indicated, decision-making works is like a camera. Decision-makers within the district can review each part of the policy and focus in on the area that

needs improvement. By doing so, the policy itself can be revisited and reevaluated in order to continue exploring alternatives until a solution is created.

Nature of the Study

For this study I used a qualitative case study methodology based on a combination of (a) one-on-one interviews with adolescents, (b) one-on-one interviews with parents, and (c) one-on-one interviews with church officials. Further details on the nature of the study are provided in Chapter 3.

Definitions

Bullying: Unwanted, aggressive behavior among school aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. Bullying includes actions such as making threats, spreading rumors, attacking someone physically or verbally, and intentionally excluding someone from a group (Stop Bullying, 2014).

Child: A young person, especially between infancy and youth. A son or daughter of human parents (Merriam-Webster's dictionary and thesaurus, 2014).

Church: A building for public and especially Christian worship. A body or organization of religious believers, as the whole body of Christians (Merriam-Webster's dictionary and thesaurus, 2014).

Doctrine: A set of ideas or beliefs that are taught or believed to be true. A statement of government policy especially in international relations (Merriam-Webster's dictionary and thesaurus, 2014).

Ecological systems theory: An approach to understanding phenomena that is based on the recognition of the social contexts of microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Parent: A person who begets or brings forth offspring. A person who brings up and cares for another (Merriam-Webster's dictionary and thesaurus, 2014).

Sacraments: In religion and especially in Christianity, a sacred ceremony. The Roman Catholic, the Greek, and the official Anglican churches hold that without the reception of certain sacraments the believer cannot attain salvation. Other churches believe they are symbolic only. The Greek and Roman Catholic churches recognize seven sacraments: baptism, confirmation, marriage, penance, ordination, the Eucharist, and extreme unction (Sacraments, 2012).

Student: Scholar, learner; especially a person who attends a school, studies, and is an attentive and systematic observer (Merriam-Webster's dictionary and thesaurus, 2014).

Teacher: A person who teaches, especially whose occupation is to instruct (Merriam-Webster's dictionary and thesaurus, 2014).

Assumptions

When the interviews were conducted, it was assumed that the Pentecostal churches in Jefferson City represented accurate faith-based approaches. It was also assumed that each interviewee would provide information that would not lead the researcher to any false conclusions.

Scope and Delimitations

The target sample of this study was students who attend Simonsen Ninth Grade Center in Jefferson City, Missouri. This facility was selected to control the sample population and to provide a narrow margin to work within. This study was limited to those respondents who agreed to the interview. The boundaries of this study were variables such as teachers, parents, students, and children, which can allow for replication and duplication in other research projects.

Limitations

Strength and Limitations of the Methodology

Qualitative research methodology applies a more unstructured model compared to quantitative methodology. Maxwell (2013) discussed that the strength of this design is that loosely designed studies can provide valuable data. However, with designs that are unstructured, the limitations include that these designs are not systematic in the sense of following certain steps in order to complete the research model. Another limitation in qualitative methods is that they allow for interpretations. In some cases, interpretations can invite unintended research bias. Interpretations that contain biases can skew the results of the study.

Strength and Limitations of the Research Design

The main limitation of a case study design is the lack of transferability (Yin, 2009). A case study takes place in a highly specific context that is not necessarily likely to represent conditions elsewhere.

Significance

In a national survey conducted regarding youth violence, "16.6% reported carrying a weapon (gun, knife or club) on one or more days in the 30 days preceding the survey; the prevalence was higher among males (25.9%) than females (6.8%)" (David-Ferdon et al., 2016, p.8-9). According to the CDC's statistics on the Division of Violence Prevention, violence in the United States among school age youth is increasing at a commensurate rate (David-Ferdon et al., 2016, p.8-9). Existing anti-bullying/violence prevention methods have reduced incidents of violence. Faith-based organizations offer options to combat this problem and to date are rarely used as an anti-bullying measure (David-Ferdon et al., 2016, p.8-9). One practical application could be to implement a training program within the behavioral health field with faith principles as the basis of the program. This program could be used to teach youth and parents whose children are labeled as bullies in the school system. Juvenile system programs designed to assist youth with mental issues do not commonly integrate faith principles in the program. Because current programs have not successfully reduced incidents of bullying, faith-based teachings may be useful in imparting options for dealing with conflict to youth and their parents.

Schools could create an after school behavior modification program in which those who bully would have to participate in order to not be suspended from school. This program would be a way to keep students in school and, in the same instance, teach them through the behavior modification program a better way to conduct themselves in school. Also, in order not to violate the First Amendment, parents could attend a community

program that would take place at various locations, not to exclude the options of churches, that would assist the parents with information on parenting through Christian education. This program would be comparable to when youth are sentenced through the juvenile court system to mandatory alcoholic anonymous meetings or sessions with addiction counselors.

This study could impact social change. With each act of bullying, moral judgment in youth is compromised. Some youth may start to believe that the more they see bullying, the more it is acceptable, which would be counterproductive to positive social aims. Morality refers to the "codes of conduct put forward by a society or some other group, such as a religion, or accepted by an individual for her own behavior or normatively to refer to a code of conduct that, given specified conditions, would be put forward by all rational persons" (Merriam-Webster's dictionary and thesaurus, 2014). A moral code, depending upon what it happens to be at any given point in time, is what dictates what is right and wrong in society, yet can differ depending on the individual's religious and/or cultural background. Laws in the United States are dictated by what is morally right without upholding any specific societal standards (Mercado-Crespo,2013). However, most societal moral laws and concepts stem from a biblical perspective (Mercado-Crespo 2013). Bullying is in contradiction to such a moral code. Breaching morality brings anarchy which breeds destruction and ruins the value systems in place in society (Mercado-Crespo,2013).

Chapter Summary

Faith-based organizations offer programs for both community and parents, as well as opportunities to assist in creating an atmosphere for young people to do better and to be better citizens. Through faith-based organizations, social-development strategies teach children how to handle tough social situations. Through faith-based organizations, the lives of young people can be changed, emotionally and mentally, to produce better citizens for society. The purpose of this qualitative exploratory case study was to research the relationship between involvement in faith-based activities and bullying, specifically in terms of (a) discovering whether participation in faith-based activities is associated with lowered incidents of, or inclinations toward, bullying; and (b) identifying what mechanisms, if any, might be responsible for the ability of faith-based activities to suppress bullying behaviors and orientations.

In Chapter 2 I review the literature that provides a glimpse into current research about bullying, current prevention programs, and faith-based initiatives. The review of the literature contains various articles that present different vantage points as they relate to this issue. Chapter 3 presents the exploration of methodology, research designs, research's role, data sources, and data analysis. Chapter 4 details the observations recorded through the data collection process to bring about results to support the overall research problem. Chapter 5 includes a summary, conclusions, recommendations, and how the research satisfied the intent of this study. Also in Chapter 5, I discuss why and how the study was accomplished and interpretations of all findings and implications for social change.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Literature Review

Bullying has morphed beyond a rite of passage during childhood or adolescence. It is recognized as a serious mental health risk that can lead to anxiety, depression, confusion, low self-esteem, and even suicide for the victim. The definition of bullying varies, whether it is defined by parents, students, teachers, psychiatrists, or lawmakers, which describes the negative consequences of physical, mental, or emotional abuse brought on by the repeated actions of another person. In the United States, 49 states have passed antibullying laws, yet bullying has not stopped. Approximately 1.5 million school-aged children ages 12-18 self-report as victims of bullying by peers (Jeong & Lee, 2013). Additionally, Jeong and Lee (2013) found that students who attend schools with established antibullying programs were more likely to be victims of bullying than students at schools without such programs.

Bullying is a complex action based on the multilayered components of the type of violence involved in the act. Despite much study, there is no simple explanation as to why people engage in bullying (Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005). The central definition of bullying was introduced by Olweus (1993), who described bullying as an incident that occurs whenever a student "is exposed repeatedly, over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other students" (p. 9). Bullying can be further depicted as the presence of a power inequality; forceful intimidation; and a harmful effect on the victim (Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005). Olweus (1993) further defined school bullying as physical and/or emotional harm inflicted by other students within the boundaries of a school area.

Forms of bullying include teasing, taunting, name calling, hitting, kicking, or taking/destroying others' belongings. Studies indicate that a significant number of students fall victim to bullying; between 8% and 41% of students reported being teased in a mean way or being hit, kicked, and/or pushed (Orpinas et al., 2000; Silvernail, Thompson, Yang, & Kopp, (2000); Smith, Talamelli, Cowie, Naylor, & Chauhan, (2004).

Bullying has long-term effects on victims' mental health. Victims of school bullying are more likely to suffer psychological issues such as sadness, depression, loneliness, and low self-esteem (Wolke & Lereya, 2015). To the extreme, severe bullying leads to attempts at suicide, with victims of bullying 2% to 9% more likely to consider suicide that nonvictims (Kim & Leventhal, 2008). Girls ages 10 to 14 are at an even higher risk, with more than 14% of all high school students reported as having considered suicide; 7% of all high school students in the United States have attempted suicide (Varia, 2013). Bullying can lead to social ineptness and academic struggles. Bullied victims are more likely to (a) have difficulties relating to peers, (b) experience peer rejection, (c) develop feelings of revulsion for school, and (d) have poor academic performance (Juvonen & Graham, 2014).

Factors such as age and race have been found as peer victimization influencers (Blake, Zhou, Kwok, & Benz, 2016). Minority youth are more often ill-treated by peers at school than majority groups in the same school (Swearer & Hymel, 2015). Although, research does indicate that incidents of bullying decrease as students age (DeVoe et al, 2004), girls are more likely to be bullied than boys (U.S. Department of Education, 2015) However, types of harassment differ between girls and boys. While boys are more prone

to physical abuse, girls are more inclined to emotional or verbal abuse (e.g., rumor-spreading or gossiping), especially as the levels of cyber-bullying through social media become more prevalent (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Research has also indicated that family and peer group dynamics can protect as well as cause bullying (Cassidy, 2009; Flaspohler, Elfstrom, Vanderzee, Sink, & Birchmeier, 2009; Ledwell & King, 2015). Students who are socially awkward, and not accepted amongst their peers are often targets of bullying (Ledwell & King, 2015). Students without involved parents have been found to be victims of bullying more often than those students with involved parents (Flasphler et al., 2009).

Beyond the individual, the school environment also plays a significant role in the level of bullying that occurs within the school grounds. In addition to security, climate and culture of the school, preventative measures, teachers and other staff, especially available counselors, also influence incidents of bullying (Espelage, Polanin, & Low, 2014). Extra security measures including increased supervision, metal detectors, security cameras, locked entrances, visitor sign-in, visible student badges, and locker checks reduce violence in schools (Perumean-Chaney & Sutton, 2013). Students are children and/or young adults, and without proper adult supervision, they may have difficulties dealing with other students. Adult supervision assists children to develop relationship skills that do not result in bullying tactics.

Bullying prevention strategies involve several components designed to discuss the issues, create a safe school environment, and make the effort a community wide initiative (Stop Bullying, 2017). Scientific strategies including reactive/proactive responses,

comprehensive approaches, and curriculum interventions have had varying degrees of success in reducing incidents of bullying (Rivara & Le Menestrel, 2016). One of the most implemented preventive strategies involves the execution of new curricula and school-wide multidisciplinary interventions designed to increase awareness of school violence, improve social cognitive skills, teach conflict resolution skills, and develop policy around the bullying issue (Vreeman & Carroll, 2007). A study by Teglasi and Rothman (2001) found that students participating in 15 weeks of training and preventive education on social problem-solving skills were less likely to engage in aggressive behaviors.

Despite reviews of the comprehensive prevention approach that reported on the effectiveness of programs in addressing school bullying, only a small number of studies found that school bullying prevention programs have no effect or little effect on reducing school violence. Based on meta-analysis, Ferguson, Miguel, Kilburn, & Sanchez (2007) reported that school antibullying programs show little perceptible effect on violence and victimization of children in school settings. Of the 254 public secondary schools studied by Payne, Gottfredson, and Gottfredson (2003), it was found that communal school organizations had no significant effect on reducing student bullying. While the Teglasi and Rothman's (2001) study showed promised, even more recent research has shown that antibullying programs are not significantly effective in reducing incidents of bullying (Yeager, Fong, Less, & Espelage, 2015; Nocentini, Zambuto, & Menesini, 2015).

Just as antibullying laws were being adopted in U.S. states and individual programs in schools become part of standard practices, additional programs to provide students with safe environments have also evolved. Safe environments for students serve

as vehicle to make school and even the route to school safe from outside influences such as gang pressure and criminals. Safe Passage program is a model for reducing school problems by bringing together school staff members, parents, the local health department, the local social service agency, local youth organizations, and students (Burdick-Will, 2013; Dryfoos, 1998; Safe Passages, 2005). In Chicago, Safe Passages is a program created to make the route students take to school safe from gang recruitment and individuals with intent to do harm to children (Burdick-Will, 2012). Results from studies on this comprehensive approach suggest that Safe Passage programs can be effective in delivering justice while increasing school safety compared to other school-based intervention programs. While there are many programs and initiatives to combat bullying, none of these programs have been widely successful in reducing bullying in schools.

School bullying and youth violence is an issue that impacts America's schools in such a profound way that faith-based organizations may hold the key in unlocking the solution in reducing the incidents between youths. Bullying not only affects the victims, but it also affects their families and those around them. Studies have shown these effects can last well into adulthood and can negatively impact victims and offending parties both personally as well as professionally (Shetgiri et al. 2012). The currently available literature shows this is the case (Shetgiri et al. 2012), but one of the main points that is lacking overall is what steps should be taken in finding a solution to this problem. Faith-based organizations have typically been looked upon as a limited means to resolve the identified problem as defined by Shetigri et al. (2012), but they have not been used on a widespread scale because of the view that it may violate the idea of separation of church

and state; school officials are not comfortable in using faith-based resources in solving a problem in the public school system. This identifies a major gap in the available literature, and not many experts appear to wish to take on this gap to address how faith-based programs might resolve the issue of bullying.

I suggested in the previous chapter that various forms of child rearing theories left children susceptible as to whether or not they would become bullies or if they would become the targets of school bullies. According to Georgiou and Stavrinides (2013) the effectiveness of various parenting techniques demonstrate how the techniques prevent children from becoming bullies. One of the variables was whether the families were actively involved in some type of religious or spiritual activity. It is an important research point as to whether spiritual upbringing in a household helps to reduce the potential of a child becoming a bully. When referring to religious upbringing, Christian faith is not identified, but for the majority of the discussion in this literature review, the focus of religious upbringing was on the Christian faith. The golden rule of "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" is not just an important theory of behavioral standards in Christian households, but it is a vital idea that should be passed on from parent to child in all households. Basic concepts such as this were found in most households in the study and helped in teaching children the importance of not bullying others (Georgiou & Stavrinides, 2013).

Faith-based organizations help with educating parents on how they can prevent their children from becoming bullies using principles of faith, but these organizations can also have a strong presence in the schools and surrounding community in order to give

the children positive activities in which to engage. With these activities available, youth are able to focus on positive images rather than those which contain violence and can influence negative behaviors in the youth towards one another. Kalman (2013) has shown that while psychology has been the go-to resolution in the past for bullying, it has not been as effective as initially anticipated. Psychology has been typically thought of as a tool that can fix almost any type of problem that adults or children experience that is termed as abnormal, but in the case of bullying this is also an identified gap in the currently existing literature. In the case of correcting the behavior of bullies, counseling is not enough (Vickers, 2010); youth must be given practical activities and positive reinforcements to show them how to behave appropriately toward their peers. Again, faith-based organizations are being looked at as an alternative method to dealing with the issue of bullying in schools. It is not only an issue that affects youth, but it also affects parents and school officials.

Rhodes et al., (2010) also conducted a study on how the influence of incarcerated mothers can affected children on whether or not they become bullies. This study found several different external as well as internal influences that can determine if the child is going to exhibit signs of bullying later in youth or even in adult life. There are other studies which have shown that children who are bullies are more likely to become aggressive in adulthood and show this type of behavior in personal life as well as in the workplace (Vickers, 2010). In many ways, aggressiveness in the workplace is traceable back to many behaviors in childhood which shows they were either the victims of a bully or were a bully themselves as defined by Vickers (2010). What the literature does not

show, however, is what kind of interventions, if any, were used to attempt to correct these behaviors before the individual reached adulthood. Again, there is a clearly identified gap in the currently available literature which will be addressed in this literature review.

Finally, there is also a marked difference between Eastern and Western ideas of bullying and its influences. According to Acevedo et al. (2013), the differences in raising children in a country such as Turkey versus the United States alters the perspective of how bullying is addressed in these families. For example, Acevedo et al. (2013) argued that Eastern families consider bullying as a way to toughen up male children and give them character, while Western families see this as a problem which needs to be addressed before irreparable psychological harm is done. Additionally, in the United States, there are families who believe that there is a difference in cultural attitudes when it comes to discipline and bullying in specific homes. Adkison-Bradley et al. (2014) argued that parents who are African-American have significantly different views than other races when it comes to bullying and want to "toughen up" their children to make sure they can survive what they consider to be a cruel world. Many African-Americans feel that in order to be able to deal with the injustices that are dealt to them because of their race, they must be able to deal with the name-calling and associated acts of cruelty from an early age.

While there is a great deal of literature available in this area of discussion, the purpose of including this type of topic in this paper is to determine how the inclusion of faith-based organizations can affect African-Americans and how they can include their own faith in stopping bullying in their own community. Even though there is not a great

deal of inclusion of the church or their programs in the African-American community to stop bullying, it is a good base to serve as a means to test how it can be effectively integrated into the school as well as the community at large to reduce incidents of bullying. Searching the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) and Journal Storage (JStor) for faith based anti-bullying prevention, programs, and prevalence returns more than 60,000 results since 2000. Of these articles, 20,000 focused on workplace bullying and could be eliminated as they pertained to adult behavior. Among the rest of the articles it was necessary to differentiate the faith based anti-bullying programs from secular programs by adding 'religion' and 'church' to the search words. The addition of these search terms revealed 359 articles that focused on the impact of faith based activities and practices on school behavior. The currently available literature in this area can be utilized to demonstrate how faith-based organizations at large can be used to significantly reduce incidents of school bullying, thereby assisting officials in helping students and parents in modifying undesirable behaviors in at-risk youth in school.

The following search terms were utilized in the literature review:

- "Bullying" and "faith-based organizations"

- "Bullying" and "faith-based organizations" and "prosocial"

- "Bullying" and "churches"

- "Bullying" and "churches" and "prosocial"

Searches were conducted on JSTOR, Google Scholar, EBSCO Host, and Academic Search Direct.

Theoretical Framework for the Study

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological systems theory classifies five close levels that can represent diverse social contexts. These social contexts are microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. These social contexts build upon the next, each making a case that continues into the other structures. Bronfenbrenner called these social contexts nested structures which describes these various facets of the environment of the child. Within this model, the child is viewed as being in his or her own social ecology. Each system demonstrates how the structure affects, family, culture, friends, and the community. Following are the definitions for each of these systems and how they contribute overall to the theory chosen to tie this conceptual framework to the rest of the project.

A microsystem demonstrates how children's behavior unfolds in various environments. It shows the pattern of the child's development. It is a "pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given setting with particular physical and material characteristics" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979 p.22). It denotes the social relationships that children have with parents, siblings, peers, and teachers whether at home, at school, or in the neighborhood. In this social context children adopt different roles, which are explicit to each relationship. As defined by scholars, "The simultaneous and dynamic interactions of the child's relationships within different microsystems contribute to the development of the child's social identity" (Mercado-Crespo, 2013, p. 27). This explains how children take on the role of the bully

and the victim respectively and act out these different areas according to what they feel are appropriate actions.

A mesosystem demonstrates the social connections that children have created through one of the microsystems. Through the social connections, it expresses how the role of children relates from one relationship to the next, from school, church, home, and in the community. "The norms that dominate in each of those contexts may influence the child's behavior, and affect the mesosystem level relationship of these contexts" (Mercado-Crespo, 2013, p. 23). Barboza et al. (2009) discusses the joint contributions of two or more microsystems and how they can be instrumental in bringing a positive influence in the development of a child's process and development. It can also explain how children can be influenced to avoid the pitfalls of turning into bullies which can lead into other negative behaviors that can last well into adulthood.

Exosystems are events that arise in settings where children will be affected even if they are not directly participating in an event. This context refers to the community and the influence that it has on children's behavior. In any community, the norms that affect the community will ultimately affect the children. "Situations that occur among teacher unions locally may affect the enforcement of policies and guidelines that affect children's experiences at school; changes in parents' experiences at work may affect the time they spend with their children" (Mercado-Crespo, 2013).

Macrosystems on the other hand demonstrate the larger or more distant institutions. Macrosystems relates to the establishment of the social norms, beliefs, ideologies, and socio-economic status. As a child develops, these influences will be

affected by the micro-, meso-, and exosystems. The chronosystem refers to the effect that time has on behaviors. This context emphasizes the dynamic of the child's ecology. Bronfenbrenner identifies the interactions between the child and his or her environment. Many things can positively or negatively affect a child's development, as implied.

The phenomenon of bullying is one that psychologists have tried to understand and legislatures have tried to combat by creating laws that have not been able to fully address and solve the issue. According to Orel (2013), students of the LGBT community have experienced this phenomenon, and studies have been completed to try to understand this problem. However, it is still a rampant issue in society. Policy makers have come along side to legislate this issue; however, there is not solution as of yet. "In July 2011, the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) and the National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR) filed suit against the Anoka-Hennepin School District in Minnesota, alleging that the school's policies regarding sexual orientation led to an epidemic of anti-gay and gender-based harassment. In filing this suit, the SPLC and NCLR followed in the footsteps of other advocates who attempted to use litigation to combat anti-gay bullying (Orel, 2013 p.578). This brings the discussion in the literature review to the forefront of the researcher's mind that religiosity has to fit into the plan in society. This phenomenon in society has to deal with our values and principles in society. Rūta Adamonienė and Adelė Astromskienė (2013) discuss that youth in Europe are being encouraged to contribute to sustainable developments in society. Also, the European culture is encouraging youth to cherish their values. In the words of some academics in the field, "Cherishing of common civil values is concurrent from personal value principles of every

member of society" (Adamonienė & Astromskienė, 2013 p. 472). In society, people have to understand that most of the basic core values come from religion. Most American common laws have a religious undertone despite being founded on a separation of church and state.

Some utilized theory approaches to public policy are the Rationalistic Approach, The Incrementalist Approach, and Mixed Scanning Approach. Decision-making models help to drive public policy in creating legislation and policies that can be used to help citizens to govern themselves in society. With the Rationalistic Approach, as discussed by Amitai Etzioni (1976), a decision-maker is first made aware of the problem. After the problem has been identified, then it suggests a goal and cautiously measures alternative means for the problem. By doing so, the decision-maker chooses an alternative method based on the merit of the method with reference to the state of affairs he chooses. "Social decision-making centers, it is pointed out, frequently do not have a specific, agreed upon set of values that could provide the criteria for evaluating alternatives" (Etzioni 1967 p. 385). He further explains that values are merely fluid and are affected by the decisions made. In addition, Etzioni (1967) further discusses that the Rational Approach will be rejected in the sense that decision-makers do not have adequate time and resources to devote to the research and evaluating the policy through this particular method. This method is "unrealistic and undesirable" (Etzioni, 1967 p. 386).

Etzioni (1967) deemed the rational approach, too demanding for decision-makers. However, the Incremental Approach is deemed less demanding on decision makers. "Influenced by the free competition model of economics, incrementalism rejects the

notion that policies can be guided in terms of central institutions of a society expressing

the collective 'good'" (Etzioni, 1967 p.387). In addition, policies are a balance of

compromise amongst societal partisans. However, he identifies that poor decisions are

those that never reach a compromise and are amended later. Incrementalism as a

normative model suggests that consent amongst partisans is not the preferred approach.

"In the first place, decisions so reached would, of necessity, reflect the interests of the

most powerful, since partisans invariably differ in their respective power positions;

demands of the underprivileged and politically unorganized would be underrepresented"

(Etzioni 1967 p. 387). Secondly, incrementalism would focus on short term goals and

seek limited change in past policies. It would neglect basic innovations. While small

steps to lead to substantial change, this approach does not provide anything to reach that

goal. These steps would lead to either circular or dispersing motions ultimately leading

back to nowhere (Etzioni, 1967).

"Thus, while the incrementalism hold that decision-making involves a choice

between the two kinds of decision-making models, it should be noted that (a) most

incremental decisions specify or anticipate fundamental decisions, and (b) the cumulative

value of the incremental decisions is greatly affected by the related fundamental

decision" (Etzioni, 1967 p. 388). For example, it is a fundamental decision in the state of

Missouri that the budget has been balanced each year by the legislature; however, the

incremental decision on how much funding each particular state agency receives in order

to balance that budget. Again, in the words of academics in the field, "These incremental

changes are often the unfolding of trends initiated at critical turning points at which

fundamental decisions were made" (Etzioni, 1967 p. 388). Incrementalists' decisions tend

to be remedial, meaning that small steps are taken toward a conclusion or right decision.

Also, courses of decisions are altered when there is evidence of wrong direction. "But if

the decision-maker evaluates his incremental decisions and small steps, which he must do

if he is to decide whether or not the direction is right, his judgment will be greatly

affected by the evaluative criteria he applies" (Etzioni, 1967 p. 388).

The Mixed Scanning Approach is a more active societal decision-making model.

This particular model requires two sets of mechanics. These mechanics are "high-order,

fundamental policy-making processes which set basic directions and incremental

processes which prepare for fundamental decisions and work them out after they have

been reached" (Etzioni, 1967 p. 388). This model provides both realistic strategies

developed by policy-makers and effective strategy for followers to carry out. This model

provides two cameras. The first model is a broad angle that would cover all parts of the

sky. The second would be able to zero in on the area that is exposed by the first camera.

This allows for examiners to review this exposed area more in depth. "The strategy

combines a detailed (rationalistic) examination of some sectors-which, unlike the

exhaustive examination of the entire area, is feasible-with a 'truncated' review of other

sectors," (Etzioni, 1967 p. 389). Effective decision-making requires periodic or set

intervals. "Reality cannot be assumed to be structured in straight lines where each step

towards a goal leads directly to another and where the accumulation of small steps in

effect solves the problem" (Etzioni, 1967 p. 389). Therefore, mixed scanning combines

various levels of the practice. It also has set criteria for situations when various levels

need to be emphasized. "Each of the two elements in mixed-scanning helps to reduce the effects of the particular shortcomings of the other; incrementalism reduces the unrealistic aspects of rationalism by limiting the details required in fundamental decisions, and contextuating rationalism helps to overcome the conservative slant of incrementalism by exploring longer-run alternatives" (Etzioni, 1967 p. 389).

Since neither lawmakers nor policy makers are unable to determine the result of problems on an ongoing basis, lawmakers in Jefferson City, Missouri, have rendered a state policy that will allow for various school districts to determine their own policy in regards to bullying. On a district-by-district level, the policy can be reviewed, analyzed, discussed, and revised based on the accuracy and effectiveness of the policy. With so many moving parts controlled by many participants uncovering the situations, and actions and reactions and results within those situations, like adolescent bullying, requires a analysis method that takes examines the strategy used to solve the problem and then outlines a strategy that will be effective (Etzioni, 1967). The Mixed Scanning Approach works in this current study as the method will describe the current strategies being used to combat bullying, and outline am action plan that will be effective in reducing and eventually eliminating bullying amongst students. Examination of the reasons that bullying amongst students still continues to occur despite The Mixed Scanning Approach is like a camera; capturing a moment in time and freezing that moment. From there all aspects of the picture can be reviewed as necessary, and an effective alternative can be compared. Decision-makers within the district can review each part of the policy and focus in on the area that needs improvement. By doing so, the policy itself can be

revisited and reevaluated in order to continue exploring alternatives until a solution is created.

In terms of the research questions of the study, EST suggests that (a) faith-based organizations can lower bullying to the extent that they can impact one or more of the five system levels (microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem); and (b) the mechanisms through which faith-based associations can lower bullying are somehow related to creating change in one or more of the five system levels.

Faith-Based Organizations as a Solution

School bullying and youth violence is an issue that impacts America's schools in such a profound way that faith-based organizations hold the key in unlocking the solution in reducing the incidents in incidents between youths. It not only affects the victims, but it also affects their families and those around them. Studies have shown these effects can last well into adulthood and can negatively impact victims and offending parties both personally as well as professionally. In the previous chapter, there was a great deal of discussion included about the possibilities of using faith-based organizations as a solution of reducing incidents of bullying amongst youth. According to Brigham (2012), these types of organizations can be used to create specific safe places for youth to learn conflict resolution skills so they do not have to resort to using violence to solve problems with their peers. However, it should also be noted that faith-based organizations serve other purposes when averting the influences that cause children to become bullies. Parents also benefit greatly from these organizations when trying to prevent these internal and external influences from causing children to exhibit behaviors associated with bullying.

Brigham (2012) also states that if these behaviors are not corrected at an early stage, they can develop into adult aggressive tendencies which manifest themselves in private life as well as in the workplace as cited by Vickers (2010). Some of these associated behaviors in adulthood stemmed from childhood bullying include workplace aggressiveness, missing important deadlines, and turning in subpar work thinking it is acceptable, making harassing comments to co-workers, and other unsavory actions that can lead to possible violence (Vickers, 2011).

Benefits to Children

Kalman (2013) has openly stated that using psychology has failed to address the main issue of reducing the incidents of bullying amongst youth in schools in America. Therefore, alternative methods need to be sought to address this widespread problem. The schools have tried to create various programs which were supposed to discourage students from bullying one another, but researchers such as Evans et al., (2014) also found to be less than impressive. This specific study states that because of the legal restrictions placed on schools when creating any type of program through the system, the overall effectiveness of any school-related program will be diminished because of the watered-down programs offered. Much in the manner of the DARE programs of the 1980s which were supposed to prevent children from getting involved with illicit drugs, the anti-bullying programs currently offered by the school systems are based on psychological theories which according to Kalman (2013) have been deemed as ineffective. Many cite acts of school violence such as school shootings and other related incidents as examples of the ineffectiveness of the attempts by school officials to get a

handle on the problem of bullying amongst children in the American public school system.

Despite the aforementioned programs, there is a current issue with openly using faith-based programs to reduce bullying in schools. This issue has to do with the philosophy of keeping faith-based programs separated from state-sponsored programs such as the public school system. Evans et al. (2014) argues that school officials must become more flexible when it comes to allowing faith-based programs in their facilities because the potential for long-term effectiveness is overwhelmingly positive and should be followed up with more studies so the gap in the currently available literature can be updated. Additionally, with the availability of faith-based programs in public schools for youth, schools can combine resources to use them more effectively in combatting this issue. Instead of working against one another, faith-based agencies and public school systems should be working hand in hand to resolve the issue of bullying to reduce the negative long-term effects on both the offenders as well as the victims.

Benefits to Parents

Children are not the only victims in this epidemic; parents also have to suffer when their child is forced to suffer at the hands of their peers in such horrific ways. In addition to starting programs of a faith-based nature in the school system, there are also programs in the surrounding communities which are designed to help parents who need a helping hand. According to Georgiou & Stavrinides (2013), parents need resources that are specifically designed to address the issues associated with their children becoming bullies and possibly growing up to become adults who are violent in private life as well

as in the workplace. Studies such as the one cited in this section show that faith-based programs in the community are necessary from the parental point of view because of the overall failure of other programs which have been geared more toward the use of psychological tools (Kalman, 2013; Evans et al, 2014). Georgiou and Stavrinides (2013) have also concluded that faith-based programs are designed to give parents the tools necessary to pass along to their children so the incidents of bullying in school can decrease over time. Parents sometimes have to be given additional resources so they can comprehend how to best help their children when the children are either the victims of a bully or when they unfortunately are the ones tormenting weaker children. The overall recommendation given from the studies cited in this literature review is that follow-up studies need to be conducted in order to evaluate the overall effectiveness of faith-based programs for parents in the community.

There is also the question of whether or not parental characteristics are passed to children which can affect them behaving like bullies in school. Shetgiri et al (2012) argues that in their study there is sufficient evidence that demonstrates without question that there are positive effects from faith-based programs to help parents in the community. Because of this result, there are also conclusions in this study that are calling for the repeat of these tests in the future to validate the results that have already shown the effects on parents trying to prevent their children from exhibiting negative behaviors amongst their peers. Additionally, Vickers (2010) outlines the characteristics of workplace behaviors which are identified as bullying or negative leadership elements which are detrimental to the development of the children. Some of these characteristics

are traced back to aggressive behaviors in childhood bullies who have never learned how to correct their patterns and in turn have grown into adult bullies in their workplace. These workplace bullies have led to incidents of workplace violence in extreme cases (Vickers, 2010).

When discussing the parental development of children and how parental involvement influences their behavior amongst their peers, one of the most important influences are the maternal factors. According to Myers et al. (2013), the children of incarcerated mothers were found to be primary targets amongst their peers when it came to being teased and bullied in school. Without having the influence of the mother in the picture at home, children in the targeted population during the study were more likely to be bullied and teased for not having what is considered by society to be a stereotypical family and could very likely turn into bullies themselves. What could not be determined in the study, however, is when these bullied children would turn into tormentors themselves. Some studies such as Vickers (2011) determined it could happen in adult life in the workplace, most likely, and others such as Evans et al. (2014) concluded that with the intervention of specialized faith-based programs it could be averted from happening. Setting up faith-based programs to benefits both children and adults in the community, will not only allow children to learn life-coping skills to reduce incidents of bullying in schools, but will also help adults who are looking after grandchildren or other relatives who are faced with taking the maternal role at least temporarily (Myers et al, 2013).

Addressing the Role of Faith-Based Organizations in the Community

As previously mentioned, there is a division as to the role of faith-based organizations in the schools as well as the community at large. America as a whole has always preached the separation of church and state which has trickled down to the offering of public assistance to community members at multiple levels. Sometimes there is a level of hesitancy when creating and implementing programs at the public level such as those which are meant to address issues such as bullying in schools, but there are also factors of success which have to be considered when determining whether or not to use spiritual programs on such a public level. According to Hemming and Madge (2012), the evaluation of faith-based programs and their effectiveness in the community is vital to determining how to break the barrier in the communities of the idea of separation of church and state in the allocation of resources. With resources in government stretched thin to begin with, it would only be logical for communities to take advantage of the services created by faith-based organizations so other resources can be saved for other types of public assistance programs. The use of faith-based programs is proven by the study conducted by Hemming and Madge (2012) as well as Evans et al. (2014) to be economically feasible in the communities and can save precious resources that can be used in other vital areas where people need assistance.

What also needs to be taken into consideration when discussing this topic is the fact that negative leadership can be modified through the faith-based programs offered in the community. Schilling (2009) argues that the role of negative leadership is so ingrained into the minds of adults that it has to be addressed at the psychological level.

Some qualities that can be gained from learning the traits of negative leadership are oppositional behavior, perfectionistic attitude, abuse of the professional disciplinary system, psychological bullying of peers, and discriminatory attitudes (Schilling, 2009). It is these character traits which are learned in childhood from classic bullying behaviors which can follow a person into adulthood and shape them into the classic negative leader. The conclusion of the study conducted by Schilling is that the elements of negative leadership begin during the ages of 10 to 17 years when bullying is prevalent in a child's life. As a child grows older and the more they are exposed to the bullying, the more characteristics of negative leadership are learned and practiced in adulthood. Additionally, Vickers (2010) points out that what is and is not considered acceptable behavior changes over time. These are all good reasons why these characteristics need to be corrected during childhood so they do not follow a person into adulthood where they can do the most damage.

Definition of Bullying Behavior

As defined in the last chapter, the definition of bullying is the unwanted, aggressive behavior among school aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. Bullying includes actions such as making threats, spreading rumors, attacking someone physically or verbally, and excluding someone from a group on purpose. This definition is directly taken from the website stop bullying.org, which is an organization dedicated to educating adults as well as children about the dangers of bullying and how it affects everyone. According to Vickers (2010) and Twemlow and Sacco (2013), adults are

victims of bullying as well as children. Most of this bullying is done in the workplace where it is difficult to prove the incident to have action taken against the offending party because bullying behavior tends to be exclusively identified with children.

Twemlow and Sacco (2013) write that many of the points associated with bullying behavior apply to both adults and children. While this project is focusing on children and how faith-based programs can help reduce incidents of bullying in the community, it is important to mention how adults are affected by the lack of resources to help reduce bullying in the community. Additional research has shown how relationships between children and parents are very important. Parents are responsible for their children. However, parental practices, attitudes and behaviors are all linked to the youth and how they interact; whether aggressively or non-aggressively. This suggests that weak parental supervision is associated with peer violence. Twemlow and Sacco (2013) concluded that their point of bullying leads to peer violence not only in children, but also in adults. This is a conclusion to Vickers' studies in 2010 and 2011 which should be followed up in the future with more studies to validate these conclusions.

Adult Bullying Behaviors

Vickers (2010) highlights the fact in his or her study that what is and is not considered acceptable workplace behavior changes over time. For example, it was at one time considered acceptable behavior to speak to females and minorities in a certain way, yet over time this acceptable type of behavior was then branded as bullying in the workplace. Making disparaging comments about someone because of their age is also now considered bullying in the workplace because of the changes over time (Vickers,

2010). Eventually other behaviors will also change over time and will become classified as bullying in the workplace, but until then managers have to remain open-minded about changes in their company. In a later study, Vickers (2011) also stated that victims of bullying make excellent employees in the public sector because of their experience. They are able to make changes to public policy, including working with faith-based organizations, because of their previous experiences with being bullied either as children or as adults in other places of employment and they want to do what they are able to in order to prevent others to experience what they have. Because of this empathy for the victims of bullying, the employees who work in the public sector are more likely to grant resources to faith-based organizations to help combat bullying than those who have not personally experienced the effects of bullying and negative leadership (Vickers, 2011). It does not matter whether the experience occurred during childhood or adulthood; the important thing to remember is that bullying, no matter what form it comes in, is traumatic and is difficult to live through. This is why it is vital to catch and correct these characteristics during childhood.

Role of Bullying in African-American Communities

As stated in an earlier section of this chapter, previous studies have been conducted which have shown that bullying is treated differently in African-American homes than in other ethnic communities. According to Adkison-Bradley et al (2014), African-American parents have a different attitude towards bullying because of the history of violence they have suffered in America versus Caucasian families. There are many African-Americans who feel that bullying in general is a way to prepare their

children for the racial injustices they will face in the 'real world' since historically they have suffered at the hands of everyone since they were first brought to America as slaves. In general, the attitude in an African-American household is that young people, males in particular, should learn to have thick skin when it comes to being bullied because the experience makes them stronger human beings. Additionally, it was suggested in the previous chapter that various forms of child-rearing theories left children susceptible to becoming bullies or the targets of school bullies. Georgiou and Stavrinides (2013) discuss in their study the effectiveness of various parenting techniques and how they prevent children from becoming bullies. One of the variables was whether the families were actively involved in some type of religious or spiritual activity. It is an important point of argument as to whether spiritual upbringing in a household helps to determine whether a child is more likely to become a bully amongst his or her peers.

Adkison-Bradley et al. (2014) further concluded in their study that with the strong faith in the African-American community, a faith-based program to educate parents as well as children in the dangers of bullying would be beneficial. This segment of the population tends to have a stronger base of faith than others, which lends itself well to the possibility of future studies in this area. This researcher would like to conduct a study in this area to determine how faith-based anti-bullying programs will affect the children who participate in such a program over the next five to ten years. The same attitude has been observed in Eastern countries versus Western countries where bullying is concerned; according to Acevedo et al. (2013), the religious upbringing of children in

Middle Eastern countries takes on a different attitude where bullying is concerned and is noticeable when attempting to deal with the effects of bullying into adulthood.

Chapter Summary

Anti-bullying programs based on faith principles have the capability of combating incidents of bullying that current programs have not been successful in doing. Faith-based programs speak to core principles in different cultures and society as a whole, that will not only help students differentiate from right and wrong, but also help them understand their actions. These programs also work through a unified design, involving parents as a integral part of the success of the program. By reducing these incidents, it will eventually help adults in the workplace reduce the amount of negative leadership which will ultimately reduce stress. The currently available literature shows this is the case, but one of the main points that is lacking overall is what steps should be taken in finding a solution to this problem. Faith-based organizations have typically been looked upon as a limited means to resolve the identified problem, but have not been used on a widespread scale because of the view that they should be kept at an arm's length because of the idea of separation of church and state; school officials are not comfortable in using faith-based resources in solving a problem in the public school system. This is undoubtedly an identified gap in the currently available literature. Even with it being an identified gap in the literature, there are not many experts who wish to take on this gap to address how faith-based programs can fill it and resolve the issue being discussed in this project.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Core of Research

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory case study is to research the relationship between involvement in faith-based activities and bullying, specifically in terms of (a) discovering whether participation in faith-based activities is associated with lowered incidents of, or inclinations toward, bullying; and (b) identifying what mechanisms, if any, might be responsible for the ability of faith-based activities to suppress bullying behaviors and orientations. The remainder of the chapter contains a description and defense of all relevant aspects of study design.

Research Questions

The research questions of the study were as follows:

RQ1: Does participation in faith-based activities and programs reduce inclinations toward, or practice of, bullying?

RQ2: If participation in faith-based activities and programs reduces inclinations toward, or practice of, bullying, what are the mechanisms by which such reduction occurs?

Research Method and Design

The study of a particular phenomenon can foster understanding or provide insight into the area of study or similar areas (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). Leedy & Ormrod's propositions and the research questions they explored should drive the choice of research method and design (Marshall, 1996) despite researcher preference. In this case, involvement of faith-based activities programs and the level of parental involvement

which reduces incidents of bullying amongst ninth grade students in Jefferson City, Missouri is explored.

Researchers break quantitative data into four types: description, interpretation, verification, and evaluation (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005; Peshkin, 1993). Quantitative studies, which involve empirical experiments and data collecting, would not have been appropriate for the issues in this study. Qualitative research is not theory-driven or proven by testing a hypothesis; rather, qualitative researchers seek to describe the effects of a phenomenon, interpret the effect of an agent of change, verify a particular assumption, or evaluate a policy or condition. Qualitative research focuses on phenomena that occur in the real world (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). Thus, the basis of a qualitative study is for participants to relate their experiences regarding specific events or phenomena, whereas studies conducted quantitatively use scientific methods to collect and analyze numerical (quantifiable) data. In order to examine the relationship between bullying and participation in faith-based organizations for this study, I interviewed parents and teachers on their perceptions about students' behavior and how that behavior is perceived. Also, this study was specifically designed in a manner that would decrease or remove the chance of researcher bias influencing its outcome by use of methodological constructs and transcendental analysis (Tillman, 1967) which allow for thematic, generalized results that are not statistically quantifiable. The nature of this research made qualitative methodology the optimal choice suited to the type and manner of information gathering. I selected a qualitative methodology because it offered the best fit for the research overall.

This study embodies inherent and specific reasons for preferring a qualitative research design over other alternatives. A significant benefit of this methodology is that data is based on the participants' own categories/perceptions of meanings, providing pertinent individual information (Creswell, 2013). Such approaches allow researchers to discern and describe individuals' personal experience of the phenomena under study (Creswell, 2013). They allow the researcher to inquire regarding phenomena within the natural environment (Creswell, 2013). Face to face interviews allow for the interviewer to interact with participants and experience their reactions to the questions.

In addition, the research process is dynamic, with give and take between respondents and inquirer that yields complete and detailed data not always available via other methods (Creswell, 2013). The hybrid form derived when combining the two major methods, known as mixed methods research, was not appropriate in this case although includes qualitative-type inquiry. If the research tool was a questionnaire or survey that required scaled responses (e.g., 1 to 5) that could be numerically represented on a statistical graph, it could be considered as a tool used to combine qualitative questionnaire format with statistical analysis and consider it a mixture. The open-ended questions presented at the interview in this study, however, precluded such classification.

The design of the study was that of a case study. A case study is an investigation into a phenomenon in its real-life context (Yin, 2009) in an attempt to understand the dynamics in that setting (Eisenhardt, 1989). Conducted in the natural setting, a case study allows for a comprehensive view of the phenomenon in question (Andrade, 2009) by exploring the *how* and *why* questions of the particular situation being investigated

(Benbasat, Goldstein, & Mead 1987). The study of a particular phenomenon can foster

understanding or provide insight for similar areas (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). A case study

is useful for learning about unknown or misunderstood situations (Leedy & Ormrod).

Studying the relationship between faith-based antibullying programs and incidents of

bullying provides insight into the effectiveness of faith-based versus non-faith-based

programs in reducing and eliminating bullying incidents among school-age students. As

governments and organizations are examining ways to prevent bullying amongst

students, especially as it relates to suicide, faith-based programs may offer more effective

concepts and ideas for its reduction and elimination.

Interview Preparation

Interviewing is a process that requires planning and careful execution under any

methodology, but particularly when using transcendental phenomenology. Prior to

conducting interviews, the researcher should develop open-ended questions that do not

lead the respondent in a particular direction by attaining the state of epoché. Furthermore,

renowned methodologists Polkinghorne (1989) and Moustakas (1994) conceived a five-

point process, close in content and procedure to a narrative guide developed by Creswell

(2013) for nontranscendental narrative study, which is presented below with explanation:

First, the researcher must identify the phenomenon to study. Before research can

begin, a topic is chosen that, as mentioned before, determines the suitability of

methodology to be used (Marshall, 1996). In this case study, the underlying phenomenon

was the impact, or absence of impact, of faith-based activities on bullying behavior and

orientations.

The second step, called epoché, or removing bias, must occur during question formation and information gathering/interviewing. This prelingual, open cognitive state allows the researcher to be receptive to bias-free information that does not undergo interpretation, as it does with traditional qualitative methods that foster subjectivity.

The third phase is the interview, or data collection, which necessitates contact with selected individuals who form a sample group drawn from a population who meet the criteria of having had lived experience with the phenomenon. The number of respondents required for scholarly significance in this section is rational when considering that interviews will be the tool to conduct the research as opposed to questionnaires and surveys, which can elicit information from large groups readily. Polkinghorne (1989) sets a figure of between five and 25 as adequate to produce academically significant results without overwhelming the interviewer, leading to possible information overload and mischaracterization (Polkinghorne, 1989), so that quality is not compromised by quantity.

Although in Creswell's (2014) guide the fourth stage is interpretation, for transcendental phenomenology this step in the research process is similar to thematic breaking down. The researcher identifies those words or groups of words that are most often reported by consistent bracketing, then clustering them thematically and placing significance on the groups via horizontalization.

The fifth and final state is reached when the researcher develops a rich textured description of the phenomenon with structural definition (Moustakas, 1994). It is in reviewing the results of bracketing and clustering that the true essence or pure content of

the phenomenon is realized, absent biased input from the researcher (Moustakas, 1994). Creswell echoed Husserl's language in calling the result of this reduction the phenomenon's essence (Creswell, 2005).

Although free from bias, results obtained from transcendental phenomenology evolve from related experiences and therefore will not be replicable in the way that empirical research is. Nonetheless, it is considered less influenced by subjective input than other qualitative methods (Creswell, 2005) and thus should produce results in this study that present the reader with accurate depictions of the issues proffered for internalization that prompt further questions or action.

Population

According to Creswell (2006), there is crossover between narrative typology and phenomenology that produces both method and content. The significant difference between the two, according to Creswell, lies in numbers and not philosophy. This is due to the need to attain a sufficient number of responses to reach data saturation, adding to the representative nature of findings. Saturation occurs when asking more questions or adding more respondents would be redundant and provide no uncovered information in repetition and not add new information (Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, & Fontenot, 2013). In this case, the population was that of (a) youth likely to exhibit bullying behaviors, (b) the parents of such youth, and (c) church personnel in contact with such youth.

Sample

Determining participant selection is focused on the unit of analysis. For this case study, the unit of analysis includes individuals and their accounts of the relationship

between involvement in faith-based activities and bullying, specifically in terms of (a) discovering whether participation in faith-based activities is associated with lowered incidents of, or inclinations toward, bullying; and (b) identifying what mechanisms, if any, might be responsible for the ability of faith-based activities to suppress bullying behaviors and orientations. Sample sizes in qualitative research are often smaller than those utilized in quantitative research and are selected based upon the study's purpose and goals (Mason, 2010). Furthermore, in qualitative research, there is no set requirement with regards to the number of participants (Guest, 2006; Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

The researcher must do his/her due diligence in order to optimally explore and plan the sample size for validity and accurate representation (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). According to Marshall (2013), the literature differs regarding the specific sample size necessary for a qualitative study, ranging from five to 25. In a content analysis of PhD studies, the sample sizes most often used were 20 and 30 (Mason, 2010). Ultimately, the researcher should select a sample size that allows for the greatest chances of reaching data saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

The required sample for the current study can be calculated on the basis of Creswell's (2015) recommendations for qualitative studies. According to Creswell (2015), a sample of between 12 to 16 individuals is likely to yield data saturation. However, this recommended sample size assumes that the 12 to 16 participants in a qualitative study will be responsive to questions and forthcoming with data. If participants are not as forthcoming, then, as Creswell noted, the sample needed for data saturation could be much higher—for example, between 25 and 30 individuals. It is also

possible that, with extraordinarily communicative subjects, data saturation for a

qualitative study could be reached with as few as 8-10 participants (Creswell, 2015).

Thus, in the absence of specific assumptions about participants' data quality and

quantity, a qualitative sample of 16 represents the upper end of Creswell's (2016)

recommendation for data saturation. According to Yin (2009), a case study does not

require as many participants as a non-case study, with as few as two to three participants

considered adequate for a case study format (on the assumption that substantial data

quantity and quality are present). Thus, even a smaller number of participants will not

compromise the case study. For the current qualitative exploratory case study, the

researcher will utilize a sample of 20 participants.

Materials/Instruments

The instrument employed will be a personal interview administered separately to

the three populations (adolescents, parents, and church personnel in the sample).

Respondents in this type of descriptive qualitative study are selected for their experience

with the problem at issue as well as their ability to articulate their views (Magilvy &

Thomas, 2009). The following interview questions have been proposed:

Table 1

Research Questions and Interview Questions: Adolescents

Research question	Interview questions
Does participation in faith-based activities and programs reduce inclinations toward, or practice of, bullying?	Do you think that attending church influences you to be less likely to mistreat others? Why? If not, explain? Do you think that attending church influences your inclination to get into conflicts with your peers? Why? If not, explain.
If participation in faith-based activities and programs reduces inclinations toward, or practice of, bullying, what are the mechanisms by which such reduction occurs?	How does attending a church activity affect your thoughts and feelings about wanting to mistreat others? If there is no effect, please explain. How does attending a church activity affect your thoughts and feelings about following rules? If there is no effect, please explain. How does attending a church activity affect your thoughts and feelings about the importance of rules? If there is no effect, please explain. How does attending a church activity affect your thoughts and feelings about the importance of avoiding violence? If there is no effect, please explain. How does attending a church activity affect your thoughts and feelings about the importance of negotiating your differences with others? If there is no effect, please explain. How does attending a church bring your parents more deeply into your life? If the church doesn't have this effect, please explain.

Table 2

*Research Questions and Interview Questions: Parent*s

Research question	Interview questions
Does participation in faith-based activities and programs reduce inclinations toward, or practice of, bullying?	Do you think your child feel less inclined to mistreat others as a result of attending church? How? Why? If not, please explain. Do you think your child feels less inclined to have conflict with your peers as a result of attending church? How? Why? If not, please explain.
If participation in faith-based activities and programs reduces inclinations toward, or practice of, bullying, what are the mechanisms by which such reduction occurs?	How do you think attending church activities affects your child's desire to mistreat others? If none, please explain? How do you think attending church activities affects your child's desire to follow the rules? If none, please explain? How do you think attending church activities affects your child's opinion to follow the rules? If none, please explain? How do you think attending church activities affects your child's opinion to avoid violence? If none, please explain? How do you think attending church activities affects your child's understanding of the importance of negotiating differences with others? If none, please explain? How does attending a church engage you more deeply in your child's life? If the church doesn't have this effect, please explain.

Table 3

Research Questions and Interview Questions: Church Personnel

Research Question	Interview Questions
Does participation in faith-based activities and programs reduce inclinations toward, or practice of, bullying?	Do you think children are less likely to mistreat others if they attend church regularly? If not, explain. Do you think children are less likely to have conflicts with their peers if they attend church regularly? If not, explain
If participation in faith-based activities and programs reduces inclinations toward, or practice of, bullying, what are the mechanisms by which such reduction occurs?	Do you think attending church activities affect children's thoughts and feelings about wanting to mistreat others? If there is no effect, please explain. How does attending church activities affect children's thoughts and feelings about following rules? If there is no effect, please explain. How does attending church activities affect children's thoughts and feelings about the importance of rules? If there is no effect, please explain. How does attending a church activity affect children's thoughts and feelings about the importance of avoiding violence? If there is no effect, please explain. How does attending a church activity affect children's thoughts and feelings about the importance of negotiating your differences with others? If there is no effect, please explain. How does attending a church result in a deeper parental engagement in your child's life? If the church doesn't have this effect, please explain.

Data Collection

The following steps were followed in conducting the interviews. After Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval (Walden University IRB approval number (05-29-18-0370877), the sample group (identities known by the researcher) were contacted by e-mail, with a personal follow-up for those willing to participate. In the e-mail there will be a protocol explaining that participation is voluntary, anonymous, the results used for academic purposes only and kept under lock and key by the researcher until destruction following completion of the study, in accordance with American Psychological Association (APA) guidance regarding research using human subjects (APA, 2015). I then arranged interview times and locations with each volunteer. These were at the convenience of the respondents and scheduled to take no more than an hour. Interviews were face-to-face, giving me a chance to discern any unusual body language or tone (see Shank, 2006). I tape recorded the interviews and took notes, both measures agreed to by the respondents, who were also informed that they could stop the procedure at any point if they so desired. No compensation or ramifications were attached to participation.

Analysis

Analysis proceeded via bracketing of oft-given responses, clustering into like groups, then giving significance to these thematic clusters through horizontalization reporting, without interjection of researcher interpretation. The taped data and notes were transcribed to be accessible for the researcher to perform this type of analysis. The bracketing and further processing for reduction involves several readings of the material

to refine and develop the nature or essence of answers to each question, per Husserl's methods (Husserl, 1931). This resembles coding to identify primary themes addressing the research questions, propositions, and supported by the theoretical framework.

In addition, Johnson (1997) advocated the use of triangulation in qualitative studies for added reliability and validity. Triangulation can occur in several ways. In this study, triangulation was achieved by interviewing three groups of individuals (adolescents, parents, and church personnel) about the research phenomenon. There was no software used in this study.

Validity

According to Polkinghorne, "validity concerns the believability of a statement or knowledge claim" (Polkinghorne, 2007, p. 474) in qualitative research. Data collecting tools must be reliable (ask what the researcher intends) and valid (produce fairly consistent results, although this can vary more in qualitative than quantitative research) (Polkinghorne, 2007). According to Giorgi, content, criterion, and construct are key components of quality research (Giorgi, 2002). In fact, Creswell has defined validity as how accurately the responses reflect reality of experience with phenomena (2013). Validity can also be assessed by review of the questions during the interview, reading cues (Shank, 2006), and ascertaining the interviewees' genuine articulation of the phenomenon through measures beyond words (Ponterotto, 2006), consistent with Husserl's formulation. The interview questions have been validated by Janice Speck Ed. D., who is a Counselor Educator at Missouri Baptist University, in St. Louis, MO. Dr.

Speck has also verified that they were the appropriate questions to ask and that it would answer my research questions.

Reliability

Results in qualitative studies should be carefully reviewed for thoroughness and truthfulness. Triangulation can assist with this, as can the researcher's impartiality, which is essential (Trochim, 2007).

Assumptions

The researcher brings several assumptions into this study: that respondents were truthful, answer according to their own experiences, and give meaningful information (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). The sample is assumed to be large enough to reach saturation, thus the careful selection of individuals only from the specific population. It is assumed that experiences will be representative or relatable to other experiences. Finally, the researcher assumes that the participants have sufficient experience to answer questions based on their positions and experience (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010), or at least enough background to speculate accurately concerning questions asked.

Limitations

Most studies contain limitations. In this case, transferability of outcomes and responses is not assured. Therefore, the work may be limited due to geography, socio-economic or other factors. Also, lack of close acquaintance with respondents may hamper full information-gathering, if subjects are reticent or do not convey their total experience, which the researcher would not be able to detect. The sample here is small, but within

guidelines, and were chosen from a purposefully selected population, and questions were pre-tested.

Delimitations

Delimitations are inherent choices to include or leave out various concerns in research that affect its application. Other schools/programs in the Jefferson City area were excluded from this study, as the age and characteristics of students at the school studied match the intent of what the research questions seek to determine. Only teachers and faculty were interviewed, although perceptions about students and parents are at issue among participants in Pentecostal churches in Jefferson City, Missouri.

Teachers are believed to have sufficient information to answer questions about both these groups, and more research in the field might be triggered that includes them in populations. Only interviews were used, as they can provide full answers, although from a smaller sample than some other tools.

Ethical Assurances

According to the Belmont report, studies using human beings as subjects necessitate ethical considerations and assurances. Respect for the persons were met by voluntary participation at the convenience of respondents (HHS, 1979). Participants gave informed consent, and were not harmed in any way. The ultimate end of this study is consistent with the Belmont report's ethical concern for justice, as the intention is to discover information that may aid marginalized students, but through interviews with teachers who are not in jeopardy. The researcher will comply with all operational, legal,

and statutory provisions regarding the gathering, handling, and disposing of information collected, as depicted in the protocol located at Appendix A.

Chapter Summary

Qualitative methodology is appropriate when research seeks to discern attitudes, opinions, or perceptions about a phenomenon or concept, as opposed to quantitative empirical research. In this study, adolescents, parents, and church personnel were interviewed about (a) the potential of faith-based activities to lower bullying and (b) the mechanisms through which faith-based activities reduced bullying. A sample of 30 individuals will be sought and interviewed to generate insights related to the two research questions of the study: (1) Does participation in faith-based activities and programs reduce inclinations toward, or practice of, bullying? (2) If participation in faith-based activities and programs reduces inclinations toward, or practice of, bullying, what are the mechanisms by which such reduction occurs? The answers to these research questions will be provided in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4**:** Results

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory case study was to research the relationship between involvement in faith-based activities and bullying, specifically in terms of (a) discovering whether participation in faith-based activities is associated with lowered incidents of, or inclinations toward, bullying; and (b) identifying what mechanisms, if any, might be responsible for the ability of faith-based activities to suppress bullying behaviors and orientations. This purpose was achieved through the analysis of data from a sample of ninth graders in Jefferson City, Missouri. Chapter 4 consists of the analysis of 20 in-depth interviews that were carried out in support of a study about the association between the attendance of church and faith-based activities and the behavior and attitudes of adolescents with regards to bullying.

Fieldwork took place during August, 2018, to January, 2019, and the present paper was compiled during the last week of February, 2019. Details of the method of data collection can be found in the Appendices B and C, as can the method of analysis, the research and interview questions, and the numerical count of the types of answers in the first two questions that were asked of the respondents.

Chapter Overview

In this chapter I present the setting, demographics, number of research participants, and the data collection procedures used. In this chapter, I also discuss the data analysis and precoded categories. In addition, I review the emerging themes that are supported with direct quotes from interviews with participants in response to my research

question. As part of the data analysis I also offer a note on discrepant cases and discuss what steps I took to ensure credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability.

Settings

After receiving initial contact from potential youth participants via e-mail to the principal at Simonsen Ninth Grade Center, I directly contacted the principal and he and his staff assisted in inviting students to participate in an interview. Appointments were made based upon the number of students who turned in permission slips to the school. For youth participants, the school provided a room adequate to interview students that would make the students comfortable and would be convenient for them. For parent participation, each youth participant was asked to list their parents' contact information in order to invite them to participate in the study. Each parent was contacted individually, and the parent selected one of the location options that was comfortable and convenient for them. For youth worker participation, initial contact was made to the Pentecostal churches in Jefferson City via e-mail. The senior pastors contacted their appropriate staff for me to invite them to participate in this study.

Initially I proposed that my interviews would be conducted at one public library, a church, and at the school district building. However, some of the participants preferred to do the interviews at their church in the community, while other participants requested conducting the interviews in their private offices or conference rooms at their place of employment.

Each participant of the three groups signed an informed consent form prior to the interview. All interviews took place in a quiet, private environment that was free from

public interference, noise, and stressing elements. Every participant spoke freely as much as they wished to, and the interview was ended only when participants felt they had said everything there was to be said. Due to the comfortable setting and privacy of each interview, location was not considered to be a factor that would impact the results.

Demographics

A purposive sampling strategy was used to select participants who represented the targeted community demographics. Of the 20 total participants, 40% (8) were African American and 60% (12) were European American. The gender of the participants was 60% (12) female and 40% (8) male. Of the youth participants, 63.6% (7) were European American, and 36.36% (4) were African American. The genders of the 11 youth participants was 55% (6) female and 45% (5) male. From the six total parent participants, 50% (3) were European American and 50% (3) African American. The genders of the parent participants were 16.6% (1) male and 83.3% (5) female. From the three total of youth workers participating, 33.3% (1) were African American and 66.6% (2) European American. The genders of the youth worker participants were 33% (1) female and 66.6% (2) male.

The most recent data available for Jefferson City were a population estimate of 43,079 of whom 47.9 % were female, 52.1% male, 74.8 % of individuals were classified as European American, 18.5% African-American, 3.5% Hispanic, and the rest being split among those of Asian or biracial descent (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). In contrasting this data with my sample size, a difference can be seen in that I had fewer males than females,

and I had more individuals to participate who were European American, than any other race.

The youth participants were all students of Simonsen Ninth Grade Center, which places students aged of 14-16. Participants included 11 students, six parents and three youth workers.

Data Collection

I followed the following steps in conducting the interviews. After IRB approval, I contacted the sample group of students, parents, and youth church workers, by e-mail through the appropriate channels, via school and church organization. I contacted parents willing to participate with a personal call once consent forms were signed for student interviews. In the e-mail I included a protocol explaining that participation was voluntary and anonymous and the study results would be used for academic purposes only and kept under lock and key by me until destruction following completion of the study, in accordance with APA guidance regarding research using human subjects (APA, 2015). I then arranged interviews with days and times and locations with each volunteer. These were at the convenience of the respondents, including the school administration, and scheduled to take no more than an hour. Interviews were face-to-face, giving me a chance to discern any unusual body language or tone (see Shank, 2006). The interviews were tape recorded, with note-taking by myself, both measures agreed to by the respondents, who were also informed that they could stop the procedure at any point if they so desired. No compensation or ramifications were attached to participation.

After coordinating an appointed day for youth participants with the principal of the school, I collected the signed consent forms at the time of the interview. The consent forms, which discussed the specifics of the research study, were e-mailed to the principal and given to the students. As I met with each individual student face to face, the consent form was collected prior to the start of the interview to make sure that parents had given consent. Interviews were not conducted until both parents signed the consent form and the assent form was signed by each participant. The data collection consisted of 20 face-to-face interviews, and I used a self-developed interview questionnaire that took an average of 30 minutes for each participant to complete. I tape recorded all interviews, and the data were reviewed by each participant upon completion of the interview for accuracy of their responses. The data is stored under safe conditions as specified in my IRB approved application. There were no unusual circumstances encountered during the data collection.

I used a semistructured interview protocol (see Appendix B), but some variations in the questions were implemented. Some questions were formulated according to the participant response to provide more specifics to an answer or to add more depth in order to ensure that the interview questions were appropriately addressed in each of the interviews. After recording the interviews, I took notes on elements that I thought could be of use for later analysis.

Prior to conducting my first interview, I also included in my journal any personal biases so that the data analysis stage would be completed with as much objectivity as possible. These notes and memos were all consulted when analyzing the data to ensure no

details were disregarded during the data collection. During each interview, I asked additional questions when clarification or conformation was needed from participants on something that was communicated during the interview (see Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2014).

Table 4

Results from youth case study

Youth participants	Interview dates	Length	Pages transcribed	Demographics	Male/Female
YP 1	08-13-18	20 mins	3 pages	European-American	Female
YP 2	12-14-18	30 mins	2 pages	European-American	Female
YP 3	12-14-18	30 mins	2 pages	European-American	Male
YP 4	12-17-18	20 mins	3 pages	African American	Female
YP 5	12-17-18	20 mins	3 pages	European-American	Female
YP 6	12-17-18	30 mins	2 pages	European-American	Female
YP 7	12-18-18	20 mins	2 pages	European-American	Male
YP 8	12-18-18	20 mins	2 pages	European-American	Male
YP 9	12-21-18	30 mins	4 pages	African American	Male
YP 10	12-21-18	20 mins	3 pages	African American	Male
YP 11	1-7-19	30 mins	3 pages	African American	Female
Percentage				European-American = 63.6% African American = 36.36%	Female = 55% Male 45%

Table 5

Results From Parent Case Study

Adult participants	Interview dates	Length	Pages transcribed	Demographics	Male/Female
AP 1	08-08-18	45 mins	4 pages	European-American	Male
AP 2	08-13-18	30 mins	3 pages	European-American	Female
AP 3	12-21-18	30 mins	3 pages	African American	Female
AP 4	12-21-18	20 mins	2 pages	African American	Female
AP 5	01-07-18	30 mins	3 pages	African American	Female
AP 6	0118-18	30 mins	3pages	European-American	Female
Percentage				European American = 50% African American = 50%	Female = 83.3% Male 16.6%

Table 6

Results from youth church personnel case study

Youth worker participant	Interview Dates	Length	Pages Transcribed	Demographics	Male/Female
YWP 1	08-23-18	30 mins	6 pages	European-American	Female
YWP 2	10-31-18	30 mins	5 pages	African American	Male
YWP 3	12-20-18	30 mins	4 pages	European-American	Male
Percentage				European-American = 66.6 African American = 33%	Female = 33% Male 66.6%

Table 7

Preliminary coding

Preliminary codes	Number of times mentioned	Related words
Bullying	0	
Peace	3	Conflict management
		No conflict
		Self-esteem
		Awareness of surroundings
Church attendance		Church activity
Biblical teaching	28	Golden rule
		Teachings of Christ
		Church teachings
		Faith
		Biblical methods
Rule followers	5	
Peer pressure	2	Societal influence
		Peer social group
Love	10	Compassion
Violence	0	
Authority	52	Parental influence
		Church influence
		Community environment
		Family
		Structure and organizations

Before I conducted my interviews, I created the preliminary coding list. This list codes the number of times that the preliminary code was used when identifying emerging themes. I was surprised to see the number of times that answers resulted in the way the child behaved. Whether it was a response from the youth or parents, there were evidence that some youth participants would behave however, they desired too. It did not matter if they attended church or not, they would behave the way they wanted too regardless. In particular, some youth participant stated, "The pastor can tell me all day not to go to school and bully other students. . . . I make my own choices to bully someone else."

Table 8

Final codebook with themes

Preliminary codes	Interview question	Emerging themes	Final codes
Peace	1,2,6,7	Golden Rule	Biblical teachings/foundation
			Biblical stories
			Teachings/lessons of Christ
			Biblical methods
			Church activities/make friends/no conflict
			Peace with self
			Church development/spiritual character
			Church personnel /activities
			Rules associated with Heaven/will of God
			Hearing stories about violence
			Good behavior based on church teachings
			Sermons/discussions at church
			Love
			Welcomed atmosphere
			Inclusiveness
			(Table Continues)

Preliminary codes	Interview question	Emerging themes	Final codes
Church Attendance	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8	Empathy	Compassion Apathy Friendly Environment Understanding/Aware of people's feelings Safety Good-hearted Awareness of surroundings/social circles
Biblical Teaching	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8	Behavioral Norms	Anger/de-escalation Children's behavior Regular Church attendance Conflicts and struggles Strong-willed
Rule Followers	1,2,4,5	Influences	Church Environment Societal Influences Community/Role Models Social Peer Group/Self-Esteem Judgement and Criticism Positivity Perceived expectations
Peer Pressure	IQ 1,2,3,6,7	Family Importance	Closeness Relationships Togetherness Parents make attendance Love//warm feelings of love Physical closeness associated with church Family/Respectful Conversations Prioritization
Love	1,2,3,7,8	Systems	Authority Socialization and Structure Rules and Teachings with fun and games Rules and training at early age Structure and Organizations Importance of following rules Conflict management
Violence Authority	1,2,3,6, 1,4,5,6		

Results

Overarching Theme: Research Question 1

RQ1: Does participation in faith-based activities and programs reduce inclinations toward, or practice of, bullying? Interview question 1 (Q.1) asked the following: Do you think children are less likely to mistreat others if they attend church regularly?

Youth. A count of the type of answers given to this question showed 6 out of the 11 young respondents giving a positive answer, i.e. saying that church attendance influenced them to be less likely to mistreat others; 4 of them gave a negative answer, considering church attendance ineffective and 1 of them thought that although the church's influence could be positive, it was not strong enough to have an effect in all the situations they might find themselves into.

Some of the young people interviewed for this study reported that they believed that regular church attendance did result in the likelihood that they were less inclined to mistreat others. They justified this opinion on the grounds that they followed the teachings of the church that instructed good behavior. In particular, some referred to their adherence to the command about treating others kindly as proof of the influence of the church in their tendency to avoid mistreating others. In the words of one of the respondents, the relationships with others and the way they treated them were largely guided by the church teachings. This respondent stated to "just be kind to others, and showthem love; this is the main thing they teach you in the church, and I think that very important." The positive influence of church attendance was further confirmed by comments made by one of the respondents who, albeit describing him/herself an atheist,

appreciated the potential of church teachings that proclaimed "putting others before yourself and treat others how you want to be treated" to influence young people and the way they treat each other. The concept of the Good Samaritan communicated, to them from church attendance, also had a positive influence and guided their actions, with the result that they were less likely to mistreat others according to some of the young respondents.

Faith, a concept closely associated with church attendance, was cited as another factor that made them less likely to mistreat others according to some. The discipline and rules imposed by religion and by extension by the church, prevented them from mistreating others: "Sometimes I think yeah. As a Christian there are certain things you can't do. Even though you want to do things, you shouldn't do it. So I think my [religion] keeps me from doing certain stuff . . . I hold back."

The community feeling that united church attendees resulted in friendships to be created. The peaceful and affable environment that characterized these groups was conducive to treating each other well, something that occurred at least during the time of the church attendance.

An in-depth analysis of their experiences in church revealed that through the teachings of the church some of the young respondents became aware of other people and their feelings. This awareness made them compassionate towards others. Their religious fervor, being prominent during church attendance, was a reminder to some that "God would want you to treat them [well]." Furthermore, by getting to know other people through their interactions at church resulted in becoming familiar with them; knowing

them well brought about the likelihood not to mistreat them: "Because I feel like it gets you involved with other people . . . and I think having that interaction helps."

Church situations that provoked the favorable influences on young people and the way the treated others reportedly included their youth group, with activities such as games which resulted in interesting discussions between them and having fun.

Another element associated with regular church attendance that influenced the young to be less likely to mistreat others was that, according to one of the young respondents, church helped them to understand and accept themselves. This, in its turn, meant that they did not feel the need to "show off or act out" and as a result they were "nicer to people."

Some of the young people interviewed for this study did not think that church attendance had any bearing on their behavior or the way they treated others, despite the good words of the pastor. According to their comments, it was the choices that they made themselves, based on their own character and personality that determined how they behaved towards others. In the words of one of them: "at the end of the day you make your own choices". From this perspective, the influence of the church on their behavior was limited. This point is illustrated by a respondent reporting that they might have been thinking about what the pastor at church told them that day but still engaged in the activity regardless because it was what they wanted to do.

Moreover, it came to be that when they found themselves in situations that made them angry, the church's influence was not powerful enough to have an effect, and this was

likely to occur at school, when others might bully them, according to this particular respondent.

One of the young respondents pointed out that problems they have at home could be a reason they might mistreat others, being a way of expressing the anger that they build up at home. The church's influence in these situations seems incapable of having an effect.

Parents. The count of the type of responses of parents showed that 4 of the 6 parents interviewed considered that church attendance influenced children to be less likely to mistreat others whilst 2 of them did not think that church attendance had this influence.

Overall, the views of the parents interviewed for this study on whether children's regular church attendance influenced their behavior towards others, resulting in the likelihood that they were less inclined to mistreat others, corresponded with the views expressed by the young people interviewed, as indicated above. Thus, according to some of the parents, the transmission of the "principles and values" of the Bible to their children, through regular church attendance, had definitely a positive influence on their behavior and the way they treated others. According to some, the command found in the Book of Luke in the Bible instructing to "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" which is the "Golden rule" was, indeed, influential to their children.

Moreover, parents considered that the teachings of the pastors at the church had the required effect on their children. The favorable results were evident to them in practical terms, which they observed in the behavior of their sons and daughters and the

way these children treated their siblings. In the words of one of the parents, "I believe that that simple Golden rule has influenced [my son] to treat others kindly and respectfully".

Some parents believed that the virtuous behavior of their children that stemmed from their church attendance was the result of the impact that church attendance had on their character and in particular on their self-confidence. Feeling strong in themselves gave the children strength which meant that they did not have the need to mistreat or bully others out of needing to show off. As one of the parents put it: "[as a result of church attendance] I think she believes in herself more and she's nicer to others… "

As it was the case among the children interviewed for this study, some of the parents did not think that regular church attendance had a particularly beneficial effect on children's behavior when it came to the treatment of others. In their opinion, it was the "nature of children" determined how they acted in the situations they found themselves into, therefore the church's influence was not a significant the factor that influenced their behavior: as one of the parents put it: "kids are going to be kids."

Youth pastor, church personnel, and youth leader. One of the 3 respondents involved with youth believed that church attendance did influence young people's likelihood to avoid mistreating others whilst 2 of them were reluctant to correlate the quality of youth behavior with church attendance.

While they recognized the potential for adolescents and young people in general to be influenced favorably by the "relationship with Christ", in the words of the youth pastor who was interviewed for this project, the results of regular church attendance by

the young were said to be sometimes disappointing, suggesting that the association between church attendance and quality of behavior was not guaranteed. This study heard that even though the majority of church-attending youth were "very responsive and very kind", the fact that there were others who were the opposite, threatening with violence and expressing racist comments making others feel unsafe, meant that regular church attendance did not have the desirable effect according to the church-related respondents. The following comments by the youth pastor and the church personnel interviewed for this study illustrate their negative views. The Youth Pastor reported, "I guess technically I would have to say yes it's conducive to helping them to treat others well. But there's always gonna be some that it's not going to help, it's not the church's fault." Church personnel commented,

> "I wish, I wish I could say the answer is yes. I think attending church unfortunately does not mean that you're necessarily going to be less apt to mistreat others. I see in the church that I go to I've seen in any church that I have been a part of, where children will mistreat other children in church, and there are so many reasons for that."

Church personnel believed that factors such as the conditions children have at home, that can cause "anger management issues", family background, and social standing can influence behavior and this influence would often override any impact that the church might have on the behavior of children to each other. For example, it was commented, wealthier children may "look down" on their less advantaged peers and this may lead to bullying or mistreatment of others.

The youth leader interviewed for this study expressed more conviction of the potential for the positive influence of church attendance on the behavior of young people and the way they treat others. Comparing young people with church experience with young people who do not attend church, he concluded that the "biblical foundation" acquired by children who attend church regularly was certainly a good influence that resulted in the good treatment of others–compared to those who do not attend church regularly who tend to be unsure of what is right and wrong behavior.

Interview question 2 (Q.2) asked the following: Do you think children are less likely to have problems with their peers if they attend church regularly?

Youth. A count of the type of answers of the young people interviewed for this study showed 7 out of the 11 believing that children are less likely to come into conflict with their peers if they attend church regularly; one of them did not think that church had any impact whilst 3 of them thought that the effect of the church in this context was limited.

Most of the young respondents of our study credited church attendance as a factor that influenced them to avoid arguments or conflicts in their lives. They referred to the teaching that commanded "Turn the other cheek", to illustrate the example of an instruction that was communicated to them by the church and helped them to avoid getting into conflict with their peers. Furthermore, church attendance reminded them of God's will, that certainly wanted them to avoid conflict, they said. Wishing to remain at the good side of God, they obeyed church teachings, as the following comment by one of the young respondents suggests:

Just because people who believe in Christianity believe that God is watching over

them so they want to act responsibly. So, for people who don't just on their own

want to be responsible and not want to get into fights with other people, it kind of

gives them that push to be a good person I guess.

The words of their pastor, who brought to their attention the fact that people had

problems and suffered and should not be judged helped them and motivated them to

avoid bullying others.

If you listen to what the pastor would say, like you shouldn't just judge someone,

or like have conflict with them, bullying them. Like they going through a lot, . . .

Like judging is a sin. I wouldn't bully people, I don't do that.

Another aspect that stemmed from church attendance and helped them to avoid

conflict was the support they received with regards to the development of their spiritual

character and their faith that helped them to avoid getting into situations of conflict. One

of the respondents expressed this point in the following way. "I think because you get in

touch with yourself and you understand yourself and you believe in something that is a

higher power and you believe that something can happen. I don't know how to put it into

words."

From another perspective, referring to relationships with peers they had formed

within the confines of church activities, there was indeed less bullying between them and

these friends. This was the result of the familiarization that developed between them, and

by knowing them and "having fun together," they were less likely to come into conflict or

engage in any violence towards them. "We go to church and we learn about God, out of

church, we teach each other how to ride bikes, or more educated stuff; play basketball and go outside."

Although church attendance was largely recognized as having a good impact on the way they conducted their relationships and avoided conflict, in the final analysis, it was pointed out by a couple of the young respondents, their own spontaneous decision-making was the overriding factor that determined their reactions in specific situations: "Like they are telling me to be good and nice to my peers, but like I said, I'm making my own choice by that though."

Parents. Three of the 6 parents of this study responded positively to the question relating to whether regular church attendance influences children's inclination to get into conflicts with their peers and one of them answered negatively; 2 of them were of both minds, believing that it could on some occasions but it was not effective on others.

Some of the parents interviewed for this study gave full credit to the church's influence for their children's conflict-free behavior. They believed that church attendance taught them compassion and anger management; they also referred to regular church attendance and the teachings of love they received there as reasons why their children tended to be less likely to come into conflict with their peers. According to parents, understanding other people's sufferings and being "taught why some people may be acting negatively" helped children to think twice before initiating conflict.

Other parents, however, did not believe that the influence of the church could be strong enough in order to help them avoid conflict when it came to specific situations because the most dominant factor that determined the outcome in specific cases was the

child's personality, as one of the parents' comment shows: "Though she is also very strong-willed individual, so she's gonna argue with you no matter what."

Another view on whether church attendance could influence the child's inclination to get into conflict expressed by parents was that the church's influence could be positive as long as it was supported by the home.

Youth pastor, church personnel and youth leader. Numerically speaking, two of the respondents in this category (related to youth-church) thought that the church influence could not always be guaranteed with regards to young people's tendency to come into conflict with their peers; one of them did think that the church had a positive influence.

According to the youth pastor interviewed for this study, regular church attendance did have a positive influence on the relationships of young people with their peers. In the pastor's view, the church was unique in being able to equip children with mechanisms that can help them to deal with conflict. Accepting that conflict is unavoidable in the world and in social interactions, the church, according to the youth pastor, taught young people how to pray, how to forgive and how to "turn their conflicts and struggles over to God", something which other institutions such as the school or even the family itself did not have the ability to provide. These attributes could be applied in their relationships with their peers when needed. As a result, in the pastor's opinion, children's church attendance resulted in their being less likely to come into conflict with their peers.

The youth leader interviewed for this project did not think that the church had any particular influence on the likelihood of coming into conflict with their peers, considering this influence to be more likely to stem from school or from the home.

The 'church personnel' pointed out that although messages of love and kindness were communicated to young people from the pulpit that should have a favorable influence in general, influencing young people positively was not guaranteed "… just because you go to church that means you are not going to do it".

Overarching Theme: Research Question 2

RQ2: If participation in faith-based activities and programs reduces inclinations toward, or practice of, bullying, what are the mechanisms by which such reduction occurs Interview question 3 (Q.3) asked the following: Do you think attending church activities affect children's thoughts and feelings about wanting to mistreat others?

Youth. The overall environment of the church, including other "church attendees" who were from diverse backgrounds, was credited as being conducive to a positive attitude by some of the young people who participated in this research. The community feeling that was created by church activities that involved groups of their peers made people "nicer to each other" according to one of the respondents. For example, they said, the interaction with other people at a church event contributed to the overall atmosphere that was "happy and positive" so that they subsequently tried to transfer this situation to other contexts such as the school: "It makes you want to be happy and makes you want to go to school and have that same feeling all throughout, all the time."

The teachings of the church that instructed them that it is wrong and "a sin" to treat others badly induced some to act in the way that would be approved by the church, so as to avoid sinning as the following comment of one of the young respondents illustrates: "If you go to church I believe that you won't mistreat others because, you will know that it is wrong and it is a sin so you won't want to do it when you believe in a higher power."

There were two to three of the young respondents who did not think that the church had any influence on the way they thought or felt. This was justified by one of them in terms of being, as they described themselves, an atheist; alternatively it was because they felt strongly that the main factor that determined all of their feelings, behavior and reactions was related to their own personality rather than to any influence of the church: "So I think that I already have a standard of what I think is the right thing to do and what I believe in."

A couple of other young respondents pointed out that asking them whether attending a church activity affected their thoughts and feelings about wanting to mistreat others was not a meaningful question for them because it was in their nature to have no intention of treating others badly in the first place: "[I]t's kind of like something you are kind of born with I would say. Something you just should not do."

Another point made by some of the young respondents was that although the church's positive influence might be possible, this was merely one of a multitude of other influences that affected them in their daily lives, therefore credit for their positive

thoughts and feelings was due to other factors too, such as to other people: "As I take what I get from multiple people, and put it to come together as a solution."

Yet another point made by one of the respondents indicates that they considered the influence of church attendance to be incapable of having an impact when it came to a difficult situation, when they were unable to control their anger: "It's not like I want to hurt people, ever. Only when I get put in that situation where I am uncomfortable and they making me mad or something like that."

Parents. From the parents' perspective, attending church activities did result in their children treating others "appropriately, kindly and respectfully" as one of them put it. The church environment was conducive to good behavior and this was clearly observable and appreciated by at least one of the parents who commented: "When she does attend her church activities, she is just a more positive person. She doesn't mistreat, she's even nicer to me." Another point raised by one of the parents was that the physical presence in the church environment resulted in their children behaving in a positive way by making them aware of what is expected of them: "[It] just reminds them [of] the way that they are supposed to react to everybody."

Another procedure that contributed to the ultimately positive influence of the church on the child's thoughts and feelings about mistreating others was, as mentioned by one of the parents, the encouragement of subsequent discussions they had with them on the occasion that they misbehaved in church, in which case the parents had the chance to show them the error of their ways.

Some parents considered their children's personality to be the main factor that influenced their behavior; therefore, the church's impact on their behavior was secondary in their view. They commented that even if church personnel talked to the children about bullying, their teachings did not always stop children from reacting the way they would according to their own nature: "I think it lessens bullying behavior. I think it lessens it, I don't think it stops it."

For a small number of parents, the question on how attending a church activity affects their children's thoughts and feelings about wanting to mistreat others was not meaningful, they said, because they believed that their children are good by nature and have no thoughts to mistreat others–therefore the subject of church influence is irrelevant in their case. Moreover, they tended to attribute their children's positive behavior to the good upbringing they are giving them rather than to the influence of church attendance.

Youth pastor, church personnel and youth leader. According to the youth pastor and the church personnel, church activities which are led by Christian adults have the potential to influence children's thoughts and feelings about wanting to mistreat others in two ways:

- By being themselves role models.
- By helping them in practical ways in cases when there is conflict among them that requires resolution, and by showing them how find ways of dealing or coping with it.

The Youth Pastor stated, "I believe that church is the prime area where these kinds of conflicts can be resolved and taught how to handle in a safe way." In

addition the Church personnel responded "Hearing things like that [like Ephesians 4:3, And be ye kind one to another tenderhearted forgiving one another] will have an impact." These are foundational principles that can show practical ways to resolve conflict in any situations.

According to the youth leader, the empathy that is taught by the church consists one of the mechanisms that contribute to the children's positive thoughts and feelings about mistreating others and plays an important role in the relationships with their peers as well as with their family members. As the youth leader put it, this was achieved through church attendance "by instilling the gospel's doctrine into their system whilst socializing them". The youth leader remarked that by comparison, children who are not involved in church activities are at a disadvantage because the church can help substitute their family in the case that they have no love etc. from them.

Interview question 4 (Q.4) asked the following: How does attending church activities affect children's thoughts and feelings about following rules? If there is no effect?)

Youth. Asked to say how, if at all, attending church activities influenced their attitudes towards following rules, most of the young people interviewed for this study named the church environment itself, which was associated with authority and rules, as the factor that resulted in their thoughts being geared accordingly. Furthermore, the Bible teachings were conducive to an attitude of obeying rules, some remarked.

The presence of adults with authority, whom they trusted and respected, was another factor that affected their thoughts and feelings about following rules. As one of

the young people put it, "when an adult is telling you things, you should respect that and do what they say and follow their rules, instead of just kind of doing your own thing."

According to one of the young respondents, church activities and the benefits gained through obeying the rules that were set there continued to have an effect in their everyday life, by giving them a positive attitude:

It makes me want to go to school and pay attention in class. It makes me still want to make good grades and graduate, it makes me like . . . When they are telling me, and motivating me to become a better person, it makes me want to do that when I get to school. They are not filling my head with negative thoughts, they are filing me with positive thoughts, so when I go to school, that's how I feel.

Their own desire to conform to what is expected of them and "do the right thing" was also important in this respect: Youth participant two responded, "I think that you go to church and you attend things, you like to be on the right track." Youth participant 11 commented, "I try my hardest not to lie and things like that, because I know God doesn't want me to do that type of thing and I try to listen to my mom and be respectful of my teachers and my peers and stuff like that." Again, Youth participant two responded, "You want to stay on the right path, so you want to follow the rules and keep listening to those rules and keep following them."

However, deference to the authority of the church personnel seemed to be the main factor that influenced positively their thoughts and feelings about following rules. On the one hand, following rules was viewed from a spiritual perspective as being a means of avoiding to commit a sin, thus ensuring their place in heaven: "when you don't

follow the rules it's a sin, and you will not exactly go to Heaven or be in limbo as they

say"; "I want to do what's best for me, what God thinks is best for me." On the other

hand, following the rules ensured that they did not get into trouble with the church

authorities, running the risk, for instance, of being expelled from Sunday school:

> At church, when you don't follow the rules at Sunday school there are
>
> consequences. . . . In church if you didn't follow the rules, you would have to sit
>
> in time-out, or be kicked out of class and you didn't want to do that.

Reference to their own personal values as a factor that determined their behavior

was made by quite a few of the young respondents, who considered the influence of

church attendance on their decision to follow rules to be of secondary importance:

> Again, it really doesn't affect me because I don't believe in it. I think I kind of
>
> have my own standards for what I think I want to do. I am a rule follower so I
>
> follow the rules whether God tells me to or not.

Another point added in the discussion about obeying rules related to the role of

parents. A respondent pointed out that they followed the rules as a result of their parents'

instructions rather than of the influence of the church and the activities they participated

in.

Parents. The parents interviewed for this study tended to take pride in their own

efforts to achieve the desired positive behavior of their children, by encouraging them to

follow rules, stressing that children did so not only as a result of church attendance but

also because they taught them to do so, albeit based on biblical principles and on Jesus'

Word: "So, I would say that church does help, but again it's what we do at home too. It's

like a combination of both." The limited amount of time children spent at church, compared to at home, meant that the contribution of the parents was more important according to them.

The child's personality was the ultimately the main factor in how they behaved, influencing their propensity to follow rules according to one of the parents who emphasized that their child's strong will overruled any possible church influence: "I'm not sure that her church activities affect her desire to follow rules like I said earlier she's very strong-willed."

Youth pastor, church personnel and youth leader. Teaching children to follow the rules was one of the most important duties of the church according to the youth pastor and church personnel interviewed for this study. They considered the instillation of an attitude of compliance to rules a crucial objective of their teachings since often, they said, children don't learn this at home; and this attitude, is something that they will need in their adulthood.

The youth pastor and church personnel member interviewed for this study seemed to consider the imposition of rules that entail the issue of respect of others at their core as the main mechanism through which church activities affect children. The discipline that is encouraged through these rules benefits both younger and older children. These rules, they said, are questioned by the young, but questioning them comprises part of the benefit gained by the children. A way of teaching and encouraging children to follow the rules through church activities was by making "following the rules fun with games and prizes."

But, the church personnel member pointed out, the main emphasis of the church is not to teach children to follow rules but to "teach them to follow Christ" because "If you follow Christ you will do better at following rules as long as the rules are not conflicting with scriptures."

In the words of the youth leader who, agrees that following rules is a crucial element that has implications in the children's adult lives, the church encourages them to do this by providing the "structure of authority and discipline". The youth leader considers that faith-based activities provide children with the Christian ethic and have a biblical foundation – they are based on God's will – that teach to honor those in authority such as parents and teachers.

Interview question 5 (Q.5) asked the following: How does attending church activities affect children's thoughts and feelings about the importance of rules?

Youth. As reported by one of the young respondents, appreciating the importance of rules in the context of the church activities which they attended was a spontaneous occurrence because the church personnel made these rules clear to them. Moreover, the importance of the rules was not doubted because these rules were perceived as having a direct correlation with God's will and their potential of going to Heaven: "The rules at church have to go to Heaven … so it all basically ties in together and it basically important to follow the rules."

Understanding the purpose of the rules, as for example when they aim at protecting the environment or to ensure the safety of others, was another element that illustrated the importance of following rules and ensured that they did so according to

some of the young respondents of this study: "But I feel like the importance of rules is to keep everybody in the environment safe."

As with their response to previously discussed questions, so in the question about the impact of attending church activities in their understanding of the importance of following rules was considered ineffective. In the view of a few of the young respondents, attending church activities had no particular impact in their thoughts and feelings about the importance of rules as the following comment indicates: "I feel there is no affect, I really don't know why."

Parents. From the parents' perspective, the discipline that is associated with church or faith-based activities was a central and dominating theme that resulted in instilling in their children the importance of following rules. The teachings of the church and the consequent attitudes of compassion that were transmitted by the church were also regarded as having a role in making their children aware of the importance of following rules not only in the confines of the church but in their life in general.

According to a comment, church youth leaders provided an additional benefit by being role models for the children who looked up to them, respected them and therefore considered their instructions valuable. The following comment by one of the parents illustrates the importance of role models at church activities. "I think it's helpful because it gives them insight from that person's perspective, somebody that they respect as a leader."

The parents' own contribution in explaining the importance of following rules to their children was another point raised by parents who claimed at least some of the credit

in this respect: "They follow the rules, because we train them to follow the rules, because of biblical principles."

As in some of the previously discussed responses, there was a tendency among some parents to consider it unlikely that the church had any impact on their children's behavior or understanding, on the grounds that in the final analysis the children's own personality determined their behavior and attitudes rather than the church's influence, as it is illustrated by the following comment of one of the parents:

I will still have to say that the church activities don't affect [my daughter's] opinion about following rules. She, just like I said, is very strong-willed. She is a leader not a follower, and so she just, her church activities just makes you want to be a better person, but it doesn't push her in the direction of being a rule follower.

Concerning the correlation between the individual personality of the child and the tendency to understand the importance of following the rules, it was commented by a parent that while the "natural state of children was against following the rules", by maturing and with the support of both the church and their parents they eventually came to appreciate the importance of rules.

Youth pastor, church personnel and youth leader. According to the church pastor who was interviewed for this study, one of the most important factors that influenced the understanding of the importance of rules by young people was peer pressure. This was also instrumental in encouraging children to follow rules and "do the right thing." Moreover, "reprimanding" children during church activities on the occasion when they did not follow rules also had the desired effect according to the pastor.

The stories about the sufferings of Jesus and his dying on the cross to save people–all have an effect on children's behavior according to church personnel, who nevertheless also pointed out that this effect tended to be stronger among the younger of the children and diminished as they grow into adolescence.

The instructions of church leaders, including the pastor also had the effect of getting children to understand the importance of following the rules. These were the rules set by God and by Christ and included instructions about preying and ultimately about following their own conscious.

Interview question 6 (Q.6) asked the following: How does attending a church activity affect children's thoughts and feelings about the importance of avoiding violence?

Youth. According to the young people interviewed for this study, hearing about the effects of violence to other children has a deterrent effect. It was reported by one of them that during church activities they were told stories about violence and hearing these acted as the mechanism that impacted their perceptions about the importance of avoiding violence. Some commented that there was a strong emphasis during church activities, including in the sermons, on the effects of violence and this was particularly impactful in their own attitudes by making them aware of the effects of violence.

Youth participant one stated, "… But you see things and hear stories at churches and things about types of violence. And then it kind of induces you to not want to do it, because you see the effects of it." For youth participant one, hearing stories at church had a deterring effect.

Youth participant one also commented, "I heard a lot about gun violence, and just like fighting violence."

Hearing about the effects of violence, in combination with their own wish and desire not to hurt others also contributes in their attitudes towards violence.

Youth participant two stated, "I think that affects you, when you think about violence because you don't want to hurt anyone else or anything and you just want to be in a state of peace and happiness so it makes you not think about violence." Hearing the effects of violence, can be a factor in not hurting others, and wanting to live in a state, as youth participant two repsonded, "…be in a state of peace and happiness".

Youth participant five, commented, "I think in church, they talk about violence a lot like in the sermons, and it's always viewed negatively, obviously, because it is negative. So, I think that them talking about that more giving it more attention kind of leads people to have a negative connotation with violence and want to avoid it more." In addition, for youth participant five, hearing sermons with a negative connotation on violence at church had a deterring effect.

The importance of avoiding violence was further impressed on the young respondents through church attendance by reminding them of the teachings of the Bible that clearly stated that "violence is a sin": "Well, it affects me because I know that like, it all dwindles down to the fact that I know what God said and I want to be like, I want to follow what He asked me to do."

The church environment and its personnel had a lasting impact on them according to some of the young respondents, who appreciated the positive messages and instructions it communicated to them.

When you surround yourself with positive things, when they are telling you the positive things to do, and when you go into something bad, usually before you think about it, you think about the positive things and the negative things that's going to come out through that situation.

As it was the case in response to other questions that aimed to identify the association of church attendance with their behavior and attitudes, so in this respect a couple of respondents sought to stress that it was their own personality and their own decision-making that was the main factor influencing their behavior rather than any impact of the church: "There is no affect because I never feel like I want to get into violence. I feel like there is never a need to get into violence, with or without church."

Parents. Overall, parents saw themselves rather than attendance of church activities as the prime actor that influenced children's attitudes towards violence. Moreover, when they were asked to comment on how attending church activities affected children's thoughts and feelings about the importance of avoiding violence, one of their responses was that by definition church activities were devoid of violence, therefore the mere presence of the children in the church environment was conducive to avoiding violent situations.

The teachings of love that they were associated with the Bible provided a further motivation to understand the importance of avoiding violence and this was another

instruction that the parents themselves taught their children too. Parents stressed their own role in instilling the importance of good behavior–avoiding violence in this case–to their children and one way they did this was to get them to avoid mixing with "bad" people. According to one of the parents, "… For instance in the Bible First Corinthians chapter 15 verse 33 says that, bad company corrupts good character.... So, we will teach our young people that you got to be careful with the friends that you pick and hang out with."

Youth pastor, church personnel and youth leader. In the opinion of the youth pastor, by learning the scriptures, by learning to live like Jesus and by learning to apply the principles found in the word of God, all people, including children and adults can learn to avoid violence.

An important means through which to influence young people is the response of the church to violence and its condemnation. According to the church personnel, through peer pressure young people eventually learn to reject violence and "give it over to Jesus", walk away from it. Without a doubt, the teachings of Christ also had a positive impact in young people's understanding of the importance of avoiding violence.

Despite the potential for the church to assist in young people's perceptions about violence, the church personnel interviewed for this study were cautious about attributing all achievements relating to the prevention of violent behavior to the church and its influence. Although the church provides activities and lessons against violence, the church personnel claimed to be unsure of their effectiveness. With regards to young people and violence, according to the church personnel, "the church has dropped the ball"

and "… unfortunately I don't think the church address it very often. I have to confess I don't know how many times I have addressed it".

Interview question 7 (Q.7) asked the following: How does attending a church activity affect children's thoughts and feelings about the importance of negotiating your differences with others?

Youth When responding to this question, the adolescents who took part in our study cited the communication of church and Bible teachings as being the mechanism that helped them to understand the importance of negotiating their differences with each other. As an example of this process, specifically, one said, the commandment "turn the other cheek" came to mind when one was on the verge of arguing with someone, and helped them to end the argument and "show love" instead, sayings something like: "Whether I am right or wrong, I am just going to leave this here" in order to avoid "causing hatred or a fight or anything like that".

Some of the young respondents commented that they perceived that the church had certain expectations from them, as for example that they should speak nicely to others even if they wanted to express a different opinion to their own. The following comment of one of the respondents illustrates this point:

Because you are acting harsh toward them and they will think that is very rude so they will not want to listen to you and your differences, but if you speak in a nicer tone and have clear thoughts and tell you want you to know, and I think this because of blah, the will want to listen.

Further elucidation of the way in which attending a church activity affected their thoughts and feelings about the importance of negotiating their differences with others revealed that the interaction with others and the resulting awareness and acceptance of the diversity of people through these interactions had a positive influence on them. As one of the young respondents put it, "If you do activities in church, then you learn that other people are different, and then you just learn to accept that."

According to one point of view, the impact of the church with respect to affecting their thoughts and feelings about the importance of negotiating their differences with others was less important than that of their school, where this subject was tackled in greater depth:

But that's basically the same thing I learned in school and I think we went to more in-depth with it in school, so I don't really think I got anything special from church. . . . Well in class we always have discussions and stuff, ever since I was young you raise your hand, you answer the question and you talk about it. And I learned about not disrespecting others when you disagree with them.

As previously shown, the opinion that church attendance did not have a particularly strong effect on their actions was present among a couple of the young respondents. It was their own character traits that determined how they reacted in specific situations rather than the influence of the church:

Well, honestly, I don't think this one has a strong effect on me because when I'm angry, I won't talk at all. I shut down. Well, it could have a little affect, I feel like

if I weren't a shutdown person when I'm angry, I would probably say something that's hurtful to somebody.

Parents. According to some of the parents of this study, the teachings of the church and of God that welcome diversity do have an influence on children, as one of the parents' comments illustrates: "He has been taught as a kid in church. How to address situations, how to deal with people, you know who don't know nothing about the Lord." Moreover, the Bible's teachings resulted in the children becoming "lenient to understanding" and giving them the capability to deal with situations.

The diversity of people who participate in church activities reinforced children's understanding of the importance of negotiating their differences with others. "Some people are new believers; some people are really seasoned believers and people comes from different backgrounds and different cultures. That's one thing I like, is that they can learn about different backgrounds and cultures. That's a good thing."

Not only did the church teach children about diversity in theory, but its teachings related to practical applications too, with church leaders providing them with strategies on how to deal with specific situations. "I seen situations where my kids have used different strategies and problem-solving things that they have learned from elders in the church." The youth services provided by the church also helped them in "dealing with their problems" and therefore helped them to develop skills on how to "master certain problems."

From one parent's perspective, the church had no impact in this respect. This was an area where the school played a role, by being diverse. "I don't think our church activities influences her in that area."

Youth pastor, church personnel and youth leader. Bible teachings have the ability to equip young people with methods of discussing and negotiating with each other in situations when they have to deal with disagreements or small conflicts. However, the church member of personnel interviewed for this study was critical of the fact that churches tend to be "homogenous," which resulted in an attitude where diversity was neither encouraged nor tolerated. From this point of view, the result was that children did not encounter situations where they might have to deal with differences that needed a compromise and get some experience in this way, therefore the influence of the church was "not profound."

Interview question 8 (Q.8) asked the following: How does attending a church result in a deeper parental engagement in your child's life?

Youth. The concept of love was evoked was repeatedly by the young respondents when answering the question about how attending church brings their parents more deeply into their life. This question reminded some of the warm feelings that were transmitted to them by the love of their parents when going to church in their family group. One of the youth said, "Just by having people surrounding you that love and care for you and show you the path." Another stated,

I think when we go to church with family, you just feel a little happier, and you just feel like you all are meant to be there for a reason, and it brings you a little

closer together because it's a place where you can have love and spread your love for each other.

The physical closeness enabled them to observe their parents and understand them a little better According to one, "I think that it gives you an opportunity to see them walk out their faith and you can see how they feel and what they have been going through." Another said,

I think church does have this effect, because most of the time you and your family go to church and you do these hymns and everything. you sing together, you pray together and it brings you closer as a family where you feel the same and believe the same. Believe in a higher power and you just come closer together.

In addition to the warm feelings that helped bring them together, some respondents remarked that church attendance with their parents provided a common focus and a subject to talk about, with the result of getting closer to them:

Well, it brings me and my mom closer, because there are certain times I will be able to go and talk to her and ask her questions about what does this scripture mean or we get into a topic that is like, affects both of us in our lives.

Going to church provided an opportunity for some of the young respondents of this study to get together with their parents–something they did not usually experience at home. The following comment illustrates this:

If you are a kid that normally, like, doesn't interact with your parents much at home. Then you go to church then you have something to talk about with each

other. Just having to talk about with your parents and just like interacting with

them more, and just coming closer.

The opportunity for closeness was particularly appreciated by one of the respondents for

getting together with their grandmother. "Like I don't go to church with my mom, I go to

church with my Grandma so it's like, that's my quality time with my granny."

Some other young respondents did not think that church contributed to the quality

of their relationship with their parents because, they said, it was good to start with. "I'd

say it does not have an effect, because I feel like my parents love me, like with or

without, if I go to church or not."

The respondent who described themselves as an atheist expressed a contrary view

on this issue, pointing out that church was a factor that brought conflict with their father:

[M]y dad . . . thinks that if you don't believe in God you go to Hell, so I think for

me it kind of didn't bring my parents closer to me but made them worry about me,

or at least my dad.

Parents. Corroborating some of the young respondents' comments mentioned

above, parents also commented on the opportunity that church attendance enabled them

to be closer with their children. Encouraging dialogue between parents and children was

another benefit associated with the children's church attendance, since following that

they would discuss their experiences at the church meeting and this brings them closer

together. "They come in my room and they like to talk about some issues that were like

very impactful to them that they kind of gravitated to."

Praying together as a family also brought them closer together. In cases when this was not practical on a daily basis—"Because, unfortunately, we can't do it every day"—the church helped and guided parents with problems, so that made them "better parents" according to one of them. "[It] just help guide me as far as being a parent and a mother."

Youth pastor, church personnel and youth leader. From the perspective of the church personnel and the youth leader, parents play a crucial role and in the words of the youth leader interviewed, "I know church fosters family togetherness. I know, if you get, from my experience in youth ministry, I know that if you get the parents engaged you got the kids as well."

Further confirmation of the importance attached to the relationship between parents and young people that was encouraged and appreciated by the church was expressed by the comment that "families and church, they go hand and hand."

Data Analysis

Following data collection, all interviews were transcribed verbatim. As I previously mentioned in Chapter 3, no software was used for codification and analysis. Prior to interviewing, I developed a preliminary coding framework (Table 7) that was based on my research questions. Based on this preliminary framework, I reviewed each transcript and began coding. Before I conducted my interviews, I created the preliminary coding list. This list codes the number of times that the preliminary code was used when identifying emerging themes. I was surprised to see the number of times that answers resulted in the way the child behaved. Whether it was a response from the youth or parents, there were evidence that some youth participants would behave however, they

desired too. It did not matter if they attended church or not, they would behave the way they wanted too regardless. In particular, some youth participant stated, "the pastor can tell me all day not to go to school and bully other students….I make my own choices to bully someone else". In addition, I also reviewed my notes from each interview participant and my personal journal, in which I circled key words and phrases during the interview that I thought could possibly serve as additional codes to my initial coding framework.

While coding, I began looking for emerging patterns and themes that were relevant to my research question and theoretical framework. I used descriptive coding to summarize words, short phrases, sentences, and paragraphs on the basic topic of the passage with the purpose of finding patterns and repetitions in the participants' responses, as recommended by Saldana (2009). New codes were identified from the analyzed raw data, in addition to my preliminary codebook. These codes were then combined and placed into my codebook.

In my second round of coding, I begin identifying themes while also thinking ahead to final codes that began to emerge. During this iterative process, several codes were dropped, while some codes were combined with others.

Analysis proceeded via bracketing of oft-given responses, clustering into like groups, then giving significance to these thematic clusters through horizontalization reporting, without interjection of researcher interpretation. The taped data and notes were transcribed to enable the researcher to perform this type of analysis. The bracketing and further processing for reduction involves several readings of the material to refine and

develop the nature or essence of answers to each question, per Husserl's methods (Husserl, 1931). This resembles coding to identify primary themes addressing the research questions, propositions, and supported by the theoretical framework. As new categories and themes emerged, some initial codes were also recoded and placed in new categories. By the 14th interview, the majority of the emerging themes had appeared, and the rest of the interviews were composed of repetitions of those themes. After analyzing the data, some of these categories remained valid and were used consistently to make sense of the participants' discourse.

In addition, Johnson (1997) advocated the use of triangulation in qualitative studies for added reliability and validity. Triangulation can occur in several ways. In this study, triangulation was achieved by interviewing three groups of individuals–adolescents, parents, and church personnel–about the research phenomenon. Other coding categories were changed into smaller codes and placed into other new emerging categories, while others were mentioned infrequently during the interviews. Integrating these categories into the research question, interview responses, notes from the interview, and theoretical framework yielded several themes. This process was repeated throughout the analysis stage until completion of the study.

As I began combining and formulating new codes a number of similar themes begin to emerge from the process. Table 8 illustrates the final codebook with the preliminary coding framework, the emerging codes, categories, themes, and how the coding plan was referenced to the research question.

Table 9

Count of Positive, Negative, and "Yes and No" Answers to Q.1

Q.1	Do you think children are less likely to mistreat others if they attend church regularly?		
	Yes	No	Yes and no
Youth	(6)	(4)	(1)
1.	1	-	-
2.	1	-	-
3.	1	-	-
4.	1	-	-
5.	-	1	-
6.	-	1	-
7.	1	-	-
8.	-	1	-
9.	1	-	-
10.	-	1	-
11.	-	-	1
Parents	(4)	(2)	-
1.	1	-	-
2.	1	-	-
3.	-	1	-
4.	1	-	-
5.	-	1	-
6.	1	-	-
Youth pastor/ church personnel/youth leader	(1)		(2)
1.	-	-	1
2.	1	-	-
3.	-	-	1
Total	(11)	(6)	(3)

Table 10

Count of Positive, Negative, and "Yes and No" Answers to Q.2

Q.2	Do you think children are less likely to have problems with their peers if they attend church regularly?		
	Yes	No	Yes and no
Youth	(7)	(1)	(3)
1.	-	-	1
2.	1	-	-
3.	1	-	-
4.	1	-	-
5.	1	-	-
6.	-	-	1
7.	-	1	-
8.	1	-	-
9.	1	-	-
10.	1	-	-
11.	-	-	1
Parents	(3)	(1)	(2)
1.	1	-	-
2.	1	-	-
3.	-	1	-
4.	-	-	1
5.	-	-	1
6.	1	-	-
Youth pastor/ church personnel/youth leader	(1)	-	(2)
1.	-	-	1
2.	1	-	-
3.	-	-	1
Total	(11)	(2)	(7)

Table 11

Count of Positive, Negative, and "Yes and No" Answers to Q.3

Q.3	Do you think attending church activities affect children's thoughts and feelings about wanting to mistreat others?		
	Yes	No	Yes and no
Youth	(7)	(3)	(1)
1.	1	-	-
2.	1	-	-
3.	-	1	-
4.	1	-	-
5.	-	1	-
6.	1	-	-
7.	-	1	-
8.	1	-	-
9.	1	-	-
10.	1	-	-
11.	-	-	1
Parents	(4)	(0)	(2)
1.	1	-	-
2.	-	-	1
3.	1	-	-
4.	1	-	-
5.	-	-	1
6.	1	-	-
Youth pastor/ church personnel/youth leader	(3)	(0)	(0)
1.	1	-	-
2.	1	-	-
3.	1	-	-
Total	(14)	(3)	(3)

Table 12

Count of Positive, Negative, and "Yes and No" Answers to Q.4

Q.4	How does attending church activities affect children's thoughts and feelings about following rules? If there is no effect?		
	Yes	No	Yes and no
Youth	(6)	(2)	(3)
1.	1	-	-
2.	1	-	-
3.	-	-	1
4.	1	-	-
5.	-	1	-
6.	1	-	-
7.	-	1	-
8.	-	-	1
9.	1	-	-
10.	-	-	1
11.	1	-	-
Parents	(4)	(0)	(2)
1.	1	-	-
2.	1	-	-
3.	1	-	-
4.	1	-	-
5.	-	-	1
6.	-	-	1
Youth pastor/ church personnel/youth leader	(2)	(0)	(1)
1.	-	-	1
2.	1	-	-
3.	1	-	-
Total	(12)	(2)	(6)

Table 13

Count of Positive, Negative, and "Yes and No" Answers to Q.5

Q.5	How does attending church activities affect children's thoughts and feelings about the importance of rules? If there is no effect?		
	Yes	No	Yes and no
Youth	(10)	(1)	(0)
1.	1	-	-
2.	1	-	-
3.	1	-	-
4.	1	-	-
5.	1	-	-
6.	1	-	-
7.	-	1	-
8.	1	-	-
9.	1	-	-
10.	1	-	-
11.	1	-	-
Parents	(4)	(1)	(1)
1.	1	-	-
2.	1	-	-
3.	-	1	-
4.	1	-	-
5.	1	-	-
6.	-	-	1
Youth pastor/ church personnel/youth leader	(1)	(0)	(2)
1.	-	-	1
2.	1	-	-
3.	-	-	1
Total	(15)	(2)	(3)

Table 14

Count of Positive, Negative, and "Yes and No" Answers to Q.6

Q.6	How does attending a church activity affect children's thoughts and feelings about the importance of avoiding violence? If there is no effect?		
	Yes	No	Yes and no
Youth	(9)	(1)	(1)
1.	1	-	-
2.	1	-	-
3.	1	-	-
4.	1	-	-
5.	1	-	-
6.	-	-	1
7.	-	1	-
8.	1	-	-
9.	1	-	-
10.	1	-	-
11.	1	-	-
Parents	(4)	(0)	(2)
1.	1	-	-
2.	1	-	-
3.	-	-	1
4.	1	-	-
5.	-	-	1
6.	1	-	-
Youth pastor/ church personnel/youth leader	(1)	(1)	(1)
1.	1	-	-
2.	-	-	1
3.	-	1	-
Total	(14)	(2)	(4)

Table 15

Count of Positive, Negative, and "Yes and No" Answers to Q.7

Q.7	How does attending a church activity affect children's thoughts and feelings about the importance of negotiating your differences with others? If there is no effect?		
	Yes	No	Yes and no
Youth	(6)	(1)	(4)
1.	-	-	1
2.	1	-	-
3.	1	-	-
4.	1	-	-
5.	-	1	-
6.	-	-	1
7.	1	-	-
8.	1	-	-
9.	1	-	-
10.	-	-	1
11.	-	-	1
Parents	(5)	(0)	(1)
1.	1	-	-
2.	1	-	-
3.	1	-	-
4.	1	-	-
5.	1	-	-
6.	-	-	1
Youth pastor/ church personnel/youth leader	(1)	(0)	(2)
1.	1	-	-
2.	-	-	1
3.	-	-	1
Total	(12)	(1)	(6)

Table 16

Count of Positive, Negative, and "Yes and No" Answers to Q.8

Q.8	How does attending a church result in a deeper parental engagement in your child's life? If the church doesn't have this effect?		
	Yes	No	Yes and no
Youth	(8)	(1)	(2)
1.	1	-	-
2.	1	-	-
3.	1	-	-
4.	1	-	-
5.	-	-	1
6.	1	-	-
7.	-	-	1
8.	1	-	-
9.	1	-	-
10.	-	1	-
11.	1	-	-
Parents	(6)	(0)	(0)
1.	1	-	-
2.	1	-	-
3.	1	-	-
4.	1	-	-
5.	1	-	-
6.	1	-	-
Youth pastor/ church personnel/youth leader	(2)	(0)	(1)
1.	1	-	-
2.	-	-	1
3.	1	-	-
Total	(16)	(1)	(3)

Evidence of Trustworthiness

According to Polkinghorne, "validity concerns the believability of a statement or knowledge claim" (Polkinghorne, 2007, p. 474) in qualitative research. Data collecting tools must be reliable (ask what the researcher intends) and valid (produce fairly consistent results, although this can vary more in qualitative than quantitative research) (Polkinghorne, 2007). According to Giorgi, content, criterion, and construct are key components of quality research (Giorgi, 2002). In fact, Creswell has defined validity as how accurately the responses reflect reality of experience with phenomena (2013). Validity can also be assessed by review of the questions during the interview, reading cues (Shank, 2006), and ascertaining the interviewees' genuine articulation of the phenomenon through measures beyond words (Ponterotto, 2006), consistent with Husserl's formulation. The interview questions have been validated by Janice Speck Ed. D., who is a Counselor Educator at Missouri Baptist University, in St. Louis, MO. Dr. Speck has also verified that they were the appropriate questions to ask and that it would answer my research questions.

Analysis proceeded via bracketing of oft-given responses, clustering into like groups, then giving significance to these thematic clusters through horizontalization reporting, without interjection of researcher interpretation. The taped data and notes were transcribed to be accessible for the researcher to perform this type of analysis. The bracketing and further processing for reduction involves several readings of the material to refine and develop the nature or essence of answers to each question, per Husserl's methods (Husserl, 1931). This resembles coding to identify primary themes addressing

the research questions, propositions, and supported by the theoretical framework. The respondents were selected by chance and to the best of my knowledge their answers during the interview were spontaneous and honest.

Chapter Summary

Some of the young people interviewed for this study reported that they believed that regular church attendance did result in the likelihood that they were less inclined to mistreat others. They justified this opinion on the grounds that they followed the teachings of the church that instructed good behavior. An in-depth analysis of their experiences in church revealed that through the teachings of the church some of the young respondents became aware of other people and their feelings. This awareness made them compassionate towards others. Overall, the views of the parents interviewed for this study on whether children's regular church attendance influenced their behavior towards others, resulting in the likelihood that they were less inclined to mistreat others, corresponded with the views expressed by the young people interviewed, as indicated above. Thus, according to some of the parents, the transmission of the "principles and values" of the Bible to their children, through regular church attendance, had definitely a positive influence on their behavior and the way they treated others. One of the 3 respondents involved with youth believed that church attendance did influence young people's likelihood to avoid mistreating others whilst 2 of them were reluctant to correlate the quality of youth behavior with church attendance. While they recognized the potential for adolescents and young people in general to be influenced favorably by the "relationship with Christ", in the words of the youth pastor who was interviewed for this

project, the results of regular church attendance by the young were said to be sometimes disappointing, suggesting that the association between church attendance and quality of behavior was not guaranteed. The overall environment of the church, including other "church attendees" who were from diverse backgrounds, was credited as being conducive to a positive attitude by some of the young people who participated in this research. For a small number of parents, the question on how attending a church activity affects their children's thoughts and feelings about wanting to mistreat others was not meaningful, they said, because they believed that their children are good by nature and have no thoughts to mistreat others–therefore the subject of church influence is irrelevant in their case. Overall, parents saw themselves rather than attendance of church activities as the prime actor that influenced children's attitudes towards violence.

In Chapter 5, I explain the conclusions and recommendations as to how the research satisfied the original intent. Specifically, Chapter 5 is a summary of why and how the study was accomplished, including an interpretation of the findings, conclusions addressing the research questions, and implications for social change.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Introduction

The problem identified for the purposes of the current study was centered on the

relationship between participation in faith-based organizations and the reduction of

bullying behaviors. This relationship had not been adequately addressed in research on

the nexus of bullying and faith-based organization participation, suggesting a significant

literature gap that if filled may help in the development of an understanding of the role

that faith-based organizations play in bullying prevention. It had not been previously

researched whether participation in faith-based organizations lowers bullying. In

addition, previous research has not sought to determine if children who attend faith-based

events or organizations are less likely to bully. For the purposes of the current study, the

plausible mechanisms for bullying reduction by participating in faith-based organizations

are identified as the following:

- the moral instruction of the potential bully;

- the boundary-setting for the potential bully;

- the social engagement of the potential bully;

- the social engagement of the potential bully's parents.

Based on the identified literature gap, the current study was designed as a qualitative

exploratory case study that researched the relationship between involvement in faith-

based activities and bullying. The goals of the study were to discover whether

participation in faith-based activities is associated with lowered incidents of, or

inclinations toward, bullying and to identify what mechanisms, if any, might be

responsible for the ability of faith-based activities to suppress bullying behaviors and orientations. Through an analysis of data obtained from a sample of ninth graders in Jefferson City, Missouri, these goals were intended to be fulfilled.

Findings and Interpretation

One of the most significant findings of the current study was that many of the student participants reported the opinion that regular attendance of faith-based organizations, specifically churches, resulted in a decreased likelihood of mistreating others. Based on the responses of the students, it appears that this finding stemmed from such students following the teachings of the church that instructed good behavior. The analysis of the student experiences in church revealed that through the teachings of the church some of the student respondents became aware of other people and their feelings, suggesting an increase in the sympathy and empathy of the students.

An increased awareness in the feelings and treatments of others appeared to increase the compassion that the students showed towards others. There is substantial evidence that developing increased empathetic and sympathetic capacities can decrease aggressive behaviors, including bullying. Vickers (2011) found that sympathy and empathy decreased the likelihood of employee bullying. Specifically, empathy for victims of bullying may lead to less bullying and even attempts to stop bullying. Similarly, the development of empathetic capacities has been found to decrease bullying behaviors, in large part because potential perpetrators of bullying and aggression tend to be better able to resist urges to bully when empathetic responses are present (Anderson et al., 2010).

Previous research also shows that various family and peer group dynamics can decrease bullying behaviors (Cassidy, 2009; Flaspohler et al. 2009; Ledwell & King, 2015). This may reflect students learning to be more empathetic, sympathetic, or compassionate and therefore less likely to engage in bullying behavior. Similarly, it may suggest that the development of strong and secure relationships facilitates the development of empathetic and sympathetic capacities, thus decreasing bullying behavior. Based on the results of the current study, there is strong evidence that faith-based organizations may contribute to the development of empathetic, sympathetic, and compassionate capacities through both faith-based teachings and strong social connections. However, the strong social connections and relationships that are formed may be stronger factors for the prevention of bullying in faith-based organizations than the actual teachings of any particular church. The social and emotional security provided by faith-based organizations through the facilitation of strong and meaningful relationships may best explain any decreases in the likelihood of being inclined to bully others.

The finding that the facilitation of strong and secure social relationships in faith-based organizations contributes to decreased bullying is also supported by research on the role of the environment in the development of bullying behaviors and decreases in bullying behaviors. In school environments, the security, climate and culture of the school can impact the development of bullying, but so too can the facilitation of social relationships, preventative measures for bullying, the training of teachers and other staff, and the availability of the faculty to attend to student needs (Espelage et al., 2014). It may

be, then, that the development of feelings of security and strong social relationships play a role in how both school and church environments can minimize bullying behaviors. While extra security measures have been shown to reduce violence in schools, suggesting that there are deterrent effects in showing the punishments for bullying (Perumean-Chaney & Sutton, 2013), environments that provide safety, security, and promote positive relationships between authorities and students may also decrease bullying (Espelage et al., 2014). Faith-based organizations may provide the means for students to not only develop antibullying morals and standards of conduct, but also the structures for the facilitation of strong and secure relationships, which deter bullying behaviors as well.

One of the major issues revealed in the literature on bullying is that antibullying programs often do not work. For example, Ferguson et al. (2007) found that school antibullying programs show little perceptible effects on violence and victimization of children in school settings. Many other studies have found similar evidence, namely that antibullying programs are not significantly effective in reducing incidents of bullying (Nocentini et al., 2015; Yeager et al., 2015). However, one study has found a significant relationship between a specific antibullying program and reductions in bullying. Teglasi and Rothman (2001) found that students in training and preventive programs focused on social problem-solving skills were significantly less likely to engage in aggressive, bullying, and violent behaviors. The focus of the Teglasi and Rothman (2001) study was on the development of prosocial behaviors and the reduction of antisocial behaviors. By reinforcing positive social problem-solving skills, the intervention in Teglasi and Rothman's (2001) study promoted the development of stronger social relationships

between students and decreased the use of poor conflict resolution strategies that could lead to bullying. Based on such results, it appears that developing strong social relations may be an important aspect of effective organization-based approaches to reducing bullying. If particular faith-based organizations tend to promote prosocial behaviors and positive conflict resolutions methods as well as help foster relationships within the organization, then they may play a role in decreasing bullying.

Another significant finding of the current study was that the parents interviewed in the study held that regular church attendance by their children influenced the children's behavior towards others. Specifically, the parents held that their students were less likely to be inclined to mistreat others if they attended church regularly. The line of reasoning held by many of the parents was that the students learned not to mistreat others during church teachings. This corresponds very closely to those views expressed by the students interviewed. Parents, of course, play a major role in the education of their children, including the moral and behavioral education of their children. Georgiou and Stavrinides (2013) found that certain parenting techniques could be employed to reduce the likelihood of bullying and aggressive behaviors. Families being actively involved in some type of religious or spiritual activity was found to be one significant factor in reducing the likelihood of bullying. It is difficult to determine whether spiritual upbringing itself is one of the direct factors for the reduction the potential for a child to become a bully. After all, the social factors associated with increased religious and spiritual participation may play more of a role in the reduction of bullying behavior.

In contrast, certain teachings may help explain decreases in bullying. As mentioned before, the golden rule and various other basic concepts are central to certain religions, including Christianity (Georgiou & Stavrinides, 2013). Such basic moral concepts can help guide children towards being moral and avoiding bullying behavior. It is important to recognize that there may be a relationships between the development of sympathetic, empathetic, and compassionate capacities and attending church that goes beyond the development of strong and secure social relationships. As mentioned above, such secure and strong social relationships can contribute to developing such capacities. However, such capacities may be taught through religious teachings as well. After all, teaching the golden rule, for example, may instill the values that everyone should be treated fairly. There is some evidence that faith-based organizations can improve the ability of parents in educating their children in such a way that helps prevent their children from becoming bullies using principles of faith (Kalman, 2013). Faith-based organizations tend to have a strong presence in the schools and surrounding communities, which can grant the children positive activities in which to engage and discourage social behaviors that create the opportunities for bullying. In seeking to correct and prevent bullying behaviors of children, often school counseling is insufficient (Vickers, 2010). The results of the current study do not provide strong evidence to distinguish the specific sources of antibullying behaviors and reducing bullying behaviors. Nevertheless, the results do provide evidence on the specific reasons that parents and students have for the possible effects that faith-based organizations have on reducing bullying behaviors.

Faith-based organizations may provide the types of environments that promote pro-social behaviors in children. Schools and other organizations may serve similar functions. The findings of the current study strongly suggest that various environments may impact the overall prevalence of bullying. Houses may provide the strongest grounds for preventing bullying. Based on the results, the overall environment of the church, including the congregation and church structures, were identified bolstering positive attitudes towards others among the participants. This was especially important in cases in which the congregation was found to be diverse. Nevertheless, some of the parents did not identify church environments as playing a major role in developing anti-bullying behaviors in their children. Therefore, there is another divergence found here between the parents. Perhaps households were viewed as the predominant environment that supports anti-bullying behaviors in students. Still, many parents identify the importance of the environments in which their students are surrounded as being high for the prevention of bullying.

In the current study, some of the parents indicated that the transmission of the principles and values of the Bible to their children, through regular church attendance, had definitely a positive influence on their behavior and the way they treated others. However, other parents suggested that there may not be any significant relationship between church attendance and children learning not to engage in bullying behaviors. One way to explain the divergence on this point is that some parents may claim full or nearly full responsibility for the behaviors of their children. Thus, many parents may hold that any bullying behavior or lack of bullying behavior is the result of their parenting, not

any faith-based organization that their children attend. Previous research demonstrates the importance of the relationships between children and their parents in preventing bullying behavior of such children (Espelage, 2014). In particular, parents are the most responsible actors in their children's lives. Nevertheless, parental practices, attitudes, and behaviors are all associated in various ways for their children. This includes aggressive and non-aggressive behaviors by children (Espelage, 2014). Therefore, research confirms both that the behavior of children is intimately linked to the parenting behaviors and strategies of their parents and that such parents are aware of this.

In addition, research shows that weak and poor parental supervision is associated with peer violence (Meyers, 2013). Negative parenting strategies, which includes neglectful parenting, are connected with the poor regulation of emotions in children, which can contribute to aggression and bullying. Parents are also primarily responsible for correcting any immoral or illicit behavior in their children. For example, children with emotion dysregulation caused by behavioral or developmental issues may contribute to emotional outbursts, including outbursts of anger that result in bullying (Meyers, 2013). Research by Shetgiri et al. (2012) showed that hat parental behavior and characteristics influence children bullying others. The prevention of bullying, then, relies heavily on parents being available to their children and teaching their children how to properly regulate behavior. Such prior research provides a very strong basis for the belief that parents play the predominant role in the behavior, including bullying behavior, of children. Therefore, parents who believe that they are responsible for the appropriate

behaviors of their students would likely be reluctant to attribute such appropriate behaviors to the actions of others.

In addition, many of the parents recognized the potential for adolescents to be influenced favorably by religious teachings. Specifically, in the current study, some of the parents recognized that Christian teachings could have a positive impact on children and that such teachings could be taught through faith-based organizations, such as churches. However, there are also indications that the parents themselves can be a source of teaching Christian or other faith-based principles and lessons to their children. That is, even in cases in which parents identify Christian teachings as major influences on the non-bullying behaviors and anti-bullying behaviors of their children, it may be the case that such parents also recognize their own role in teaching their children Christian teachings. The specific relationships between parental teachings, church teachings, and the prevention of bullying behaviors.

Limitations

The study collected data from 20 participants who reside in Jefferson City, MO. This data pool was comprised of 11 youth participants, 6 adult participants, 3 church personnel. Consequently, the data that has been provided is limited in the respect that it only covers a very small percent of the population in the stat. Assuming that these findings could be generalized to the entire state of Missouri or other regions in the United States would be misleading, as these findings only represent a very small proportion. Initially, the researcher proposed to involve a larger number of participants, but

unfortunately, only a smaller number of adolescents were able to obtain parental permission for participation in this study.

To obtain participants, the researcher met with the Superintendent of the school district, by emailing his office and following up with a phone call. The researcher was able to meet in person to discuss the study and obtain permission to meet with the Principal of the Ninth Grade Center. Next, the researcher emailed and called the Simenson Ninth Grade Center's Principal to discuss working with youth in the school. The researcher then sent consent forms to the school that certain classes would hand out each day to students. The consent form was given to students to inform their parents of the study. The interviews could not be conducted unless the parental consent form was turned in signed and dated by the parent. This limited the researcher's ability to access a larger data pool because not all parents agreed and students could not participate by agreeing right then and there. A third party had to approve. Therefore, the researcher was forced to wait to receive the consent forms that were to be brought in the following days.

Per protocol standards, the researcher interviewed every qualified participant who offered to participate in the study by scheduling an interview time and date. Prior to starting each interview, the researcher had potential participants sign the consent form and then proceeded to the formal interview that was done with a tape recorder and handwritten notes. Some participants answered questions generally using some of the same terms, which allowed for saturation with the sample.

Although the researcher was unable to capture the initial sample size for this study, the 20 participants were comprised of individuals from various backgrounds, faiths

and demographics within Jefferson City. The wide distribution of participants from different communities was intended initially for this study, and the results cannot be necessarily generalized to any particular community. However, the results of this study may provide a broader spectrum on the perceptions of citizens who reside in Jefferson City on the issue when it comes to bullying.

Limitations to trustworthiness that arose from this study were due to the researcher's strong religious background. To prevent this bias from carrying over into the questioning, sampling, committee members and colleagues reviewed the interview questions and provided feedback on suggested modifications. To further improve the research study, the researcher received additional assistance from Janice Speck Ed. D., who is a Counselor Educator at Missouri Baptist University, in St. Louis, MO. Dr. Speck has verified that the questions were appropriate and relevant. Suggestions were noted and adjustments were made.

It is possible that the youth participants might not have felt comfortable in a face to face interview setting in which they were supposed to provide accurate depictions of their religious views. Some participants felt comfortable telling the researchers about religious views and how it affects their behavior, but others seemed on edge. Perhaps quantitative research done in the future could benefit from conducting online or telephone surveys, which would add more privacy for participants who are of different religious beliefs.

A delimitation of this study is centered on its qualitative nature, which is focused on interpreting information offered freely by the participants. The unstructured design of

the study allowed for the collection of information in an unsystematic manner. Although the researcher collected the data in a uniform manner, there was no way to predict the kind of information that would be provided, which was why it was important to be flexible. In addition, interpretation of the data is left open. Different researchers may interpret the results differently. Nevertheless, there were clear trends identified in the study which can help to recognize themes and build on conclusions. The researcher was able to overcome this delimitation by maintaining an open mind and allowing participant to share whatever they wished, as long as it was relevant to the original purpose of data collection.

Another delimitation of the study is that its case study design lacks transferability (Yin, 2009). The case study design requires the study takes place in a highly specific context which may not represent conditions in other communities and schools. The findings are, thus, limited to the specific environment in which the study was conducted. The generalizability of the findings is limited as well. Even so, the findings of the current study can be used to justify further quantitative studies and to provide some grounds for supporting policy changes and different considerations for decreasing bullying. Therefore, the researcher has overcome this delimitation by suggesting ways that this study may be applicable to other similar studies. Although the boundaries are clearly defined for this scenario, it can be used as a model for future inspiration.

Impacts for Social Change

Individual

The main set of impacts for social change is individual efforts to mitigate bullying behaviors. Individuals play an active role in the psychological processes of negotiating themselves in relation to the environment through behavior, decision making and goal setting. For children, parents are strongly attached with the responsibility of steering their behavior for positive social change and individual development, including emerging bullying behaviors in children. Therefore, parents can utilize the results from the current study to make determinations regarding how they can prevent their children from associating with delinquent bullying behaviors and identify bullying behaviors in their schools. Although the current study does not deduce strong grounds for parental decision-making, it does provide strong grounds on how parents can reconsider some of their parenting styles to influence their children's' social behavior. As suggested in the study, parents can instill the theme of empathy on their children in order to deter them from bullying behaviors. Empathy is essential for providing children with the ability to understand and share the feelings of the people around them, including their friends and mates from church and school. The primary theme of empathy as portrayed in the study can be acquired through attending church. Parents should encourage their children to attend church regularly in order to learn the various values of empathy. As Vanclay (2002) stipulates, empathy can induce significant modifications in an individual's environment. A child's environment can be influenced by certain social stressors and opportunities that the child is exposed to. The church is, therefore, the best platform to

foster positive qualities of empathy including, compassion, good heartedness, and friendly environment. Therefore, parents who maybe neglectful or identify their children's schools as being neglectful can use the church to instill teachings that promote positive social behaviors, strong relationship and secure relationships that discourage bullying tendencies.

Familial

Social change can be influenced in the familial perspective through contemporary research by creating better understanding of the main social factors that appear to play a major role in bullying. It is vital that parents are familiar with the social environments that their children are exposed to because of the significant effects that they have on the development and behavior of the child. Noteworthy, bullying in school can be caused by external factors outside the schools like neglect and feeble relationship bond in different life aspects. The dominant theme in this level is influences. According to Vanclay (2002), a child's social behavior and development is mainly determined by their main influences on their apparent surrounding. Children are rule followers, and are highly susceptible to emulate what is usually portrayed to them (Van Schooten *et al*. 2003). For instance, if is exposed to violent traits at home through the family members, they are likely to emulate the same behaviors on fellow children at school. The church and alike organizations are essential in fostering healthy relationships that children may lack from their family or even school.

Families can consider the outcome of the current study to place them in a better position to assess their own capacities in the facilitation of the positive relationship on

their children's lives. Extensive studies suggest a connection between families, society, organizations and bullying (Van Schooten *et al*. 2003). Although bullying behaviors may arise from the poor environment that a child is exposed to at home, they can also be prevented through developing strong and secure relationships both at home and the church. In this regard, the theme of family importance can play a significant role in children behavior development and help to mitigate peer pressure. Positive family relation with a child creates a strong bond that foster togetherness and respect (Cook *et al*. 2010). Various studies have stipulated that the initial bond can contribute to various attachment patterns in children (Cook *et al*. 2010). The experience of consistent care patterns promotes a secure attachment throughout the child's life. On the other hand, experiences of unavailable or inconsistent care lead to insecure attachment patterns (Vanclay 2002). As such, families who can recognize such accounts are in greater positions to assess how they are facilitating the social development of their own children. By doing this, parents will be quick to recognize and address anti-social and pro-social behaviors accordingly, consequently leading to less bullying tendencies of more informed parents.

Organizational

The organizational level presents a great potential for social change. Both schools and spiritual institutions stand to largely benefit from the findings of the current study. From the current study, it is evident that social structures like relationships can play a significant role in reducing bullying. Here, the theme of influences come into play again. Although social development marks a long process that continues into the teenage age of

children, the earliest experience of forming and shaping social bonds lies on influences (Cook *et al.* 2010). As a matter of fact, various studies suggest that influences have repercussion on how children relate to other in their lives and how good they are in forming relationships as adults (Cook *et al.* 2010).

Furthermore, while previous research showed that school programs encourage pro-social behaviors and discouraged anti-social behaviors, it is also significant for schools to recognize the importance of a holistic approach to improving social relations. Such a holistic approach includes fostering strong and secure relationships at home, school, and elsewhere, including faith-based organizations or other social organizations. According to Cook *et al.* (2010), the interactive influence of teachers' emotional support and parent involvement are highly related to the positive development among young children. Second, the results suggest that parents recognize that churches can play a major role in developing the sorts of behaviors that prevent bullying. The current study reveals the positive influences attributed to a child's behavior through church attendance. Church enables children to practice humility and empathy by equipping them with positive practices like compassion, apathy, good heartedness, and understanding the feelings of other among others (Vanclay 2002). With such knowledge, schools can leverage such information to develop stronger alliances between parents, schools, and faith-based organizations. Such alliances may provide opportunities for fostering social relationships and teachings well-beyond school and into organizations, including faith-based organizations.

Societal and Political

Social and political impacts of social change have far-reaching impacts on a child's social development. Noteworthy, a strong relationship between children can be promoted through different societal aspects. Similar to the findings of the current studies, various literature on social impacts on a child's social development have indicated that bullying can be sparked by unhealthy relationships that a child is submitted to while growing up (Cook *et al*. 2010). Inconsistent and unavailable care can prove detrimental to a child's behavior, thus leading to bullying tendencies. Insecurely attached children tend to act more ambivalently. Insecure attachment related to negative child performance (Cook *et al*. 2010).

The major political impacts are focused on policies that intend to reduce bullying. The current bullying campaigns that have policy bases are focused very heavily on schools implementing those structures that identify discernible cases of bullying, generally through punishment or separation. The systems theory is significant to this aspect of social change in different ways. Systems theory focuses on authority, rules, training, organization structures, and conflict management among others. Schools and spiritual organizations teach children on the significant of systems and structures and the importance of authority and following rules. By instilling such discipline on children, they can easily be steered away from negative behaviors like bullying (Cook *et al*. 2010).

Conclusions and Discussion

The current case study features a qualitative design intended to determine the accounts of children and their parents regarding the role that faith-based organizations

may play in the prevention of bullying. Previous research providing a foundation on which the underlying causes of bullying could be partially understood. While all the factors of bullying are not yet known, research indicates that fostering pro-social behavior and discouraging anti-social behavior through the facilitation of healthy and stable social relationships can prevent bullying. Based on the responses from the students and parents in the current study, there is now evidence that faith-based organizations may help prevent bullying because of the pedagogical impacts of church teachings and the development of stable social relationships in faith-based organizations. Nevertheless, the current qualitative study cannot conclude that attendance in faith-based organizations will prevent bullying to any significant degree. Instead, the findings suggest possible connections between the two, especially when considering the prior research at the nexus of bullying and social development. Many of the parents in the study believed that church attendance could decrease bullying behaviors, while others took the primary responsibly for any bullying behaviors of their children.

Future research on the role of faith-based organizations on bullying can focus on the specific factors that contribute to bullying and how faith-based organizations can reduce the impact of such factors. Much more research is needed on the causes of bullying. Much of the current research on bullying is focused on ways to prevent bullying that has already been identified, rather than on the root causes of such bullying. Faith-based organizations may play a role in reducing bullying behaviors of children who have already exhibited bullying behaviors, but they may also play a major role in preventing bullying behaviors in the first place. Similarly, future research can be more holistic and

focus on the complex relationships between conditions of the home, family structures, participation in faith-based organizations and other social organizations, and school conditions.

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Appendix A: National Institute of Health Certification

Certificate of Completion

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research certifies that **Jason Groce** successfully completed the NIH Web-based training course "Protecting Human Research Participants".

Date of completion: 03/05/2018.

Certification Number: 2671599.

Appendix B: Interview Questions

Research Questions and Interview Questions: Adolescents

Research Question	Interview Questions
Does participation in faith-based activities and programs reduce inclinations toward, or practice of, bullying?	Do you think that attending church influences you to be less likely to mistreat others? Why? If not, explain? Do you think that attending church influences your inclination to get into conflicts with your peers? Why? If not, explain.
If participation in faith-based activities and programs reduces inclinations toward, or practice of, bullying, what are the mechanisms by which such reduction occurs?	How does attending a church activity affect your thoughts and feelings about wanting to mistreat others? If there is no effect, please explain. How does attending a church activity affect your thoughts and feelings about following rules? If there is no effect, please explain. How does attending a church activity affect your thoughts and feelings about the importance of rules? If there is no effect, please explain. How does attending a church activity affect your thoughts and feelings about the importance of avoiding violence? If there is no effect, please explain. How does attending a church activity affect your thoughts and feelings about the importance of negotiating your differences with others? If there is no effect, please explain. How does attending a church bring your parents more deeply into your life? If the church doesn't have this effect, please explain.

Research Questions and Interview Questions: Parents

Research Question	Interview Questions
Does participation in faith-based activities and programs reduce inclinations toward, or practice of, bullying?	Do you think your child feel less inclined to mistreat others as a result of attending church? How? Why? If not, please explain. Do you think your child feels less inclined to have conflict with your peers as a result of attending church? How? Why? If not, please explain.
If participation in faith-based activities and programs reduces inclinations toward, or practice of, bullying, what are the mechanisms by which such reduction occurs?	How do you think attending church activities affects your child's desire to mistreat others? If none, please explain? How do you think attending church activities affects your child's desire to follow the rules? If none, please explain? How do you think attending church activities affects your child's opinion to follow the rules? If none, please explain? How do you think attending church activities affects your child's opinion to avoid violence? If none, please explain? How do you think attending church activities affects your child's understanding of the importance of negotiating differences with others? If none, please explain? How does attending a church engage you more deeply in your child's life? If the church doesn't have this effect, please explain.

Research Questions and Interview Questions: Church Personnel

Research Question	Interview Questions
Does participation in faith-based activities and programs reduce inclinations toward, or practice of, bullying?	Do you think children are less likely to mistreat others if they attend church regularly? If not, explain. Do you think children are less likely to have conflicts with their peers if they attend church regularly? If not, explain
If participation in faith-based activities and programs reduces inclinations toward, or practice of, bullying, what are the mechanisms by which such reduction occurs?	Do you think attending church activities affect children's thoughts and feelings about wanting to mistreat others? If there is no effect, please explain. How does attending church activities affect children's thoughts and feelings about following rules? If there is no effect, please explain. How does attending church activities affect children's thoughts and feelings about the importance of rules? If there is no effect, please explain. How does attending a church activity affect children's thoughts and feelings about the importance of avoiding violence? If there is no effect, please explain. How does attending a church activity affect children's thoughts and feelings about the importance of negotiating your differences with others? If there is no effect, please explain. How does attending a church result in a deeper parental engagement in your child's life? If the church doesn't have this effect, please explain.

Appendix C: Key Notes

Q.1
Youth

- Teachings of the church demand good behavior and treat others as you want to be treated yourself

- Friendly environment of church conducive to treating others well

- You become aware of other people's feelings etc. and therefore more compassionate and less likely to mistreat / treat others as God would want you to

- You become more at peace with yourself and do not have the need to show off

- No effect of church, in the final analysis action depends on own personal decisions

- The church's influence is not powerful enough on occasion when their anger predominates due to problems at home or at the school

Parents

- Church teachings and in particular St Lukes' Golden rule of "Do unto others what do unto others as you would have them do unto you" had practical results in the good behavior of their children – which they saw in practice in the way they treated their siblings.

- It gave them self confidence/ avoided the need to bully as a way to show off

- No particular influence because children's character determines their behavior

- Not church influence.

Youth pastor, church personnel, youth leader

- No definite influence of church on children's behavior because other problems dominate and influence or determine their behavior

- According to youth leader with experience with children who attend school and those who do not, church definitely influences positively

Q.2
Youth

- Teachings of the church and words of pastor all command to avoid conflict: they obey in order to be at the right side of God

- The church helped in the development of their spiritual character – they were at peace with themselves and did not need to come into conflict

- Understanding others and their troubles result in less conflict

- They made friends in church activities and this meant no conflict with them because they were familiarized

- Although church attendance had a positive influence, in the final analysis their spontaneous decisions in situations were the result of their own …..

Parents

- Yes, because it teaches love and compassion

- No, because children's personality determines their reactions

- Yes, as long as it is supported by the home

Youth pastor, church personnel, youth leader

- Support from the church does have some favorable influence

- Church influence cannot always be guaranteed

Q.3

Youth

- Overall church environment and community feeling was inductive to positive attitudes

- No influence because one is an atheist/ because in the final analysis their own personality determines their reactions

- No influence because no intention to mistreat others in the first place

- Little influence because there are many other (positive) factors that affect their lives

- When it comes to a difficult situation the church's influence is incapable of overriding their anger

Parents

- Environment is conducive to good behavior

- Instigates discussions on right and wrong with parents

- Children are good anyway, so question is not meaningful to some parents

Youth pastor, church personnel, youth leader

- Church provided children with role models

- Church helped them in practical ways in conflict resolutions

- Compared to non-church attending children, those who did attend church activities were at an advantage because of love shown to them

Q.4

Youth

- Strong association of church environment with authority and rules

- Bible teachings conducive to obeying the rules

- Presence of adults with authority whom they trusted and respected made them obey the rules

- Deference to church's authority – spiritual reasons, not to commit sin

- In order not to get into trouble

- The main influence in following rules comes from their own set of values, not because of the church

- Following rules is the result of their parents' instructions, not those of the church

Parents

- They rather take pride in their own influence on their children in this respect

- They remind that children's own personality is the ultimate decider of how they react

Youth pastor, church personnel, youth leader

- Teaching young people to follow rules was taken very seriously by the church

- They did this by stressing the importance of respecting others

- They used games and prizes to train the young to follow rules

- By providing the structure and authority that is conducive to following rules

Q. 5

Youth

- It is easy to follow the rules that apply to the church activities because they are clearly stated by the church personnel

- Following rules is important because they are associated with the road to Heaven and the Will of God

- It is important to understand the purpose of rules in order to follow them

- According to some, attending church activities had no effect in their understanding of the importance of rules

Parents

- The discipline that characterizes church or faith-based activities ensures the children's understanding of the importance of following rules

- Role models in the youth leaders transmitted importance of following rules

- Parents also played a role in instilling importance of rules in their children (the demand some of the credit)

- No influence because children's own personality overrides church's influence

Youth pastor, church personnel, youth leader

- Peer pressure plays an important role in instilling importance of following the rules

- Following the rules set by Christ resulted in the understanding of the significance of rules

- The church structures and organization was conducive to the understanding of the importance of rules.

- Stories from Christianity have an effect as the awareness of the suffering of Christ

Q.6
Youth

- Hearing about violence (they tell them at church) on other children deters them from it

- Not wanting to hurt others also deters

- Being made aware and reminded of the teachings of the Bible that say that "violence is a sin"

- The impact of the church teachings and instructions had a lasting effect and reminded them to avoid violence when they might be tempted to it…

- The opinion that the church had no impact in this respect was also expressed by one or two respondents.

Parents

- Mere presence in the church environment is conducive to be devoid of violence

- Teachings of love included in the Bible suggest the importance of avoiding violence

- Parents played an important role in this respect too – they taught them to avoid bad company

Youth pastor, church personnel, youth leader

- The teachings of scripture had a positive effect on young people's thoughts and feelings about avoiding violence

Q.7
Youth

- Church teachings had a positive influence in their interactions. They learned specific strategies that showed the importance of negotiating their differences

- The perceived expectations of the church from them

- Understanding and accepting the diversity of people

- Impact of the church is less powerful than that of school

- No particular influence of the church when it comes to a specific situation- their own character determines their reactions rather than church influence

Parents

- Teachings of the church welcome diversity. Also, presence of different people helps children to understand and appreciate diversity

- Church youth services teaches them specific practical strategies and helpe develop their skills to deal with situations

Youth pastor, church personnel, youth leader

- Church teachings can equip one for life in negotiating

- Criticism that church congregation's homogeneity prevents acceptance of diversity in children

Q.8
Youth

- Church attendance brought them physically together with their parents and this was associated with warm feelings of love

- Physical closeness occasioned by church attendance enabled them to understand their parents a little better

- Common focus…

- No effect of church because they are close already

Parents

- Church attendance encourages closeness on the occasion of attending as a family / parents-children

- Discussing church attendance- related experiences between parents and children further results in closeness and understanding each other

- Church provided parents with guidance in the case of having problems with their children

Church personnel, youth leader

- Church attaches great importance to parents and their closeness / relationship with children