

DIFFERENT PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL BULLYING: TEACHERS AND
SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS IN NON-URBAN MISSOURI SCHOOL
DISTRICTS

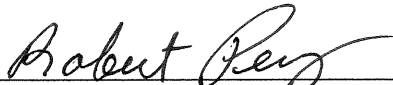
Tracy D. Barger

2018

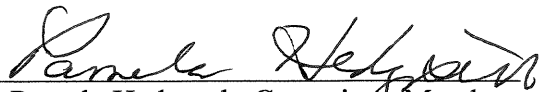
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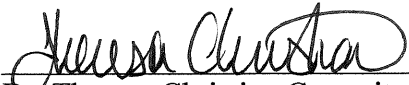
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DIFFERENT PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL BULLYING: TEACHERS AND SCHOOL
ADMINISTRATORS IN NON-URBAN MISSOURI SCHOOL DISTRICTS

A Dissertation
Presented to
The Faculty of the Graduate Education Department
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Doctor of Education

By

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the perceptions of bullying among teachers and school administrators in the state of Missouri and to determine perceptual impact on bullying control. This study was significant as the perceptions of teachers and school administrators may be different and affect whether or not bullying is being controlled in schools. Data was collected via a survey asking the respondent to state if bullying was being controlled in their school, to differentiate bullying from non-bullying behaviors, state types of bullying in their school, and rating perceptions of teacher/student and teacher/school administrator relationships in their school. Data was analyzed between teachers and school administrators using ANOVA and *t*-tests. The data from this study does show a significant difference in perceptions of teachers and school administrators when it comes to bullying and bullying control.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

“He will have to learn, I know, that all people are not just – that all men and women are not true. Teach him that for every scoundrel there is a hero; that for every enemy there is a friend. Let him learn early that the bullies are the easiest people to lick.”

Abraham Lincoln

(Swearer, Espelage, & Napolitano, 2009, p. ix)

Bullying is now considered a global problem affecting all schools (Kennedy, Russom, & Kevorkian, 2012). Dan Olweus, one of the pioneers of bullying research, found students anywhere can be affected by bullying (Olweus, 1993). School size, large or small, private or public, urban or rural, bullying does not discriminate (Kennedy, Russom, & Kevorkian, 2012). Research shows bullying starts at a young age, most of the time in elementary school. Nearly 37.7 % of elementary students in the U. S. reported being bullied frequently at school (Bradshaw, Sawyer, & O’Brennan, 2007) while a survey of middle and high school students indicated 37.9 % of students being involved in bullying in some form (Bradshaw, Sawyer, & O’Brennan, 2008).

Some schools are becoming more of a place of survival than learning, which can present a threat to the safety of the learning environment schools must provide (Aluede, Adeleke, Omoike, & Afen-Akpaída, 2008). Bullying can be threatening and create an uncomfortable or even hostile environment making learning difficult for students (Kevorkian & D’Antona, 2008). Bullying is known to “interfere[ing] with the learning process” and research shows it may have negative effects in the long run. Simply put, bullying is a “reality that must recognized and addressed” (Kevorkian & D’Antona, 2008, p. 1).

Bullying among school-aged children is a very old phenomenon, but was not researched systemically until the early 1970’s. Dan Olweus was the first to begin research

in this area in Scandanavia. His book, *Aggression in the Schools: Bullies and Whipping Boys* (1978) is recognized as the first notable study on bullying. Its' publication started an international research trend (James, 2010), which spread to other parts of the world in the late 1980's and early 1990's (Olweus, 1993). By the late 1990's other researchers interest in the problem of bullying and bullying's effect on children began to peak.

Bullying can sometimes be dismissed as harmless or just a part of growing up. This is part of the culture, which has fostered bullying behavior. Many educators are unaware bullying is happening or they do not know how to intervene in bullying situations. Teachers sometimes respond incorrectly to bullying situations or do not respond appropriately (Farrell, 2010). Children can sometimes be completely overwhelmed and might not know where to turn. They either feel adults cannot help them or telling an adult might actually make things worse, therefore many bullying incidents may go unreported (Kevorkian & D'Antona, 2008).

Bullying is recognized as a complex issue in today's society because of so many different ideas as to what actually constitutes bullying (Smith & Smith, 2014). Kevorkian and D'Antona (2008) found many adults are not able to differentiate normal childhood conflict from bullying among children and students in school. The different viewpoints when it comes to the perceptions of whether an incident is considered bullying can make it especially difficult for educators to effectively address the issue (Bradshaw, Waasdorp, O'Brennan, & Gulemetova, 2013).

There are many different viewpoints between students and teachers when it comes to bullying behaviors. There are also differences between school staff members, not only on how they view bullying, but how they respond to it as well (Bradshaw et al., 2013).

Research shows there is a discrepancy between how students perceive bullying behaviors compared to that of teachers and staff. Many teachers in today's schools are unaware of how extensive and serious bullying is in their schools, therefore making it difficult for them to effectively identify bullying behaviors (Waasdorp, Pas, O'Brennan, & Bradshaw, 2011).

According to Kochenderfer-Ladd and Pelletier (2008), research found the important role teachers play when it comes to reducing bullying in their classrooms and preventing bullying as well. The research also indicates everyone in the field of education (paraprofessionals, substitutes, bus drivers, cafeteria workers, etc.) must receive the proper training when it comes to bullying, normal childhood conflict, and fighting. They must be trained to recognize the signs of bullying and how to respond or intervene with confidence. Staying silent when bullying occurs can have a negative impact on students as it can send the message that silence is a stamp of approval (Kevorkian & D'Antona, 2008).

This study examined the different perceptions of teachers and school administrators in non-urban school districts when it came to bullying at school. Using a collection of quantitative and qualitative data, the study attempted to determine if different perceptions exist between the identified groups, and if so, if they affect whether or not bullying is being controlled in their school.

Problem Statement/Rationale

The complexity of bullying among school-aged children is becoming harder to identify and address appropriately possibly creating different perceptions of bullying behaviors by teachers and school administrators. These different perceptions of bullying

may affect the identified groups' perceptions of whether or not bullying is being controlled in their school.

Bullying is not a term new to the 21st century (Green, 2007). Experts suggest bullying is now “recognized as a global problem” which affects schools of all sizes, nationality, and can be public or private (Kennedy, Russom, & Kevorkian, 2012, p. 1). Although bullying has been around for decades (Green, 2007), it has received more attention in recent years due to high profile news stories, mostly highlighting tragedies reporting student suicides and school shootings where students reported being bullied (Kennedy, Russom, & Kevorkian, 2012). These tragedies have prompted many different studies on bullying and intervention programs (Green, 2007).

Barbara Coloroso (2008) states bullying is a “life-and-death issue that we ignore at our children’s peril” (p. xix). Children have an inherent right to feel safe at school (Owleus, 1993), but “thousands go to school every day filled with fear and trepidation” (Coloroso, 2008, p. xix). The time for assuming bullying is simply “boys will be boys” or “girls are just mean” is long gone (Coloroso, p. xix). When individuals dismiss bullying behaviors as child’s play children are left unprotected (Kevorkian & D’Antona, 2008).

There are many factors, which make it difficult for educators to address bullying appropriately. One of those factors is the different perceptions between staff and students (Bradshaw, Sawyer, and O’Brennan, 2007). Perceptions of bullying vary greatly depending on the respondent (e.g. peer, self, teacher, administrator, parent). This makes the issue even more complex when school staff and students view and respond differently to incidents of bullying (Mishna, Pepler, & Wiener, 2006). Kevorkian & D’Antona (2008) suggest children be taught to recognize the difference between the following

things: constructive criticism, friendly advice, and outright bullying. To try to address the issue of bullying, “children and adults need to understand what bullying is and know how to identify bullying behaviors” (Kevorkian & D’Antona, 2008, p. 24). Only then will the issue of preventing bullying be able to be addressed (Kevorkian & D’Antona, 2008). Parents and teachers need to become more comfortable talking to kids about what is going on in their lives and discuss it regularly. To accomplish this, a common language of bullying needs to be developed as well as an understanding of bullying dynamics. The key is actually listening to students so the different perceptions of bullying can come closer together (Green, 2007). Until all stakeholders can get on board with what behaviors constitute bullying, it will be difficult to address the issue (Coloroso, 2008).

Theoretical Framework

With the increased national attention bullying has received in recent years many school districts have begun developing bullying prevention initiatives in an effort to reduce bullying behaviors in their schools. As a starting point, many school districts rely on past and current research to provide insight on what bullying actually looks like in order to properly train their staff (Bradshaw, Waasdorp, O’Brennan, & Gulemetova, 2013). While it may seem like identifying bullying behaviors would be somewhat straightforward, recognizing this type of behavior is actually a complex matter. It can be very challenging for adults to distinguish bullying behaviors from non-bullying behaviors (Nielsen-Hewett & Sweller, 2013).

Many studies have shown how the viewpoints of bullying behaviors can differ greatly between teachers and school administrators. The theoretical framework for this study is taken from the work of Mishna, Pepler, and Wiener (2006) who conducted one

of the first qualitative studies on the different perceptions of bullying. This research analyzed the perceptions of 4th and 5th grade Canadian students who had reported being bullied, their parents, teachers, and school administrators. The authors found many factors, which “contribute[d] to the complexity of bullying” (p. 256) and influenced how survey participants responded to specific incidents of bullying. The study noted the individual groups seemed to “understand what constitutes bullying” (p. 259); however determining whether an incident is actually bullying was found to be related to various factors that “influence respondent decisions” (p. 271).

One of the major factors found in the study that seemed to influence how different individuals responded to a specific incident of possible bullying was if the individual was able to distinguish bullying from non-bullying behaviors. The study found respondents seemed to struggle with determining “whether an incident matched their own criteria for bullying” (Mishna, Pepler, & Wiener, 2006, p. 263). For example, many of the surveyed individuals’ definition of bullying may have only included physical behavior so when an incident of indirect bullying occurred, such as exclusion from a group or harmful gossip, some did not realize they were being bullied (Mishna, Pepler, & Wiener, 2006).

It is often very confusing for children and adults to determine if an incident is bullying. Mishna, Pepler, & Wiener (2006) noted in their theory regarding bullying, that the definitions for this term differed for students, parents, teachers, and school administrators and their interpretations “did not necessarily correspond with how they depicted actual situations” (p. 271). Developing one definition of bullying for these groups is not sufficient when many interpret the definition differently, causing inconsistent handling of a bullying incident.

Another important aspect of this theoretical framework for bullying was the difficulty teachers and school administrators had distinguishing normal conflict among students from bullying (Mishna, Pepler, & Wiener, 2006). These different perceptions were noted to influence how individuals responded to bullying. Adults, at times, would not consider an incident bullying, yet the child involved felt it was. Some students also suggested they had informed adults of a bullying incident and did not feel the adults had intervened appropriately or at all. This suggests that respondents may rely on their own definitions and assumptions concerning bullying behaviors and normal conflict and these may impact how the situation is addressed (Mishna, Pepler, & Wiener, 2006).

The varying perceptions of teachers and school administrators make it difficult for educators to effectively address the issue of bullying (Bradshaw, Waasdorp, O'Brennan, & Gulemetova, 2013; Mishna, Pepler, & Wiener, 2006); therefore, this study will attempt to determine if these different perceptions play a role in whether bullying is being addressed appropriately, if at all.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to compare perceptions of bullying among teachers and school administrators and to determine perceptual impact on bullying control. This study was significant because if bullying is to be addressed effectively in schools, teachers and school administrators must adhere to similar definitions and what behaviors actually constitute bullying. In addition, training must be provided to teachers, staff, and school administrators on how to deal with bullying. If this can be done, students and teachers will spend more time on the things that matter most: teaching and learning.

These different perceptions of bullying may affect whether or not bullying is being controlled in schools. For data purposes, an attitudinal study was sent to teachers and school administrators in all non-urban public school districts in Missouri school districts. The researcher did not include urban school districts as urban areas generally represent a different societal set of social and economic influences than rural and suburban districts. Reports have shown urban districts to have a much higher rate of bullying-related discipline issues with ethnic or gang-related activity, which are not as prominent in rural and suburban schools (Center for Safe Schools, 2013), and could possibly skew survey results. Research has shown urban areas have been studied more prevalently due to the issues of ethnic or gang-related activity and little is known as about bullying in other areas, such as rural and suburban schools (Smokowski, Cotter, Robertson, and Guo, 2013).

Research Questions

1. How are bullying behaviors perceived by teachers and school administrators?
2. How controlled do teachers and school administrators perceive the issue of bullying is in the school building where they are employed?
3. How do teachers and school administrators perceive student/teacher relationships in the school building where they are employed?
4. How do teachers and school administrators perceive teacher/school administrator relationships in the school building where they are employed?
5. How does the grade level taught affect perceptions of bullying?
6. How does the geographical location of the school district affect perceptions of bullying?

Null Hypotheses

1. There are no significant differences in the perception of bullying behaviors between teachers and school administrators.
2. There are no significant differences between the perception of teachers and school administrators on how controlled bullying behaviors are in their school building.
3. There are no significant differences between the perceptions of teachers and school administrators on student/teacher relationships in their school.
4. There are no significant differences between the perceptions of teachers and school administrators on teacher/school administrator relationships in their school.
5. There are no significant differences in perception on what bullying behaviors are between grade levels.
6. There are no significant differences in the perception of bullying behaviors between rural and suburban participant perceptions.
7. There are no significant differences between the rural and suburban participant perceptions on how controlled bullying behaviors are in their school building.
8. There are no significant differences between rural and suburban participant perceptions on student/teacher relationships in their school.
9. There are no significant differences between rural and suburban participant perceptions on teacher/school administrator relationships in their school.

Limitations of Study

1. The data used in this study will be obtained through an online attitudinal survey. Therefore, the researcher acknowledges the perceptual nature of the data and the

honesty of the responses by the respondents. The responses will offer a perception of bullying behaviors by teachers and school administrators and whether or not each perceive bullying as being controlled in their school.

2. The accuracy of the data obtained may be affected by the rate of return of the survey.

Delimitations

1. The population for this study is all non-urban public Missouri school districts in the state of Missouri. The researcher decided to exclude urban school districts in the study as urban areas generally represent a different societal set of social and economic influences than that of rural and suburban districts.

Definition of Terms

The following are operational definitions for the purpose of this study:

Bullycide. This is a hybrid of the terms bullying and suicide. Bullycide is the term used when a child or teen commits suicide as a result of being bullied (“Bullycide,” n.d.).

Bystander. For the purposed of this study, the role of peer bystanders in bullying situations can be positive or negative in nature (Salmivalli, Voeten, & Poskiparta, 2011) and can include students assisting the bullying, aiding the victim or simply remain a “passive bystander” (Salmivalli, Voeten, & Poskiparta, 2011, p. 266).

Cyberbullying. For the purpose of this study the definition of cyberbullying will be a “willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices” (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010, p. 615).

Direct bullying. For the purpose of this study direct bullying is known as a face-to-face encounter and involves an open attack on someone. This can be physical and verbal aggression (Whitson, 2014).

Indirect Bullying. For the purpose of this study, indirect bullying, also known as covert bullying (Monks & Smith, 2006) or relational aggression (Whitson, 2014), will be known as a means of aggression that can be social exclusion, deliberately damaging relationships or the spreading of rumors (Monks & Smith, 2006).

Power Imbalance. For the purpose of this study, power imbalance, or sometimes referred to as imbalance of power or strength, is defined as a “power differential or imbalance between aggressor and target” (Sacco, Silbaugh, Corredor, Casey, & Doherty, 2012) and can be psychological or physical in nature (Olweus, 1993).

Victim. Dan Olweus (1993) defines a person as being bullied when he or she is “exposed, repeatedly and over time to negative actions on the part of one or more other students” (p. 9) and this is the definition that will be referred to in this study.

Summary

Bullying is not a new phenomenon and has become one of students’ major life pressures making it difficult for students to learn and feel safe at school (Kevorkian & D’Antona, 2008). Dan Olweus (1978) is credited with the first notable study on bullying in the early 1970’s and published his findings in 1978, starting an international research trend that continued into the early 1990’s (James, 2010).

Identifying bullying behaviors can be very subjective, which can lead to difficulty in determining incidents as bullying. Research indicates perceptions of bullying vary

depending on the person, which makes it especially difficult for educators to effectively address the issue (Bradshaw et al., 2013). Kevorkian & D'Antona (2008) state many adults cannot differentiate bullying from normal childhood conflict, therefore, anyone involved with the care of children, not just educators, must receive the proper training when it comes to bullying, conflict, and fighting. Barbara Coloroso (2008) states, "we need to have a common language and understanding of the dynamics of bullying" (p. 13).

The researcher attempted to determine how teachers and school administrators define bullying behaviors. The data collected by the researcher were analyzed to determine whether these perceptions influenced how bullying is being addressed. The researcher also attempted to determine how each group of participants perceives the control of bullying in their school.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

While there are many life pressures students face in today's schools, bullying ranks high as one of the challenges they face everyday (Kevorkian & D'Antona, 2008). At the 2011 White House Conference on Bullying Prevention, President Barack Obama made the following statement: "If there's one goal of this conference it's to dispel the myth that bullying is just a harmless rite of passage or an inevitable part of growing up. It's not" (White House Summit on Bullying, 2011, para. 1.). Research is proving bullying is not simply a rite of passage, like many believe, but a serious issue that is not only hard to identify, but to address appropriately as well (Kevorkian & D'Antona, 2008). Failing to address bullying puts students at a disadvantage to succeed academically, which could directly effect if they are college and career ready (White House Summit on Bullying, 2011).

Each year, there are roughly 13 million students bullied in the United States (White House Summit on Bullying, 2011) and although it has been recognized as an issue of major concern for many years, research on this topic only came to light in the late 1970's (Monks & Coyne, 2011). Sweden was the first county to express a strong interest in bully/victim problems in the late 1960's and early 1970's. This trend quickly spread to other Scandinavian countries (Olweus, 1991). Norway noted concern among teachers and parents during this time period, but school authorities did not feel it was their place to intervene; therefore it was not systemically researched until the early 1970's (Olweus, 1993).

Internationally, there were several other countries with growing public concern over bullying among school-aged children (Green, 2007). After the work of Peter Heinemann in the late 1960's, Dan Olweus launched a three-year study with Swedish boys concerning Heinemann's idea of the child mob. Olweus disagreed, to a certain extent, with Heinemann that children attacked in packs and felt like it was more of an individual or small group behavior. After the conclusion of the study, Olweus developed a very broad definition of bullying that is still being used 40 years later, but also acknowledged bullying had "potentially devastating consequences for children" (Bazelon, 2013, p. 201).

One of the "turning points in the recognition of school bullying" was the shooting at Columbine High School in Colorado in 1999 (Cornell & Limber, 2015). Two teenage boys went on a shooting rampage killing 13 people as well as themselves. Both boys left suicide notes citing they had been bullied for many years. This event left communities and lawmakers across the United States scrambling as to what to do to help prevent bullying (Bazelon, 2013). A surge of anti-bullying legislation then swept its way across the U.S., however, almost 10 years after the Columbine incident, in 2010, a young girl named Phoebe Prince took her own life to escape the alleged bullying that was occurring in the halls at South Hadley High School in Massachusetts (Cohen & Brooks, 2014). Tragedies such as these have caused many countries to not only launch very in-depth studies pertaining to bullying, but also the implementation for prevention strategies (Kennedy, Russom, & Kevorkian, 2012). State and local governments have begun to get involved citing the need for additional training for students, teachers and school administrators (Green, 2007).

Research suggests bullying touches 100 percent of children, whether as a bully, a victim or a bystander. It is a reality in today's schools and the consequences "associated with bullying are far too grave to ignore" (Kervorkian & D'Antona, 2008, p. 19). The following will address: the background on bullying, the different definitions of bullying, the difficulty in identifying and addressing bullying, organizational culture, the difference between culture and climate, school climate, the importance of teacher-student relationships, and the need for change if we are going to successfully address bullying in our society.

Background on Bullying

School bullying spans back 150 years appearing in modern Western literature such as Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist* and Thomas Hughes' *Tom Brown's School Days* (Hymel & Swearer, 2015). Many countries such as Ancient Greece, England, and Australia, have "encountered problems related to bullying for centuries" (Green, 2007, p. 333). There is no doubt bullying is a very old phenomenon as it has occurred in literature and also by many generations of adults who can relate to personal experiences related to bullying (Olweus, 1993). Today, bullying appears in more modern themes such as violent video games and reality TV making it familiar to children everywhere (Hymel & Swearer, 2015).

Research on bullying has continued to grow, after a slow beginning, mostly fueled by tragic events, such as youth suicide and school shootings: a result of many young people who have been bullied and do not know how to cope (Kennedy, Russom, & Kervorkian, 2012). The academic interest in bullying first seemed to explode after three student suicides in Norway in 1983, which is well documented in Dan Olweus' early

research (1993). The amount of Google Scholar searches on the term *bullying* over the last 40 years showed an increase from just 337 searches in 1975 to almost 20,000 in 2011 (Sercombe & Donnelly, 2013). Researchers, state agencies, and communities alike were trying to pinpoint a cause to this thing called bullying and what they could do to stop it (U.S. Department of Education, 2011).

Another factor affecting the growing attention to bullying is the attention national media has given to the topic (Cohen & Brooks, 2014). Swearer, Espelage, and Napolitano (2009) suggest bullying behaviors have not necessarily increased, but the attention given to bullying has increased. The public's understanding of certain issues in our society, such as bullying, is highly dependent on how the news media portrays it (Cohen & Brooks, 2014). News media not only determines what events will be covered, but *how* they will be covered as well. Trigger events, like the suicides of Tyler Clementi and Phoebe Prince in 2010, were covered in initial waves in the media as students who had been bullied to death. The criminal charges and trials that followed sent rippling affects lasting much longer with the media. Bullying and suicide tend to be silent to the general public until the media portrays the dramatic affects of these bullycides (Cohen & Brooks, 2014). Therefore, it is important for educators and parents to rely on the research based on bullying and bullying prevention and not just on what the media is reporting (Swearer, Espelage, & Napolitano, 2009).

Dan Olweus. Before the 1970's, the systemic research of bullying was rare, however some features were notably perceived. The patterns of bullying in some individuals were described in many 18th and 19th century books and old newspapers (Koo, 2007). Dan Olweus is credited with completing the first notable study on bullying

during the early seventies with his book, *Aggression in Schools – Bullies and Whipping Boys* (1978). The study opened the door for a plethora of research, which only continues to grow (Olweus, 1993).

Olweus, originally from Norway, is credited as being the first to systemically research bullying. He has been involved in bullying research and intervention over the last 40 years and was the first to do a systemic intervention study on bullying in Scandinavia in the early 1970's (James, 2010). Moved by Peter Heinemann's work on mobbing and the treatment of his adoptive son in the late 1960's, Olweus began to question the theory of the child mob. Olweus was curious to know if children really did attack in packs and how aggression was seen by children; especially at school and on the playground (Bazelon, 2013). This led Olweus to survey and study Swedish boys over the next three years. His research revolved around one thousand boys ranging in ages from twelve to sixteen. He interviewed the boys, their teachers, and their parents as well. The results of Olweus' research was published in 1973 and although he was indebted to Heinemann for bringing his attention to this issue, he disagreed about how the aggressors and the victims in bullying situations behaved. While Heinemann felt like mobbing was a crowd behavior, Olweus felt it was more of a small group setting and stated, "a small group of two or three students do most of the bullying in a class" (Bazelon, 2013, p. 200). He also found that as many as 30% of the boys who reported being bullied were being bullied by just one individual (Bazelon, 2013).

It was after this study Olweus established the very narrow definition for bullying, which is still recognized by academics and educators 40 years later. The definition involved three parts and Olweus stated all must be present to constitute bullying: the

behavior is intended to cause harm and can be verbal or physical abuse, it must be repeated over time, and there must be a power imbalance. Olweus was strong in his belief that the power imbalance must be present for the incident to be considered true bullying. This power differential can be physical or psychological in nature and the victim feels helpless towards his/her aggressor. Olweus firmly believed bullying, according to this definition, had “potentially devastating consequences for children” (Bazelon, 2013, pp. 200-201).

At this point in Olweus’ career, he and his family had moved to Norway where he was a professor of psychology at the University of Bergen. In 1982, however, three elementary boys from different schools had committed suicide in Norway. All three boys had apparently been bullied to death and this put the country, especially the government, at a loss as to what to do. Olweus was fielding calls from reporters as well as government officials looking for answers. Olweus’ was firm in his belief that adults make it completely clear this behavior would not be tolerated. Olweus took this as his chance to renew his theory of bullying as a serious form of abuse and the need for a bullying prevention in schools (Balzelon, 2013).

At this time, Olweus was placed on a government committee in Norway on bullying prevention and received government funding to conduct a large-scale research project to develop a school-based bullying prevention program. The focus of this program became changing the culture of the school (Bazelon, 2013): to reduce bullying behaviors as much of possible (Olweus, 1993) and work on peer relations in the classroom and the school in general (Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, 2003-2016).

This early work of Olweus led to The Olweus (pronounced Ol-VAY-us) Bullying Prevention Program.

This program is a comprehensive approach to bullying prevention and intervention. It includes a school-wide component, but also classroom, individual and community components as well. It is geared for grade levels K-12 and focuses on promoting long-term school climate changes to ensure a safe learning environment for students. The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program has found great success with implementation in schools around the world, including thousands of schools in the United States. Reducing and preventing bullying among school-aged children is the main goal; however, the program also aims to improve peer relations in the classroom as well as the school community. Statistics of the program are very positive and include reducing bullying among students as well as improving the social climate of classrooms and reducing some related antisocial behaviors (Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, 2003-2016).

After the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program found it's way to the United States, not all schools were welcoming the program with open arms. Schools were not grasping the idea of Olweus' program whole-heartedly and many were implementing the program inaccurately. Most were not taking the power differential into consideration; a big mistake according to Olweus. This led to confusion and also caused the U.S. to miss the behavior and problems that causes children the most harm. Then, a single, life-shattering event occurred causing people in the United States to start scrambling for answers. Susan Swearer, a school psychologist from the University of Nebraska –

Lincoln, stated the United States just did not get it. “Until Columbine” (Bazelon, 2013, p. 205).

Columbine high school shooting. In 1999, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, armed with a shotgun, a rifle, small handguns, and host of other weapons, walked into their high school in Columbine, Colorado for the last time. Angry for their place in the hierarchy of students within their school, they did not discriminate when it came to ridicule and the choosing of their targets. They targeted the bullies, but everyone else as well; as if everyone should pay for the way they were treated. Many survivors recall them antagonizing jocks, an African-American student, female students, some that were overweight, and ones who wore glasses before they killed them. If only for a little while, they were at the top of the pecking order at Columbine High School (Klein, 2012). Before turning their guns on themselves, Dylan and Eric killed 12 of their fellow students and one teacher. This incident sent shockwaves throughout the country and caused many states to enact a wave of legislation aimed to stop bullying in its tracks or to lessen its effects in the very least (U.S. Department of Education, 2011).

Bullying statistics. The Columbine shooting is considered the turning point for bullying to be taken seriously in our nation (Cornell & Limber, 2015). It continues to be “one of the most pressing issues facing our nation’s youth” even as all 50 states have implemented some form of anti-bullying legislation and saw a major increase in public awareness (Luxenberg, Limber, & Olweus, 2015). Elected officials, school officials and members of communities all over the country feel bullying is not only a serious issue for today’s youth, but one that is often neglected (Swearer, Limber, & Ally, 2009). Bullying has received increased attention in the last two decades due to increased school shootings,

student suicides (Kennedy, Russom, & Kevorkain, 2012), and, of course, through the news media (Cohen & Brooks, 2014).

Bullying is becoming more frequent among students in the United States (IES, 2010) and cannot only have serious effects during the school years, but adulthood as well (Luxenberg, Limber, & Olweus, 2015). Bullying can also “lead to many short-term and long-term consequences such as depression and poor health” (IES, 2010).

Recent National statistics. In 2013, the National Center for Education Statistics reported 21.5% of students surveyed between the ages of 12 and 18 were bullied at school while only 6.9% of students were cyberbullied (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Then in 2015, the nationwide Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Report for the United States showed 20.2% of students were bullied on school property over the last year while 15.5% of students surveyed had been bullied electronically over the same time frame (U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2016).

The *Bullying in U.S. Schools – 2014 Status Report* “reflects the status of bullying behaviors across the United States during the 2013-14 school year” (Luxenberg, Limber, & Olweus, 2015, p. 1). Data collected was obtained using the Olweus Bullying Prevention Questionnaire with students in grades 3–12. Students were provided a definition of what bullying was and what it was not prior to completing the survey. Findings from this report showed 14% of students overall reported being bullied while at school and this percentage seemed to decrease with increased age or grade level. The types of bullying behaviors reported were highest with verbal bullying and followed next by relational bullying behaviors such as spreading rumors and excluding others from activities. The newest form of bullying, cyberbullying, was the least reported form of

bullying in this report with only four percent of boys and six percent of girls reported being bullied using some forms of electronics. Cyberbullying has received a great deal of media attention in recent years so this statistic may come as a surprise, however, Luxenberg, Limber, & Olweus (2013) suggests the threat of cyberbullying with students has been overly exaggerated with the media.

Missouri Student Survey. The Missouri Department of Mental Health and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) have conducted the Missouri Student Survey (MSS) every other year to students in grades 6-12 beginning in the year 2000 (Missouri Department of Mental Health, 2016). The survey is administered to “help assess student attitudes regarding factors relating to fostering safe and drug-free learning environments” (Missouri Department of Mental Health, 2014). Students are asked questions about many different topics including substance abuse, bullying, and suicide. Engaging in these behaviors can have grave consequences, which cannot be ignored. Therefore, this survey was created in order to better track these adolescent risk behaviors. The survey is web-based, questions are multiple-choice, and it takes students around 30 minutes to complete. Once survey results are analyzed, results will look at trends over time (Missouri Department of Mental Health, 2016).

The MSS assesses the bullying behaviors of both physical and emotional bullying. In 2014, one in three students surveyed in grades 6-12 (31.4%) reported being bullied, in some form, on school property in the last year. In 2016, 25.7% of Missouri high school students reported being bullied at school. This percentage decreased from 2014 to 2016, however middle school students were not included in this area of data for the year 2016 (Missouri Department of Mental Health, 2016).

The data released from the years 2006 – 2016 shows many of the areas of bullying behaviors being assessed on the MSS seem to be on a steady decline. Hitting, shoving or pushing someone has decreased from 19.6% in 2012 to 15.5% in 2016. Spreading rumors or lies about someone at school has decreased by 10% in the last six years going from 32.9% in 2010 to 22.9% in 2016. The newer category of posting something online or sending a text message in order to hurt another person shows a gradual increase with a starting percentage of 15.1% in 2012 to a 16.6% in 2016. Most alarmingly, however, is the category of making fun of people while at school. Even though this category shows a steady decrease over the last six years going from 72.1% in 2010 to 54.1% in 2016, this data shows over 50% of students surveyed have made fun of other people while at school in the three months prior to being surveyed (Missouri Department of Health, 2006-2014).

While the results from the MSS over the last six years show a steady decrease in physical bullying behaviors, relational bullying behaviors, especially making fun of others and posting online or in a text message, are still affecting over 50 percent of students surveyed in Missouri (Missouri Department of Mental Health, 2016).

Legislation and regulations on bullying. School violence, with specific links to bullying in some form, has caused an increased focus on youth bullying across the United States. Many high-profile incidents of violent behavior, from school shootings to student suicides, which have “implicated bullying as an underlying cause” (U.S. Department of Education, 2011, p. ix) have caused a wave of new legislation across the United States (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). Bullying in schools has become not only a major educational concern, but an urgent health and social concern as well. This national

concern has put bullying at the forefront when it comes to “public debate on school legislation and policy” (U.S. Department of Education, 2011, p. ix).

Prior to the Columbine shooting in 1999, there were no clear statutes by any state regarding school bullying. Georgia was the first state to pass bullying legislation, which required a character education program to be implemented in schools, and specifically addressed bullying prevention, in 1999. The wave of legislation by most states in the United States have called for defining acts of bullying and also adopting school district policies to prohibit bullying behaviors (U.S. Department of Education, 2011).

State legislatures, from 1999-2010, enacted 120 different pieces of legislature to either introduce bullying statutes or amend what was already in place in the educational setting as well as criminally. Ensuring the safety of students seemed to be the primary goal when it came to introducing bullying legislation, however even with the new laws and requirements that have been put into place schools simply are unsure how to take action (Smith & Smith, 2014).

Federal bullying legislation. There are two laws concerning bullying at the federal level, however both deal with online communication and cyberbullying. The first is the Interstate Communications Law and was enacted in 1984. This law makes it “a felony to communicate across state lines a threat to kidnap, extort, or injure another person” (Jacobs, 2010, p. 18). In 1996, the Communications Decency Act was enacted to “protect online users and service providers from legal action against them for the comments of others” (Jacobs, 2010, p. 18). These two federal laws deal more with communication over the Internet in a threatening manner and were created before cyberbullying was brought to light. However, in 2008, Congress passed the Protecting

Children in the 21st Century Act (also known as the Broadband Data Improvement Act). This Act requires “public schools to educate their students about cyberbullying, online safety, and sexual predators” (Jacobs, 2010, p. 18). The Federal Trade Commission is also required to “conduct a public-awareness campaign” concerning these same issues (Jacobs, 2010, p.18).

Another issue making it more difficult for educators when it comes to state or federal legislation, is these “laws do not follow research-based definitions of bullying” (Sacco et al., 2012, p. 4). One of the most significant challenges with legislation is determining what constitutes school bullying in terms of behaviors and under what conditions. Since there is not one universally acceptable definition of bullying in the research field or at the state or federal level, states must establish their own definitions (U.S. Department of Education, 2011).

Research on bullying legislation has expanded greatly as well as the school’s legal responsibilities over the last decade (Ally & Limber, 2009). This research shows how the different legal definitions of bullying and bullying behaviors are causing great inconsistencies especially in the ways the laws are implemented (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). These issues make it difficult when it comes to identifying bullying behaviors at school.

Missouri bullying legislation. It was not until 2007 that the State of Missouri implemented legislation on bullying. This legislation, Missouri Revised Statute 160.775, requires all school districts to have an anti-bullying policy in place. Missouri Revised Statute 160.775 states:

1. Every district shall adopt an anti-bullying policy by September 1, 2007.

2. “Bullying” means intimidation or harassment that causes a reasonable student to fear for his or her physical safety or property. Bullying may consist of physical actions, including gestures, or oral, cyberbullying, electronic, or written communication, and any threat of retaliation for reporting of such acts.
3. Each district’s anti-bullying policy shall be founded on the assumption that all students need a safe learning environment. Policies shall treat students equally and shall not contain specific lists of protected classes of students who are to receive special treatment. Policies may include age-appropriate differences for schools based on the grade levels at the school. Each such policy shall require a statement of the consequences of bullying.
4. Each district’s anti-bullying policy shall require district employees to report any instance of bullying of which the employee has firsthand knowledge. The district policy shall address training of employees in the requirements of the district policy.

Missouri Revised Statutes

Chapter 160

Schools – General Provisions

Section 160.775.1

The statute states Missouri school districts must have an anti-bullying policy in place as of 2007 and also outlines the definition of bullying recognized by the state of Missouri. The statute does not outline exactly what needs to be included in the policy leaving it up to individual districts to design their own based on the age level and needs

of their buildings. It does state, however, consequences for bullying must be included (Missouri Revised Statute 160.775.1, 2016).

Missouri enacted the Megan Meier Cyberbullying Prevention Act, or SB 818, on June 30, 2008, after the bill died at the federal level earlier in the year. The new law was created after 13-year-old Megan Meier, from St. Charles, Missouri, hanged her after receiving taunting messages over the Internet and there were no laws in place in which to prosecute those involved. The new law updated the old legislation stating harassing communication can be written or over the telephone. The new law included language for “harassment from computers, text messages and other electronic devices may also be considered illegal” (Senate Bill 818, Missouri Senate, 2008). The new law also requires school districts to make a police report anytime stalking or harassment is committed on school property, including anything done over the Internet. The penalty for this new law increased as well (Henderson, 2009).

Defining Bullying

The struggle to find an adequate definition for bullying has become a consistent theme (Sercombe and Donnelly, 2013) in addressing bullying effectively. There is much controversy and confusion when it comes to defining bullying, as it is such a broad term (Cornell & Limber, 2015). The complexity of the different types of bullying also make it hard to define because it can be direct or indirect and cyberbullying has come to light in more recent years (Grimm, 2012).

Since Dan Olweus (1978) is credited as the first to research bullying, many in literature focus on his definition or aspects of his definition. He originally defined bullying as the actions of a boy or boys involved in premeditated violent physical or

mental aggression against another boy. He revised this definition many years later to the following: “A student is being bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other students” (Olweus, 1993, p. 9). Sercombe and Donnelly (2013) contend “there is a general agreement in the literature about the force of Olweus’ definition especially with the core elements of intent and powerlessness of the victim” (p. 494). The authors believe, however, more care needs to be taken to precisely define the terms associated with bullying.

As bullying has changed over time, so has the definition. Part of the problem with addressing bullying is the fact there are so many different definitions identified in current research, law, and individual school districts across the United States. Many definitions have become very long in order to try to address every possibility or issue that may arise, but this becomes very ineffective as it tries to cover everything (Grimm, 2012). Mishna, Pepler, and Wiener (2006) state one’s own definition of bullying comes into play when an individual is trying to determine if a behavior is bullying. This again, can be one of the major issues with struggling to identify bullying behaviors. Everyone is working with their own definitions, therefore, there can be many arguments as to whether one simple behavior is bullying or not.

Teachers, school administrators, and parents should be aware most children have developed their own definition of bullying to the extent many do not even realize they are being bullied. These definitions will vary greatly depending on the age of the student. This is one factor that should be considered when addressing whether a child is being bullied. Another obstacle when identifying bullying is many parents have a very different

definition than that of their children, schools, lawmakers, and researchers. Since schools tend to use definitions that closely align with that of researchers, parents' views on whether or not their child is being bullied may differ greatly from the adults at school or even their own children. If bullying is going to be addressed effectively in schools parents, adults at school, and students must adhere to similar definitions (Naylor, Cowie, Cossin, deBetterncourt, & Lemme, 2006).

Legislative definitions. Almost all U.S. states have enacted legislation with their own definition of bullying, but it varies greatly from state to state (Sacco et al., 2012). The state of Missouri provides a definition that was put into place in 2007. Missouri Revised Statute 160.775 states:

“Bullying,” means intimidation or harassment that causes a reasonable student to fear for his or her physical safety or property. Bullying may consist of physical actions, including gestures, or oral, cyberbullying, electronic, or written communication, and any threat of retaliation for reporting of such acts.

Cornell and Limber (2015) state the definitions within laws of bullying must be “readily applied and understood” (p. 335) as complications have arose in addressing bullying behaviors with lengthy and hard to understand definitions.

There are many differences noted in how bullying behavior is defined within school districts across the nation and how prohibited behaviors are applied within school district policies. This may be one of the many reasons contributing to confusion when it comes to how a certain incident should be handled (U.S. Department of Education, 2011) and whether or not the incident is addressed as bullying.

Difficulty Identifying Bullying

Recognizing bullying behavior is a complex matter and can be very challenging for adults to distinguish bullying behaviors from non-bullying behaviors. Bullying has been viewed by some as a normal part of growing up especially in the younger years (Neilsen-Hewett & Sweller, 2013), however, Kevorkian and D'Antona (2008) state bullying is not a part of growing up and should not be tolerated or dismissed. Ignoring instances of bullying can create a fear of safety for students and research has shown it can have long lasting negative or detrimental effects.

There are many theories from many different entities as to what causes bullying. However, most school officials and students agree there are many factors that can affect if one is bullied; external appearance, behavior, and way of life are all examples of why one might be bullied in today's society (Bradshaw, Sawyer, & O'Brennan, 2007). How individuals in these different roles view bullying needs to be clarified in order for it to be addressed at the educational level, however there is little or no consensus at this time. Educators need to be able to understand the different perspectives associated with bullying in order to increase positive student-teacher relationships where bullying can be addressed effectively (Wong, Cheng, & Chen, 2013).

Signe Whitson (2014) states in her book, *8 Keys to End Bullying*, the key to successful intervention and prevention of bullying is the ability to recognize it in all forms. Bullying is not one singular action or behavior. Bullies create many ways in which to inflict unwanted aggression on their prey. She suggests it is imperative to be able to become knowledgeable about the different forms of bullying and the specific behaviors within each form.

What bullying is not. While Olweus (1993) provided an enhanced version of his original definition and what behaviors needed to be included to constitute bullying, he also pointed out what “bullying was not (or should not be)” (p. 10). Olweus stated bullying does not occur when two individuals of equal strength (physical or psychological) are involved in a conflict. He stressed in order for an incident to be considered bullying there must be an imbalance of power. Signe Whitson (2014) suggests not all bad behavior is bullying. Kids can roughhouse each other or even get involved in a fight. The difference, however, is these are conflicts, which can be resolved easily. Students are normally equals that can work through the conflict.

Olweus’ internationally renowned bullying prevention program also points out the differences between rough play, real fighting and bullying. Rough play can typically be categorized by most recess play that gets out of hand. There is no power imbalance and the students are normally friends. Imagine an intense kickball game that gets out of control. Elbows may be thrown or shoving may occur in hopes of being the first to get to the ball, but no real intention of hurting someone was the actual goal (Whitson, 2014).

For the concept of real fighting the dynamics change. The students are not usually friends and there seems to be a fairly equal level of power. This type of fighting is usually very spontaneous and has the goal of intending to harm someone and the entire mood is aggressive and tense. An example might be two students who come to blows after school or a couple of athletes who have a disagreement on the playing field (Whitson, 2014).

It is also important for individuals to be able to distinguish rude and mean behavior from bullying. Trudy Ludwig (2013) defines being rude as when a person unintentionally says or does something that might hurt someone else’s feelings. Some

examples of students being rude might be when they jump in line in front of someone else or take their pencil while they are working. A lot of times students are just inconsiderate to their peers. Many adults and students will confuse these acts as bullying, however the key word to recognize in this aspect is *unintentional*. The child's intention was not to hurt the other child, but just to poke fun.

When students are mean to one another they are saying or doing something to hurt someone on purpose one or even two times. Some students may tell their peers that someone in their class is poor and lives in a trashy house. They may tell someone they suck at running because they scored the slowest time in P.E. The main difference between being rude and mean revolves around intent. Being rude may not be intentional, however meanness is (Whitson, 2014).

It is extremely important all stakeholders, including students, learn the difference between rudeness, meanness, rough play, fighting, and bullying so they can know what behaviors to pay attention to and adults know when to intervene. Rates of bullying have dropped significantly when adults and kids share a common definition of what bullying is, what it is not, and know when to intervene (Whitson, 2014).

Reports of bullying. When there are multiple persons involved and multiple factors to consider there is not a 'gold standard' for accuracy when it comes to reported cases of bullying (Hymel & Swearer, 2015, p. 294). "11 Facts about Bullying" (n.d.) on the Dosomething.org website reports over 67% of students believe "schools respond poorly to bullying" (n.p.) and many students feel adult intervention is "infrequent and ineffective" (n.p.). Research shows students are very reluctant to report bullying for fear of the repercussions or ineffective adult responses (Hymel & Swearer, 2015).

King and Hedricks (2010) state kids are simply not reporting the incidents of bullying for fear it will make matters worse. School administrators are concerned with this way of thinking as many times incidents are brought to the attention of adults after things have gone too far. Unreported instances of bullying hampers the educators' and administrators' ability to determine the "frequency of bullying behaviors in their schools" (IES, 2010). Whitson (2014) states many students are hesitant to report what has happened to them because of how the incident made them feel. Many students feel ashamed or start feeling self-doubt; almost as if something they did or said contributed to being bullied and they fear they will be blamed. Students also worry they will be labeled a tattletale by their peers, which in the end will only make matters worse. Because of statistics like these many incidents of bullying in the United States go unreported (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

The IES National Center for Educational Evaluation and Regional Assistance (2010) conducted a survey on the characteristics of bullying associated with increased reporting of bullying to school officials. The survey showed 32.8% of students reported victimization to an adult or teacher at school, while 64.2% did not report victimization to anyone. The first step in addressing bullying at school is to be able to determine the scope of bullying behaviors within the school and let students know help is available because when bullying goes unreported, administrators and teachers develop an incomplete representation of what is going on in their schools (IES, 2010).

Staff members and teachers tend to perceive and respond differently when it comes to a reported incident or one he/she have witnessed personally (Bradshaw, Sawyer, & O'Brennan, 2007). A study by Bradshaw, Sawyer, and O'Brennan (2007) showed staff

witnessing bullying almost 70% of the time while incidents reported to them as bullying were only about 47% of the time. Staff members followed up more with students who were involved in bullying incidents they personally witnessed compared to reported incidents. These statistics, along with the fact 67% of students believe schools do not respond appropriately and many students feel adults do not intervene enough or their approach is ineffective (“11 Facts about Bullying”, n.d.) brings to light the issue of how the different perspectives of bullying are perceived and may play a role in how it is addressed.

Different perspectives of bullying. Bradshaw, Sawyer, & O’Brennan (2007) noted in their research on bullying a big discrepancy between the way “students and school staff perceive the issue of bullying” (p. 362). Teachers are many times unaware of bullying incidents or do not realize how serious a situation can be. Research also suggests teachers and especially support staff are not adequately trained to identify bullying behaviors effectively (Williford, 2015). These differences have also led to staff underestimating the frequency of bullying within their schools on a consistent basis.

Bradshaw et al. (2013) suggest, “perceptions of bullying...vary depending on the respondent”, therefore making it a challenge for educators and researchers to “fully understand the prevalence and significance of bullying” (p. 281). At times, students and staff members within a school can see one incident completely different. A child may consider an incident bullying, whereas the staff member will not. A teacher respondent in Mishna, Pepler, and Wiener’s (2006) study stated, ‘It is tricky because something you see as minor may be major to the kid’ (p. 265).

When teachers are unaware bullying is taking place and investigate after the incident has occurred, many students perceive staff as “not doing enough to prevent bullying and not responding appropriately when an incident is reported to them” (Bradshaw, Sawyer, & O’Brennan, 2007, p. 378). This seems to be yet another disparity when it comes to students’ and staff perceptions of reported bullying. Bradshaw, Sawyer, & O’Brennan (2007) state many teachers agree they are handling bullying incidents that are reported to them, however students perceived this to be a very uncommon occurrence.

The inability of teachers to identify and intervene in bullying situations effectively could be a big part of the problem (Bradshaw, Sawyer, & O’Brennan, 2007). Bauman and Del Rio (2006) found teachers and school staff were more willing to classify physical harassment as bullying, but deem covert forms less serious and issues students should handle on their own. The success of a bullying initiative in any school will depend on the collective efforts of the administration and staff. Their shared views on bullying and school violence affect not only the school climate, but the “subsequent safety of students” as well (Kennedy, Russom, & Kevorkian, 2012, p. 3). However, even when administrations and staff clearly understand what their role is in preventing bullying and/or addressing it is, the individual perceptions of bullying can play a major role in whether an incident is considered bullying or not (Kennedy, Russom, & Kevorkian, 2012).

The perceptions of parents in relationship to bullying can play not only a major role in bullying at school, but can “contribute to the overall culture of bullying,” yet it is overlooked when it comes to research in this area (Espelage & Swearer, 2008, p.17). Solomon, Bradshaw, Wright, and Cheng (2008) reported a child can be greatly

influenced by their parents' perceptions and attitudes towards bullying and then carry these over to the school setting. How a parent communicates with his/her child about bullying may shape how the child views and responds to bullying at school (Waasdorp, Bradshaw, & Duong, 2011).

Organizational Culture

Culture is present in organizations around the world (Schein, 2017) and has been studied for hundreds of years (National School Climate Council, 2007) by anthropologists and sociologists alike (Schein, 2017). This research has shown many different concepts and definitions about what culture actually is. There seems to be many different definitions used by researchers and those definitions seem to overlap quite a bit. When thinking about a definition for culture it is important to note the differences between observation and understanding. Cultural elements can be easy to observe, but even harder to understand (Schein, 2017). Edgar H. Schein (2017) points out in his book *Organizational Culture and Leadership* to focus on what you can see and feel while Bolman and Deal (2008) stress the most important element in culture is not what happens, but what it means. These actions can be interpreted differently as “people experience life differently” (p. 253).

Definition of culture. People at various levels see culture differently, which makes it hard to settle on one functional definition. There are many factors to consider when looking at a definition of culture. Deal and Kennedy (as cited in Schein, 2017) portrayed culture “as the way we do things around here” (p. 6). Schein (2017) states when defining culture to think of it as everything a group has learned about itself along the way. It's the patterns of values and beliefs that drive the organization in its day-to-day

operations and the work of the group itself. Bolman and Deal (2008) state culture is the “superglue that bonds an organization,” but also brings the people of the organization together for a common desired goal (p. 253). They believe culture within a group is developed over time with a shared belief, value, and practice system. Over time, the system is shared with new recruits who would eventually become teachers of the culture themselves.

Schein (2017) defines culture as:

the accumulated shared learning of a group as it solves its problems of external adaptation and internal integration; which has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, feel, and behave in relation to those problems. (p. 6)

One of the most important elements of Schein’s definition of culture is that of accumulated shared learning. “Culture is a shared product of shared learning” (Edmondson, 2012 in Schein, 2017). When learning is shared within the group, the group forms a cohesive bond that will eventually evolve into the group realizing not only who they are, but also what the desired purpose for the group will be.

Implications of the word culture. What is implied by the term culture? Is it being referred to as shared learning with shared results? Is it referred to as the behavior of the group when it comes to perceptions, thoughts, feelings or behavior? Culture is a learned phenomenon for the group just as character and personality are a learned behavior for individuals (Schein, 2017). The concept of culture within a group depends on several different factors according to Schein (2017). First, the culture of the group has some form of structural stability. It implies that ideas and learning are not only shared,

but stable enough to define the group. Sometimes the basic assumptions of a culture are so deeply embedded they are not visible, nor tangible. A definition of culture can provide one with what culture is, but cannot begin to describe “the ‘essence’ of what culture is” (Schein, 2017, p. 10). This essence results in those values and beliefs that are nonnegotiable and are deeply embedded in the core of the organization.

A group’s culture, once developed, covers every part of the group’s functioning. From day-to-day operations and how decisions are made, to the environments in which the group functions; culture encompasses it all. Finally, the concept of culture will provide more stability in the long run with patterning or integration. The values, beliefs, and rituals come together as one and this patterning or integration is at the spirit of what is meant by culture (Schein, 2017).

Three levels of culture. Culture can be analyzed at many different levels depending on the observer. These levels can range from something very obvious that can be seen and felt to some of the basic underlying assumptions not always seen or noticed and can sometimes be taken for granted. There are many espoused beliefs and values intertwined between the layers, which help the group communicate their culture. These three levels of analysis when it comes to culture, according to Schein (2017), are artifacts, espoused beliefs and values, and basic underlying assumptions.

Artifacts. Artifacts are the visible products of the group; the things that can be seen, heard and felt when observing. Artifacts encompass the physical environment, the language, emotional displays within the group, etc. However, one of the most important artifacts is the climate of the group. Many researchers use culture and

climate interchangeably, however climate is a subset of culture. Climate is the way individuals interact with each other (Schein, 2017).

One thing to note about the artifact level is the fact that it is very easy to observe, but very difficult, at times, to understand. If someone is not familiar with the culture of the group it can be very hard to understand based on the artifact level alone. Plus, when one observes something that does not make sense it is very easy to rely on his/her own cultural background, which can lead to misinterpretation. The observer might need to ask questions of those within the group to really understand what is going on. These are called the espoused beliefs and values.

Espoused beliefs and values. Espoused beliefs, values, and morals are extremely important to an organization. These beliefs and values contribute to the development of the group for how it will conduct business now and in the future by establishing standards, values, and rules of conduct for the organization. When a group is first created it will be based on someone's original thoughts and beliefs, which relay how he/she thinks things should be. When a problem arises, the process to form a solution will be based on someone's own assumptions within the group. These individuals will become known as leaders, founders, or managers until the group has been together long enough to make shared decisions. These values and beliefs remain conscious and give members of the group something to fall back on when dealing with situations. However, problems can arise when the assumptions of leaders are not in line with the basic assumptions of the organization (Schein, 2017).

Basic underlying assumptions. Basic underlying assumptions are the core of the culture of any group or organization. These assumptions are the taken-for-granted

assumptions that are deeply embedded in the culture of the organization and appear at the unconscious level. Because of this they are very difficult to determine. They are not visible, but help determine “behaviors, perception, thought and feeling” (Schein, 2017, p. 18). Basic underlying assumptions are crucial in providing the answers to why an organization does the things it does. (Schein, 2017).

It is very difficult, once these underlying assumptions are established within a group, to change this way of thinking. The assumptions have been engrained for so long that many individuals do not know how or do not want to change this way of thinking. Therefore, they tend to deny or falsify to themselves what is really going on instead of having to deal with something that is not aligned to the group’s basic assumptions. The power of culture, in this sense, is that it is a shared assumption and the group will come together to mutually reinforce their common beliefs (Schein, 2017).

Understanding the Difference between Culture and Climate

As mentioned previously, many individuals believe culture and climate in an organization is the same thing. While these two terms have been around for a very long time they represent two totally different concepts. The terms do share similar characteristics, which can lead to some confusion. The National School Climate Council (2007) defines school climate as “the patterns of school life experiences and reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching, learning and leadership practices, and organizational structure” (p. 5). They also refer to school climate as the “quality and character of the school” (p. 5). Culture, on the other hand, is when groups develop unwritten sets of expectations to show who they are and how they operate (Gruenert, 2008). When you think of the school’s culture as it’s personality and the

school's climate as it's attitude it is understood how it is much easier to change the climate versus the culture (National School Climate Council, 2007).

Elements of school climate. The National School Climate Center (2007) has identified five different elements of school climate. The first element is safety. Students and staff must feel safe while at school for any learning to take place. This is why it is extremely important for rules and expectations to be put in to place very quickly. Safety also covers the security of the physical part of the campus and social-emotional security (i.e. free from bullying and harassment).

The second element is teaching and learning. Teachers and students need to feel supported in order to grow. When students feel like their teachers care about them and value what they have to say they are more inclined to participate (National School Climate Council, 2007). Teachers, on the other hand, who feel supported by their administration show higher levels of commitment (Waasdorp, Bradshaw, & Duong, 2011), are more open to communicate with their colleagues, and establish strong student-teacher relationships (Brown & Medway, 2007).

The next element of school climate is interpersonal relationships. Respect for diversity among students and staff is a big part of this element. There is no room for judgment. Learning how to interact on a social level among peers is very important as well as being supported by the adults in the school. Following interpersonal relationships is that of the institutional environment. The school is set up in a welcoming environment to affect students' experience at school. Students and teachers engage with one another not only in the classroom, but within the building as well to show a connectedness throughout the school (National School Climate Council, 2007).

The final element of school climate is staff relationships. Students cannot be expected to develop relationships among their peers if the staff in the building cannot. The leader of the building is a very important part of making this element successful. When hiring, the leader will need to look for individuals who fit within what the vision and mission of the school are and expect to be. Leaders will need to ensure staff teambuilding and encourage good working relationships. Students will catch on quickly and see how well a positive working relationship can be (National School Climate Council, 2007).

Why is school climate important? Positive school climate is recognized as an important factor for students' academic, behavioral, and mental well being (Voight, Austin, & Hansen, 2013). It is also known to be "effective for risk prevention" and "positive youth development" (National School Climate Council, 2007, p. 7). Research shows positive school climate has an impact on teachers and support staff within a building (O'Brennan & Bradshaw, 2013) and has shown to increase teacher retention (National School Climate Council, 2007). Research also shows when teachers feel supported by their administration they are more open to communicate with their colleagues, are more prone to develop positive student-teacher relationships, and have better academic and behavioral outcomes (Brown & Medway, 2007).

Factors that impact school climate. The importance of a positive school climate in relation to student academic achievement and growth, as well as students' mental well-being has been noted in current research. School climate can either promote or complicate a child's ability to "learn and achieve academically" (National School Climate Council, 2007, p. 6). While there is much research regarding different factors

that impact school climate, Preble and Gordon (2011) focus on three: relationships, respectful teaching practices, and the physical environment.

Relationships. Quality relationships, with peers and adults, are one of the most important factors affecting school climate. One of the most essential school climate factors is the relationship formed between students and teachers. These relationships create an important perception for students in which they view all school experiences. Creating a positive school climate, which helps students feel like they are valued as individuals and their opinions and thoughts matter, is also a factor from these positive school relationships (Preble & Gordon, 2011). Marzano (2007) states when “the relationship between teachers and students is good, everything else in the classroom seems to be enhanced,” (p. 150).

Marzano (2007) argues the keystone to effective management and “perhaps even the entirety of teaching” is the quality of relationships between teachers and their students (p. 149). There are two very important dynamics that make an effective teacher-student relationship. The first dynamic is to the extent to which the teacher provides a clear direction for students in terms of learning and behavior. The second dynamic is the message the teacher sends to the students they are a team working together to help them be as successful as possible.

The evidence is quite compelling on how important it is for students to be able to trust teachers. Research studies show there is a connection between how students feel at school and motivation, achievement, and both their psychological and physical health. Students are not only more comfortable taking learning risks when they feel safe, but

they also are more likely to seek the “help they need when they are in the zone of proximal development” (Hattie & Yates, 2014, p. 18).

Respectful teaching practices. Respectful teaching is at the “heart of respectful schools” (Preble & Gordon, 2011, p. 16). Communication of the expectations, values, and beliefs to students is done early on so students are aware of what is expected from them and where they are headed as an individual, a class, and a school. These practices make students feel they are valued as a person and feel their voice is important when sharing ideas. Students will tend to contribute more to class discussions and interact more confidently with their peers. And while teachers are able to meet the needs of every student individually they are still able to bring attention to the needs and interests of the different students in the classroom. A classroom that nurtures respectful teaching practices, provides opportunities for students to interact with each other, and “foster independence, promote communication, and build rapport and respect” (Preble & Gordon, 2011, p. 16).

The physical environment. Another important factor, which can positively or negatively impact school culture, is the physical environment. The physical environment sets the tone for staff and students. When the physical environment of a school is not important, students and staff can view their educational and work experience in a negative way. A run down physical environment can impact how teachers and students feel the leaders of the school view their worth and this can make a negative impact as well. Giving the power to students to help improve the school environment can be a powerful strategy when improving school climate. It can allow students to feel valued and true members of a school community when they are included in decision-

making processes and help them feel connected to those around them. When teachers and students are included in these processes, management, and school improvement commitment and motivation by both parties increases (Preble & Gordon, 2011).

Positive Intervention for School Climate Improvement

Disruptive behaviors make learning difficult for students in many classrooms (Algozzine, R., Barrett, S., Dunlap, G., Eber, L., Horner, R. H., Kincaid.,...Sugai, G., 2010). Schools in the past have adopted a tougher approach to discipline and consequences hoping the students will eventually “figure it out” (Horner, Sugai, & Anderson, 2010, p. 1). Research has shown when schools have implemented more rules and harsher consequences the disrespect continues and often increases (Preble & Gordon, 2011). And while negative consequences tend to work with students who are generally successful at school, these procedures are not as effective with students who struggle or have the most severe problem behaviors (OSEP Technical Assistance Center, 2017). However, research has shown focusing on positive behaviors, instead of the negative, “fosters more constructive actions and continued improvement by individuals and for the school as a whole” (Preble & Gordon, 2011, p. 16).

Positive Behavior and Interventions and Supports (PBIS)

Preble and Gordon (2011), in their book *Transforming School Climate and Learning*, suggest there is no solution which will work for all students. However, the authors discuss the insightful work of Rob Horner and George Sugui who developed the Positive Behavior and Interventions and Supports (PBIS) program. The program, also known as School-wide Positive Behavior Support (SW-PBS) is “comprised of a broad range of systemic and individualized strategies for achieving important social and

learning outcomes while preventing problem behaviors with all students” (OSEP Technical Assistance Center, 2010, PBIS in the Classroom). This 3-tiered program “focuses on the prevention of student behavior problems and promotes a positive, collaborative school environment” (O’Brennan & Bradshaw, 2013, p. 3).

SW-PBS emphasizes the following:

- Operationally defined and valued outcomes for all students.
- Clearly established behavioral and biomedical sciences that can be applied to address problem behaviors in schools.
 - Behavior is learned and can be taught.
 - Behavior is lawful and predictable.
 - Behavior occurrences are affected by environmental factors that interact with biophysical characteristics of the individual.
 - Understanding the relation between physiology factors and environmental variables is a critical feature when supporting students with behavioral, social, emotional, and mental health issues.
 - Assessing and manipulating environmental factors can predictable affect occurrences of behavior.
 - Data collection and use for active decision-making are important for continuous intervention, program and system improvement.
- Research-validated practices.

- Gives priority to system change considerations that support the effective and efficient selection and implementation of practices by school personnel.

OSEP Technical Assistance Center, 2010, PBIS in the Classroom

PBIS or SWPBS is a “set of intervention practices and organizational systems for establishing the social culture and intensive individual behavior supports needed to achieve academic and social success for all students” (Horner, Sugai, & Anderson, 2010, p. 4). SWPBS, according to Preble & Gordon (2011), functions on a three-tiered system and focuses on positive behavior expectations, which will decrease problem behavior (Horner, Sugai, & Anderson, 2010). Sugai & Horner (as cited in Preble & Gordon, 2011) suggest schools look at students falling into three distinct categories and use a triangle to illustrate these categories. The bottom of the triangle, known as Tier 1, is where 80% of students will fall. These are the students who are usually responsive to rules and expectations; they generally love school, and have the disposition to succeed in school. The next section of the triangle, Tier 2, is where 15% of students fall and are those who respond differently to any given set of expectations. These students may struggle in school, have a challenging home environment or just have personal issues or difficulties preventing them from responding to Tier 1 interventions. The top part of the triangle, known as Tier 3, is the last five percent of students, which are the most challenging. Many of these students may have experienced some form of trauma or the most extreme circumstances outside of school. These students may need additional help, which the school may not be able to provide (Preble & Gordon, 2011).

Using this three-tiered approach to prevention, schools work together to create a school-wide program focusing on promoting and celebrating positive behavior expectations and uses data to influence decision-making (O'Brennan & Bradshaw, 2013).

Olweus Bullying Prevention Program. O'Brennan and Bradshaw (2013) also reference the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program as another evidence based positive approach to school climate improvement. The program is not only designed to improve school climate, but to reduce and prevent bullying as well. This is also a tiered program implemented school-wide, but provides components for the classroom, individual students, and the community as well. The community component provides activities to involve parents and members of the community, as well as doctors, mental health workers, etc. Previous studies on this program have shown "significant reductions" in the reports of bullying and antisocial behaviors (p. 287).

Importance of Teacher-Student Relationships

Preble and Gordon (2011) challenge the assumption respectful schools are safer by having more rules and harsher consequences for students. Preble & Gordon (2011) argue while rules are important school climate is an imperative part of schools becoming more respectful. Preble & Gordon (2011) also discuss how SW-PBS is a positive, data driven approach focusing on positive behavior expectations instead of the negative. Another important part of positive school climate is that of the teacher-student relationship. Not only does a positive teacher-student relationship create students with a lens to view all school experiences (Preble & Gordon, 2011), but research also shows establishing this relationship early on will result in "lasting benefits involving trust and affection" (Hattie & Yates, 2014, p. 17).

Teacher-Student Relationships and Effect Sizes

Research on the value of teacher-student relationships shows convincing evidence. John Hattie's (2009) research with effect sizes in relation to student achievement covers a variety of factors. To try to understand effect sizes, as outlined by Hattie (2009), it is important to have some background knowledge of his work in this area. Hattie (2009) states, "an effect size provides a common expression of the magnitude of study outcomes for many types of outcome variables," such as teacher-student relationships (p. 7). Hattie also shows "an effect size of $d = 1.0$ indicates an increase of one standard deviation on the outcome" (p. 7). Students usually will show growth of two to three years in the area of achievement if this increase of one standard deviation is shown. This can be generalized in two ways. It can either improve the learning of students by 50% in an area ($r = 0.50$) or it can be a correlation between some variable (e.g. teacher-student relationships). Thus, a continuum and scale were developed (effect scale) to help determine which of the many possible influences may affect achievement.

The achievement continuum, which Hattie (2009) refers to in his book, *Visible Learning*, shows the many different factors which can affect achievement and sets the average effect size of $d = 0.40$. This average can be used to summarize "the typical effect of all possible influences in education and should be used as the benchmark to judge effects in education" (Hattie, 2009, p. 16). Effects lower than the $d = 0.40$ are ones that would possibly need more consideration, while effect sizes above this mark are certainly factors schools would want to consider implementing.

Hattie (2009) synthesized the over 800+ meta analyses to show the "influences on achievement" in a more global perspective of what are and are not key influences on

achievement (p. 14). Hattie found the effect size of teacher-student relationships was $d = 0.72$. This falls within the “zone of desired effects” on the barometer of influence (p. 14). Based on Hattie’s (2009) data with effect sizes and Marzano’s (2007) data on teacher-student relationships it is clear when teachers have a more positive relationship with their students the more safe the students feel when it comes to their physical well-being and their academic well-being as well.

Bullying – A Need for Change

To truly stop bullying in its tracks, schools must foster a positive school climate in which bullying is not accepted in any form. In an effort to address school bullying, schools must have programs in place that will help positively impact the climate in their buildings. All stakeholders must work to change the challenge of thinking bullying is simply part of growing up. Schools need to have a *this is the way we do things around here* type of approach. Instead of waiting until after an incident of bullying has occurred or when a child becomes so troubled he/she cannot seem to find a way out, things need to be approached from an entirely different viewpoint. Stakeholders within the school and the community must work proactively to provide a positive and safe place for students to learn and be productive members of society (Coloroso, 2008).

Previous research shows there is a link between negative school climate and bullying. This might suggest there are “shared attitudes and beliefs supporting bullying, aggression, peer victimization” (Waasdorp, Pas, O’Brennan, & Bradshaw, 2011, p. 117) and other bullying behaviors in many schools across the United States. These shared beliefs can likely influence staff members’ responses to bullying as well. This makes it extremely important for educators to examine differences in perceptions of students and

staff members when it comes to bullying so it can be addressed effectively (Waasdorp, Pas, O'Brennan, & Bradshaw, 2011), and so positive school climate can become the norm so students will have the feeling of safety and security while at school (Goldweber, Waasdorp, & Bradshaw, 2013).

Many adults actually help reinforce bullying behaviors when they respond to students inappropriately. When adults do not intervene or simply ignore bullying behaviors it will continue and escalate (Coloroso, 2008). Barbara Coloroso (2008) states, "bullying is learned behavior" (p. xxv). If students are able to learn bullying, then we can examine it more in-depth and work on creating a positive change.

School climate is making its way to the forefront of successful students in today's schools. School climate "supports the social and emotional well-being of students which in turn leads to stronger academic results through positive school climate and learning" (Preble & Gordan, 2011, p. 12). Some schools have reached the point where they are not a place where all students feel safe. When 73% of students report being bullied in schools either by direct or indirect means, we have a problem (Rivers, Poteat, Noret, & Ashurts, 2009). This could be one of the reasons why the issue of bullying is at the limelight of our culture (Preble & Gordan, 2011).

Summary

Each year there are roughly 13 million students bullied in the United States (White House Summit on Bullying, 2011). Bullying continues to be "one of the most pressing issues facing our nation's youth" even as all 50 states have implemented some form of anti-bullying legislation and have seen a major increase in public awareness (Luxenberg, Limber, & Olweus, 2015, p. 2). Research has shown bullying is not a normal

part of growing up as many have believed in the past, but a serious issue that can be extremely difficult to identify and address appropriately (Kevorkian & D'Antona, 2008). Failing to address bullying puts students at a disadvantage to succeed academically (White House Summit on Bullying, 2011) and also becomes part of the culture accepting to bullying behaviors (Kevorkian & D'Antona, 2008).

Dan Olweus, originally from Norway, is credited as the first person to research bullying. His first study, *Aggression in Schools – Bullies and Whipping Boys* was first published in 1978. His definition of bullying is one that is still recognized in literature almost 40 years later. Olweus contends in order for an incident to be considered bullying three factors must be present: the behavior is intended to do harm, which can be verbal or physical in nature; the behavior must be repeated over time, and there must be a power imbalance. Olweus is credited with creating the Olweus Bullying Prevention program, which is implemented in schools worldwide.

As research in the areas of bullying prevention and intervention continue to grow, there seems to be a complexity in the many different forms of bullying, the lack of a clear definition, and identified bullying behaviors addressed within a definition (Grimm, 2012). The struggle to find an adequate definition for bullying has become a consistent theme (Sercombe & Donnelly, 2013) since bullying is such a broad term (Cornell & Limber, 2015).

Many high-profile incidents of violent behavior, such as school shootings and student suicides, where bullying has been implicated as an underlying cause, started a wave of new legislation across the United States. Every state has now passed anti-

bullying legislation in some form in an effort to combat bullying or in the least, lessen its effects (U. S. Department of Education, 2011).

Recognizing bullying behaviors can be a complex matter and can be very challenging for adults to distinguish bullying behaviors from non-bullying behaviors (Kevorkian & D'Antona, 2008). The struggle to find an adequate definition for bullying has become a consistent theme (Sercombe and Donnelly, 2013) in addressing bullying effectively as well. Dan Olweus states it is also important to note if the power imbalance is not present in a situation then the incident should be labeled as normal childhood conflict (Olweus, 1993). Trudy Ludwig (2013) also states the importance of being able to distinguish between behaviors that are rude, mean or bullying. Therefore, it is imperative for all stakeholders to become knowledgeable about the different forms of bullying and the specific behaviors within each form (Whitson, 2014).

There tends to be a very big discrepancy between the way “students and staff perceive the issue of bullying” (Bradshaw, Sawyer, & O’Brennan, 2007, p. 362). At times, students and staff members within a school can view the same incident completely different. Where one might see the issue as bullying, the other might view it as normal childhood conflict (Bradshaw, Waasdorp, & O’Brennan, 2007). These different perspectives between staff and students when it comes to bullying can be a big part of the problem (Bauman & Del Rio, 2006).

School climate within a school is becoming a big predictor with students and bullying behavior. When there is a shared attitude and belief system that seems to support bullying many forms of bullying behaviors simply become the norm (Waasdorp, Pas, O’Brennan, & Bradshaw, 2011). This can also affect how school staff responds to

bullying as well. Positive school climate is important for students' academic achievement and well-being (Voight, Austin & Hansen, 2013) so many schools are focusing on positive behavior supports intervention as well as the impact of quality teacher-student relationships in order to help their students and staff be the best they can be (Preble & Gordon, 2011).

Hattie (2009) and Marzano (2007) have both outlined in their research the importance of the teacher-student relationship. The teacher-student relationship creates an important perception for students in which they view all school experiences. Students not only feel valued, but that their thoughts and opinions matter. Hattie's (2009) research with effects sizes and factors of achievement shows the effect size of the teacher-student relationship as $d = 0.72$. The average effect size is $d = 0.40$ so any factor of achievement above this is something worthy of consideration for implementation in any school.

Finally, schools have an inherent responsibility to provide students a safe place to learn. Bullying presents a roadblock to learning which denies many students this harbor of safety. Research has proven it affects the learning process and can potentially have long-term negative effects (Kevorkian & D'Antona, 2008). Kevorkian & D'Antona (2008) state, "When we allow a culture that supports social exclusion and the development of social cliques, bullying behaviors become the norm" (p. 43). Lack of action on the part of the school or teacher simply sends the message bullying is acceptable and the behavior will continue. To truly prevent bullying, schools must foster a positive school culture in which bullying is not accepted in any form.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to compare perceptions of bullying among teachers and school administrators and to determine perceptual impact on bullying control. The researcher attempted to determine if the different perceptions of bullying behaviors affect the identified groups' perceptions of whether or not bullying is being controlled in their school. The review of the related literature revealed a discrepancy in the way staff members and students perceived the issue of school bullying (Bradshaw, Sawyer, & O'Brennan, 2007). Bradshaw, et al. (2013) concluded the perceptions of bullying vary greatly depending on the respondent, making it a challenge for educators to understand the significance of bullying within their schools.

The researcher attempted to produce a base of understanding on the interpretation of events that some may perceive differently and thus create misunderstanding and conflict. Increased knowledge may contribute to a base of understanding between stakeholders in the school districts regarding the perceptions of what may or may not be bullying behavior.

To answer the research questions and test the null hypotheses stated in chapter one the researcher developed two similar surveys to determine the perceptions of the two categories of education stakeholders. The stakeholder categories are teachers and school administrators for all non-urban public schools in the state of Missouri. The surveys were developed based on the review of the literature. Face validity of the survey was determined by utilization of a panel of professional educators familiar with the

development of surveys and the subject of bullying in a school setting including school administrators, college professors, and fellow educators with doctoral degrees. The researcher asked the panel members to comment on each question as to the congruence of the question with the research question stated by the researcher. The researcher achieved face validity of the survey instrument by reviewing all panel comments and making changes as suggested by the panel. The researcher then sent the revised survey to the panel members for a second review. After the second review all panel members affirmed their opinion the survey did have face validity.

The researcher conducted a pilot study of the survey after panel approval. The researcher determined content validity of the survey with the pilot study. The researcher submitted the panel-approved survey to a pilot group of teachers and school administrators not included in the sample group for their perceptions of the validity of the questions. The researcher utilized Rovinelli and Hamblen (1977) index of item-objective congruence to determine the content validity of the questions to assist the researcher in the construction of the final survey. The researcher randomly selected two schools in Missouri to be the test subjects for survey development. Each school selected was contacted by email by the researcher asking the high school principal, the middle school principal and the elementary principal to contact at least three teachers in each of their buildings and ask them if they would participate in the pilot test.

The school administrators that agreed to participate received emails with the links to the two surveys attached and were asked to email the appropriate survey to the participating individuals. The email contained the survey link, instructions for

completion, evaluation of validity, and assurances of anonymity. The researcher received feedback from seven administrators and 49 teachers for a total of 56 total respondents.

The researcher used Chronbach's alpha reliability test on the final survey results of the study. The results of the panel for each question as to content validity were based on 56 respondents. The mean for questions four, five and six, which dealt with bullying types or scenarios, were calculated at .9821. The mean for questions seven and eight, which dealt with relationships within the school building, were calculated at .8928 and .8571, respectively. All responses remained close to a positive one; therefore, the pilot participants judged all questions to be valid; therefore, no survey questions were changed.

The researcher included the collection of quantitative and qualitative data to produce synergy and strength between quantitative and qualitative research methods enabling the researcher to have a better understanding of the phenomenon of perceptive differences of bullying behavior. The combination of the two types of research analysis should provide a broader understanding of the perceptions of various groups than the use of either quantitative or qualitative methods alone (Creswell, 2014; Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012).

Quantitative and qualitative techniques were utilized to analyze the perceptions of the participants. Data was collected by administering a survey using Google Forms. The researcher began by contacting superintendents of non-urban school districts in the state of Missouri. The first contact was via email with a follow up email for superintendents not responding to the email within one week from the original email being sent. Superintendents who agreed to assist the researcher in the distribution of the survey received a link to the survey for teachers and school administrators in the email.

Superintendents were asked to forward the survey link to teachers and school administrators in their district. Once the survey was completed Google Forms automatically sent the completed survey results to the researcher with all identifying information, such as respondents' email, removed. Demographic information remained such as rural or suburban school district and the grade level in which the participant was currently working.

Participants

Participants of this study consisted of teachers and school administrators from non-urban public school districts in the state of Missouri. The average income of households in the state of Missouri is \$50,200 and 14.8% of residents live in poverty. The range of ethnic backgrounds for this region is as follows: Pacific Islander, 0.06%; Indian, 0.22%; Multi-Racial, 1.47%; Asian, 1.78%; Hispanic, 3.22%; Black, 8.97%; and White 83.68%. The range of students receiving free and reduced breakfast and lunch was from 9% to 98.3% in 2016 (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education [DESE], 2017). The population of the study excluded the urban areas in the state of Missouri due to urban areas representing different social influences than rural suburban schools districts. Reports have shown urban districts to have a much higher rate of bullying-related discipline issues with ethnic or gang-related activity, which are not as prominent in rural and suburban districts (Center for Safe Schools, 2013), and could possibly skew survey results. Research has shown urban areas have been studied more prevalently due to the issues of ethnic or gang-related activity and little is known as about bullying in other areas, such as rural and suburban schools (Smokowski, Cotter, Robertson, and Guo, 2013).

The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's school district list was obtained from the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's (DESE) website. The list provided the name of the school districts as well as the different buildings within the district along with the grade span for each. Email addresses of the principals and superintendent of each district was also listed as well as other information that might be helpful such as school district phone number and addresses. A link to Google Forms was sent to the superintendent's email with a request for it to be sent to building principals and teachers.

The participant was informed that by completing the survey the participant was agreeing to allow the researcher to use the data collected in the study. The survey included a box for the participant to add the date completed and acknowledging the following sentence: I agree to allow the researcher to use my response anonymously in the completion of the study.

Sample Selection

The researcher's sample selection was all non-urban public school districts in the state of Missouri. All teachers and school administrators employed by a non-urban public school district in the state of Missouri were eligible for participation in the study. The researcher excluded urban school districts in the study as urban areas generally represent a different societal set of social and economic influences than rural and suburban districts. Reports have shown urban districts to have a much higher rate of bullying-related discipline issues with ethnic or gang-related activity, which are not as prominent in rural and suburban districts (Center for Safe Schools, 2013), and could possibly skew survey results. Research has shown urban areas have been studied more prevalently due

to the issues of ethnic or gang-related activity and little is known as about bullying in other areas, such as rural and suburban schools (Smokowski, Cotter, Robertson, and Guo, 2013).

Research Setting (Places)

The setting for this study is non-urban school districts in the state of Missouri. There are 556 school districts in the state of Missouri, which includes 38 charter schools and the five urban school districts excluded from this study. The total number of students enrolled in 2015-16 was 885, 204 (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education [DESE], 2016). The range of square miles school districts cover in Missouri is 2.0821 square miles to 507.0469 square miles (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education [DESE], 2016).

The study excluded the five urban school districts in Missouri due to urban areas representing different social influences than rural suburban schools districts. The researcher decided to exclude urban school districts in the study as urban areas generally represent a different societal set of social and economic influences than rural and suburban districts. Reports have shown urban districts to have a much higher rate of bullying-related discipline issues with ethnic or gang-related activity, which are not as prominent in rural and suburban school districts (Center for Safe Schools, 2013), and could possibly skew survey results. Research has shown urban areas have been studied more prevalently due to the issues of ethnic or gang-related activity and little is known as about bullying in other areas, such as rural and suburban schools (Smokowski, Cotter, Robertson, and Guo, 2013).

Missouri's leading service group is the community, business and personal services sector. Private health care, hotels, data processing services and professional sports franchises are some of the services included in this group. The wholesale and retail trade sector rank second and finance, insurance and real estate sector is the third most important service group in the state of Missouri (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2016).

The state of Missouri is also a leader in agriculture, manufacturing, and services. Livestock is extremely important to the state as it produces over half of Missouri's agriculture production. Soybeans are the state's most important crop and Missouri ranks 7th in the nation for soybean production. In the manufacturing sector, Missouri is a leader in automobile and truck production and transportation equipment such as airplanes, barges, railroad cars, etc.

Research Design

The researcher began the study with a review of the relevant literature concerning the background on bullying, the definition of bullying, school climate in relation to bullying, teacher-student relationships, and a changing culture in our schools and society. The review of the related literature and the researcher's purpose for doing the study were the guides for the researcher determination of the research questions. The null hypotheses followed the research combination of the two types of research analysis and should provide a broader understanding of the perceptions of various groups than the use of either quantitative or qualitative methods alone (Creswell, 2014; Mills & Airasian, 2012).

Following the development of the research questions and the null hypotheses the researcher developed a survey instrument based on the review of the literature and the data needed to answer the research questions and test the null hypotheses. Two expert

panels reviewed the completed survey. The first panel consisted of professional educators familiar with the development of surveys and the subject of bullying in a school setting including school administrators, college professors, and fellow educators with doctoral degrees. The panel judged the face validity of the instrument. Factors the panel considered were if the survey questions appeared to pertain to the topic and if the questions as stated elicited the expected responses. All panel comments were reviewed and changes were made as needed and the revised surveys were sent to the panel members for a second review with no additional changes requested. The researcher sent the survey to the second panel to test content validity.

The second panel consisted of individuals similar to the population to be surveyed: teachers and school administrators. The panel members were asked to comment on each question. They were asked if the question related to the topic, if they were not sure if it related to the topic and if the question did not relate to the topic. The researcher used Rovinelli and Hambelton (1977) index of item-objective congruence to determine the content validity of the questions. The results of the panel for each question as to content validity were based on 56 respondents. The mean for questions four, five and six, which dealt with bullying types or scenarios, were calculated at .9821. The mean for questions seven and eight, which dealt with relationships within the school building, were calculated at .8928 and .8571, respectively. All responses remained close to a positive one; therefore, the pilot participants judged all questions to be valid; therefore, no survey questions were changed.

After the completion of the survey's pilot study, the researcher received approval from the researcher's committee and the Research Review Board of Southwest Baptist

University. The researcher contacted each superintendent of school districts the researcher identified as eligible to be included in the study via email. The researcher sent the survey link via email to each superintendent of schools that agreed to participate at the beginning of October 2017. The superintendent then sent the link to teachers and school administrators within his/her district.

Participant confidentiality was protected by the use of Google Forms removing any identifying information in the collection of the survey results. Google Forms did not collect individual names or schools when organizing data sent to the researcher. The researcher calculated the percentage of responses and compared the number to the size of the population of interest to determine the response rate. With a total population of over 10,000 or more a return rate of 623 was needed to provide the needed confidence level. The researcher received feedback from 1,136 teachers and school administrators from the state of Missouri yielding an 11% response rate and thus, a confidence level of 99% was calculated, noting additional responses would have little effect on the results. The researcher can be confident there is only a 1% chance that additional responses might have changed results (Raosoft Sample Size, 2018). The researcher determined that the rate of return was appropriate and the qualitative data was imported from the excel sheet provided by Google Docs to the SPSS software.

The researcher utilized a t – test when comparing two independent variables to one dependent variable for example comparison of responses to question number four that asked the participant if bullying is controlled in their school building. An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was calculated when comparing two independent variables and more than one dependent variable or when participants were asked to provide multiple

responses as they were for question five with eight scenarios and question six with four types of bullying. An analysis of variance (ANOVA) with Post HOC with multiple comparisons was utilized when there were more than two independent variables to be compared as when comparing participant responses between grade levels.

The researcher disaggregated the participants into the following groups for comparing responses to the survey questions to test null hypotheses and answer the research questions. The groups compared were school administrators to teachers, teachers to teachers by grade level, school administrators to school administrators by grade level, school administrators to teachers by grade level and rural to suburban respondents. The researcher coded the qualitative data from the survey to observe trends through the use of constant comparative analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The researcher took all qualitative responses for teachers from the Excel document in Google Forms and coded each response as physical bullying, verbal bullying, relational bullying or cyberbullying. The researcher then tallied the responses in each category and divided the number of responses in each bullying category by the total number of responses given. The researcher was able to determine the percentage of perceptions each bullying type according to the number of responses noted by teachers to determine qualitative perceptions of bullying. The researcher repeated this process for qualitative data for school administrators. The researcher then utilized the results to answer the research questions.

Previous researchers have concluded the perceptions of bullying vary greatly depending on the respondent, making it a challenge for educators to understand the significance of bullying within their schools (Bradshaw, et al., 2013). The purpose of the

study is to provide educators with information that may help school administrators and teachers when it comes to addressing bullying in their schools from a similar perception of what the other sees as bullying.

Instrumentation

The researcher began the study with a review of the relevant literature concerning the background on bullying, the definition of bullying, school climate in relation to bullying, teacher-student relationships, and a changing culture in our schools and society. Utilizing the related literature the researcher developed a survey instrument containing an eight-question survey. The survey had three demographic questions, one grouping question, one qualitative question, and three Likert scale questions. The three demographic questions at the beginning of the survey related to individual characteristics of the participants and were followed by a grouping question relating to respondents' personal experiences with bullying. Participants were given a grouping question with eight scenarios asking them to identify, which, if any, of the scenarios they would consider bullying behavior. Respondents were then given a qualitative question where they could list other perceived bullying behaviors. A section was identified at the end of this question as other for participants to add other types of behaviors they perceived to be bullying. For question six the researcher listed four definitions of bullying taken from the review of literature. Participants were asked which, if any, of the listed defined bullying types are in their school. Question seven was based on the review of the literature that indicated the relationship students had with their teacher might affect their perception of bullying activity (Hattie, 1993). The final question, question eight, asked participants about their perception of relationships between teachers and school administrators in their

school. Instructions on how to get the completed survey to the researcher followed the final question on the survey.

Two expert panels reviewed the completed survey. The first panel consisted of professional educators familiar with the development of surveys and the subject of bullying in a school setting including school administrators, college professors, and fellow educators with doctoral degrees. The panel judged the face validity of the instrument. Factors the panel considered were if the survey questions appeared to pertain to the topic and if the questions as stated would elicit the expected responses. All panel comments were reviewed and changes made then the revised survey was sent to the panel members for a second review.

The second panel consisted of individuals similar to the population to be surveyed: teachers and school administrators. The panel members were asked to comment on each question. They were asked if the question related to the topic, if they were not sure if it related to the topic and if the question did not relate to the topic. The researcher used Rovinelli and Hamblen (1977) index of item-objective congruence to determine the content validity of the questions to construct the final survey. The results of the panel for each question as to content validity were based on 56 respondents. The mean for questions four, five, and six, which dealt with bullying types or scenarios, were calculated at .9821. The mean for questions seven and eight, which dealt with relationships within the school building, were calculated at .8928 and .8571, respectively. All responses remained close to a positive one; therefore, the pilot participants judged all questions to be valid; therefore, no survey questions were changed.

Data Treatment

The purpose of this study was to compare perceptions of bullying among teachers and school administrators and to determine perceptual impact on bullying control. This study was significant because if bullying is going to be addressed effectively in schools teachers and school administrators must adhere to similar definitions and what behaviors actually constitute bullying. In addition, training must be provided to teachers, staff, and school administrators on how to deal with bullying. If this can be done, students and teachers will spend more times on the things that matter most: teaching and learning.

These different perceptions of bullying may affect whether or not bullying is being controlled in schools. For data purposes, an attitudinal study was sent to teachers and school administrators in non-urban public school districts in the state of Missouri. The survey provided the data needed to answer the following research questions and test the null hypotheses:

Research Questions

1. How are bullying behaviors perceived by teachers and school administrators?
2. How controlled do teachers and school administrators perceive the issue of bullying is in the school building where they are employed?
3. How do teachers and school administrators perceive student/teacher relationships in the school building where they are employed?
4. How do teachers and school administrators perceive teacher/school administrator relationships in the school building where they are employed?
5. How does the grade level you teach affect your perception of bullying?
6. How does the geographical location of the school district affect perceptions of bullying?

Null Hypotheses

1. There are no significant differences in the perception of bullying behaviors between teachers and school administrators.
2. There are no significant differences between the perception of teachers and school administrators on how controlled bullying behaviors are in their school building.
3. There are no significant differences between the perceptions of teachers and administrators on student/teacher relationships in their school.
4. There are no significant differences between the perceptions of teachers and school administrators on teacher/school administrator relationships in their school.
5. There are no significant differences in perception on what bullying behaviors are between grade levels.
6. There are significant differences in the perception of bullying behaviors between rural and suburban participant perceptions.
7. There are no significant differences between the rural and suburban participant perceptions of how controlled bullying behaviors are in their school building.
8. There are no significant differences between rural and suburban participant perceptions on student/teacher relationships in their school.
9. There are no significant differences between rural and suburban participant perceptions on teacher/school administrator relationships in their school.

The researcher included quantitative and qualitative data to better understand the phenomenon of different perceptions of individuals observing the same behavior as to whether or not that behavior is bullying behavior. The combination of the two types of

research may provide better understanding of the perceptions of school stakeholders than the use of a quantitative or qualitative method alone (Creswell, 2014; Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012).

The researcher used ANOVA's and *t*-tests to compare the responses of all respondents as stated in the research design section of chapter three to determine if a significant difference exists between the two groups and to test the null hypotheses and to answer the stated research questions.

The researcher utilized a *t* – test when comparing two independent variables to one dependent variable for example comparison of responses to question number four that asked the participant if bullying is controlled in their school building. An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was calculated when comparing two independent variables and more than one dependent variable or when participants were asked to provide multiple responses as they were for question five with eight scenarios and question six with four types of bullying. An analysis of variance (ANOVA) with Post HOC with multiple comparisons was utilized when using more than two independent variables to be compared as when comparing participant responses between grade levels.

The researcher disaggregated the participants into the following groups for comparing responses to the survey questions to test null hypotheses and answer the research questions. The groups compared were school administrators to teachers, teachers to teachers by grade level, school administrators to school administrators by grade level, school administrators to teachers by grade level and rural to suburban respondents. The researcher performed *t*-tests with these groups to determine the impact of bullying control, the perceptions of student/teacher relationships and the perceptions of

teacher/school administrator relationships. The researcher then performed an analysis of variance (ANOVA) with the same groups to determine perceived bullying behaviors, perceived bullying types, and the impact of bullying control. The researcher coded the qualitative data from the survey to observe trends through the use of constant comparative analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The researcher utilized the results to answer the research questions.

The researcher coded the qualitative data from the survey to observe trends through the use of constant comparative analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The researcher utilized the results to answer the research questions. The reason for conducting the research was to learn perceptual differences, which is the value of qualitative research as it allows researchers to have insight into how people interpret events in their lives (Creswell, 2014; Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The researcher grouped the qualitative data from the survey to observe themes through the use of constant comparative analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

Summary

Chapter three presented the methodology to be used in this study. This study was a quantitative study with a qualitative component which investigated whether the perceptions of teachers and school administrators when it comes to bullying affects how bullying is addressed within the school. Quantitative and qualitative techniques were utilized to analyze the perceptions of the participants. Data was collected by administering a survey using Google Forms through electronic mail.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Introduction

This study was proposed to gather information about teacher and school administrator perceptions on bullying in schools. Data was used to compare perceptions of bullying among teachers and school administrators and to determine perceptual impact on bullying control. This chapter was used to organize and present the collected data. Statistical analysis was completed on survey results and used to determine the following: 1) bullying control, 2) identify bullying behaviors from non-bullying behaviors, 3) perceptions of the different types of bullying, and 4) the perceptual nature of teacher/student relationships and teacher/school administrator relationships.

Analysis of the Data

A survey was distributed to all K-12 teachers and school administrators in non-urban school districts in the state of Missouri. Over 10,000 teachers and school administrators in the state of Missouri were invited to participate in the survey with a total of 1,136 who actually responded. The survey presented questions relating to teachers' and school administrators' perceptual views of bullying in their school.

The survey included three demographic questions, one grouping question, one qualitative question, and three Likert scale questions. The demographic questions were included at the beginning of the survey followed by a Likert scale question asking respondents to identify if bullying is being controlled in their school. Respondents were then asked to answer two grouping questions relating to the different types of bullying and identifying bullying situations from non-bullying situations. A qualitative question

concerning this same topic followed this grouping question. The last two questions of the survey asked respondents to answer two Likert scale questions concerning their perceptions of the relationships between students and teachers and teachers and school administrators within their school. The data was analyzed to compare perceptions of bullying among teachers and school administrators and to determine perceptual impact on bullying control.

Descriptive data.

The first section of the survey included three general demographic questions identifying various characteristics of the participants. Question one of the survey asked participants to identify the grade span in which they are working with currently (elementary, middle school, high school, or other), question two asked participants to identify whether their school district was in a rural or suburban community, and the third demographic question of the survey asked participants to identify their gender. Both descriptive and inferential data were utilized to analyze the data and were presented in this chapter to give insight into answers to the research questions in this study. The demographic data for questions one and two are presented in Table 4.1. Question 3, which asked participants to identify their gender, was not included as many respondents chose not to answer this question. The data in Table 4.1 includes the grade level span of each respondent and the district location of the respondent.

Table 4.1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 1,136)

Characteristic	n	%
Position		
Administrator	229	20
Teacher	907	80
Grade Level		
Elementary	314	28
Middle school	227	20
High school	418	37
Other	169	15
District location		
Rural	1,047	92
Suburban	87	8

All grade levels or spans were represented within the respondents of the survey. Those associated with an elementary school totaled 28% of the respondents while middle and high school respondents represented 20% and 37%, respectively. Fifteen percent of respondents checked the box entitled other as their particular teaching or administrative assignment did not fit the first three criteria.

The second demographic question asked respondents to identify whether their school district was located in a rural or suburban area. Rural populations were overwhelming existent with 92% of respondents stating their school district was in a rural area. Suburban districts only represented eight percent of participants.

Inferential statistics.

The researcher will present the statistical process for answering the research questions and for testing the null hypotheses. Each survey question will be presented followed by a table with the results of a statistical process conducted to provide data to allow the researcher to answer research questions and/or test null hypotheses. The table will be followed by a brief highlight of the results.

Question 4 asked participants to identify their perception of whether bullying was being controlled in the school building in which they were working currently. A *t*-test was calculated to compare differences in perceptions of teachers and school administrators on the question of bullying being controlled in their school. The computation of the *t*-test is presented in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: t-test for Perceptions of Bullying Control in Respondent's School (Q4)

Category	<i>n</i>	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig.
School Administrator	229	1.22	5.28	
Teacher	907	1.46	1.004	
Total				.001

School administrators' and teachers' perceptions showed a significance difference between the two groups with school administrators' feeling that bullying was more controlled in their school building than that of teachers' surveyed. The mean for school administrators was calculated at 1.22 with a standard deviation of 5.28. The group of teacher respondents mean calculated at 1.46 with a standard deviation. The significance between the two groups was .001 (Table 4.2). This data indicates there was a significant difference between school administrators and teachers when it comes to perceptions of bullying control within the respondents' schools.

Question 5 was a grouping question with eight scenarios presented and the participant was asked to identify, which, if any, of the scenarios they would consider bullying. Scenarios one, three, four, and six were considered bullying while scenarios two, five, seven, and eight were not considered bullying according to the definition of bullying as outlined in chapter one of this study.

An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was then calculated to compare perceptions of bullying behaviors between school administrators and teachers. The results from the ANOVA are outlined in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: ANOVA for Perceived Bullying Behaviors All Responses (Q5)

Variable & Source	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig. <p.05</i>
5.1					
Between Groups	.021	.005	4	.179	.949
Within Groups	32.9959	.029	1128		
5.2					
Between Groups	5.078	1.270	4	5.658	.000
Within Groups	253.780	.224	1131		
5.3					
Between Groups	.052	.013	4	.426	.790
Within Groups	34.807	.031	1131		
5.4					
Between Groups	.049	.012	4	.621	.648
Within Groups	22.485	.020	1131		
5.5					
Between Groups	.047	.012	4	.336	.854
Within Groups	39.473	.035	1131		
5.6					
Between Groups	.440	.110	4	.785	.535
Within Groups	158.446	.140	1131		
5.7					
Between Groups	2.061	.515	4	3.567	.007
Within Groups	163.375	.144	1131		
5.8					
Between Groups	.342	.085	4	1.290	.272
Within Groups	74.877	.066	1130		

Of the eight scenarios presented to teachers and school administrators, four were considered bullying and four were not according to the definition of bullying for this study as outlined in chapter one. The data indicated two of the eight scenarios as showing

a significant difference between the groups as their significance was $<.05$. The second scenario listed on Table 4.3 (5.2) outlined an incident where a student takes another student's assignment and uses it as his/her own. The students are of unequal power imbalance. This scenario showed an F of 5.658 with a significance of .000. The seventh scenario in Table 4.3 (5.7) presented a situation where a student cuts in line in front of another student and had an F of 3.567 with a significance of .007. Both scenarios qualify as bullying according to the definition of bullying for this study as outlined in chapter one.

To further explain a difference in perception between the school administrator group and the teacher group the researcher looked at the descriptive statistics of a frequency count of school administrator and teacher responses for the percentage of each group's identification of what they perceived as bullying and what they did not perceive to be bullying. The findings are presented in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4: Frequencies of Responses to Eight Scenarios of Q5

Question	School Administrator		Teacher	
5.1	Y = 97%	N = 3%	Y = 97%	N = 3%
5.2*	Y = 49%	N = 51%	Y = 69%	N = 31%
5.3	Y = 96%	N = 4%	Y = 97%	N = 3%
5.4	Y = 99%	N = 1%	Y = 98%	N = 2%
5.5*	Y = 2%	N = 98%	Y = 4%	N = 96%
5.6	Y = 83%	N = 17%	Y = 83%	N = 17%
5.7*	Y = 9%	N = 91%	Y = 20%	N = 80%
5.8*	Y = 4%	N = 96%	Y = 8%	N = 92%

Questions with an * by the definition of bullying for this study as outlined in chapter one are not bullying

The four scenarios, which constituted bullying, were scenarios 5.1, 5.3, 5.4, and 5.6 according to the definition of bullying as outlined in chapter one. When it came to teachers' and school administrators' responses to these scenarios, the groups were comparable when it came to agreeing the incidents were bullying. The non-bullying scenarios (5.2, 5.5, 5.7, and 5.8) data indicated more of a spread when it came to responses noting non-bullying versus bullying. The data for the second scenario (5.2) indicated 20% more of teachers who responded felt the situation was bullying, versus non-bullying, than that of school administrators. Scenario 5.5 was more comparable between teachers and school administrators with only two percent more of teachers believing the situation was bullying versus non-bullying. The third non-bullying scenario (5.7) showed a more distant spread between the groups with the data indicated 11% more teachers than school administrators believed the incident to be bullying when it was not. Finally, the last scenario (5.8) data indicated only four percent more of teachers felt the incident was bullying than that of school administrators surveyed.

The data presented in Table 4.5 is an analysis of variance (ANOVA) for responses to question six, which asked participants to identify what types of bullying behaviors were present in their school. Choices given were physical, verbal, relational, and/or cyberbullying. Teachers and school administrators were to simply check which of the four, if any, they felt were present in their school.

Table 4.5: ANOVA Comparison of School Administrator and Teacher Perceptions of Different Bullying Types Present in Participants' Schools (Q6)

Bullying Type & Source	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F(4,1131)</i>	<i>Sig. <p.05</i>
Physical				
Between Groups	.661	.165	.693	.597
Within Groups	269.561	.238		
Verbal				
Between Groups	.630	.157	1.949	.100
Within Groups	91.390	.081		
Relational				
Between Groups	6.094	1.523	8.662	.000
Within Groups	198.927	.176		
Cyberbullying				
Between Groups	48.421	12.105	56.267	.000
Within Groups	243.324	.215		

Two of the four types of bullying behaviors (physical, verbal, relational, cyberbullying) were found to show a significant difference between teachers and school administrators, as their significance was $<.05$. The two types, which showed this significant difference, were relational bullying and cyberbullying. The F of relational bullying was 8.662 and with a significance of $.000$. Cyberbullying had an F of 56.267 and showed a significance of $.000$ indicating a considerable difference in perceptions between school administrators and teachers for these types of bullying behaviors.

The data for the bullying types of physical bullying and verbal bullying indicated no significant difference between school administrators and teachers surveyed, therefore the researcher looked at the descriptive statistics in Table 4.6 to see what the individual responses in each group were and if the responses appear to be affected by the grade level the participant teaches or is an administrator of currently.

Table 4.6: Frequency Counts of All Responses to Q6: Types of Bullying in Participants' Schools

Type of Bullying	Percentage of Yes	Percentage of No
Physical	65	35
Verbal	91	9
Relational	80	20
Cyberbullying	65	35

The frequency of responses indicated school administrators and teachers believe there is verbal and relational bullying present in their school building, but are somewhat divided as to the presence of physical and cyberbullying behaviors. The researcher presents a Post Hoc test in Table 4.7 comparing means with more than two levels with the grade level taught being the independent variables and the types of bullying being the dependent variables. The significant difference in perceptions of the presence of the types of bullying indicated in Table 4.7 may have been influenced by the grade level. The Post Hoc test was calculated to determine if that was possible.

Table 4.7: Post Hoc Comparison of the Mean by Grade Level of School Administrator and Teacher Perceptions of Different Bullying Types Present in Participants' School (Q6)

	Participant Groups							
	Elementary 269		Middle 202		High 368		Other 60	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Physical	1.38	.509	1.33	.493	1.31	.485	1.37	.486
Verbal	1.13	.333	1.06	.246	1.10	.294	1.08	.279
Relational	1.15 _a	.370	1.13 _a	.336	1.29	.472	1.28	.555
Cyberbullying	1.17 _b	.433	1.20 _b	.403	1.66 _b	.508	1.23 _b	.427

Note: Means in a row sharing subscripts are significantly different from each other.

The data in Table 4.7 indicates the grade level taught may affect the perceptions of bullying of teachers and school administrators. Table 4.7 indicates physical bullying and verbal bullying were identified as present at all grade levels. Relational bullying was identified more often at the high school and other level than in the elementary and middle levels. The data presented also indicated cyberbullying was identified significantly more at the high school level than at the other levels.

Teachers and school administrators were asked to identify their perceptions of student/teacher relationships in their school. A *t*-test was conducted to determine if there was a statistical difference between the two groups. Data for the *t*-test is presented in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8: t-test Comparing Means of School Administrator Perceptions of Student/Teacher Relationships to Teacher Perceptions of Student/Teacher Relationships (Q7)

Category	n	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig.
School Administrator	229	1.05	.223	
Teacher	907	1.11	.692	
Total				.000

The data in Table 4.8 indicated school administrators felt the relationships between teachers and students were more positive than that of teachers who were surveyed. The *t*-test for the perceptions of student/teacher relationships within the respondents' school showed the school administrator respondents to have a mean of 1.05 with a standard deviation of .223. The teacher respondent group had a mean of 1.11 with a standard deviation of .692. A significant difference between the school administrator and teacher respondents was found as the significance was calculated at .000 and was $<p$.

Teachers and school administrators were then asked to identify their perceptions of school administrator/teacher relationships in their school. A *t*-test was conducted to determine if there was a statistical difference between the two groups. Data for the *t*-test is presented in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9: t-test Comparing Means of School Administrator Perceptions of School Administrator/Teacher Relationships to Teacher Perceptions of School Administrator/Teacher Relationships (Q8)

Category	n	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig. $p < .05$
Administrator	229	1.09	.304	
Teacher	907	1.31	.655	
Total				.000

The data for the t -test in Table 4.9 for the perceptions of school administrator/teacher relationships within the respondents' school indicated school administrators felt the relationships between teachers and school administrators in the building were more positive than that of the teachers surveyed. The school administrator respondents had a mean of 1.09 with a standard deviation of .304. The teacher respondent group had a mean 1.31 with a standard deviation of .655. A significant difference between the school administrator and teacher respondents was found as the significance was calculated at .000.

Impact of Bullying Control in Rural and Suburban Districts

Teachers and school administrators were asked to answer a demographic question stating whether the district in which they were employed in currently was in a rural or suburban location. Perceptions of bullying control were then analyzed between teachers and school administrators in rural and suburban districts. An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to determine perceptual impact of bullying control between teachers and school administrators in rural and suburban districts. The mean square between the groups was calculated at a 2.046. There was no significant difference found between the two groups as the significance was calculated at .095.

An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was also performed to determine differences in perceived bullying behaviors based on respondents' district location of a rural or suburban district. Respondents were given eight scenarios and asked to identify, which, if any, were bullying in nature. The data for this ANOVA is presented in Table. 4.10.

Table 4.10: ANOVA for Perceived Bullying Behaviors Between Rural and Suburban Respondents

Question	Source	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	Sig.
5.1	Between Groups	.073	.036	.288
	Within Groups	32.907	.029	
	Total	32.980		
5.2	Between Groups	.992	.496	.114
	Within Groups	257.866	.228	
	Total	258.858		
5.3	Between Groups	.344	.172	.004
	Within Groups	34.516	.030	
	Total	34.859		
5.4	Between Groups	.002	.001	.963
	Within Groups	22.533	.020	
	Total	22.534		
5.5	Between Groups	.104	.052	.225
	Within Groups	39.416	.035	
	Total	39.520		
5.6	Between Groups	1.104	.552	.019
	Within Groups	157.782	.139	
	Total	158.886		
5.7	Between Groups	.324	.162	.330
	Within Groups	165.112	.146	
	Total	165.436		
5.8	Between Groups	.011	.005	.922
	Within Groups	75.209	.066	
	Total	75.219		

Of the eight scenarios presented, two showed a significant difference between respondents from rural and suburban districts. Scenario three in Table 4.7 (5.3) presented a situation where one student forces another student of lesser power physically to give up his/her seat on the bus every day after school. The mean of the square for this scenario

was .172, which showed a significance of .004. Scenario six in Table 4.7 (5.6) presented a situation where a group of students refuse to let a student of lesser power join in the game they were playing at recess on a daily basis. This scenario was calculated with a mean square of .552 and showed a significance of .019. Both of these scenarios were considered bullying based on the definition of bullying as outlined in chapter one of this study, but respondents from rural and suburban districts indicated a significance difference between the groups when it came to identifying the situation as bullying. The mean for rural respondents for scenario 5.3 was 1.03 and the mean for suburban respondents was 1.09; therefore, rural respondents indicated the incident was bullying more than that of the suburban respondents. The data for scenario 5.7 indicated similar results as scenario 5.3. The mean for rural respondents was calculated at 1.16 while the mean for suburban respondents 1.26. The data indicated rural respondents perceived this scenario to be bullying more than the suburban respondents.

An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was then performed to determine the perceptions of school administrators and teachers on the different types of bullying behaviors in rural and suburban districts. Respondents were asked to identify which, if any, types of bullying were occurring in their school (physical, verbal, relational, and cyberbullying). The data is presented in Table 4.11.

Table 4.11: ANOVA for Perceptions of Different Types of Bullying Between Rural and Suburban Respondents

Type of Bullying/Source	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>Sig. < p.05</i>
Physical			
Between Groups	1.728	.864	.026
Within Groups	268.494	.237	
Verbal			
Between Groups	.373	.187	.100
Within Groups	91.647	.081	
Relational			
Between Groups	.424	.181	.310
Within Groups	204.597	.181	
Cyberbullying			
Between Groups	1.880	.940	.026
Within Groups	289.866	.256	

Two of the four bullying types showed a significant difference between respondents in rural and suburban areas: physical bullying and cyberbullying. Physical bullying had a mean square of .864 with a significance of .026. Cyberbullying had a mean square of .940 and a significance of .026. There data indicates no significant differences were noted between the groups when it came to verbal bullying or relational bullying.

Respondents from rural and suburban districts were then asked to identify their perceptions of the relationship between teachers and students in their school. A *t*-test was conducted between these rural and suburban districts to determine if there was a significant difference between the two groups. Data for the *t*-test is presented in Table 4.12.

Table 4.12: t-test Comparing Perceptions of Student/Teacher Relationships in Rural and Suburban Districts

Group	n	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig.
Rural	1,047	1.10	.557	
Suburban	87	1.08	1.183	
Total				.020

Respondents from rural districts perceived the relationship between teachers and students to be more positive compared to that of the suburban respondents. The group of respondents in a rural school district calculated a mean of 1.10 with a standard deviation of .557. The respondents from suburban school districts had a mean of 1.08 with a standard deviation of 1.183. There was a significant difference noted between the groups in rural and suburban districts as the significance was calculated at .020.

Comparing Perceptions of School Administrator/Teacher Relationships in Rural and Suburban Districts

A *t*-test was performed to determine if there was a significant difference in perceptions of teacher/school administrator relationships in rural and suburban schools. Rural district statistics showed a mean of 1.27 with a standard deviation of .616. The statistics for suburban districts had a mean of 1.28 and a standard deviation of .499. The data indicated there was little difference between the perceptions of respondents in rural or suburban districts; therefore, no significant difference between the two groups was noted, as the significance was .779.

Qualitative results.

This section provided qualitative evidence used to determine insights on bullying and bullying behaviors. Teachers and school administrators were asked to identify,

which, if any, of eight scenarios was considered bullying. Four of the scenarios were considered bullying while four of the scenarios were not. At the end of this question, participants were asked to identify other behaviors they felt were bullying. Of the 907 teachers who responded to the survey, 50 listed other behaviors they felt to be bullying. The researcher then took the responses into the four different bullying types (physical, verbal, relational, and cyberbullying) and tallied the responses for each category. Table 4.13 presents the data of teacher respondents' open-ended responses for other bullying behaviors or situations.

Table 4.13: Teachers' Perceived Bullying Behaviors (Open-Ended)

Bullying Type	N	%	Example Responses
Physical	1	2%	Any behavior that can cause physical harm
Verbal	16	32%	Derogatory verbal comments, talking about a student in a derogatory manner, calling names, speaks negatively to another student on a regular basis, consistent name calling, etc.
Relational	17	34%	Students who consistently gang up on a student of lesser popularity, forcing another student to share homework daily or weekly, whispering/snickering about others, hiding or taking special education students' belongings, denying friendships, humiliation, sexual harassment or orientations, etc.
Cyberbullying	3	6%	Publishing rumors on social media, using social media to take pictures and post on Snapchapt, etc.

After dividing teachers' comments into the four bullying categories (physical, verbal, relational, cyberbullying), the data indicated relational and verbal bullying to be the most prominent behaviors as perceived by teachers in their school buildings with 34% and 32%, respectively. Cyberbullying followed with six percent, while physical bullying was only perceived by one percent of teachers in their building. Many teachers' comments were tailored towards the definition of bullying and not necessarily a particular type of bullying. For instance, comments were made towards a power imbalance not needing to be present to be considered bullying while others stated the number of times a bullying behavior was repeated was an important factor.

There were 229 school administrators from the state of Missouri who participated in the survey. Of the 229 who responded to the survey, 14 school administrators listed other behaviors they felt to be bullying. The researcher again divided the responses into the four different bullying types (physical, verbal, relational, and cyberbullying) and tallied the responses for each category. Table 4.14 presents the data for school administrator respondents' open-ended responses for other bullying behaviors or situations.

Table 4.14: School Administrators' Perceived Bullying Behaviors (Open-Ended)

Bullying Type	N	%	Example Responses
Physical	1	7%	Intent on inflicting physical harm
Verbal	16	21%	Intimate or humiliate others, name calling, verbal threats, derogatory verbal comments, etc.
Relational	17	57%	Students perpetuated by an individual group of students, systematic put-downs of other students, spreading false rumors about other students, making racist or homophobic remarks about other students, etc.
Cyberbullying	3	14%	Spreading rumors on social media, posting sexually explicit photos or screen shots on social media or by group chat, etc.

After dividing school administrators' comments into the four bullying categories (physical, verbal, relational, cyberbullying), the data indicated relational bullying to be the most prominent behaviors as perceived by school administrators in their school buildings with 57% of school administrators listing some type of relational bullying behavior in the other comment section. Verbal bullying was perceived by 21% of those who commented while cyberbullying was at 14% percent. The data indicated physical bullying only represented one percent of school administrators' perceptions. Many school administrators' comments were tailored towards the definition of bullying and not necessarily a particular type of bullying. For instance, comments were made that repetition of bullying behavior played an important role while consistency and persistent behavior by individuals should be considered bullying.

Summary of Findings

This section summarized findings related to the survey. The research questions are addressed followed by the null hypotheses test results. The null hypotheses results, descriptive and qualitative data are the basis for answering the research questions.

Research Question 1.

How are bullying behaviors perceived by teachers and school administrators?

After reviewing and analyzing survey results, the researcher determined teachers and school administrators perceive bullying differently in some cases, but not in all cases. The first evidence of this difference is located in Table 4.2. The results of this *t*-test indicated a significant difference in the perceptions of teachers and school administrators on the question of bullying being controlled in their school.

Additional data from Table 4.3 presented data from question five that presented eight scenarios for participants to identify, which, if any, they perceived to be bullying. Of the eight scenarios, four are considered bullying by the definition outlined in chapter one and four were not by definition considered bullying. The results determined teachers' and school administrators' perceptions were similar for six of the eight scenarios, however scenarios two and seven were not considered bullying by definitions and teachers and school administrators had significantly different perceptions of whether they were bullying. The majority of teachers identified both as bullying and the majority of school administrators did not identify them as bullying.

The results for question six, as presented in Table 4.5, also addresses research question one. Table 4.5 presents the results of an ANOVA for question six that asked the participants to indicate, which, if any, of the four types of bullying are present in their

school. The results indicate teachers and school administrators both stated physical and verbal bullying were present in their school. A significant difference was indicated between teacher and school administrator responses for relational and cyberbullying. The researcher feels this could pose possible issues when dealing with bullying effectively if teacher and school administrators cannot agree if bullying is controlled in their building.

Question five of the survey also gave teachers and school administrators the opportunity to list other bullying behaviors they perceived in their school building. The researcher first collected the results from teachers displayed in Excel and tallied each response into one of the four bullying types: physical bullying, verbal bullying, relational bullying, cyberbullying. The researcher then took the number in each category and divided it by the total number of teachers leaving a response and calculated a percentage for each category. The data presented in Table 4.13 indicated perceived bullying behaviors by teachers who commented at the end of question five. Relational and verbal bullying appeared to be the most prominent behaviors at 34% and 32%, respectively. Cyberbullying was calculated at 6% while physical bullying was only 2% of bullying behaviors perceived by teachers.

This process for qualitative data was repeated with statistics for school administrators as well. The data presented in Table 4.14 indicated perceived bullying behaviors by school administrators who commented at the end of question five. Relational and verbal bullying were again the most prominent behaviors perceived by school administrators calculated at 57% and 21%, respectively. Cyberbullying was calculated at 14% while physical bullying was only 7% of bullying behaviors perceived by school administrators.

Research Question 2.

How controlled do teachers and school administrators perceive the issue of bullying is in the school building where they are employed?

Question four asked participants if they perceived bullying as being controlled in their schools. Table 4.2 presents the results of a *t*-test comparing the mean responses of school administrators. The results indicated a significant difference of .001 in the perceptions of teachers and school administrators on the question of bullying being controlled in their school. School administrators had a more positive view of bullying being controlled in their school than teachers.

The researcher then looked at descriptive statistics of a frequency count of school administrator and teacher responses for the percentage of each group's identification of what they perceived as bullying and what they did not perceive to be bullying and was presented in Table. 4.4 The data for scenario two, which was considered a non-bullying situation, indicated administrators were fairly equivalent in their perceptions with 49% of school administrators believing it was a bullying situation and 51% stating they did not feel it was a bullying situation. Teachers' perceptions on this scenario showed more of a difference with 69% agreeing the situation was bullying and 31% stating it was not.

When looking at the descriptive statistics for scenario seven, only nine percent of administrators felt this scenario was bullying and 91% felt it was not bullying. Teachers' perceptions with this scenario were 20% stating it was bullying and 80% felt it was not. These statistics relate directly to the purpose of this study in the fact that different perceptions of bullying may lead to conflicts between teachers and school administrators, which makes it difficult to effectively address the issue of bullying.

Teachers and school administrators were then asked to identify which types of bullying behaviors; if any, were occurring in their school building: physical, verbal, relational, and/or cyberbullying. The data was presented in Table 4.5 and indicated two of the four types of bullying were found to show a significant difference between teachers and school administrators: relational and cyberbullying. Physical and verbal bullying, however, did not show a significant difference indicated between school administrator perceptions and teacher perceptions therefore, these statistics support null hypothesis number one.

Research Question 3.

How do teachers and school administrators perceive teacher/student relationships in the school building where they are employed?

After reviewing and analyzing the survey results, when it came to teachers' and school administrators' perceptions of teacher/student relationships in their school building, the researcher was able to support findings connected to research question number three. Teachers and school administrators were asked to identify their perception of teacher/student relationships in their buildings. Hattie and Yates (2014) stated the evidence is quite compelling on how important it is for students to be able to trust teachers. Building a positive relationship with students is the first step. The data presented in Table 4.8 indicated school administrators had a much different perception than teachers when it came to teacher/student relationships in their building, therefore, a significant difference was found between the two groups.

Research Question 4.

How do teachers and school administrators perceive school administrator/teacher relationships in the school building where they are employed?

After reviewing and analyzing the survey results, when it came to teachers' and school administrators' perceptions of teacher/school administrator relationships in their school building, the researcher was able to support findings connected to research question number four. Respondents were asked to identify their perception of teacher/school administrator relationships in their building. The data presented in Table 4.9 indicated a significant difference between the two groups as administrators felt the relationships were more positive than that of teachers. This significance could come into play as teachers who do not feel like they have a positive relationship with their administrator and can thus impact their perceptions of bullying control among others.

Research Question 5.

How does the grade level taught affect perceptions of bullying?

In reviewing the survey results for items related to the grade level taught by respondents' and the affects of perceptions of bullying, the researcher was able to support findings connected to research question number five.

Data presented in Table 4.7 indicated physical and verbal bullying were most prominent at the elementary level compared to that of middle school, high school or the category labeled "other." Relational bullying was found to be most prominent at the level categorized as other, with high school coming in at a close second. Cyberbullying, according to the data, was most prominent at the middle school level with all other levels

being somewhat comparable. This data supports research question number five that the grade level taught might affect the perceptions of different types of bullying.

Research Question 6.

How does the geographical location of the school district affect perceptions of bullying?

Teachers and school administrators were asked to identify whether the district in which they were employed currently was in a rural or suburban district. An ANOVA was then calculated to determine perceptions of bullying control between teachers and school administrators in rural and suburban districts. There was no significant difference noted between the groups in rural and suburban districts when it came to perceptions of bullying control.

Table 4.10 presented the data for question five of the survey where participants were asked to identify which, if any, of eight scenarios were bullying. Two of the eight scenarios noted a significant difference between rural and suburban respondents. Scenarios three and six were considered bullying by the definition as outlined in chapter one and the data indicated teachers and school administrators in rural and suburban districts had difficulty identifying if these two scenarios were bullying.

Table 4.11 presented the data for perceptions of bullying types between rural and suburban respondents. Two of the four bullying types showed a significant difference between respondents in rural and suburban areas: physical bullying and cyberbullying. The data indicated no significant differences between the groups when it came to verbal or relational bullying.

Null Hypothesis 1.

There are no significant differences in the perception of bullying behaviors between teachers and school administrators.

The researcher rejects null hypothesis one based on the data presented in Tables 4.3, 4.4, and 4.5. Tables 4.3 and 4.5 indicate significant differences of perceptions as to what constitute bullying behaviors. Table 4.3 presents identified differences in means in school administrator and teacher responses for scenarios two and seven. Table 4.4 is a frequency count of school administrator and teacher responses for each scenario. For scenario two, 49% of the administrators identified scenario two as bullying and 69% of the teachers identified the scenario as bullying. Scenario seven was identified as bullying by 9% of the school administrators and by 20% of the teachers. Both differences were statistically significant, but both scenarios were not by definition considered bullying.

Null Hypothesis 2.

There are no significant differences between the perceptions of teachers and school administrators on how controlled bullying behaviors are in their school building.

The researcher rejects null hypothesis two based on the data presented in Table 4.2. Table 4.2 indicated a significant difference in perceptions of bullying being controlled in the respondents' school building. The standard deviation this *t*-test was calculated at 5.28 for school administrators and the standard deviation for teachers was calculated at 1.004; therefore the data indicated school administrators perceived bullying behaviors to be more controlled in their school buildings than that of teachers.

Null Hypothesis 3.

There are no significant differences between the perceptions of teachers and school administrators on teacher/student relationships in their school.

The researcher rejects null hypothesis three based on the data presented in Table 4.8. Table 4.8 compared the means of the school administrator perceptions of student/teacher relationships to that of teacher perceptions of student/teacher relationships. Table 4.8 indicated a significant difference in perceptions of teachers and school administrators when it came to student/teacher relationships in their school building. The standard deviation this *t*-test was calculated at .223 for school administrators and the standard deviation for teachers was calculated at .692; therefore the data indicated school administrators perceived the student/teacher relationship to be more positive than that of teachers surveyed.

Null Hypothesis 4.

There are no significant differences between the perceptions of teachers and school administrators on school administrator/teacher relationships in their school.

The researcher rejects null hypothesis four based on the data presented in Table 4.9. Table 4.9 compared the means of the school administrator perceptions of the school administrator/teacher relationship in the respondents' school building. The standard deviation this *t*-test was calculated at .304 for school administrators and the standard deviation for teachers was calculated at .655; therefore the data indicated school administrators perceived the school administrator/teacher relationship to be more positive than that of teachers surveyed.

Null Hypothesis 5.

There are no significant differences in perception on what bullying behaviors are between grade levels.

The researcher rejects null hypothesis five based on the data presented in Table 4.7. Table 4.7 indicated the grade level taught may affect the perceptions of bullying of teachers and school administrators as the different types of bullying being perceived are different at different levels. Physical and verbal bullying were identified at all grade levels, however relational bullying was identified more often at the high school and other level than in the elementary and middle levels. The data presented also indicated cyberbullying was identified significantly more at the high school level than at the other levels.

Null Hypothesis 6.

There are no significant differences in the perception of bullying behaviors between rural and suburban participant perceptions. Fail to reject no significant difference.

Null Hypothesis 7.

There are no significant differences between the rural and suburban participant perceptions on how controlled bullying behaviors are in their school building. Fail to reject no significant difference.

Null Hypothesis 8.

There are no significant differences between rural and suburban participant perceptions on student/teacher relationships in their school. The researcher rejects the significant difference.

Null Hypothesis 9.

There are no significant differences between rural and suburban participant perceptions on teacher/school administrator relationships in their school. Fail to reject no significant difference.

Summary

This chapter provided information from the perspectives of teachers and school administrators in the state of Missouri who participated in a survey and provided their perceptions of bullying and bullying behaviors in their school building. The survey results were entered into the SPSS data software to provide analyses to analyze data with the intentions of answered the six research questions presented in this study. Descriptive and inferential statistics were employed to give insight into the survey results data. In analyzing and presenting the data, the overall picture of perceptions of teachers and school administrators when it comes to bullying and bullying behaviors in their school building. The descriptive statistics along with *t*-test and ANOVA values were displayed and tables used to illustrate the noted significant differences.

Finally, open-ended responses were analyzed and discussed to determine comparisons between teachers and school administrators. The respondents gave insight into their perceptions of the definition of bullying as well as other behaviors they felt were bullying. The researcher divided the responses into the four types of bullying: physical, verbal, relational, and cyberbullying. After dividing the behaviors into the four bullying types, the researcher looked for patterns between the comments of teachers and the comments of school administrators.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Schools are becoming more a place of survival than learning for many children, which can present a threat to the safety of the learning environment schools must provide (Aluede, Adeleke, Omoike, & Afen-Akpaida, 2008). Bullying can be threatening and create an uncomfortable or even hostile environment making learning difficult for students (Kevorkian & D'Antona, 2008). Bullying is known to “interfere[ing] with the learning process” and research shows it may have negative effectives in the long run. Simply put, bullying is a “reality that must be recognized and addressed” (Kevorkian & D'Anton, 2008, p.1).

There are many different viewpoints between students and teachers when it comes to bullying behaviors. There are also differences between school staff members, not only on how they view bullying, but how they respond to it as well (Bradshaw et al., 2013). Research shows there is a discrepancy between how students perceive bullying behaviors compared to that of teachers and staff. Many teachers in today's schools are unaware of how extensive and serious bullying is in their schools, therefore making it difficult for them to effectively identify bullying behavior (Waasdorp, Pas, O'Brennan, & Bradshaw, 2011).

This study explored the comparisons of the perceptions of bullying among teachers and school administrators and determined perceptual impact on bullying control in schools. If bullying is going to be addressed effectively in schools teachers and school administrators must adhere to similar definitions and understand what behaviors actually

constitute bullying. This study has shown the need for training for teachers, staff, and school administrators on what bullying is and how to deal with it effectively.

Significant Findings

The findings of this study for the related themes addressed in the survey were presented in Chapter 4. A summary of the key findings is as follows:

1. School administrators believed bullying was more controlled than teachers in their school buildings; however, there was not a significant difference between rural and suburban respondents when it came to bullying control.
2. Teachers perceived bullying behaviors more often than school administrators when it came to identifying bullying behaviors from non-bullying behaviors.
3. Rural respondents perceived bullying behaviors more often than suburban respondents when it came to identifying bullying behaviors from non-bullying behaviors.
4. Perceptions of bullying types by teachers and school administrators showed a significant difference when it came to relational and cyberbullying behaviors. The data indicated school administrators perceived relational bullying and cyberbullying more than teachers.
5. Rural and suburban respondents' perceptions showed a significant difference when it came to physical and cyberbullying. The data indicated suburban respondents perceived physical bullying and cyberbullying more than rural respondents.
6. School administrators perceived the student/teacher relationship to be more positive than teachers while respondents from rural districts perceived the

relationships of students and teachers to be more positive than that of suburban respondents.

7. School administrators perceived the teacher/school administrator relationship to be more positive than teachers. There was only a slight difference noted between rural and suburban respondents with the mean of rural respondents calculated at 1.27 and the mean for suburban respondents calculated at 1.28.
8. Data indicates perceptions of different bullying types are occurring at different grade levels and is not consistent among grade levels. Physical bullying and verbal bullying were present among all grade levels; however, relational bullying was identified more often at the high school level and other level than in the elementary and middle school level. Cyberbullying was identified significantly more at the high school level than any of the other levels (elementary, middle school, and other).

Implications for Educators

This study focused on comparisons of perceptions of bullying among teachers and school administrators and to determine perceptual impact on bullying control. The findings of this study indicate the perceptions of bullying among teachers and school administrators differ. These different perceptions of bullying may affect whether or not bullying is being controlled in schools. One of the major problems with addressing bullying is the fact that many adults do not know what bullying is and therefore, do not know how to address it. The first and most important implication for educators concerning bullying and bullying control begins with understanding what bullying is and

how to differentiate bullying from normal childhood conflict. The first step in this process is the need for in-depth training.

Analysis of both the qualitative and quantitative data supports the need for quality professional development in the area of bullying. The findings presented in Chapter 4 confirmed teachers' and school administrators' perceptions of bullying behaviors vary greatly. This justifies the need for more training for school personnel when it comes to bullying. Therefore, districts need to ensure their school staff understands what the district's definition of bullying is, what behaviors constitute bullying, and what steps will be taken to address it.

School personnel need to have a clear understanding of the district's definition of what actually constitutes bullying and know exactly what is expected of them when bullying is suspected. Definitions of bullying differ tremendously depending on the respondent, and bullying is such a complex issue because there are so many different ideas as to what constitutes bullying (Smith & Smith, 2014). Understanding the district's definition of what bullying is will help school staff know what to look for when bullying is suspected or reported to them.

Another important factor to consider when it comes to professional development and training for staff on bullying is the need to understand the differences between the different bullying types (physical, verbal, relational, cyberbullying) and what behaviors to look for in each specific type. Many believe bullying is only a physical encounter, however, research shows relational and cyberbullying are actually on the rise and many educators are unaware of what constitutes these types of bullying. Many adults are not able to differentiate normal childhood conflict from bullying; therefore, school personnel

need to be trained on the behaviors to look for with each bullying type. Otherwise, there is a possibility of staff responding incorrectly to bullying situations, not responding appropriately, or not at all (Bradshaw, Sawyer, & O'Brennan, 2007)

Hattie's research on relationships has shown the importance of positive relationships between teachers and students will not only boost student achievement, but will result in "lasting benefits involving trust and affection" (Hattie & Yates, 2014, p. 17). Based on Hattie's (2009) and Mazano's (2007) data on teacher-student relationships it is clear when teachers have a more positive relationship with their students the more safe the students feel when it comes to their physical well-being and their academic well-being as well.

Current research has not only shown the student-teacher relationship to be extremely important, but also that of the teacher-school administrator relationship. Positive relationships between teachers and school administrators provide a lasting impact on teachers and students across the board. Research shows when teachers feel supported by their administrator they are more open to communicate with their colleagues, are more prone to develop positive student-teacher relationships, and have better academic and behavioral outcomes overall (Brown & Medway, 2007).

The purpose of this study was to provide educators with information that may be helpful to school administrators and teachers when it came addressing bullying in their schools. The data indicated school administrators and teachers do not have the same perceptions when it comes to bullying behaviors or bullying control in their school buildings. Teachers and school administrators need to have an understanding of what bullying looks like from the standpoint of their district policy and know that their

perception may be different. However, the behaviors outlined in the district policy must be addressed swiftly. Only when teachers and administrators understand these perceptions may be different, but still bar addressing, will the issue of bullying be addressed effectively.

Additional Studies Needed

Conclusions from this study suggest several implications for future research.

Building on this study, suggestions for the next phase of research are the following:

1. A study on how bullying is perceived by students and parents. Based on these perceptions, a comprehensive plan for districts can be created and implemented to help students and parents differentiate normal childhood conflict from bullying.
2. Training for students and parents on what bullying actually is and the importance of reporting incidents of suspected bullying to proper authorities.
3. A study on how schools can tie parents and community members into response and intervention efforts of bullying. This will help address the issue of bullying more effectively if all stakeholders are on board.
4. Training for staff on the importance of student/teacher relationships and how positive relationships with teachers will make students feel safe and comfortable enough to report incidents of bullying.
5. Training on the importance of teacher/school administrator relationships so staff will feel supported by his/her administrator, feel comfortable in collaborating with colleagues, and to develop more positive student-teacher relationships.

Researcher's Theory of Bullying and Bullying Control

Based on the review of the related literature and the analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data presented in Chapter 4 the researcher has developed a theory on bullying and bullying control. There are many important factors the researcher includes in this theory: the definition of bullying, the types of bullying and behaviors associated with each type, differentiating normal childhood conflict from bullying.

Bullying has been documented for centuries. Many feel incidents of bullying have increased in recent years, but it is important to note attention to bullying in national media and social media have increased as well. Many individuals believe bullying is a rite of passage one must endure. This is simply not the case. Children have a right to feel safe at school and it is our job as educators to do our very best to ensure not only their physical safety, but their mental safety as well so they will grow as learners. Educators must truly understand what bullying is and how to handle it once it happens if we are going to address bullying appropriately.

Bullying is continuing to happen in our schools on a daily basis. It is continuing to happen outside our school walls as well. Some of those incidents carry over into our schools and jeopardize the safety of our students. Educators cannot simply stand by and pretend like these incidents are not happening. Bullying needs to be taken seriously by every single educator, as well as students, parents, and community members, if bullying is going to be addresses effectively.

The first step in beginning to address the issue of bullying in schools is to look at the culture and climate of the school. The review of related literature stated the culture of an organization is like the personality of the organization while the climate is like the

attitude (Schein, 2017). It was also suggested by Schein (2017) the climate of the school is much easier to change versus the culture; however, if the culture of the school is allowing bullying to take place in the first place the leaders must take a fresh look at what expectations of behavior are being accepted and take the necessary steps to change this mindset.

After the issue of culture has been addressed and steps have been taken to change the mindset of the culture of the school, if needed, the leaders of the school will need to address the climate issue. Quality relationships, with peers and adults, are one of the most important factors affecting school climate (Preble & Gordan, 2011). The teacher-school administrator relationship has proved extremely important as research has shown teachers who feel supported by their administrator are more likely to collaborate with colleagues and develop positive relationships with students, which in turn will boost student achievement (Brown & Medway, 2007).

Hattie's research on the student-teacher relationship has also shown when the student-teacher relationship is positive students do better in school academically, feel more safe in their environment, and, thus, are more likely to report incidents of bullying to their teachers (Hattie & Yates, 2014).

The researcher truly believes addressing the culture and climate of the building and focusing on positive relationships will make a major impact on bullying within a school. Setting the tone that bullying is not accepted in any form can be done. Barbara Coloroso (2008) states "bullying is a learned behavior," and if it can be learned, then the behavior can be examined and changed.

It is also important, however, for staff and students to understand what bullying is and this can begin by the district ensuring their definition of bullying is shared. As the review of related literature explained there are many different definitions of bullying between educators, lawmakers, and schools in today's society. As of 2007, each district in the state of Missouri is required to have an anti-bullying policy in place and the district's definition is part of this policy. Making sure students and staff understand this definition of bullying is extremely important.

The next factor to be considered in this theory is the importance of being able to differentiate normal childhood conflict from bullying. Research shows many adults have trouble differentiating between the two; therefore, many incidents of bullying are handled inappropriately or not at all. The same can be said for normal childhood conflict. Many times an incident can be labeled bullying when it was nothing more than two children just not getting along. This is a very crucial step if bullying is going to be addressed effectively.

The last factor in this theory may help to address the previous factor. Educators must understand the different types of bullying and what characteristics are associated with each one. This theory supports four major types of bullying: physical, verbal, relational, and cyberbullying. Many individuals believe true bullying is only physical in nature and other incidents are ones students must work through on their own. However, this is not the case and there are many other factors to consider. Knowing the difference between these types of bullying will help individuals differentiate normal childhood conflict from bullying and will help educators know when they need to intervene.

Finally, the researcher poses the question of whether bullying is being controlled in schools. After the analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data presented in Chapter 4, the researcher noted there was a significant difference between teachers' and school administrators' perceptions when it came to bullying control. Based on this data, the researcher developed the following theory. Educators simply cannot control all aspects of bullying at all times. However, schools can ensure their staff are trained on the aspects in this theory and know what to do when bullying occurs. Educators must send the message that bullying will not be tolerated and incidents of bullying will be dealt with swiftly if we are going to ensure the safety of our students within our buildings.

Summary

Survey results were presented with 229 school administrators and 907 teachers in the state of Missouri returning surveys. This unequal sample size may skew the data. After the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data presented in Chapter 4, the researcher determined six key findings of this study. School administrators felt bullying was more controlled in their school building than that of teachers; however, teachers perceived bullying behaviors more often than school administrators when it came to differentiating bullying behaviors from non-bullying behaviors. There was not a significant difference noted between rural and suburban respondents when it came to bullying control, yet rural respondents perceived bullying behaviors more than suburban respondents. Data also indicated school administrators perceived relational and cyberbullying behaviors more than teachers while suburban respondents perceived physical and cyberbullying behaviors more than rural respondents. School administrators felt both the student/teacher relationship and the teacher/school administrator relationship

to be more positive than teachers. Finally, data indicated perceptions of different bullying types are occurring at different levels and is not consistent among grade levels.

Based on these key findings, the researcher established implications for educators and suggestions for further research on this topic. The researcher concluded with her theory of bullying and bullying control based on all aspects of this study.

Appendix A

Perceptions of Bullying Teacher Survey

1. What is the grade level you currently teach?
 - Elementary
 - Middle School
 - High School
 - Other

2. Is your school district in a rural or suburban community?
 - Rural
 - Suburban

3. What is your gender?
 - Male
 - Female

4. Do you feel bullying is being controlled in your school?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Not sure

5. Which of the following do you believe to be bullying? Check all that apply.
 - One student punches another student of lesser power physically after lunch at least 3 times per week.
 - A student takes another student's assignment and uses it as his/her own. The students are of unequal power psychologically.
 - One student forces another student of lesser power physically to give up their seat on the school bus everyday after school.
 - One student posts untrue accusations on social media about a student who is less powerful psychologically at least 2 times per week.
 - Two students of equal power wrestle over a stray ball during a kickball game at recess.
 - A student or group of students refuse to let a student of lesser power join the game they are playing at recess on a daily basis.
 - A student cuts in line in front of another student who is of equal power.
 - A brawl breaks out between several students of equal power after an intense game during P.E.
 - Other _____

Please read the following definitions for the different types of bullying before answering question 6.

Physical bullying – pushing, hitting, kicking, shoving, or physically intimidate someone else

Verbal bullying – threatening, name calling, teasing, etc.

Relational bullying – spreading rumors, excluding others, etc.

Cyberbullying – using electronic means such as texting, social media, email, or online videos to tease, threaten, call names, spread rumors, etc.

6. Using the definitions above, which of the following types of bullying have occurred or are occurring in your school? Check all that apply.

- Physical bullying
- Verbal bullying
- Relational bullying
- Cyberbullying

7. What kind of relationships do you feel students have with teachers in your school?

- Positive
- Neutral
- Negative

8. What kind of relationships do you feel teachers have with the administrators in your school?

- Positive
- Neutral
- Negative

Once you have completed the survey, please click check the box below indicating you are aware your responses will be used as data in the study. Click “Submit” once complete.

I agree to allow the researcher to use my responses anonymously in the completion of the study.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

Appendix B

Perceptions of Bullying School Administrator Survey

1. What is the grade level of your building?
 - Elementary
 - Middle School
 - High School
 - Other

2. Is your school district in a rural or suburban community?
 - Rural
 - Suburban

3. What is your gender?
 - Male
 - Female

4. Do you feel bullying is being controlled in your school?
 - Agree
 - Not sure
 - Disagree

5. Which of the following do you believe to be bullying? Check all that apply.
 - One student punches another student of lesser power physically after lunch at least 3 times per week.
 - A student takes another student's assignment and uses it as his/her own. The students are of unequal power psychologically.
 - One student forces another student of lesser power physically to give up their seat on the school bus everyday after school.
 - One student posts untrue accusations on social media about a student who is less powerful psychologically at least 2 times per week.
 - Two students of equal power wrestle over a stray ball during a kickball game at recess.
 - A student or group of students refuse to let a student of lesser power join the game they are playing at recess on a daily basis.
 - A student cuts in line in front of another student who is of equal power.
 - A brawl breaks out between several students of equal power after an intense game during P.E.
 - Other _____

Please read the following definitions for the different types of bullying before answering question 6.

Physical bullying – pushing, hitting, kicking, shoving, or physically intimidating someone else

Verbal bullying – threatening, name calling, teasing, etc.

Relational bullying – spreading rumors, excluding others, etc.

Cyberbullying – using electronic means such as texting, social media, email, or online videos to tease, threaten, call names, spread rumors, etc.

6. Using the definitions above, which of the following types of bullying have occurred or are occurring in your school? Check all that apply.

- Physical bullying
- Verbal bullying
- Relational bullying
- Cyberbullying

7. What kind of relationships do you feel students have with teachers in your school?

- Positive
- Neutral
- Negative

8. What kind of relationships do you feel teachers have with the administrators in your school?

- Positive
- Neutral
- Negative

Once you have completed the survey, please click check the box below indicating you are aware your responses will be used as data in the study. Click “Submit” once complete.

I agree to allow the researcher to use my responses anonymously in the completion of the study.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

Appendix C

Informed Consent Email

Dear Colleague,

My name is Tracy Barger and I am a doctoral student at Southwest Baptist University. I am conducting a research study to gather information about the different perceptions of school bullying between teachers and school administrators. I have chosen to include all teachers and school administrators in the state of Missouri in order to have a reliable and valid survey sample. I am asking for your participation. I realize you are very busy; the survey will take you no longer than 5 minutes to complete. The survey is completely anonymous. It will ask for demographic information, as well as personal experiences with bullying, several scenarios asking to identify if bullying is taking place or not, and after given the different definitions of bullying to identify, which, if any, of these bullying types are in your school. Finally, there will be two questions pertaining to student-teacher relationships.

Your privacy is important; your answers will be combined with other participants by an administrative assistant and reported to me in aggregate form. Information reported will not indicate individual participants or school districts. There is no penalty should you choose not to participate or answer all of the questions. At the end of the survey there is a check box next to the statement, "I agree to allow the researcher to use my responses anonymously in the completion of the study." Your check in that box will indicate your consent to participate and gives permission to use the information that you have provided on the survey in my study.

Before you make a final decision about participation, please read the following statements about how your responses will be used and how your rights as a participant will be protected:

- Participation in the study is completely voluntary. You may stop participating at any point without penalty.
- You need not answer all of the questions.
- Your answers will be kept confidential. Results will be presented to others in summary form only, without names or other identifying information.
- Your participation will take approximately 5 minutes. During this time you will answer questions about your personal experiences with bullying and how you perceive bullying behaviors in your school.

This project has been reviewed by the RRB Committee at Southwest Baptist University (417-328-1992). Ms. Martaun Stockstill is the chair of the RRB Committee. The committee believes that the research procedures adequately safeguard the subject's privacy, welfare, civil liberties, and rights.

You may contact me at 417-876-7676 if you have any questions or concerns about your participation. If you would like a copy of the results of this study, you may contact me via email at tbarger@mail.eldo.k12.mo.us. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Tracy Barger

THIS PROJECT HAS BEEN REVIEWED BY THE SOUTHWEST BAPTIST
UNIVERSITY RESEARCH REVIEW BOARD FOR RESEARCH AND RESEARCH-
RELATED ACTIVITIES INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS
(417)321-1659

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