UNDERSTANDING TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF BULLYING AND EFFECTIVENESS OF AN ANTI-BULLYING POLICY: A CASE STUDY OF SUBURBAN HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS IN THE SOUTHWESTERN U.S.

by

James Chandler Isom

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Liberty University

April, 2014

UNDERSTANDING TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF BULLYING AND EFFECTIVENESS OF AN ANTI-BULLYING POLICY: A CASE STUDY OF SUBURBAN HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS IN THE SOUTHWESTERN U.S.

by

James Chandler Isom

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Liberty University

April, 2014

APPROVED BY:

Russell G. Yocum, Ed.D., Committee Chair

James A. Swezey, Ed.D., Committee Member

Debra K. Nelson, Ed.D., Committee Member

Scott B. Watson, Associate Dean of Advanced Programs

ABSTRACT

James Chandler Isom. UNDERSTANDING TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF BULLYING AND EFFECTIVENESS OF AN ANTI-BULLYING POLICY: A CASE STUDY OF SUBURBAN HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS IN THE SOUTHWESTERN U.S. (under the direction of Dr. Russell Yocum) School of Education, Liberty University, April, 2014.

The purpose of this multiple-case study was to understand teacher perceptions of bullying and the effectiveness of the current anti-bullying policy of a suburban district in the southwestern U.S. Teacher perceptions will be generally defined as what teachers personally believe about bullying and how they perceive the effectiveness of the district's anti-bullying policy. Data was collected from three sources, interviews, teacher journals, and observations. Cross case synthesis was used to treat each case separately and then combine identified themes across cases. Data showed that teachers perceive the policy to be somewhat effective. However, significant gaps exist that need to be addressed, namely a lack of understanding of the district's definition of bullying which leads to a lack of proper identification of bullying, a lack of understanding of the policy itself, leading to a lack of implementation, and a lack of administrator support.

Descriptors: bullying, teachers, intervention, anti-bullying, case study

Dedication

This work is dedicated to all those who helped me achieve this goal. To my Lord and Savior who has blessed me. To my loving wife and children whose support and patience made this possible. To my parents who always supported a strong work ethic and believed in me. To all the other important people of my life who have offered prayers and kind words of encouragement along the way. And to my chair, Dr. Yocum, and committee members, Dr. Swezey and Dr. Nelson. Your support is greatly appreciated.

Table of Contents

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION 1
Problem Statement 2
Purpose Statement 2
Significance of the Study 3
Research Questions 3
Delimitations and Limitations 4
Research Plan 5
Personal Biography 6
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW 7
Theoretical Framework 8
Review of the Literature 17
Summary 35
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY 37
Research Design 37
Participants 41
Setting 43
Data Collection 44
Data Analysis 48
Trustworthiness 50
Ethical Issues 52
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS 54
Teachers' definition of bullying. 56
Teachers' perceptions of effectiveness. 62
Training. 66

Administrator support. 69
Summary 71
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSION 72
Discussion of Findings 72
Recommendations 79
Practical Implications 82
Limitations 84
Suggestions for Future Research 85
Conclusion 87
REFERENCES 89
APPENDICES 99
APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL LETTER 99
APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM 100
APPENDIX C: OBSERVATION CHART 103

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Bullying has become a serious problem in schools (Allen, 2010; Dake, Price, Telljohn, & Funk, 2004), but research on the problem in America has occurred at a much slower pace than other parts of the world (Swearer & Espelage, 2004). Research on bullying did not seriously begin until the 1970s with the pioneering work of Dan Olweus (Camodeca, Goossens, Schuengel, & Terwogt, 2003). His work began to show that bullying is a pervasive problem in schools. In fact, recent data has shown that almost one in five students has been bullied at school in the past 12 months (U.S. Department of Health, 2009). Worse, the short-term and long-term effects of bullying, including substance abuse and emotional distress, call for serious attention from researchers and educators. It is these effects of bullying that disrupt Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs and calls for policies and programs aimed at ending bullying in schools.

Central to stopping bullying in schools are those who must effectively and consistently implement anti-bullying policies and programs, the teachers (Rigby, 2002). Teachers must be well equipped to handle bullying because failure to effectively and consistently intervene could actually make teachers part of the problem (Olweus, 1993). Failure to intervene could simply stem from a lack of understanding of what bullying is and what to do about it. In order to address bullying in schools, teachers must be properly trained and given the necessary resources to identify bullying and know how to intervene (Mishna, Pepler, & Wiener, 2006). Moreover, because they play such an important part, it is imperative to gain an understanding of what teachers know about bullying and their district's anti-bullying policy (if indeed they have one). This study used a multiple-case, holistic case study approach aimed at gathering data for the purpose of providing a rich understanding of what teachers perceive bullying to be, while also offering insight into teacher perceptions of the effectiveness of an anti-bullying policy.

Problem Statement

Bullying can have deep-rooted effects on both bullies and victims. These effects include decreased academic achievement, depression, anxiety (Sassu, Elinoff, Bray, & Kehle, 2004), substance abuse, and even suicide (Feinberg, 2003). The past 40 years have seen a wealth of information on bullying, but little research exists on in-depth, qualitative analysis of the problem through the eyes of teachers (Mishna, 2004). Because teachers play such an important part in stopping bullying (Rigby, 2002), it is imperative that researchers look deeper into teacher perceptions of bullying and anti-bullying policies. Further, most bullying research has been quantitative in nature, using surveys to measure many different variables (Mishna, 2004). In addition, most research has been conducted in elementary and middle schools (Allen, 2010), leaving a hole in the study of the problem at high schools. It is these gaps that this study will attempt to address. Use of the case study approach will allow for deep, meaningful analysis of what teachers understand about bullying and, more importantly, what teachers know about their current anti-bullying policy and whether or not it is effective.

Purpose Statement

The purpose was to use the case study approach to analyze high school teacher perceptions of bullying and the perceived effectiveness of their district's current anti-bullying policy. Use of the case study design necessitates using a bounded system. A bounded system is the case to be studied and could be a person, a small group of individuals who share an experience, an event, or any number of other scenarios where the researcher is able to limit the focus of the study and define what will be studied (Merriam, 2009). This study's bounded system is one large suburban school district in the southwestern U.S. More specifically, the study is limited to high school teachers within the same district.

Significance of the Study

Because bullying has such serious repercussions if left unattended, it is necessary for researchers and educators to pay significant attention to anti-bullying policies and programs. The case study approach allowed collection of detailed data that provided a more in-depth look at high school teachers' understanding of bullying, their current anti-bullying policy, and the effectiveness of that policy. As a result of this study, the participating school district will gain firsthand knowledge of how their teachers understand and use the current anti-bullying policy. The study is significant for researchers, as it will provide insight from the largely unexplored views of high school teachers on anti-bullying policies. Further, the study is important for school administrators because it will allow them to better understand what teachers need to make an anti-bullying policy more effective, including resources and proper training (Smith, Schneider, Smith, & Ananiadou, 2004). The district-level instructional support team will also be able to use the study to create and install more effective programs by understanding the potential hurdles to effective implementation.

Insights gained from this case study provide a better understanding of what teachers know and do not know about bullying and their anti-bullying policy. To that end, this study has far-reaching, potentially global implications in understanding and decreasing the bullying problem in schools. Because little qualitative research of this nature exists, especially of high school teachers, this study will provide a base for future studies.

Research Questions

Teachers play an extremely important role in stopping bullying (Rigby, 2002). Because they are the frontline defenders and will ultimately be responsible for knowing and applying a school district's anti-bullying policy, my aim was to study teacher perceptions of bullying and

the effectiveness of a district's current anti-bullying policy. Teachers often hold differing definitions of bullying (Lee, 2006), which is one of the hurdles to stopping the bullying problem. In addition, the success of any policy partly lies with teachers' understanding of the part they play in stopping bullying (Nicolaides, Toda, & Smith, 2002). Because of the importance of the teachers I also wanted to explore how teachers view the current policy's effectiveness and how to make the policy more effective.

The following questions guided this study:

1. What do teachers know about bullying?
2. What are teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the current anti-bullying policy, and where do they believe there is room for improvement?
3. Does a gap exist between policy and implementation? Why or why not?
4. How can the current intervention/prevention policy be more effective?

Delimitations and Limitations

Delimitations. The study was limited to high school teachers in the same school district but at different high schools. Since the district uses the same anti-bullying policy at each of its schools, all participants were working from a consistent foundation. The choice to use a case study approach could also fit as a delimitation, as the very essence of the approach assumes one is working with a bounded system, thus focusing the study.

Limitations. Qualitative researchers face several hurdles when collecting and interpreting data. Crisis of representation describes the notion that it is difficult to capture and convey an experience of another person by simply using words (Schwandt, 2007). What qualitative researchers attempt to do is describe the feelings, attitudes, etc. of an experience to the outside world by only using black and white text, and this can be challenging. Crisis of

legitimation speaks to the idea that qualitative research is interpretive in nature. Therefore, potential issues arise concerning generalizability (Schwandt, 2007).

In addition to the limitations of qualitative studies in general, the case study design has potential limitations as well because it provides an analysis of a single participant or select few participants, which can make it more difficult to generalize findings to the entire population of interest. The sampling used for the study could also be considered a limitation. Participants were selected from the same school district and those who agreed to participate in the study. Finally, as with any qualitative study, interpretation of data could be considered a limitation, as a mistake at any point could lead to misinterpretation of data.

Although potential limitations to this study exist, several tools were employed to help minimize their effect. Triangulation of data helps ensure data collection is as authentic as possible. Member checks were used to cross-check my interpretation of interviews with the true meaning of the interviewee in order to preserve his/her "voice" as it relates to the phenomenon of interest. Finally, I used a database to help organize data.

Research Plan

This study was qualitative in nature and used the multiple-case, holistic case study approach. Journals, observations, and interviews served as the main tools for data collection. The case study approach allows deep analysis of the phenomenon of interest, in this case, teachers' perceptions on bullying and their current anti-bullying policy. Moreover, qualitative studies on bullying number much fewer than quantitative, highlighting the need for more qualitative studies. In addition, since teachers have an enormous impact on the success or failure of a policy or program, then the need to explore the problem through the eyes of teachers is essential.

Personal Biography

One of the discerning characteristics of qualitative research is that the researcher serves as the primary instrument to collect data (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009). As such, I will serve as the primary instrument for data collection, including creating the interview questions and conducting the interviews, observing the teachers, and interpreting teachers' journal logs. Then, during the analysis stage, I began to make connections between the sources of data and identified major themes.

In a qualitative study, researchers must understand that many different "voices" are represented. As used here, *voice* means that there are several different accounts of the same phenomenon or experience. The personal accounts of one may conflict with another's or even the researcher's view of the phenomenon or experience (Johnston & Strong, 2008). When trying to make sense of these different voices, the personal voice of the researcher can potentially bias the results of a qualitative study. Therefore, my values and beliefs as a teacher and novice researcher interested in the subject must be openly disclosed (Marshall, 2011). For the purposes of disclosure, the district was chosen based on convenience. I do not have a supervisory role over any of the participants, do not know them personally, nor work with any participants in the study. I personally believed that teachers know that a policy exists, but they are unsure of what actually constitutes an act of bullying. Moreover, teachers were somewhat unclear on how to properly intervene if they do witness an act of bullying. Although my personal voice could introduce bias, for ethical reasons and for the sake of the study, I attempted to bracket my own experiences and only analyze the data collected from participants. This bracketing, member checking, and triangulation hopefully minimized any potential bias.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Before the 1970s, bullying was often considered a rite of passage and many times disregarded (Sassu et al., 2004). Research in the past 40 years, however, has shown bullying to be a serious problem, most predominantly in schools (Sanders, 2004). Data from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2009) has shown that almost 20% of survey respondents reported being bullied on school property in the past 12 months. With such a high percentage of students being bullied at school, this is obviously a serious problem that requires attention.

Bullying can have both immediate and long-term implications for bullies and victims (Olweus, 1993). Along with the obvious detrimental impact bullying has on a student's ability to learn due to missed days of school (Sassu et al., 2004), serious long-term effects such as substance abuse, suicide (Feinberg, 2003), depression, low self-esteem, and chronic mental and physical health problems (Sassu et al., 2004) can be seen in both bullies and victims. Additionally, bullies are more likely than their peers to engage in antisocial behavior even after leaving school (Olweus, 1993).

In tackling the problem of bullying, students and teachers feel that teachers play an important part in stopping bullying (Crothers & Kolbert, 2004). Moreover, teacher support and implementation of anti-bullying policies is another factor that helps reduce bullying (Rigby, 2002). As the frontline defenders against bullying in schools, teachers need to be well educated on what bullying is and how to stop it. To that end, schools need to not only adopt an anti-bullying policy but ensure teachers consistently and effectively implement the policy. Failure at any level to properly intervene could perpetuate the problem, possibly causing those who are victims of bullying to continually feel unsafe at their own schools.

Theoretical Framework

This study will draw on a naturalistic inquiry approach with a focus on spending time in the field. This approach attempts to accurately portray real, firsthand accounts of the event or phenomenon of interest (Schwandt, 2007). In addition, this study is conducted from an advocacy worldview with the ultimate goal of making schools aware of the bullying issue in order to bring about change. By conducting this study and others like it, research will hopefully show that schools need to not only adopt an anti-bullying policy but also highlight that teachers need adequate training, support, and resources to effectively and consistently implement the policy. Teachers play a significant role in this issue because they are the ones "on the ground," so to speak, and will ultimately intervene on behalf of a potential victim.

The model that serves as the foundation of the study is Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs (see Figure 1).

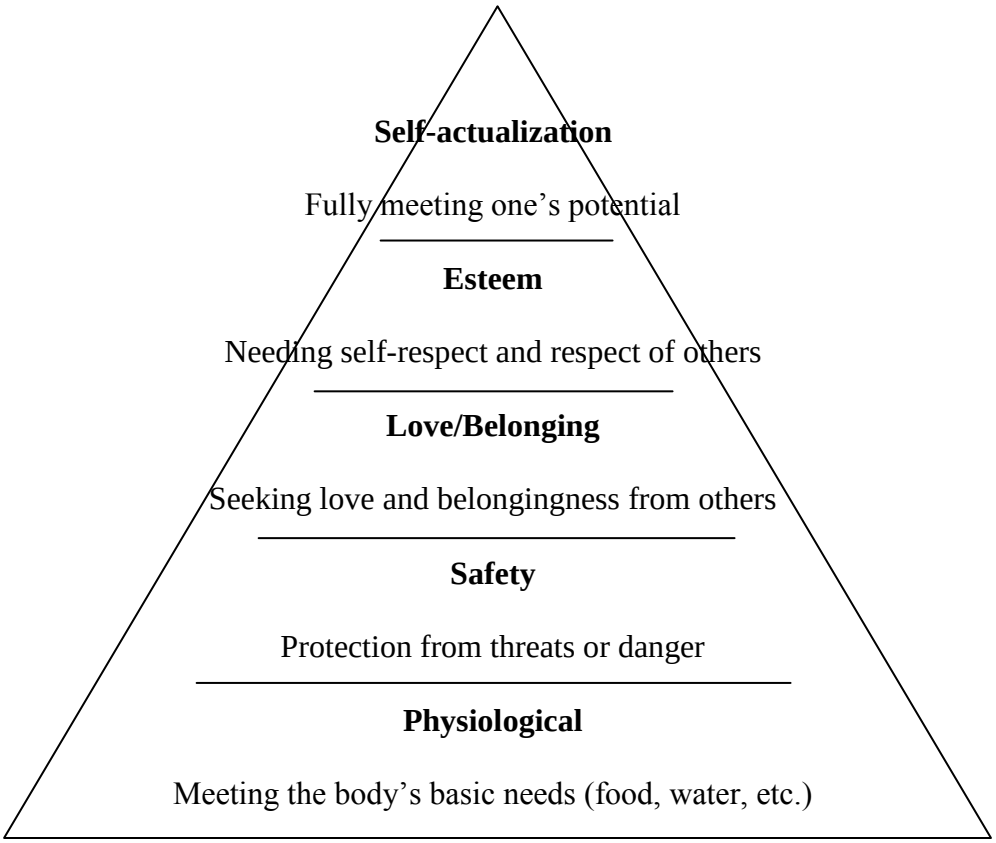

Figure 1. Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs. This figure illustrates the descriptions of each of the levels of human needs.

This model attempts to explain the varying levels of needs of humans, and these needs drive human motivations. Within the model, different levels build on one another in such a manner that a failure to fulfill needs in one level will affect all other levels thereafter. The first level contains basic physiological needs such as food, water, shelter, etc. These are the basic needs that must be met to simply sustain life (Maslow, 1943).

To further describe how the hierarchy works, take, for example, Joe, a human who does not have access to enough food. This person will be motivated, then, to find food in order to fulfill that basic need. The other levels of the hierarchy are not as important and therefore do not

drive this person's motivations. This person is motivated to simply obtain enough sustenance in order to survive (Taormina & Gao, 2013).

Moving up the pyramid, the second level is identified as safety needs, meaning that there is a need to feel safe and secure in one's environment. Assuming first level needs are met, Maslow (1943) contends that humans will then be motivated to meet the need to feel safe. This need could take on a number of different forms. The need to feel safe could be related to the actual environment where a person lives (house, apartment, etc.), the people around them (parent, guardian, trusted friend, etc.), or it could even be financial security. Whatever the form, humans are motivated to find safety and security. Maslow (1943) relates the need to feel safe to children. Children long for predictable, safe, orderly routines and the comfort of knowing they have parents or guardians who will protect them if something harmful should arise. Similarly, adults are equally motivated to find safety and security.

In the example above, Joe was motivated to find food and was not necessarily concerned with his safety. This means that Joe would be willing to disregard his own safety in order to find food. What good is it to feel safe and secure if there is first not enough food available to simply live? For the sake of discussion, assume now that Joe has fulfilled all of his needs at level one. He is now, according to the hierarchy, motivated to find a safe place to live and safe people to be around. He is no longer motivated to find food, as it is readily available.

Third in the hierarchy are the belongingness and love needs. Assuming the needs at the first two levels have been satisfied, humans then are motivated to build meaningful relationships with others and find their own place within their social group. This could take many forms as well (relationships with family members, friendships with those of the same sex, friendships with

those of the opposite sex, marriages, etc.). Again, though, once basic needs and safety have been met, humans will be motivated to find belongingness and love before moving to the next level.

Considering Joe, assume he now has easy access to food and water, has a place to live where he feels safe and secure, and has a good, stable job. With those needs met, Joe will now be motivated to build relationships with those around him. Humans are social creatures and long for that connectedness to others. Joe is now so motivated by the need to give and receive love that he may even forget that he was once willing to risk his own life to simply find food.

The fourth level is esteem needs and feeling a sense of self-worth. If the previous three levels have been satisfied, humans will be motivated to meet their esteem needs. Maslow (1943) splits this need into two categories. The first is the need to feel achievement, adequacy, and confidence. This second is the need to feel important and praised for accomplishments. Not meeting these esteem needs could leave humans with feelings of disparagement and weakness, therefore humans are motivated at this level to not have those feelings. Humans want to feel accomplished and appreciated.

Joe, who now has a house, wife, two children, and a stable job would now be motivated to feel successful and appreciated. Again, this could take many forms, but in Joe's case, assume now that because the previous three levels of needs are currently being met he is now motivated to obtain a big promotion at work. Getting the promotion would build his confidence and prove that he is appreciated by those who have power over him.

The final level is self-actualization, where one is able to not only identify his or her purpose but live it out. If the previous four levels have all been fulfilled then humans will be motivated to live out what they have identified themselves to be. Maslow (1943) describes this fifth level as, "A musician must make music, an artist must paint, a poet must write, if he is to be

ultimately happy," (Maslow, 1943, p. 382). Those who are at this highest level of the hierarchy have identified the purpose for their lives and are motivated to live it out.

After years of hard work, Joe finally gets the big promotion and is running the company. He has now been able to provide his family with a nice house, has set enough aside to send his kids to college and retire comfortably, and he is as high as he can climb on the career ladder. When he has done all he has set out to do, now what is motivating Joe? As Maslow (1943) points out, this could be different for everyone. It is up to Joe to find out.

Relating Maslow (1943) to bullying, the basic premise of bullying violates the second level, the need to feel safe, by creating a potentially hostile, unstable environment. Because of this disruption, victims become preoccupied with trying to feel safe, and every other level above is then adversely affected. Their actions are now motivated by the need to find safety. Parents want (and deserve) to believe that when their child is dropped off at school that he/she is entering a safe, caring environment. For some students who are victims of bullying, though, this is unfortunately not the case. This lack of safety at school causes victims to find ways to meet that need of safety. Some will skip school in order to avoid being bullied (Feinberg, 2003). Other victims may even completely change schools in attempt to find a safer school (Sanders, 2004). Further, some victims have thoughts of suicide or may even attempt or complete suicide (Cash, 2003).

Tying together the need to feel safe and the role of teachers, Bosworth, Ford, and Hernandez (2011) conducted a study of factors that influence faculty and student perceptions of school safety. Some of the findings that came out of the study were how teachers affect the climate of the school and ultimately whether or not students feel safe at school. When asked, students commented that the teachers make the school feel safe. This was shown in several

ways, including creating relationships with students, responding to reports, and physically being present, as students felt less safe in places where there were no teachers.

Coupled with Maslow, this study will also incorporate the information processing model. The information processing model was chosen to draw on for this study because it has been highly researched and provides a system and processes that help explain learning (Anderman & Anderman, 2009). This model will be applied to the teachers used in the study and whether or not they effectively learned, and therefore applied, their school district's current anti-bullying policy.

It is important to provide a working foundation of the information processing model before it can be applied to bullying and teacher intervention. Information processing came about in the 1950s as digital computer technology became more advanced. It relates human processing of information to the way computers logically organize, store, and retrieve information. A sequential pattern then emerges that tries to explain how humans receive, process, and store information (Simon, 1979). In essence, information is processed, stored, and used. Before information can be stored, it must be processed or encoded. Some information, including time, space, and well-learned information, is automatically processed without conscious effort. Other information, such as remembering concepts, requires more attention and is referred to as effortful processing. To aid in effortful processing, visual, acoustic, and semantic encoding help the brain process information (Myers, 2010).

As information is processed and encoded, then, three types of memory are used to store and then ultimately retrieve that information when it is needed. The three types of memory, sensory, working, and long-term, all work together to process and code information. Information can then be retrieved for later use (see Figure 2).

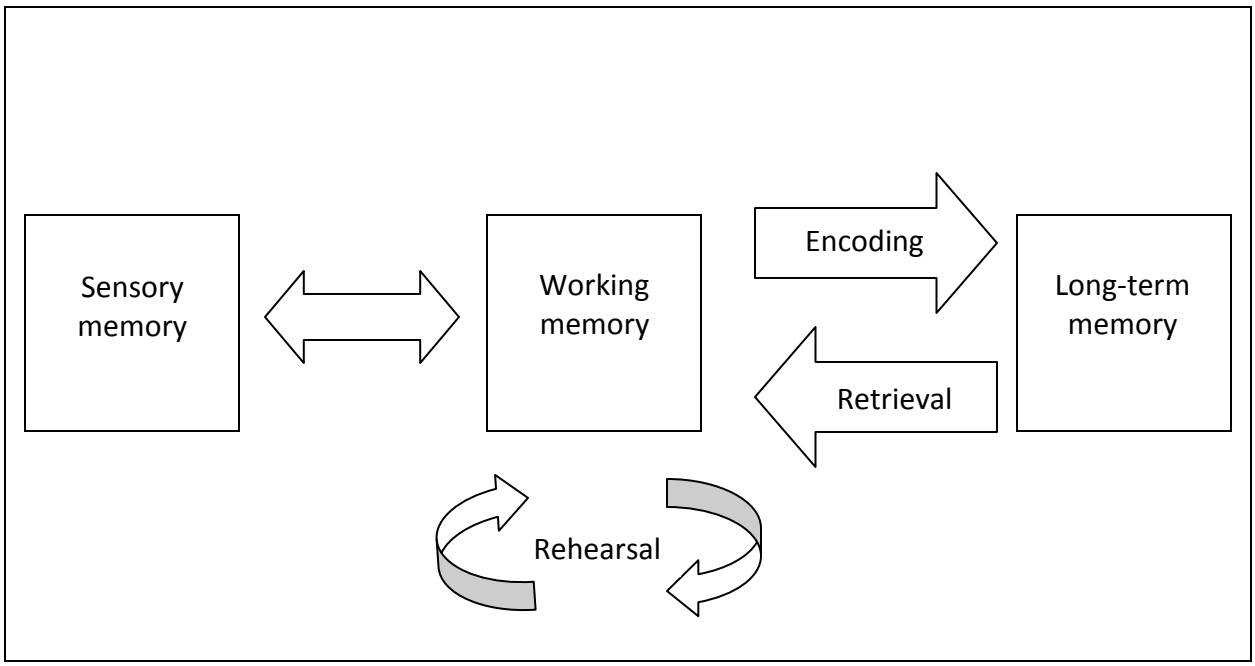

Figure 2. Information Processing Model. The model shows how information is processed and stored into memory then later retrieved for use (adapted from illustration by GGS Information Services, Cengage Learning, Gale, as cited in Anderman & Anderman, 2009).

The first type of memory is referred to as sensory memory. Sensory memory is very brief but can provide extremely accurate details (Miller, 2010). Sensory memory can only hold five to seven pieces of information, and its main purpose is to act as a buffer to process only that information that is perceived to be relevant for the current situation or task. Typically, sensory memory occurs so quickly that it is not consciously controlled (Anderman & Anderman, 2009).

Because of its short duration, sensory memory gives way to working memory, also known as short-term memory. This working memory, although longer than sensory memory, still has a relatively short time span, as the brain can only focus on and process about seven pieces of information at a given time before information begins to deteriorate (Miller, 2010). After sensory memory, information is either further processed into working memory or discarded. If information makes it past sensory memory and moves into working memory, bits

of information are now assigned meaning. One of the most highly researched and cited models of working memory comes from Alan Baddeley (Anderman & Anderman, 2009).

Baddeley and Hitch first proposed their model of working memory in 1974. This first model identified a central executive, which received incoming information and then decided how that information should be processed and ultimately whether or not that information would be sent to long-term memory. Within the model there are then two other loops. One loop continues to process verbal information while the other continues to process non-verbal information. The model has been revised over the years to include a direct loop between working memory and long-term memory, once thought to be independent but related and an episodic buffer (Baddeley, 2012).

When information is deemed necessary to keep, the brain has long-term memory storage, which is fed by the working memory. This is where important information is stored and, for all intents and purposes, does not have a limit (Myers, 2010). Different than sensory memory and working memory, which take in information then quickly process and/or discard, long-term memory serves as a highly organized system that codes and stores information for later use Anderman & Anderman, 2009).

With a base of how information is stored, then, one must understand how humans are able to use that stored information. After information is processed and stored, it can later be retrieved for use. Recalling, recognizing, and quickly relearning information once forgotten are all considered forms of retrieval. To retrieve information, memory is accessed, and the brain obtains the necessary information required for the situation for which it was retrieved (Myers, 2010).

This study will draw on this process of receiving, storing, and retrieving information to explain why teachers do or do not properly implement the school district's current anti-bullying policy. If information received is not coded and placed into long-term memory for quick retrieval then it will not be used properly. Some of the most effective ways to commit information to long-term memory are to draw on pre-existing knowledge, provide visual representations of the information, and allow for elaboration (Anderman & Anderman, 2009).

To my knowledge, no current literature exists that relates information processing to teacher actions in connection to bullying intervention. However, the connection to the model itself, in terms of storing and retrieving information, could provide an explanation of why teachers act or fail to act when they have witnessed an act of bullying. For example, as teachers sit through a training on identifying bullying and using an anti-bullying policy, each teacher will process and store information differently. For those who have experiences with bullying, thus making this new information more relevant, it is more likely they will store this new information in long-term memory (Myers, 2010). For others, though, this new information may not be stored as efficiently. It is possible, then, that this lack of stored knowledge will not be accessed when an act of bullying does occur. If a teacher cannot actively retrieve information about how to identify bullying and how to intervene, then the likelihood of an act of bullying going unnoticed and untreated is increased.

The goal, then, is to have teachers store and be able to quickly recall information on how to identify bullying and then how to intervene. The challenge is for researchers and educators to devise effective ways to accomplish this goal. Training teachers on identifying bullying and using intervention strategies needs to be more than a piece of paper, pamphlet, or sitting through

a one hour lecture. The information is more likely to be stored and retrieved if the teacher can relate to the information in some way (Myers, 2010).

Review of the Literature

Defining bullying. One of the hurdles to overcome in trying to stop bullying is that people have differing views on what actually constitutes a bullying incident. To begin the discussion, it is pertinent to work from a common definition of bullying. That, in and of itself, has been a debate over the years. An explicit, common definition of bullying is hard to come by, as few can agree on a single definition.

Research has shown that one of the discerning characteristics of whether or not someone perceives an incident as an act of bullying is if the act in question matches their own personal definition of bullying (Mishna et al., 2006). Further, other external factors that have not yet been studied could exist that influence personal definitions (Bradshaw & Waasdorp, 2009). In addition, consider Lee's (2006) study that asked teachers to provide a definition of bullying. Teachers had difficulty agreeing on a common definition despite the fact that their own school district already had adopted its own definition: "The wilful [sic], conscious desire to hurt, threaten or frighten someone. It can be physical, verbal or emotional, involving physical injury, threats and intimidation, teasing and name-calling. It can be continuous or an isolated incident" (Lee, 2006, p. 68). Definitions provided by teachers ranged from very simple to extremely complex. Most notably, as one teacher reported, "'If different teachers are holding different definitions in their head…we have almost lost before we start'" (Lee, 2006, p. 69). Although numerous definitions have come about over the years, most researchers tend to follow some sort of derivative of Olweus' (1993) definition, which defined bullying as when a student "is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other students"

(p. 9). Olweus (1993) also contends, though, that bullying could be a single act and is not always necessarily repeated acts over a long period. For the purposes of this study, bullying will defined in line with Olweus' (1993) definition.

Bullying and school safety. Research over the decades has shown that school connectedness has a positive effect on schools and students, even going back to the 1990's. Resnick et al. (1997) found, for example, that school connectedness was partially responsible for lower emotional stress, lower levels of violence, less frequent substance abuse, delay in sexual behaviors, and less suicidal involvement. Further, lower school connectedness is directly related to mental health problems, such as depression and anxiety (Shochet, Dadds, Ham, & Montague, 2006). A relationship also exists between being bullied and feeling lower school connectedness. Those who are victims of bullying feel a lower sense of school connectedness and experience more physical, emotional, and verbal victimization. On the other end, those who are not bullied feel a higher sense of school connectedness (O'Brennan & Furlong, 2010). This lack of school connectedness of victims is cause for serious concern.

One of the basic tenets of increasing school connectedness is creating a sense of belongingness and safety (Preece, 2009). As research has shown, though, bullying leaves victims feeling unsafe at school to the point where they miss school out of fear (Feinberg, 2003) or even change schools completely to escape it (Sanders, 2004). Again, these feelings preoccupy victims of bullying with the need to feel safe and then affect all other levels of Maslow's (1943) hierarchy. It makes sense, then, that victims of bullying are preoccupied with that need to feel safe and, at the same time, exhibit less school connectedness.

Bully groups. Three major groups have been identified in relation to bullying: bullies, victims, and bully-victims. Bullies, essentially, are those students who bully, or tease another.

Victims are those students who are bullied by others. The third group exhibit characteristics of both the bully and the victim (Haynie, Nansel, Eitel, Crump, Saylor, Yu, & Simons-Morton, 2001).

All three categories exhibit detrimental consequences of bullying of varying degrees. The effects of bullying on bullies and victims has been well documented, however, it is this third group, bully-victims, that is most concerning. Consistently, this group exhibits more risk factors compared to only bullies or only victims. The dual stresses of bullying and victimization cause this category to show more issues with psychosocial problems, decreased academic achievement, lower self-control, and lower social competence (Haynie et al., 2001). Bully-victims also exhibit a poorer attitude toward school compared to others and are more prone to engage in delinquent behaviors and carry weapons to school (Stein, Dukes, & Warren, 2007).

Types of bullying. Similar to trying to define bullying, researchers have had a hard time agreeing on different types of bullying. Olweus (1993) identified two main types, direct and indirect. Some have created three categories: physical, verbal, and social (Cole, Cornell, & Sheras, 2006). Others have gone a step further to separate bullying into four categories: teasing, physical, verbal, and passive (Parault, Davis, & Pellegrini, 2007).

Olweus' (1993) two types of bullying, direct and indirect, encompass all the types of bullying from other researchers mentioned above. Therefore, these two types will receive more attention. The distinction between the two types is based largely on the types of acts carried out by the bully toward the victim.

Direct bullying is characterized by open attacks on the victim. These attacks can be physical in nature, such as hitting, kicking, or punching or can also be verbal and include such

acts as name-calling, teasing, and slandering (Olweus, 1993). Crick and Dodge (1996) added that direct bullying is considered overtly aggressive behavior.

Males are more likely than females to engage in direct bullying, such as hitting or verbally abusing others. In addition, those categorized as direct bullies are perceived by their teachers to have more conduct problems compared to their peers. Further, in self-reports, those involved in direct bullying reported lower academic achievement and behavioral control. Direct bullying is also often associated with those who exhibit aggression and poor social skills (Smith, Polenik, Nakasita, & Jones, 2102).

Indirect bullying, however, is characterized by acts such as social isolation, intentionally damaging friendships, and exclusion from groups (Olweus, 1993). Relational bullying, a form of indirect bullying, includes acts such as gossiping, social isolation of the victim, and the spreading of rumors (Jacobsen & Bauman, 2007). Indirect bullying is often used interchangeably with relational or social aggression (Crick & Dodge, 1996). This type of bullying is more difficult to observe than direct bullying and is many times disregarded by teachers because it is seen as less serious (Yoon & Kerber, 2003). Further, one study showed that teachers were not even sure how to handle indirect bullying and would send students to the office for observed acts of direct bullying but not indirect (Mishna, Scarcello, Pepler, & Wiener, 2005).

Females are more likely than males to engage in indirect bullying. Similar to those who participate in direct bullying, students who engage in indirect bullying have a lower self-image and reported that they felt a sense of lower academic achievement and behavioral control compared to peers. Contrary to direct bullies, though, indirect bullies do seem to have social skills but may lack a positive view of self-worth (Smith et al., 2012).

A third type of bullying to come about with the technological advances of the 21st century is cyberbullying, or using technological means to bully others. This type of bullying could potentially fall under either direct or indirect bullying above, but it has been separated here mainly because of its uniqueness. Cyberbullying can be unavoidable and inescapable. Typical school bullying such as teasing, socially isolating, mocking, physically abusing, and etc. can sometimes be avoided by victims. Cyberbullying, however, can continue indefinitely by way of text messages, e-mails, and other social media outlets. Social media has introduced another unique element, an extremely large audience. What we may consider typical bullying at school may only be seen by a small group of students. However, social media outlets have the ability to share potential acts of bullying with a much larger audience. Third, bullies can often act with some degree of anonymity when bullying online, which is different than typical bullying at school where perpetrators can usually be identified (Slonje & Smith, 2008).

No matter the type of bullying, though, considering Olweus' (1993) definition, the act of bullying is a repeated, negative action, and these negative actions significantly impact the well-being of victims. This provides even more of a reason for teachers to understand bullying and the role they play in stopping it.

Impact of bullying. Again, Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy highlights the need to feel safe as second only to the basic physiological needs of the body. The basic premise of bullying at school could disrupt this need by creating a hostile, unstable environment that undermines instruction (Luiselli, Putnam, Handler & Feinberg, 2005). If this need for safety is not met at school, student learning can be impacted because victims of bullying will be preoccupied and feel anxious (Olweus, 1993), thus taking focus away from learning. In fact, both bullies and victims receive lower scores in school when compared to their peers (Nishina, 2004; Olweus,

1993). Part of the reason for lower scores can be attributed to victims missing school for fear of being bullied (Feinberg, 2003). Moreover, some students have been forced to completely change schools because of repeated bullying (Sanders, 2004). This could potentially cause even more gaps in learning because of the adjustment period needed to adapt to new surroundings. The missing of school days and potentially changing schools altogether out of fear of being bullied potentially means that victims of bullying could fall behind their peers.

From an emotional view, victims of bullying are more prone to lower self-esteem and depression Olweus, 1993; Sassu et al., 2004). Drawing on the support deterioration model of depression, Seed, Harkness, & Quilty (2010) found that victims of bullying were more likely to perceive a break down in their support groups partly due to the repeated stress of bullying. This break down in support groups can lead way to depression. As reported by Rigby (2003), victims of bullying have lower social well-being and psychological adjustment and also show higher levels of psychological distress. In addition to emotional distress, victims of bullying report a lower satisfaction with their lives (Flashpohler, Elfstrom, Vanderzee, Sink, & Birchmeier, 2009).

Most alarming, though, is that depression is the most common mental illness in students and can lead to a host of issues, including suicide (Cash, 2003). Teen suicide is a major concern for schools in the United States, and, unfortunately, bullying has been linked to suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts. Figures from the U.S. Department of Health (2010) have highlighted that suicide is the third leading cause of death for ages 15–24. In addition, 13.8% of U.S. high school students seriously considered suicide in the previous year, and 6.3% reported they had actually attempted suicide. Although reasons for suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts for youth are numerous (Gould, Greenberg, Velting, & Shaffer, 2003), studies have shown that victims of bullying are more likely than their peers to have suicidal thoughts and suicidal attempts (Cash,

2003; Hinduja & Patchin, 2010). Further, researchers have recently found a causal relationship between bullying and suicide. Victims of bullying are much more likely to have suicidal thoughts and tendencies in direct response to being victimized when compared to their peers (Kim, Leventhal, Koh, & Boyce, 2009). This link between bullying and suicide should draw serious attention from schools and school leaders. The fact that there are students in schools that have thought of or attempted suicide because of being bullied at school is a major issue. Teachers must be given the proper tools and resources and understand their role in the fight against bullying if an anti-bullying policy is to be successful (Nicolaides, Toda, & Smith, 2002).

Bullying can also lead to long-term antisocial behaviors. A follow-up study by Olweus (1993) found bullies are more likely to continue with antisocial behaviors after leaving school. Approximately 60% of boys who were bullies in upper grades had at least one conviction by the age of 24. In the same study, Olweus (1993) found 35%–40% of bullies had three or more convictions by age 24, compared to only 10% of the original control group comprised of non-bullies and non-victims (Olweus, 1993). Additionally, in a joint study of school shooters conducted between the United States Secret Service and United States Department of Education, 71% of shooters reported that they had been persecuted, bullied, or attacked (Vossekuil, Fein, Reddy, Borum, & Modzeleski, 2002).

The effects of being victimized by bullying does not necessarily end when a victim changes schools, enters a new grade, or even graduates. Victims of bullying are prone to psychiatric problems and smoking in adulthood. Victims are also more likely to have less financial success, have difficulty holding a job, and have more difficulty with social interactions in adulthood (Wolke, Copelan, Angold, & Costello, 2013).

Types of victims. Olweus (1993) identified two types of victims: passive and provocative. The distinction between the two types is based on the social cues they provide to others. Passive victims generally react submissively, while provocative victims have a tendency to react aggressively (Olweus, 1993).

Typically, passive victims are more anxious and insecure, and they withdraw from groups more compared to their peers. As Olweus (1993) commented, "They often look upon themselves as failures and feel stupid, ashamed, and unattractive" (p. 32). Because of this lack of self-confidence, passive victims relay to others that they will not retaliate. Those who are passive may have difficulty fitting in with their peer groups and come off as shy, possibly contributing further to being victimized by bullies. Further, passive victims may withdraw when bullied and socially isolate themselves, feel alone, and have few friends at school (Olweus, 1993). Fox and Boulton (2005) conducted a study of 330 students in 6 different schools and found several similarities amongst passive victims. Based on self-reports of victims, teacher reports, and non-victim reports, passive victims appeared scared, stood in a manner perceived to be weak, and often seemed unhappy. In the same study, self-reports and non-victim reports agreed passive victims gave in too easily when picked on.

Olweus (1993) also characterized a much smaller group of victims, provocative victims. They tend to be more aggressive and can act out when bullied. Provocative victims often create a tense and anxious environment. This anxious environment, sometimes due to the hyper nature of provocative victims, may cause provocation from bullies and possibly even an entire class. In the same aforementioned study of Fox and Boulton (2005), provocative victims shared two common characteristics. They talk back to bullies when picked on, thus receiving even more attacks from the bully, and are also seen as annoying by their peers. Aggressive acts of

provocative victims can partially be due to the victim being repeatedly bullied and knowing that it will come sooner or later (Olweus, 1993).

Identifying victims and bullies. Identifying potential bullies and victims rests majorly on school personnel. According to Olweus (1993), there are sets of primary and secondary indicators that teachers and school personnel can use to help identify potential victims and bullies. Primary indices for victims include: repeatedly being teased or called names, laughed at in an unfriendly manner, being seen physically abused by peers, being involved in fights where they seem almost defenseless, have items stolen or damaged, or show signs of physical abuse. Secondary signs include social isolation, hovering near adults in limited supervision areas, acting anxiously or insecure, appearing constantly depressed, or showing a gradual decline in academic performance. Provocative victims may exhibit some of the aforementioned signs but may also be hot-tempered, restless, actively disliked, or even bully others.

Similarly, Olweus (1993) provides school personnel with signs of bullies as well. Signs of a bully may include verbally or physically abusing others in the form of harassing teasing, pushing, hitting, etc., showing strong needs to display power or dominance, becoming easily angered, being openly defiant to peers and authority figures, seen by others as tough, having average to above-average self-esteem, having a support group of peers, and having a negative attitude toward school.

Knowing these factors, school personnel and teachers can be better equipped to identify potential victims and bullies. Again, because teachers play an important part of this process it is necessary that they be armed with this information so they can help identify potential victims and bullies so they can be referred to either school administrators or school counselors for further

investigation. By identifying them early, hopefully schools will be able to properly intervene and thwart future bullying.

Teachers' role. As the frontline defenders against school bullying, teachers must be well equipped to identify and intervene when bullying occurs. Several barriers have been identified, the first of which is that teachers have differing views of what constitutes bullying (Lee, 2006). Research has also shown that teachers are less likely to react to acts of bullying if they themselves do not view the act as a serious act of bullying (Kallestad & Olweus, 2003; Yoon & Kerber, 2003). In addition, confusion among teachers about what actually constitutes an act of bullying, coupled with different interpretations of what acts require intervention, make tackling the bullying problem an extremely complex and difficult issue (Mishna et al., 2005). To add even more fuel, it is possible for some students to actually view teachers as part of the bullying problem. When teachers fail to intervene, teachers are actually part of the problem and not part of the solution (Olweus, 1993). Further, ineffective intervention leads to students not having faith in teachers' ability to effectively intervene and use strategies to prevent bullying (Crothers & Kolbert, 2004).

The effectiveness of an anti-bullying policy or program is related to how important teachers view a potential act of bullying. If teachers do not perceive the act as important or serious, then they are less likely to draw on anti-bullying strategies. However, if teachers see themselves as a tool in the fight against bullying and believe their efforts can truly make a difference, then they are more likely to employ intervention strategies. Taking ownership of the fight against bullying and seeing themselves as agents of change to stop the problem is a key component to the success of any policy or program (Kallestad & Olweus, 2003). When teachers do recognize the need to intervene, there is some support for use of strategies, particularly

coaching, that help reduce bullying and victimization (Hirschstein, Edstrom, Frey, Snell, & MacKenzie, 2007).

If teachers are important to the success of a policy or program and that success is tied largely to teacher understandings of bullying and their role (Nicolaides, Toda, & Smith, 2002), then the next logical step is to make sure teachers are properly trained. One of the factors that must be dealt with is the attitudes and perceptions of teachers about bullying. Teachers must understand that their view of bullying and its implications could very well be different from students' views. Therefore, it is imperative to properly train teachers to recognize their own preconceived notions and understand that those may be inconsistent (Mishna et al., 2006). Further, proper training would also help teachers understand the effects of bullying on the victims no matter the degree of seriousness the teachers perceive the act to be. Training, though, must include effective distribution of literature and consistency (Ellis & Shute, 2007).
To be effective, then, schools must commit themselves and their resources to proper training. Part of the ineffectiveness of a policy or program from the teachers' perspective is a lack of proper training and resources (Mishna et al., 2005). In addition, Dake et al. (2004) found that not just teachers but even school principals felt they were not properly trained on how to handle bullying. The study also highlighted the fact that proper training is a necessary component of anti-bullying policies or programs. Without proper training, policies and programs will be largely unsuccessful. For example, research on whole-school approaches has seen mixed results, but those results could be affected by inconsistency of implementation by teachers (Smith et al., 2004).

Bullying and needs fulfillment. An explanation of why students bully others could easily go back to Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy. The act of bullying, as discussed earlier, disrupts

the victim at the second level, the need to feel safe. Bullies, though, could also be motivated by trying to fulfill a need, the need for acceptance (Aluede, Adeleke, Omoike, & Afen-Akpaida, 2008; Olthof & Goossens, 2008).

Olthof and Goossens' (2008) study of adolescent boys and girls attempted to determine the extent that acceptance played in choosing to bully others. They found that boys but not girls are at least partially motivated to bully others due to their need to be accepted by other bullies of the same sex. When it comes to trying to gain acceptance by the opposite sex, though, girls are more likely than boys to use bullying as a behavior to gain acceptance. Although their study found interesting discrepancies between boys and girls, the simple fact remains that one of the reasons bullies engage in acts of bullying against others is to gain acceptance. It should be noted that gender differences in the realm of bullying exist and have been widely studied, but such a discussion falls outside the scope of this study.

Also related to needs fulfillment, Omizo, Omizo, Baxa, and Miyose (2006) found that bullies get a sense of empowerment from bullying others. Although they may realize alternatives exist, that sense of empowerment and control is so strong that they simply choose to keep bullying. Interestingly, when it comes to consideration of the victims, bullies feel that victims bring it upon themselves.

Considering the discussion of needs fulfillment, Dussich and Maekoya (2007) found a link between physical abuse during early childhood and bullying. They applied the social coping model, and, as the model suggests, people deal with different stressors in different ways. When confronted with a stressor, a person will access a coping strategy. If successful, the person will be more likely in the future to draw on that particular strategy when confronted with the same or a similar stressor. They found those who were abused during childhood were more likely than

their peers who were not abused to become either participants in or victims of bullying (Dussich & Maekoya, 2007). This disruption in relation to Maslow's Hierarchy at such an early age from abuse, coupled with the social coping model, could definitely be tied to bullying.

Is it possible, then, bullies could be using acts of bullying as one of their coping mechanisms to fulfill a need? After all, some bullies are motivated by the need to gain acceptance from others (Olthof & Goossens, 2008). The stress of needing to be accepted by others, then, could lead bullies to use acts of bullying as their coping strategy to mitigate that stress and fulfill that need. On the other side, could victims be using their role as a victim as a coping strategy if playing the victim has proven successful in the past in fulfilling one of their needs? This is not to suggest that victims of bullying invite being bullied. Rather, it is merely a potential connection in that some may play the victim as a coping strategy, similar to how bullies are motivated by trying to fulfill a need. However, it could be that playing the victim does not at all meet a need. It could be that some victims choose to do nothing to stop acts of bullying because their coping strategies have been unsuccessful in the past. This strategy is more common as acts of bullying are repeated over longer periods of time (Craig, Pepler, & Blais, 2007). It should also be noted that some victims have quite the opposite stance and feel that counter-aggression is a more desirable way to handle the situation (Black, Weinles, & Washington, 2010). The motivation behind which strategy is used, either by the bully or victim, could be a study on its own (and should be) but falls outside the scope of this study.

Theories on bullying. Several theories and frameworks that attempt to explain bullying should be given due consideration before continuing. These include the social information processing model (SIP), theory of mind (TOM) framework, moral development theory, and social dominance theory.

Social information processing. Related to the aforementioned information processing model, Crick and Dodge (1996) used the SIP model and took into account two types of easily discernable aggression: proactive and reactive. Reactive aggression is a defensive response to an attack. Proactive aggression, however, is a deliberate act of aggression toward another. The SIP model is based on a sequential pattern that children interpret before carrying out a behavior. Steps include "encoding of social clues, interpretation of social cues, clarification of goals, response access or construction, response decision, and behavioral enactment" (Crick & Dodge, 1996, p. 993).

SIP theorists believe aggressive behavior occurs with misinterpretations at two different steps. The first is at the interpretation, or encoding, stage. If someone wrongfully interprets a social cue as an act of aggression, then it is more likely that person will react aggressively. In reality, the behavior was simply misinterpreted and was never meant to provoke an aggressive behavior. This is referred to as reactive aggression (Crick & Dodge, 1996).

The second occurs at the decision stage. Here, children evaluate a situation and possible outcomes of different behaviors. They will then act depending on which outcome was identified as most desirable (Crick & Dodge, 1996). This would be similar to accessing long-term memory to retrieve stored information about which goal would be most beneficial. Aggressive children tend to relate aggressive acts with obtaining a desired outcome. This is proactive aggression, and proactive aggressive children view acts of aggression more positively than others. Reactive aggressive children, however, were found to react aggressively when they felt threatened (Crick & Dodge, 1996).

The discerning characteristic of the SIP model is in the attainment of a particular goal. Proactive aggressive children act in order to obtain a desired outcome. Reactive aggressive

children, however, do not act in order to obtain such a goal. Rather, they act in retaliation (Crick & Dodge, 1996).

Theory of mind. The theory of mind framework, proposed and researched by Sutton (2001), provides another view of why students bully. Sutton's work was based largely on the social context and acts of bullying rather than on aggression itself. The framework is outlined as "the ability of individuals to attribute mental states to themselves and others in order to explain and predict behavior" (Sutton, 2001, p. 530). Children who have a well-developed theory of mind are easily able to identify mental states and emotions of others. Additionally, these children also understand that others can act on false beliefs. A well-developed theory of mind could be a useful skill for bullies (Sutton, 2001).

Sutton (2001) contradicted the common stereotype that bullies are socially inadequate by providing research that proved otherwise. In one of his studies, six groups (assistants, reinforcers, defenders, outsiders, victims, and bullies) were scored based on how well the participants understood cognitive false beliefs and false-belief-based emotion. The study found that bullies scored higher than the other five groups. This data provides support for bullies having a well developed theory of mind because they are able to recognize, at least to some degree, social cues better than their peers (Sutton, 2001).

The issue of social competence as it relates to theory of mind is another topic that should receive attention. Sutton (2001) claimed that current definitions of social competence rely too heavily on aggression research and should be based on the success of attaining individual goals within social contexts. This means that the definitions of social competence should be fluid, changing to fit the current social context. For example, the "nerdy" student who quietly slips out a book on the sidelines during a football game might seem socially incompetent to the "jocks."

On the other hand, the "jock" who stands at the back of the band hall and does not participate could be labeled as socially incompetent. Bullying, although widely accepted as undesirable by the majority of adults and children, is not necessarily social incompetence as other theories and frameworks may claim. What could be considered acts of bullying in one social context could just as easily be the social norm in another.

Moral development theory. The moral development theory of bullying and aggression is based largely on the work of Arsenio and Lemerise (2001) and takes values and emotions into account. Children develop a set of morals over time, and, as they grow older, their morals change. There is also a distinction made between moral and conventional events. Moral events deal with what is fair and just while conventional events are those that support social interactions. Morals are recognized as relatively unchangeable while the interpretation of conventional events could fluctuate depending on the social context of the event (Arsenio & Lemerise, 2001).

As this relates to bullying, aggressive children seem to have the capability to recognize what is just and fair. They even share common moral values with their peers. However, the problem is that aggressive children wrongfully interpret whether or not others have crossed moral boundaries. Moreover, aggressive children recognize the moral implications of others but act immorally in order to obtain desired outcomes (Arsenio & Lemerise, 2001).

Social dominance theory. Another theory applied to bullying, proposed by Nishina (2004), takes a biological approach using the social dominance theory. This theory is based on the notion that humans instinctively create social hierarchies. Additionally, a social hierarchy is beneficial to a group because it helps alleviate conflicts between members and creates a sense of organization (Nishina, 2004).

This theory can readily be applied to bullying and aggressive behaviors as children attempt to organize into social hierarchies. Aggressive behaviors could very simply be viewed as maintaining the social hierarchy and not necessarily a destructive force. Aggressors who have a keen sense of achieving group goals through socially accepted means could be viewed as leaders. Additionally, the act of bullying could aid children in finding their place in the social hierarchy. This is not to say that bullying should be accepted. Rather, it merely provides a potential explanation of why some students might bully others. When taken to extremes, bullying and aggressive behaviors can be detrimental to the group if the outcome of the act is selfish in nature. This would be destructive to the group rather than constructive because group members could feel anxious and uncomfortable (Nishina, 2004).

Intervention and prevention. Since bullying was identified in the 1970s as a serious problem in schools, numerous prevention and intervention programs have evolved. These programs range anywhere from a general set of tips to complex, curriculum-based instruction tools to be used in the classroom (Samples, 2004). No matter the complexity or delivery, the ultimate goals of these programs are to improve the atmosphere of the school by working with students, teachers, parents, and administrators (Payne & Gottfredson, 2004).

Smith, Cousins, and Stewart (2005) showed that the type of program implemented and ultimately the effectiveness of the program depend on five main factors: needs, resources, outputs, activities, and outcome. Responses from principals showed that resources, namely time and money, played a major part in creating an effective program. In addition, data showed that the effects of programs are not seen immediately but after a period of at least three months.

Orpinas, Horne, & Staniszewski (2003) classified typical anti-bullying programs into two categories: universal and targeted. Universal programs take a whole-school approach, training

students and staff on bullying in an attempt to change the school climate. Targeted programs, as the name implies, focus efforts on smaller, at-risk subgroups. Most typically, students who are past offenders are the targeted group. No matter the strategy, though, teachers will play an important role in its success or failure (Rigby, 2002).

The district being studied loosely uses the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP) as the foundation for its anti-bullying policy. This program, outlined by Olweus in 1993, has three stages and provides specific examples on what schools can do at each stage. He posed a three-pronged approach: whole school, class, and individual levels.

The whole school level's goal is to increase awareness of bullying and its prevalence. It begins with a student-response questionnaire that can be used by the school to determine where, when, and how often bullying occurs. Then, an assembly should be held to help students identify bullying. This is also when administration will outline the school's discipline policy, which should be a no-tolerance agenda. Separate meetings with staff and parents will also beneficial (Olweus, 1993). A three-year study further proved the benefits of whole school behavior intervention plans. Research showed a significant drop in office discipline referrals (Luiselli et al., 2005).

At the class level, each teacher has his or her own set of rules and consequences that are well defined. Consequences should be swift and consistent. Additionally, cooperative learning projects and regular class meetings should be used to build relationships between students. If a particular child is a repeat bully or victim, teacher-parent meetings, with the student present, should be considered (Olweus, 1993).

As for the individual level, serious talks with both bullies and victims will be necessary. Involving other students, teachers, and parents in group discussions will also be helpful. If all

other means have been exhausted and no viable solution has been reached, changing classes of either the bully or victim is a potential last resort (Olweus, 1993).

Olweus (1994) studied the effects of his prevention program using a sample of approximately 2,500 students. Data from the study showed the program effectively reduced the number of bullying incidents and the number of students who bullied others. Additionally, there was an overall decrease in general antisocial behavior. Moreover, the program helped create a more positive school climate and increased student satisfaction (Olweus, 1994).

Another component to the discussion that deserves more attention and was mentioned before is how students deal with bullying themselves, separate from policy and school rules. Victims deal with bullying in a variety of ways. Interestingly, some studies found that victims of bullying felt that counter-aggression was the most effective strategy for stopping bullying (Black et al., 2010; Craig et al., 2007). This strategy, however, is not desirable, as it could lead to other problems, including fights and eventual suspension. The preferred method in dealing with bullying, as suggested by the authors, is to tell an adult. Respondents, though, felt this was less effective than handling it on their own. Explanations for not telling an adult were many and included fear of retaliation, the stress of reliving the act when recounting the event to an adult, and fear of the adult not taking the report seriously (Black et al., 2007).

Summary

Bullying is obviously a significant problem in today's schools. Research has shown that bullying has adverse effects on both bullies and victims. Educators should be seriously concerned, as some of these effects include less academic success, emotional problems, and even suicide. The effects of bullying reach far beyond the time the bullying occurs. Victims continue to suffer as teenagers and even into adulthood, showing more prevalence of depressive

symptoms later in life and less ability to hold a job. Worse, the thought of a person thinking that the only way to stop the constant victimization is to end his/her life is disturbing to us as educators. To think that there are students walking the hallways at this very moment who may be experiencing some of these negative consequences requires a serious commitment from schools. Since teachers play such an important role in the fight against bullying it is imperative to understand what they know about bullying and the effectiveness of an anti-bullying policy. Without an effective policy in place with teachers who understand how to identify bullying and properly intervene then the policy will not be as successful as it can be.

Although bullying has received considerable attention in recent years, most of the research has been quantitative in nature and has explored definitions, motivations, occurrences, effects, and other factors related to where it occurs and why it happens. Little qualitative research exists that provides educators with an in-depth look at bullying and bullying policies through the eyes of teachers. Again, it is vitally important that teachers understand how to properly identify and intervene. If they fail to do so then they perpetuate an already serious problem. To that end, this study used a multiple case study approach of six different teachers, representing three different high schools in the same school district, to provide rich, meaningful data of teachers' understanding of bullying, the current anti-bullying policy, and its perceived effectiveness. Since the teachers' role is so important in the fight against bullying it only makes sense to capture their thoughts in order to help make future anti-bullying policies more effective. The ultimate goal of this study is to provide the research community, district administrators, school administrators, teachers, and other school personnel with an accurate portrait of what teachers know about bullying and identify gaps in interventions in an effort to consistently enforce an effective anti-bullying policy.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Bullying is no stranger to schools (Sanders, 2004). More importantly, the effects bullying can have on students should be of major concern for school leaders and teachers. Along with the short-term effects of missing school and lower self-esteem, the potential long-term effects of mental disorders, decreased learning, and even suicide are much more devastating. As the frontline defenders against bullying, teachers have an important role to play in prevention and intervention. Since the role of the teacher is vital, this study investigated teacher perceptions of a district-wide intervention/prevention strategy, its implementation, and its effectiveness.

Research Design

Qualitative studies have strong roots in sociology and anthropology dating back to the 1920s. This long history has enabled qualitative research to gain credibility and develop into several different types over the years. This development of different types of studies has come about as researchers identified new questions that needed answering (Merriam, 2009). Despite the method chosen for qualitative studies, the basic position is that some phenomenon is identified, and it is the goal of the researcher to investigate and understand the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). Further, researchers are more interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed within the contexts of the given phenomenon (Merriam, 2009). This is somewhat different from quantitative studies, which are more logical, correlational, or experimental, following a precise set of rules (Lloyd-Jones, 2003). Moreover, quantitative studies are more concerned with the facts and/or frequency of phenomena or the relationship between events and phenomena (Merriam, 2009).

Qualitative studies offer a more in-depth analysis of a phenomenon and, as described by Merriam (2009), can be characterized by five main characteristics. The first characteristic is that

the focus of the study is on understanding the experiences of participants. Therefore, the scope is to provide an inside look at what participants have experienced. Data collection is the second distinguishing characteristic of qualitative studies. Researchers spend a great amount of time in the field, collecting data through documents, interviews, and observations. Spending time in the field allows researchers to study the phenomenon in its natural setting, thus increasing the richness and depth of understanding (Schwandt, 2007). The final product of this time in the field is to provide readers with accurate analysis of the experiences of participants (Creswell, 2007). Third, the researcher is the primary instrument as opposed to surveys or other tools common to quantitative studies. Using the researcher as the instrument provides the researcher with a unique view of the phenomenon and enables him or her to further understand the phenomenon. Fourth, qualitative research can be considered inductive, where researchers obtain data and assemble it into meaningful explanations. Finally, qualitative studies provide a rich, detailed description of the participants' experiences. This allows researchers to bring those experiences to life for readers and provide insight that cannot be gained from quantitative studies.

In addition to the difference in focus, sampling is another distinguishing characteristic. Sampling is characterized by being purposeful but not to the point that particular participants are already in mind. Rather, the participants begin to surface as the study develops from the research question. This purposeful sampling allows the researcher to select participants who will help bring more understanding to the phenomenon, which is the focus of qualitative studies to begin with (Devers & Frankel, 2000).

It is the focus on understanding a phenomenon rather than calculating the frequency of its occurrence or relationship to other events that the qualitative approach was chosen for this study. It is understood, though, that many times qualitative studies can include a quantitative

component. In some cases, it can even strengthen a qualitative study (Yin, 2009). This mixed methods approach, however, falls outside the scope of this study but could be of benefit for future research.

The decision then turned to which type of qualitative study fits best for my purpose, which is an extremely important part of the process (Yin, 2009). Several designs could have fit the realm of this study, namely phenomenological, ethnographic, or case study. Each of the designs carries with it its own strengths and weaknesses.

Phenomenological studies, by their nature, are interested in studying a particular phenomenon across a group of individuals. This definitely could have fit part of my study, but the main reason for excluding this design lies with the fact that phenomenological studies are interested in the shared experiences of individuals (Creswell, 2007) and explaining the essence of the experience (Merriam, 2009). This would be more appropriate, for example, if I were interested in studying student feelings about being bullied.

Ethnographies are concerned with a particular culture. Teachers could be considered a culture, which is why this method was heavily considered. However, ethnographic studies typically are more concerned with the beliefs and values of a culture (Creswell, 2007). My study, though, was focused on teacher perceptions and not necessarily on their beliefs or values related to bullying. This design would have been more appropriate if there were an anthropological element (Merriam, 2009), which is not the case.

Case studies are rich descriptions of a particular experience within a bounded system. A bounded system occurs when the issue or experience can be separated, allowing researchers to focus their efforts and drill deeper into the experience. In addition to the bounded system, the unit of analysis will decide whether or not a case study is appropriate (Merriam, 2009). Yin

(2009) contends that case studies explore contemporary, real-life experiences where the line between the phenomenon of interest and the context surrounding the experience are not clear. Further, data collection requires many different sources in order to provide an accurate description of the many different variables of interest. Within this bounded system, then, case studies can be single or multiple, holistic or embedded (Yin, 2009).

This study was a multiple-case, holistic case study where the focus was to explore teacher perceptions of bullying and the effectiveness of an anti-bullying policy. The units of analysis, then, are the teachers, and the bounded system of interest is high school teachers in the same school district who have experience with the anti-bullying policy. These two key identifiers made the case study the appropriate approach. In addition, case studies have an advantage when trying to answer how and why questions (Yin, 2009), which were vital to this study. I wanted to know how and why teachers perceive bullying and the current policy.

Ultimately, the case study allowed me to provide a rich, in-depth analysis of teacher perceptions of bullying and the effectiveness of an anti-bullying policy by studying teachers in their natural setting. In addition, I used multiple cases. The decision to use multiple cases across multiple sites allowed the study to be more in-depth (Yin, 2009). Multiple participants allowed me to more deeply understand the phenomenon and provide a more accurate portrayal of participant experiences. The holistic approach allowed me to stay focused on the anti-bullying policy and not spend too much time on a particular subunit, as can happen with an embedded approach (Yin, 2009). Further, since the focus of the study is on teacher perceptions of a district's anti-bullying policy, a holistic approach makes sense. Execution of this multiple-case, holistic approach used six different teachers, two from each of three different high schools in the same district. Data were collected using journals, interviews, and observations. Analysis

ultimately provided a deeper understanding by identifying major themes related to the how and why the anti-bullying policy is or is not effective.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

Research Question 1: What do teachers know about bullying?

Research Question 2: What are teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the current anti-bullying policy?

Research Question 3: Does a gap exist between policy and implementation? Why or why not?

Research Question 4: How can the current intervention/prevention policy be more effective?

Participants

A total of six participants were used, two teachers from each of three different high schools. The decision to use six participants was based on the notion that more confident generalizations can be made about results when multiple cases are synthesized (Yin, 2009). A convenience sample of high schools was used. Two teachers from a non-participating school were used as test cases to pilot the interview questions for understanding and fine-tuning my interviewing skills. After approval from the district superintendent and the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (LUIRB), the high school principals were contacted. Participants were then solicited via e-mail. All classroom teachers in the school received an e-mail, which offered a brief description of the study. Originally, teachers were given a one week deadline in which to respond. However, due to lack of response, the deadline had to be increased substantially. The original e-mail was sent to the participating schools' administration in early

September 2012. No responses were received by the end of the one week deadline. Repeated reminder e-mails from school administrators continued until at least six total participants were secured.

Participants were purposely selected from respondents who had taught in the district at their current high school for at least two years. The decision to use two years as the cut off helped ensure that participants were familiar with the district's current policy. Other criteria used to select participants were total number of years teaching, ethnicity, and gender. The plan was to use teachers from a variety of backgrounds in order to hopefully provide a broader perspective on the issue versus narrowing the scope by selecting similar participants. Although purposeful sampling is a limitation, it is also one of the facets of a case study that allows a richer, deeper understanding of a phenomenon (Merriam, 2009).

Over one month past the original deadline, a total of four teachers from Johnson High School responded. One was eliminated because it was her first year teaching at the school. The other was eliminated because he taught in the same department as someone I know personally, and I was attempting to mitigate any potential bias. Therefore, the other two were selected for the study. Five total responses were garnered from Kennedy High School. Of the three eliminated, I knew one of them personally, one was not a classroom teacher, and one did not respond to my follow-up e-mail asking for background information. Therefore, the remaining two were used for the study. Finally, I received three responses from Lincoln high School, two of which came in January of 2013. One teacher was purposely eliminated from selection after gathering background information, as she taught in the same department as a teacher that had already been secured at another school.

I originally hoped to secure participants from varying ethnicities, teaching fields, and gender, but the responses did not allow for as wide a variety as I had hoped. Both teachers from Johnson High School were Caucasian males. John taught in the fine arts department and Mark in the mathematics department. Both teachers from Kennedy High School were Caucasian females. Mary taught in the health/physical education department and Ashley in the social studies department. Both teachers from Lincoln High School were Caucasian females. Susan taught in the social studies department and Karen in the special education department. Of the six participants, all were Caucasian, two were males, and four were females. Five different academic disciplines were represented.

Setting

The district studied is a large suburban school district in the southwestern U.S. with multiple high schools. The district is approximately 60% white, 15% Hispanic, 14% Asian, 10% African American, and 1% American Indian/Alaskan Native/Hawaiian Native/Other Pacific Islander.

The district typically performs well on the state-mandated accountability test, and all schools within the district meet adequate yearly progress. Three high schools in particular were chosen for this study based on their longevity.

The district was chosen based on convenience. More importantly for this study, though, the district adopted an anti-bullying policy and implemented it with teachers and students in the 2010–2011 school year. Teachers received a training on the policy and then were asked to pass information to the students in the way of a brochure, open discussion about the policy, and a short video about two students' experiences with bullying.

Data Collection

All participants filled out the consent form, stating their willingness to cooperate in the study (see Appendix B), and all agreed to have the interviews audio recorded. I employed triangulation, using three different sources of data, to help increase internal validity as I pulled information from all three sources to make meaningful interpretations (Merriam, 2009). The three methods used to collect data were journals, interviews, and direct observations.

Journals. Participants chosen for the study were asked to keep detailed journals specifically related to acts of bullying they witnessed and interventions used, if any. Participants were instructed that these observations of bullying could be at any point during the school day in the classroom, hallways, lunchroom, or any other common areas. Participants were asked to keep the journals for a period of at least two weeks. They were to record any suspected act of bullying, and then during analysis, I decided whether the recorded acts fell under the heading of bullying. Written by the frontline defenders against bullying, these personal journals were used to help me gain a deeper understanding of what each individual participant understood about the phenomenon (Merriam, 2009).

Since the focus of this study was to understand teacher perceptions of bullying and the current policy, it seemed only logical to have teachers keep personal journals of what they observed. Moreover, direct observations only allow a snapshot during a small window of time. Teacher journals could provide more detail over a much longer period of time. This use of multiple observers of the same phenomenon was used to help increase reliability (Yin, 2009).

Interviews. Interviews provide valuable insight into the experiences of participants (Turner, 2010) and was the main source of data for the study. The structure for this study was a focused interview in which participants were asked the same general, open-ended questions.

This approach is typically shorter in length and can be finished in one sitting (Yin, 2009). It also allowed me to focus the attention of the participants by asking standardized questions while at the same time having the flexibility to go beyond script and ask more probing, detailed questions. All interviews were audiotaped and transcribed. I made the transcriptions available for review to the respective interviewees. In addition, member checking of summaries was used during data analysis to ensure I was accurately telling the intended story of each interviewee. Written summaries of the interviews were e-mailed to each participant, and all participants verified that my summaries were accurate. The following standard interview questions were used with all participants in the study:

1. Please provide your definition of bullying.
2. Tell me about a time when you witnessed an act and you were unsure about whether it was an act of bullying or not.
3. Tell me about your understanding of the district's anti-bullying policy and how it should be used.
4. Why do you believe the current policy is effective or ineffective?
5. Do you enforce the protocol that should be followed to report acts of bullying? Why or why not?
6. Identify any gaps you see between the district's policy and implementation of the policy.
7. What do you need to make the policy more effective?
8. Is there anything else that you would like to add about bullying or bullying policies that I may not have asked about?

Questions 1 and 2 are designed to understand what teachers know about bullying. Question 3 addresses the teachers' understanding of the current anti-bullying policy and how to use it. Questions 4 and 5 were developed to specifically address teacher perceptions about the effectiveness of the policy and additional resources that might be required to make the policy more successful. Question 6 was designed to provide insight into gaps between policy and implementation. Question 7 explored what is needed to make the policy more effective.

Question one specifically addresses the need to understand bullying through the eyes of teachers. As Lee (2006) highlighted, teachers have a difficult time defining bullying even when their own district has adopted a common definition. I hoped to find that teachers at least have some similar characteristics in their understanding of bullying. Question two was designed to provide teachers a platform to discuss a time when they felt confused about an act they had witnessed. As shown, teachers will likely not intervene unless they perceive the act to be an act of bullying (Kallestad & Olweus, 2003; Yoon & Kerber, 2003). Question three addressed the teachers' understanding of the district's anti-bullying policy. Having a policy is irrelevant if teachers do not know how to use it.

Question four was designed to specifically address teacher perceptions of the effectiveness of the policy. Because teachers play such an important role in stopping bullying (Rigby, 2002), it is imperative to ask them if they believe the policy is working or not from their point of view. Question five is an attempt to understand why teachers may or may not properly enforce the policy. I used this question to look for potential barriers to following the policy.

Question six, then, allowed teachers the chance to identify specific gaps in implementation. I used the answers to this question to support or refute findings from other data collection methods.

Question seven investigated what teachers feel they need to make the policy more effective. Literature has shown that teachers feel they need additional training and resources (Mishna et al., 2005) to effectively handle a bullying problem. This question asked those who must implement the policy exactly what the feel they need to accomplish this goal.

Finally, question eight allowed teachers to provide any input or thoughts related to bullying and bullying policies that I may not have explicitly asked about. This could provide insightful information as teachers discuss their final thoughts.

Direct observations. One of the main tenets of case studies is that the researcher is exploring a phenomenon in its natural, real-life setting (Yin, 2009). Therefore, direct observations are very valuable. Research has shown that bullying is more prevalent outside the classroom in common areas. Specifically for high school students, bullying is more common in hallways and lunchrooms (Vaillancourt et al., 2010). In order to observe potential acts of bullying in their natural setting, I used a combination of observations in the participants' classrooms, in the hallways during passing periods, and in lunchrooms. Since it is more likely to observe bullying in common areas, the majority of observation time was spent in those areas. All high schools use block scheduling with four 90-minute classes. Between each class is a passing period to allow students to move to their next class. All high schools have multiple lunches, each lasting 30 minutes.

Since this study is concerned with teacher perceptions of the effectiveness of an anti-bullying policy, it is important to evaluate the use of that policy in the natural setting. Therefore, I created an instrument (see Appendix C) used during observations that is based on the reference sheet teachers received at their annual training at the beginning of the school year on the district's anti-bullying policy. The first three columns are similar to those on the aforementioned

reference sheet. The type of bullying incidents were categorized as direct physical, direct verbal, or indirect, based on my observation. The level of bullying was cross-checked with the district policy as level 1, 2, or 3. The teacher intervention, if any, was recorded, and any of my reflective notes were recorded as well. By using this instrument, I was able to describe the event as well as record analysis and interpretation of the event, all within the parameters of the district's anti-bullying policy.

Data Analysis

Data analysis can often be the most difficult task to undertake when conducting a qualitative study (Merriam, 2009). Due to the multiple-case study approach, analysis required me to analyze each case separately and then analyze data across cases. This is called a cross-case analysis or cross-case synthesis. This technique allowed me to analyze each case separately and then identify similarities across cases, thereby providing more meaningful interpretations.

Strategy. Of the strategies used to analyze case studies, the most preferred is theoretical propositions. Using this strategy allows researchers to analyze data based on the theory or framework that spurred the study in the first place (Yin, 2009). The theory guiding this study is the information processing model, which equates the human mind to a computer, constantly receiving, analyzing, storing, and retrieving information (Myers, 2010). This model, then, will serve as the basis for data analysis. As data is analyzed, it will be done so with the logical steps of the information processing model in mind. These steps include processing, storing, and then using information. A disruption at any stage could lead to ineffective implementation of the district's anti-bullying policy.

Technique. Of five major techniques used in analysis of case study data, cross-case synthesis was employed for this study, mainly because of the use of multiple cases. In addition,

this technique allows me to analyze each case separately and then collectively. Use of multiple cases and this technique will also add more credibility compared to using a single case (Yin, 2009).

The actual analysis for this study follows four major steps, as used by Erickson and Dyer (2004) in their analysis of six cases. Step 1 was to accumulate data into case stories for each participant, a technique used for multiple cases (Erickson & Dyer, 2004). Gathering journals, interviews, and observations into a single story provide a detailed explanation of the experiences of each participant. For this first part of the process, each participant was treated as an individual case. The focus was to provide a detailed description of each participant's experiences rather than trying to find similarities, as no analysis occurred during this stage.

The next step was to code the case stories based on similarities. I used a qualitative analysis software package, MAXQDA, to help with coding. If a particular piece of evidence fit more than one theme, then it was placed as such (Erickson & Dyer, 2004). The number of categories was not of great importance, as the themes were grouped and regrouped in later stages. As is the case with qualitative studies, the process of coding is fluid, and the number of themes is not set in stone. Unlike quantitative studies, there is no statistic to be run and an outcome received that serves as the interpretation of the data. Again, the researcher is the primary instrument and must make sense of many different bits of information (Merriam, 2009).

The third step was to bring the case stories to more meaningful, shorter versions. This occurred in two parts. The first part was to combine similar pieces of evidence from multiple cases into brief descriptions. These descriptions would then be combined with the coding to further refine themes surrounding the two major focuses of this study, teacher perceptions of bullying and teacher perceptions of the effectiveness of an anti-bullying policy. The second part

of this step was to simply shorten the case stories into overviews that are more manageable but detailed enough to provide meaningful information on the identified themes (Erickson & Dyer, 2004).

The final stage of the process was the actual synthesis across the cases. Using the identified themes from step two and the overviews and descriptions from step three, I looked for major themes that began to emerge in reference to the two major focuses of the study. As these major themes began to take shape, it was important to remember that qualitative research is fluid (Merriam, 2009), and I needed to remain flexible (Yin, 2009) and report only what the data tells me. With cross-case synthesis, each major theme that is identified must be well supported by the data (Yin, 2009).

Trustworthiness

It is imperative to discuss steps taken during data collection and analysis that help improve the credibility and reliability of results. This study incorporated several techniques to that end. Qualitative studies especially must be diligent to ensure data and interpretations are as close to reality as possible, as there is no statistical base or numerical data from which to draw. I was careful to consider member checking, voice and crisis of representation, triangulation, using a database, and reliability.

Member checks. As another tool to help increase credibility, each participant received a summary of the interview to check for accuracy. They were asked to provide feedback on my interpretations of their words. All six participants indicated that my interpretations of their respective interviews were correct and no revisions needed to be made. This technique ensures that the interpretation of the researcher is in line with the thoughts of the participant (Merriam,

2009). Failure to check with participants could introduce serious bias, as the researcher would have free reign on how to interpret the data.

Voice. Schwandt (2007) noted that voice is a concern for qualitative inquiries and should be considered when analyzing and discussing data collection. The concern for the writer is if he or she can accurately describe an experience by another person without inserting his or her own biases. This can be difficult as researchers try to organize information, analyze it, and then tell the story of someone else's experience. To help minimize this effect and provide more accurate descriptions rather than a formal, authoritative voice, I drew on what Denzin and Lincoln (2011) refer to as reflexivity. This conscious effort to critically analyze myself as the researcher and storyteller hopefully allowed for a more truthful representation of teacher perceptions.

Triangulation. A common technique in qualitative studies is triangulation, the use of three different data collection tools. I incorporated journals, interviews, and observations as part of data collection triangulation. Periodically, I made informal observations about the data being collected and whether or not they supported one another. This process helped ensure that data are as accurate, or as close to the truth, as possible, thereby possibly increasing the credibility of the study (Merriam, 2009).

Database. As Yin (2009) described, creating a case study database helps organize information for the purpose of providing further evidence to support interpretations and meanings. A case study database is similar to that of providing raw data to readers. One of the limitations of case studies is that readers are not provided with data to cross-check the study and decide for themselves if the study's interpretations are adequate. If a researcher takes the time to create such a database, readers have the opportunity to analyze raw data for themselves. This, in turn, helps increase the credibility of the study. To help facilitate effective organization of data, I

used MAXQDA software. Data was organized into meaningful codes based on similar themes that I identified. Codes and themes were identified for each case separately and then across cases. Permission to access the database will be granted or denied after receiving a written request that outlines the nature of the inquiry.

Reliability. One of the criticisms of qualitative studies in general is the inability to duplicate the results from one study to the next. The very essence of qualitative studies, though, is to observe and report on an experience or occurrence as it happened (Merriam, 2009). It is nearly impossible to re-create or replicate the phenomenon of interest and the exact experiences of those who experienced the phenomenon. One tool used in case studies, though, that helps increase reliability is multiple cases. In an effort to increase reliability, this study will use a total of six cases across three different high schools.

Ethical Issues

As is true in any research study, special attention should be given to any ethical issues that could arise. First and foremost, my preconceived beliefs could introduce bias into the study. As a professional more concerned with a quality study than confirming beliefs, I made every attempt to eliminate this potential bias. In addition, pseudonyms were given to participants in order to maintain confidentiality. Since descriptions of events and experiences may not always be positive in reference to the school or district, the participants' confidentiality must be maintained. Finally, all data collected was and will be kept secured. Any written documents will be kept in a locked cabinet, and electronic data will be stored as password protected files.

Speaking personally, I believe that it is the duty of all educators to enlighten and inspire. It is my personal goal to give due diligence to this problem of bullying that inundates schools today. Too many children are being affected by this senseless act, and hopefully, this study and

others like it will force schools and school districts to carefully analyze the effectiveness of their own bullying intervention and prevention strategies.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to use multiple case studies to analyze teacher perceptions of bullying and the effectiveness of their district's current anti-bullying policy. The following research questions guided the study:

1. What do teachers know about bullying?
2. What are teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the current anti-bullying policy, and where do they believe there is room for improvement?
3. Does a gap exist between policy and implementation? Why or why not?
4. How can the current intervention/prevention policy be more effective?

A total of six participants were used, two each from three different high schools of the same district. Interviews, observations, and teacher journals were used as data collection tools. Participants were given false names to maintain confidentiality. John and Mark from Johnson High School, Mary and Ashley represent Kennedy High School, and Susan and Karen represent Lincoln High School.

Following Erickson & Dyer's (2004) cross case synthesis of six cases, data analysis occurred in several stages. First, each case was treated independently of the others, allowing me to develop individual case stories. There was no emphasis during this first step on trying to identify commonalities across cases. The next step was to begin coding individual cases, and I used MAXQDA software to help code and organize data. After individual cases were coded I created shorter, more manageable case stories that still kept the integrity of themes intact but made data easier to eventually compare across cases. Finally, I synthesized across cases, grouped data, and looked for common themes that were supported considering all three sources of data.

Interviews provided the most meaningful data. I employed a semi-structured approach of the same eight questions with the flexibility of asking deeper, probing questions. These interviews were then summarized and checked with participants for accuracy. Interviews allowed for deeper insight into teacher perceptions of bullying and the effectiveness of the current anti-bullying policy by providing a look through the lenses of these frontline defenders, thereby hopefully allowing for better understanding.

Observations were conducted in participant classrooms and in common areas. Again, the majority of time was spent in common areas, as research has shown that bullying is more likely to occur in areas where supervision is limited. I created an observation chart to record acts of bullying that aligned with the district's policy in terms of types and levels of bullying. I also recorded any interventions and notes. Bullying was not witnessed in participant classrooms but was witnessed in common areas on all campuses involved in the study, therefore observations are a valuable piece of evidence. Observations were used anecdotally to provide insight into types of acts and interventions (or lack of interventions) observed rather than counted for their frequency. I did not want to potentially introduce a quantitative piece, such as counting the frequency of different levels of bullying or interventions, as this would fall outside the scope of this study.

Teacher journals were used as a third piece of data. When retrieving teacher journals, only two teachers had recorded any potential acts of bullying. At first I thought this may make it difficult to use the journals as a data source. However, the other four teachers commented that the reason they did not record anything was that they did not see any potential acts of bullying. It was not a lack of interest. As discussed later, teacher journals actually became a very valuable

piece of evidence.

Coding of data was done with the research questions in mind. Since the majority of data came from teacher interviews, codes were loosely tied to some degree to the interview questions. During this process, many different codes were used to group data. Some of these codes included, "definition close to district's," "definition different than district's," "inconsistency of implementation," "no specifics of the policy," and "knows policy exists." This is only a short example of the different codes used. As codes were identified, again, the last step was to identify codes across cases. Using the MAXQDA software I was able to track which codes were most consistent across cases, group codes based on similarities, then finally select those codes that were most prominent across cases in order to develop major themes.

Considering the cross-case synthesis of interviews, observations, and teacher journals, data analysis showed four major themes:

1. Teachers do not have a clear definition of bullying, which hampers their ability to identify bullying and intervene.
2. Teachers perceive the anti-bullying policy to be somewhat effective.
3. Teachers largely do not have a working understanding of the policy and need more training to make the current policy more effective.
4. The overall effectiveness of the policy is dependent upon administrator support of the policy.

Teachers' definition of bullying.

Each of the six teachers provided differing definitions of bullying, ranging all the way from specific and consistent with the district's definition to vague and inconsistent with the district's definition. From the student handbook, the district defines bullying as written, verbal,

physical, or electronic acts that can harm another by creating a threatening educational environment. This harm can be physical, emotional, or damage to property.

The discrepancies of teacher definitions are highlighted below.

Mary of Kennedy High School was most consistent with the district's definition and described bullying as being a form of harassment that can be verbal, physical, or emotional, "My definition of bullying would be the continued harassment, whether verbal, physical, emotional. Definitely unwanted attention from one person to another" (Personal communication with interviewee, November 10, 2012).

Although closest to the district's definition compared to the other participants, this is still somewhat incorrect compared to Olweus' (1993) definition, which states that bullying can be a one-time occurrence or repeated over time.

On the other end, Susan of Lincoln High School defined bullying as being between equal levels of power and must be repetitive:

> I would say it has to be between equal levels of power, so student to student or teacher to teacher. And it has to be ongoing, not just a one-time thing, and anything . . . such as an administrator to teacher or teacher to student would be more of an abuse than a bullying situation (Personal communication with interviewee, November 12, 2012).

The other four definitions fell somewhere in between. John of Johnson High School discussed bullying as when one person tries to put down another or make them feel negatively about themselves, "I guess you would basically say picking on someone for an infirmity . . . Pointing out something that's different than the person who's doing the picking" (Personal communication with interviewee, November 14, 2012).

Mark described bullying as placing unwarranted pressure on another to try and get

something in return, “I would say it’s any unwarranted pressure that’s put on someone, or . . . can be viewed as like a put down to someone” (Personal communication with interviewee, November 28, 2012).

Mary of Kennedy High School touched on bullying as mistreatment without regard to feelings and can be verbal or physical but also added the element of social bullying, “Any form of mistreatment, verbally, physically, socially, social-network wise that happens to a person without regard to consequence, feelings, or any situation involved” (Personal communication with interviewee, November 10, 2013).

Finally, Karen of Lincoln High School described bullying as when one person tries to make another feel unworthy of being around and can be verbal or physical:

> Bullying is the act of hurting, either physically, verbally hurting, or trying to make a person feel not worthy of being a good person, or a normal person, or a person worthy of being around. Trying to force someone to do something they normally wouldn’t do or make them feel bad about themselves about doing something (Personal communication with interviewee, February 7, 2013).

Based on the discrepancies that arose out of teacher definitions in relation to the district’s definition, participants did not have a clear understanding of what acts may or may not constitute bullying. Teachers understanding a common definition of bullying is essential to stopping the bullying problem. It is erroneous to think that teachers already understand what bullying is and how to stop it, they must be trained. Further evidence that supports the need for common, working definitions amongst teachers was found when teachers were asked to identify a time when they witnessed an act and were unsure whether it was an act of bullying or not.

John from Johnson High School provided the following:

> I have seen students that will get on another student because they're not getting their stuff done, they're not processing, they're not getting everything that needs to happen as fast. And when a group, especially when a group comes and they start getting onto another person the question is, are they bullying because they're all ganging up on that person, or is it that … they're concerned about their grade and that's why they're strongly encouraging the student to get the process done (Personal communication with interviewee, November 14, 2012).

John's description shows confusion on whether or not this would be bullying. According to district policy, this would definitely be bullying. Later in the interview, John came back to this question in the interview and described a specific incident between a male and female student where the male made an inappropriate comment. The incident, though, crossed the line of bullying and into possible sexual harassment, providing further evidence that teachers have a difficult time identifying bullying.

Mark from Johnson High School spoke of how not knowing the relationships between students places an added element of difficulty in identifying bullying, ". . . situations in the classroom where, especially early in the year, if you don't know the students, and you can't tell whether its good-natured joking or if it actually is some sort of unwanted . . . act between students" (Personal communication with interviewee, November 28, 2012).

Mary from Kennedy High School described another incident related to the unclear relationship between two students:

> There was a boy that was being mistreated in the classroom. I thought another boy was trying to pull his chair out from underneath him every time he tried to sit down, and one of my other female students got really upset at this boy that did it. And it turns out, they

were buddies. And they were just joking around, but at the same time the boy that was doing it knew full well that the other one was a special ed. student, and that student didn't understand if it was bullying or not. And so it was on the verge of, well, is it funny or is it not, and who's it funny to (Personal communication with interviewee, November 10, 2012)?

On follow-up questioning, Mary described how further investigation found that the student receiving special education services was not even really aware of what was going on. Mary concluded that this was bullying, not two friends joking around, and reported the incident.

Ashley reported similar difficulty when trying to identify bullying, ". . . without knowing the relationship between the two [students] if this was a friendship and teasing or . . . bullying" (Personal communication with interviewee, November 14, 2012).

Susan described a situation involving several students ganging up to attack a bully:

Well, I had a student actually this year in one of my classes who instigated an argument with this [other] student, but then the second student who had been agitated by the first student's comments continued that argument. Remarks were made, language was used, and other students were brought in [to the argument]. So it was kind of . . . turned into one person antagonizing another and then that one person was ganged up on by the other three. It was never physical, but it was definitely threatening, and I wasn't sure, since the student initiated the conversation in a very aggressive way, whether he was being picked on then by the other three or whether he . . . picked a bad fight to get into (Personal communication with interviewee, November 12, 2012).

Based on the situation, and according to district policy, very simply the first student bullied the second student then the group bullied the first student who instigated the argument. All parties are at fault.

Similar to others, Karen spoke of the relationships between students as a difficult hurdle when trying to identify bullying, "… you walk through the halls and you see kids bump into each other, and you don't know, were they friends, was that fun play, was it malicious, . . . were they trying to be mean" (Personal communication with interviewee, February 7, 2013)?

Observations inside the classroom yielded little data, as after 30 consecutive minutes in each teacher's classroom, no potential acts of bullying were observed. This was no surprise, though, because research has shown that most bullying at schools occurs in common areas where supervision is limited. In common areas, such as the hallways and lunchroom, I observed numerous acts of bullying. The majority of acts witnessed occurred where no school personnel were present. Some of these acts, though, were witnessed by school personnel. And in most of those instances, no interventions occurred. Based on interviews it does not seem the lack of interventions stems from a lack of caring, rather a lack of understanding of bullying.

Teacher journals also provided some insight into teacher misunderstandings of bullying. For example, Mark recorded one instance in the hallway after school where a male student took something out of the hands of a female student and then began teasing her about it. As Mark moved closer to investigate, the teasing continued, and the female student was visibly upset. Mark told the male student to return the item and then asked the female if she was okay. She responded that she was fine and that the male student was just being a "jerk." After describing the incident, Mark wrote that it was unclear whether this was bullying or not. Mark also described another incident where students would purposely bump into other students in the

hallway and knock the other students into the lockers. Mark wrote that it was unclear whether or not this is bullying. Further, Mark added that what is seen by a teacher as a one-time occurrence could actually be ongoing bullying.

Similar to the teachers, I found it difficult in some cases to identify an act as bullying or not because I was not familiar with the relationship between the students. For example, I witnessed a student take a cell phone out of the hands of another student. When the second student asked for it back, the first student taunted her for a few seconds and then eventually gave it back when the first student started to look truly upset. According to district policy, that would be a level 1 bullying offense. However, within a couple minutes the two students were laughing together and carrying on a conversation, spent the rest of lunch doing so, and walked out of the lunchroom together when the bell rang. This was probably not an act of bullying but two friends. In similar situations it would only take teachers a few simple questions to quickly discern the relationship.

When considering interviews, observations, and journals, there are definitely inconsistencies in defining and identifying bullying. If anti-bullying policies are to be effective those who implement it need to know how to define and identify potential acts of bullying.

Teachers' perceptions of effectiveness.

Four of the six participants believe the policy is somewhat effective. Both teachers from Johnson High School felt the policy was effective, and the teachers from Kennedy and Lincoln High Schools were split on the matter.

John, when asked about the effectiveness of the policy, commented, ". . . it is effective as much as possible within its physicality of being contained right here [at school], but when it comes to . . . cyberspace and things like that, it's very ineffective" (Personal communication with

interviewee, November 14, 2012).

In reference to the current policy, John stated that it is effective at school but fails to be effective outside the school walls, specifically referencing the internet. On a side, other teachers mentioned how bullying has been taken to the internet and social media as well. Cyberbullying, however, falls outside the scope of this study but will be addressed later under further research.

Similarly, Mark believes the policy is effective:

> I believe it's as effective as it can be because . . . I don't see bullying as a huge issue. Now I know it's an issue, don't get me wrong, But . . . I think just like any policy, you're never going to squash out everything, but I think we're doing as good a job as we can and just stay on top of it and try and make it better (Personal communication with interviewee, November 28, 2012).

Ashley from Kennedy High School adds, "I think it is effective since all of our students apparently know [the policy]" (Personal communication with interviewee, November 14, 2012). And Susan commented, "I think our current policy must be somewhat effective because . . . I don't typically see a whole lot in the classroom" (Personal communication with interviewee, November 12, 2012).

On the other side, though, Mary and Karen disagreed and stated the policy is ineffective. Mary said, "I believe it's ineffective basically because it's not something that's held on a consistent basis" (Personal communication with interviewee, November 10, 2012). And Karen adds the policy is ineffective ". . . because nobody knows exactly what we're supposed to do when you see it . . . with the exception of report it and then send them down to their principals, but that's all we really do" (Personal communication with interviewee, February 7, 2013).

It is difficult to ascertain the effectiveness as more than somewhat effective when analyzing data. The four participants who stated that the policy was effective also noted areas for improvement. For example, Mark said that the policy, ". . . is as effective as it can be" (Personal communication with interviewee, November 28, 2012). Ashley, who also stated that the policy is effective, later added that she did not really know the policy, and that one of the things needed to make the policy more effective was to know it better. Ashley explained:

> I think I just need to know the ins and outs of the policy. What are the particulars? What . . . are the steps that get followed? What is the first offense? Is there a second offense? . . . I believe there is a zero tolerance, but I think I just need to know it better" (Personal communication with interviewee, November 14, 2012).

Susan commented that the policy is, "somewhat effective," and later added, ". . . I feel like there's a disconnect between . . . what they're [school administrators] being told they [district office] want to happen" (Personal communication with interviewee, November 12, 2012). Susan also spoke of the importance of administrator support and setting clear expectations for the staff.

As for classroom observations I recorded no acts of bullying, but that is to be expected since research shows that most bullying occurs in common areas. Bullying was witnessed in common areas, but I cannot definitively say that the policy is ineffective, either, based on those observations. As for teacher journals, only two participants recorded anything in their journals. I cannot conclude that means the policy is effective, though, because I observed bullying in common areas at all three schools, not just Johnson High School. Therefore, combining all sources of data I concluded that the policy must be somewhat effective.

When asked about enforcing the protocol and intervening, all six participants said that

they intervene if they witness bullying. When asked, John responded, "Yes, I do. If I see it, it can't continue, . . . that's just part of what I do, protecting the student" (Personal communication with interviewee, November 28, 2012). Mark adds, "I do when I witness it. I just feel it's my job, and if it's important to me but it's also important to the district I just feel that it's my responsibility to do so" (Personal communication with interviewee, November 28, 2012). Mary responded, "Absolutely," then added, "I feel like if people would just start intervening and stand up to things that are going on that it would change" (Personal communication with interviewee, November 10, 2012). Ashley also responds with, "Absolutely. If I see anything that is questionable . . . I will tell an administrator" (Personal communication with interviewee, November 14, 2012). Susan commented:

> Yes. If I can clearly identify that something is taking place that is bullying then I would fill out a report and make sure that procedures are followed because I think the kids need to understand that it's absolutely not tolerated in my room or on this campus at all, and hopefully we can make change happen through consequences (Personal communication with interviewee, November 12, 2012).

Finally, Karen said, "I do when I see it. I feel very passionately and strongly that there should not be a child that is bullied. Nobody deserves that" (Personal communication with interviewee, February 7, 2013).

Although teachers do not have a common definition and have difficulty identifying bullying, the district's zero tolerance stance and current policy is at least getting the message out that bullying is not tolerated. Most teachers perceive the policy to be effective, and all teachers share the willingness to report and stop bullying.

Training.

The current policy is somewhat effective because it has made bullying a priority district-wide and teachers have the willingness to stand up and intervene. However, that does not necessarily mean the all teachers know the policy and how to properly use it. Of the six participants, only one, John of Johnson High School, knew the policy well enough to explain that there are varying levels of offenses and consequences.

John explained, "From what I understand, there is criteria and there's a big list of it, and I actually have it saved on my computer and posted on my desk so I don't have to memorize it" (Personal communication with interviewee, November 14, 2012).

The other five participants could not explain any specific details about the current policy, although one teacher, Mark did show me a quick reference chart and a copy of the district's policy when I returned for observations. Mark knew it existed and where to find it but still could not explain any specifics during the interview.

When asked during the interview about specifics of the policy, Mark said, "Probably not as familiar as I should be, no" (Personal communication with interviewee, November 28, 2012)." Mary, when asked about the understanding of the policy, responded:

> From what I understand right now if you or someone you see or a friend of yours is getting bullied then . . . you can contact the administration right away or a teacher, and apparently the AP's will intervene at that point and then take action. . . . The policy is in place but I don't know that it's being consistently followed (Personal communication with interviewee, November 10, 2012).

Ashley was asked about her familiarity with details of the policy itself and commented, "Apparently not. I thought I was" (Personal communication with interviewee, November 14,

2012). Similarly, when asked to provide specific details, Susan responded, "So I guess I don't know, specifically" (Personal communication with interviewee, November 12, 2012). Karen added, ". . . it's report what you see, and that's what you do" (Personal communication with interviewee, February 7, 2013).

Teachers could not explain the policy with much success. Even those who knew the written policy was out there (John and Mark), could do little more than reference that it did in fact exist. If teachers are expected to be the frontline defenders against bullying then logic could imply that they must know the policy that is to be enforced. They must have a working definition of bullying, know what to look for, and know, by heart, expectations of the policy.

To that end, teachers need more training on expectations and guidelines. As the leaders of the campus, most of that responsibility is placed on campus administration. When asked about gaps and implementation of the policy, Karen responded, ". . . I guess the gaps would be huge because . . . I've never been trained on what the policy is" (Personal communication with interviewee, February 7, 2013).

Ashley added:

> An outline. Maybe even something to hang on the wall. . . I think it needs to be here, here is our policy, and I think every person on campus needs to know it. Every student, every teacher, every custodial worker, every secretary, everybody needs to know it. I think it should be everywhere (Personal communication with interviewee, November 14, 2012).

When asked if additional training would be helpful, Ashley replied, "Yes. I think people throw the word bullying around without knowing what it means" (Personal communication with interviewee, November 14, 2012). Susan explained how the staff of Lincoln High School was not sure of the expectations. All the staff really knows is to report bullying when they see it.

Other than that, though, there is no clear plan.

Observations are consistent with the need to provide teachers with proper training. For example, in the lunchroom the teachers and administrators congregated in one particular area, leaving most of the lunchroom largely unsupervised. Further, there was one instance in particular where bullying occurred in front of a teacher, and nothing was done. A student was dressed in a large, awkward-fitting costume to promote recycling. The student was being guided by a small group of students because the costume made it difficult for the student to see. As the group entered the lunchroom, the rest of the group walked away from the student in the costume and watched, laughingly, as the student wandered aimlessly, not being able to see where to go. After several seconds the student in the costume hurriedly exited the lunchroom, obviously embarrassed. This happened in plain sight to the teachers on duty but nothing was done. I feel that if the teachers on duty knew, in fact, that this was probably an act of bullying, they would have intervened and investigated further.

Teacher journals provide further evidence that teachers are not properly trained to identify and intervene. Only two teachers wrote anything in the teacher journals. The other four teachers commented that they did not witness any acts or potential acts of bullying when I returned to retrieve their journals. It is difficult to believe that the other four teachers saw absolutely no acts of bullying on campus during the time they had the journals. Perhaps they did not see anything but perhaps they did and did not realize it.

Teachers need to be fully equipped with information before they can be expected to attack the bullying problem. Training on not only the policy but how to define and identify bullying is essential. The training must be ongoing as well. The application of the information processing model poses that teachers will only recall and use information that can be committed

to long-term memory. This will only happen with repeated, ongoing training.

Administrator support.

In order to close gaps and make the policy more effective, collaborative administrator support is paramount. This theme came out in several ways through interviews, observations, and teacher journals. It became apparent throughout data collection that one school in particular had placed more emphasis on bullying compared to the other two, and that emphasis comes from the leaders of the school.

Although neither teacher at Johnson High School explained details about the policy, both knew that it existed and knew how to find it. John pointed to a quick reference sheet on the desk during the interview, and Mark even provided me with a copy of the policy. In addition, both John and Mark from Johnson High School were the only participants to record anything in the teacher journals. This shows that they at least have some background knowledge of bullying, the policy, and interventions. When beginning data analysis I was concerned that only two teachers had recorded anything in the teacher journals, but this actually became a valuable piece of data, providing evidence of the importance of administrator support of policies. Finally, I observed more interventions at Johnson High School in common areas compared to Kennedy and Lincoln High Schools.

Mary of Kennedy High School described the need for administrator support, claiming that the school needs, "Consistency with principals, with teachers, and with students. I think that instead of putting signs all over campus, I think instead maybe sometimes having . . . a school-wide pep rally about it." Mary later adds, ". . . maybe campus-wide, teachers and administrators getting together and actually saying we're going to do something about it, and we're going to show all the kids this and get involved. I think that would be a huge help" (Personal

communication with interviewee, November 10, 2012). Ashley spoke of the need to have a collaborative effort on all levels, making sure all are aware of the policy and make sure it is followed.

Susan of Lincoln High School responded, "We need more support from our administration, . . . but until the administration kind of gets behind and is consistent with what they want from the staff as far as bullying, I think it won't change" (Personal communication with interviewee, November 12, 2012. Susan further described the need for administration to make bullying more of a priority, "I think that they feel that it's just another training that we need to complete to kind of abide by state law" (Personal communication with interviewee, November 12, 2012). Karen added, ". . . we need to have a clear plan, and a clear path of what plan it is that we're following and what that policy is. And then with that, everybody working together to make sure that it's enforced and taken care of" (Personal communication with interviewee, February 7, 2013).

Observations provide additional evidence of the need for administrator support. It became evident that Johnson High School had made bullying more of a priority compared to Kennedy and Lincoln High Schools. This was shown by more interventions in common areas at Johnson High School compared to Kennedy and Lincoln High Schools. If a potential act of bullying was witnessed by a teacher or administrator on duty, they responded more often compared to Kennedy and Lincoln High Schools. There was one instance in particular where I noticed an act and also noticed that an administrator on duty saw it as well. The administrator turned his back for a moment to talk with another administrator. I thought he had ignored the incident and failed to intervene, but as I began to make notes on the observation chart the administrator finished his conversation then went to investigate. In addition, the teachers and

administrators on duty at Johnson High School were more likely to roam the lunchroom as opposed to congregating in one area. In addition, for each act of bullying that was observed at Johnson High School that was seen by school personnel, someone intervened and investigated. At both Kennedy and Lincoln High Schools this was not the case. At Kennedy High School I witnessed a group of students teasing another student. This happened in front of the teacher and administrator on duty, but there was no intervention. At Lincoln High School I witnessed an incident where one female student was making fun of another female student's beliefs, a level 1 offense. The teacher on duty heard the comment but did not intervene.

Without a solid support system from the leaders on campus, bullying will continue to be a major problem. It was interesting to see how each campus was at very different places on the bullying issue, with Johnson High School being well beyond Kennedy and Lincoln High Schools. Effective implementation requires a "Do as I do" attitude rather than "Do as I say."

Summary

This chapter outlined the four major themes that were identified from triangulation of data sources, interviews, observations, and teacher journals. The four themes combine to answer each of the research questions guiding the study. Although teachers, for the most part, believed the current policy is effective there are still gaps that need to be filled. Namely, the policy needs to be supported by administration, and teachers need to be properly trained on the policy in order to define, identify, and intervene.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate teacher perceptions of bullying and the effectiveness of a school district's anti-bullying policy. Bullying has come to the forefront in recent years because of the adverse effects it can have on students, including depression, low self-esteem, and many other issues (Sassu et al., 2004). Moreover, bullying occurs most often in schools (Sanders, 2004). A multiple case study approach using six cases was employed, two participants each from three different high schools in the same district. Data were collected from semi-structured interviews with all participants, observations, and teacher journals. Four major themes were identified from the data:

1. Teachers do not have a clear definition of bullying and therefore hampers their ability to identify bullying and intervene.
2. Teachers perceive the policy to be somewhat effective.
3. Teachers largely do not have a working understanding of the policy and need more training to make the current policy more effective.
4. The overall effectiveness of the policy is dependent upon administrator support of the policy.

Discussion of Findings

The following four questions guided the study:

1. What do teachers know about bullying?
2. What are teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the current anti-bullying policy, and where do they believe there is room for improvement?
3. Does a gap exist between policy and implementation? Why or why not?
4. How can the current intervention/prevention policy be more effective?

Considering Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs, humans are motivated to fulfill a certain set of identified needs. The first level encompasses meeting the basic needs of food, water, shelter, etc. that are needed to simply survive. Once those needs have been met, humans are then motivated by the need to feel safe and secure. Bullying, whether it be physical, emotional, verbal, or any other form, violates this second level. Victims of bullying are then motivated to find safety and security and therefore cannot move beyond the second level. This violation of safety has been researched and shown that victims of bullying avoid school out of fear of being bullied and will even change schools altogether. This pre-occupation at the second level prohibits victims from moving onto the next levels of love, esteem, and self-actualization. Not only are victims unable to move past the second level, research has shown that victims are more susceptible to depression, anxiety, and suicide.

One of the goals of anti-bullying policies is to create safe, caring environments for students to be able to learn. One would hope that a school that effectively implements its anti-bullying policy would mitigate and hopefully eliminate any fear of being bullied.

In terms of the information processing model, which provides a logical, sequential pattern of how humans receive, store, and access information (Anderman & Anderman, 2009), this study has shown that the current anti-bullying policy has not been committed to long-term memory for later retrieval and use. As has been shown, teachers play an extremely important role in deciding the success or failure of an anti-bullying policy. In this study, teachers were able to recall very little about the district's anti-bullying policy. If teachers are unable to recall the policy then possibly the policy is not being as effectively implemented as it could be. This, in turn, could actually perpetuate the bullying problem, thereby, again, violating victims' need to feel safe. The findings of this study show that part of the problem could be that teachers have not properly

processed and stored the anti-bullying policy. Therefore, when a potential act of bullying occurs, teachers are not properly equipped to respond appropriately. If teachers are such a major player in stopping bullying, the policy must be made meaningful and committed to long-term memory so that it can be easily retrieved and implemented.

Analysis of data presented four major themes that answered the research questions.

Teachers' definitions of bullying. Similar to Lee's (2006) study, one of the major factors gleaned from the study is that teachers hold different definitions of bullying. Moreover, teachers may not perceive an act to be bullying unless it matches their own personal definition of bullying (Mishna et al., 2006). Although the district has a clear definition of bullying, less than half of the teachers were relatively close to the district's definition. Even those who showed some similarities to the district's definition failed to mention one or more important components. It became apparent that the participants do not fully understand the district's definition. This is a huge obstacle in the fight against bullying. If teachers across the district do not have a common understanding of bullying then they will be less likely to intervene and could actually become part of the problem (Olweus, 1993).

Alarmingly, research has shown that in some instances teachers will recognize an act of bullying but purposely not intervene if they do not view the act as serious enough (Kallestad & Olweus, 2003; Yoon & Kerber, 2003). This is obviously unacceptable, but if teachers are working with different definitions, as was the case of the schools in this study, this could be happening in the very schools that were studied.

Further, lack of a consistent, working definition of bullying lends itself to not properly identifying potential acts of bullying. If the teachers are not sure what truly constitutes bullying then it is irrational to think that they can identify and intervene. Because so many different

definitions are held by the teachers, perhaps bullying is happening right in front of them and they may not even know it. It was amazing that only two of the six participants recorded anything in the teacher journals, especially since I witnessed bullying every time I observed at the schools. The lack of intervention could potentially cause students to lose faith in teachers (Crothers & Kolbert, 2004).

Another discrepancy that arose from several teachers was that it can be difficult to identify bullying because they do not always know the relationship between students. Although teachers may not always know the relationship between students, that does not excuse them from further investigation of an incident. Often it only takes a few simple questions to decide whether an act is bullying or two friends joking around. Without knowing what to look for, though, teachers are less likely to intervene and ask those questions.

Teachers will only be able to ask those questions and intervene if they first know what bullying is and then how to identify it. As shown by interviews, observations, and teacher journals, teachers in the district do not have a common, working definition and are unclear on how to identify bullying. Some of the situations described by teachers were definitely acts of bullying whereas as others, after investigation, were not. The key is that teachers need to be able to define, identify, and then investigate.

This lack of understanding of the definition of bullying can be tied back to the information processing model. Information is processed, stored, and then retrieved. Using this model there is a disruption with the gathering, storing, or retrieving information related to defining bullying. According to state and district policy, all teachers had been trained on the district's anti-bullying policy. The fact that so few teachers could give a definition of bullying that closely resembled the district's definition shows that there is a disruption at some level, and

therefore inaccurate implementation of the policy. Exactly where this disruption occurs could be different for each person, but the fact remains that so many different definitions shows a lack of understanding.

Teachers' perceptions of effectiveness. This is contrary to what I thought would be found in the study. I expected most teachers to describe the policy as ineffective. After interviewing the participants, though, it became clear that most teachers believed the policy is effective, to some degree. The fact that there is a policy in place at least forces teachers to recognize that stopping bullying is a district priority and makes them more aware of the problem.

It is not prudent for me to say that the policy is completely effective because data shows obvious gaps that need to be addressed. However, I cannot say the policy is ineffective, either. A major factor in determining the success of an anti-bullying policy is how teachers view themselves as part of the process. If they view themselves as an integral part and believe they can bring about change then the policy will be more effective (Kallestad & Olweus, 2003). An explanation for the perceived effectiveness by several teachers could be tied to that fact. All participants expressed willingness to intervene when they see potential acts of bullying. Their views as participants in the fight against bullying could lead them to believe the policy is more effective than it actually is.

One conclusion I can draw that is supported by all three sources of data is that Johnson High School is more effective in dealing with bullying compared to Kennedy and Lincoln High Schools. I believe this is in large part due to the emphasis Johnson High School's administration has placed on tackling the bullying problem. I say that, though, realizing that this study is simply a snapshot representation of two teachers from each school. That is one of the limitations of this

study, but I also would not have otherwise realized these discrepancies between schools without conducting a qualitative, multiple case study.

In reference to the information processing model, teachers have not effectively processed the information presented to them during bullying training at the beginning of the year. This disruption has led to conflicting views on the effectiveness of the policy. Attention has to go back to the fact that even those who claimed the policy is effective also described issues that needed to be addressed, further adding to the confusion.

Training. As the frontline defenders, teachers need to have a solid understanding of the district's policy. As outlined in chapter four, only one teacher, John, mentioned the actual policy, and those who were pressed for specifics on the policy could not provide any. All teachers knew that the district has an anti-bullying stance but none knew the actual policy well enough to describe which acts are which level offense and what interventions and/or consequences are at each level of offense. This gap, coupled with teacher misunderstandings of bullying, potentially means that bullying is happening in these schools that could be prevented.

In order to address this gap in policy and implementation, teachers must be properly trained (Smith, Schneider, Smith, & Ananiadou, 2004). Proper training will help teachers identify and intervene, hopefully further reducing the bullying problem in these schools. Training, though, must be more than a quick one hour presentation during the inservice week before the beginning of the school year. Training must be ongoing and support the overall goal of reducing bullying.

In addition, the effectiveness of a policy is connected to training and allocation of resources (Mishna et al., 2005). Findings from this study support that claim, as some participants called for more training. Effective, ongoing training will hopefully help teachers

have a more clear definition of bullying, thereby increasing the likelihood they will properly identify and intervene. This snowball effect then will hopefully lead to a more positive school climate by creating a safer, more caring environment.

Training must be able to help teachers commit the definition, policy, and interventions to long-term memory so it can be accessed when needed. As the information processing model suggests, information will only be recalled and accessed if the connection is made. A simple one hour presentation at the beginning of the school year is not nearly enough to help teachers understand bullying and the anti-bullying policy.

Administrator support. If those in charge make stopping bullying a priority then that feeling will filter down to teachers and ultimately students. This was most evident when cross case synthesizing and finding that Johnson High School's administration had obviously made bullying a top priority. Both teachers from Johnson High School showed me the quick reference sheet that had been given to all teachers. In addition, Johnson High School's teachers were the only participants to record anything in the teacher journals. Also, the teachers and administrators on duty at Johnson High School could be found walking around the lunchroom, interacting with students more so than Kennedy and Lincoln High Schools.

Susan's comments about the lack of administrator support is concerning. I understand it is the view of one teacher, but her comments require due diligence because if one teacher feels that way then others could feel similarly. The approach of bullying not being taken seriously and being just another training is detrimental to the success of the policy. Administrators must get behind the policy, make it a priority, and properly train teachers. With that, training of teachers must be consistent (Ellis & Shute, 2007). Moreover, Smith, Cousins, and Stewart (2005) found that anti-bullying programs are most effective when schools dedicate time, effort, and money.

Interestingly, their study surveyed school principals, those who are ultimately responsible for ensuring the success of such programs. If the district studied hopes to stop bullying, it is key for school administration to dedicate time and effort. If teachers are the frontline defenders but feel those above them who will ultimately receive the office referrals are indifferent, how will bullying ever be stopped?

Recommendations

After analyzing data, three recommendations have come to the forefront not just for the district being studied but all school districts. Because bullying is a problem, even in high schools, bullying must be a top priority. Second, in order to make the policy more effective, training needs to be more cohesive across the entire district. Finally, since this study focused on teachers, it would be in the best interest of school districts to go straight to those frontline defenders and ask them what they need.

Prioritize. This must start at the district office, as they are ultimately the ones who decide how much time, effort, and money will be allocated. As shown, though, the bullying problem will continue if administrators and teachers do not take it seriously and make it a priority. Teachers can actually become part of the problem when they fail to intervene (Olweus, 1993). The teachers are obviously willing to help stop the problem as shown by the interviews, but they must feel supported. One of the more alarming interviews was Susan who said that it felt as if administration was not taking the bullying problem seriously and approached as simply another training that had to be done. That does not send a great message to the teachers. If bullying is not a priority then nothing will change.

And it is that change that we strive for. Two of the teachers commented on how they wanted things to change. They wished for bullying to become less of a problem because they

realize the detrimental effects it can have. Two teachers even went so far as to mention suicide as a byproduct of bullying. If we hope to stop bullying then schools must be more proactive and make it a priority (Haeseler, 2010).

Training. In its current form, each school is allowed to implement the policy however administration best sees fit for their school. It does not seem that this has been the best course of action because each school is at a different point. Johnson High School has obviously made bullying a priority, as shown by teacher interviews, observations, and journals. The teachers at Johnson High School were able to point to a "quick reference chart" posted near the computers. One of the teachers from Johnson was even able to provide me a copy of the district's policy, showing that he at least knew where to obtain it. Lincoln High School, on the other end, has not made it as high a priority. Again, I look to teacher interviews and journals for evidence. Both teachers from Lincoln High School felt administration had not placed enough emphasis on bullying. Kennedy High School fell somewhere in the middle of the two.

At some point the district must lay out explicit expectations and guidelines for the schools to follow. Simply putting together a plan and then handing it over to the schools is not enough. There needs to be another level of support to ensure all parties are pulling together in the same direction. Part of the problem with implementation at the district level may not necessarily be a lack of interest by school administration but a lack of understanding. Tie this potential lack of understanding at the administrative level to the fact that the effectiveness of an anti-bullying policy is tied closely to teachers understanding their role in the fight against bullying (Nicolaides, Toda, & Smith, 2002), and it is easy to see how a breakdown in proper, cohesive training at the district to administrative level will fail as it filters down to the teacher level. It is the responsibility of the district office then to make sure all school leaders understand

expectations so it can then filter down to teachers, staff, and students.

As part of this process it is important for district and school administrators to collaborate in order to develop more effective training for their respective teachers. As Mishna et al. (2005) found, proper training is essential to the effectiveness of the policy. In reference to this study, administrators at Johnson High School may have insights or thoughts to share with administrators at Kennedy and Lincoln High Schools. This collaborative effort between the district office and across schools will help unify the district's expectations and provide grounds for more effective implementation. This will hopefully yield positive dialogue and ultimately better equip teachers with proper training and a better understanding of their role in tackling this issue.

Further, to help ensure teachers commit the policy to long-term memory, training must be more meaningful and support must be ongoing throughout the school year. Ellis and Shute (2007) also suggest that training should be consistent. It is erroneous to think that a one-hour presentation at the beginning of the school year will be enough for teachers to commit the policy to long-term memory so it can be retrieved for later use. Training of teachers then, should employ those same strategies the teachers use in their own classrooms. Training should be meaningful, making connections to prior knowledge and immersing the students (or teachers in this case) in an environment where they can experience rather than memorize (Binulal & Aravind, 2013).

Survey the teachers. "Perhaps the greatest potential for stemming the tide of the global plague known as bullying lies in the actions of teachers . . . " (Piotrowski & Hoot, 2008). This was written in reference to a famous quote of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. that spoke of how failing to intervene in the face of evil is to be as guilty as the perpetrator. With such a high

responsibility placed on teachers to be the agents of change to stop this problem (McCarra & Forrester, 2013) then it makes sense to go directly to the teachers and ask them what the know, or do not know, and what they need to fight the good fight.

In the recommendations above, I suggested that training should be more cohesive and that expectations should be outlined at the district level and then filter down to administrators. However, I also realize the importance of allowing administrators to make decisions that are in the best interest of their particular student population. In order to address these specific needs of each campus it would be a good idea to survey the teachers of each campus. They are the ones who will ultimately enforce the policy so it would be beneficial to get a better understanding of what each individual campus may need. For example, Johnson High School in this study seems to have a better handle on how to identify bullying compared to Kennedy and Lincoln High Schools, but the teachers do not fully understand the policy. Therefore, as part of the ongoing training, teachers can become more familiar with the specifics of the policy. On the other hand, Kennedy High School's teachers may need more help understanding a common, working definition of bullying while Lincoln High School's teachers may need to have a clear outline of expectations from administration.

Surveying teachers will also help them feel like they are part of the process and that they have a voice. This will hopefully help curb the attitude that this is simply another required training on top of everything else they already have to do. Moreover, teachers are the first line of defense and can provide valuable insight.

Practical Implications

Existing literature has fallen short in two major areas that this study has attempted to fill. First, the majority of bullying research has been conducted at elementary and middle school

levels. As shown by this study, bullying is still a problem in high schools. Secondly, little research exists that has studied the perceptions of teachers, the frontline defenders. Most research on perceptions of effectiveness has been conducted at the school administration level.

The use of multiple cases has provided an in-depth analysis across different high schools in the same district. This has provided unique insight that could not have been achieved by a quantitative study or another type of qualitative study.

Since this study focused on teachers and their perceptions of the district's policy, the major stakeholders to gain are teachers, administrators, students and parents. The findings of this study and others like it will hopefully help school districts build and support more effective anti-bullying policies.

I hope teachers will be able to see that, although they may believe a policy is somewhat effective and working well, there is always room for improvement. This study provides a snapshot of six cases and highlights the drastic differences in teacher definitions of bullying. Working from such a wide range of definitions potentially means that teachers are misinterpreting or altogether missing bullying that may be happening in schools. By using information found in this study teachers will be able to realize that there is some level of accountability on their own shoulders to not simply know that a policy exists. Granted, administrator support was found to be a major theme contributing to the perceived effectiveness, but that does not excuse individual teachers from knowing what to look for and what to do about it.

With that, however, the effectiveness of an anti-bullying policy is closely related to support of the policy from school personnel. As shown, if teachers perceive that administration does not take the policy seriously then the policy cannot be effective. School and district

administrators can also use this study to gain perspective from teachers in order to help build more effective training models. The model of a one hour presentation during teacher inservice the week before school starts is simply not enough. Support and training from administrators needs to be ongoing throughout the school year. This ongoing training and support will keep the policy relevant and serve as constant reminders that the school and district have made stopping bullying a top priority.

Possibly the greatest stakeholders to gain from this study are the students. Implementing an effective anti-bullying policy will help create safer, more caring learning environments and hopefully a more positive school culture. As research has shown, positive school culture leads to a greater sense of belongingness (Orpinas & Horne, 2010). In addition, promoting a safer school environment falls in line with Maslow's Hierarch of Needs (1948). If bullying significantly declines because of effective implementation of a policy then more students will be able to have their needs met.

Finally, parents can benefit as well by showing that effectiveness of an anti-bullying policy is tied to proper training, support, and teacher understanding. Parents can use this information to discuss current policies with teachers and administrators in order to provide input and/or ensure policies are being consistently supported and enforced. If parents know that schools are taking an active role in stopping bullying then parents may have some reassurance they are sending their children to a safe, caring environment.

Limitations

Qualitative studies, especially case studies, can lend themselves to researcher bias. Although steps were taken to mitigate limitations, they still exist. As the instrument of data collection and interpretation, it is possible that bias can be introduced. In addition, I have a

vested interest in stopping bullying, which could lead to further introduction of bias.

Another limitation is the selection of participants. Because I received very few responses expressing interest in participating I was forced select from a relatively small sample of teachers. For example, it would have been beneficial to have an even number of males and females and representatives of different ethnicities instead of using all Caucasian participants.

Observations could be seen as a limitation as well because of their subjective nature. It is possible that an act I qualified as bullying may or may not actually be bullying. In addition, I noticed during observations that both students and staff realized my presence. There were times when I saw a potential act, moved closer to see and hear, and as I moved closer the students would quiet down. Although the students did not know why I was there, they must have at least viewed me as an authority figure of some sort and therefore stopped what they were doing.

Limitations of teacher journals could exist as well. After each interview I presented teachers with a notebook and instructed participants to record any act they see or hear about that could be bullying. I asked them, if they remembered, to record the date, time, location, incident, and interventions, if any. Four of the six participants recorded nothing in their journals, perhaps because they did not understand my expectations.

The use of multiple cases could be another limitation in reference to data analysis and synthesis. Case studies in general provide a large amount of data, and this study used six cases, making analyzing and synthesizing even more challenging. There is a possibility that I may have missed something the data was trying to tell me.

Suggestions for Future Research

This study was geared toward teacher perceptions of suburban high school teachers. Throughout the study, several implications for future research arose, including broadening the

scope to middle and elementary schools, re-evaluating the same schools after a transition to the OBPP, further exploration of cyberbullying, conducting a mixed methods study, and conducting a qualitative study of administrator perceptions of anti-bullying policies.

Much of the current literature on bullying is at the elementary and middle schools, which was one of the reasons I chose high schools for this study. However, it would still be worth the time to conduct a similar study of elementary and middle school teachers. As mentioned, training needs to be cohesive but flexible to meet the needs of each campus. Elementary and middle schools will have different needs than high schools so it is important to ask the teachers at those levels some of the same questions presented in this study for a comparative analysis amongst different age groups.

Throughout the process of data collection I learned that the district is slowly transitioning to adopt the Olweus Bully Prevention Program (OBPP) at the high schools. I recommend that a study similar to this, possibly even the same study, be conducted after all schools have implemented the OBPP after 5 years, as most success with anti-bullying programs is seen after a long-term commitment (Smith, Cousins, & Stewart, 2005). It was evident during this study that schools were on very different levels concerning the bullying issue, and a common program, such as the OBPP, will hopefully steer all schools to a better, safer environment.

Three of the six participants mentioned the difficulty with cyberbullying and the problems it can cause. This is still a fairly new phenomenon in the research realm, although it is receiving more attention in recent years. It would be worthwhile to explore teacher attitudes toward cyberbullying and how the advent of the internet has changed bullying.

It would also be helpful to incorporate a quantitative element, surveying all high school teachers across the district. Although a qualitative case study allows a deeper understanding, it is

limited because it can only provide a snapshot of the experiences of those chosen for the study (Yin, 2009). That leads to another issue with this study. Participants were purposefully chosen, and adding a quantitative survey of all teachers could be helpful to further identify common themes. Moreover, mixed methods studies can lend themselves to the best of both worlds by providing quantitative and qualitative analysis.

I would also like to see a qualitative study about administrator attitudes toward anti-bullying policies. Since they play such a vital role in effective implementation it would serve the educational community well to explore their attitudes and experiences.

Conclusion

School bullying is obviously a major issue in our schools. This study, through interviews, observations, and teacher journals has shown some of the challenges schools face when trying to stop bullying. While all teachers in the study agreed that bullying is detrimental and have the willingness to intervene, they are all working with different definitions of bullying and do not fully understand the current policy. In addition, administrators play an extremely important part in the effective implementation of an anti-bullying policy.

As the agents of change it is imperative to arm teachers with the information, tools, and techniques necessary to handle bullying. In order to accomplish this, teachers need to know that bullying is a top priority. They must also be given proper, ongoing training from an administrative team who believes in the value and importance of an anti-bullying policy. With those things in place I firmly believe teachers will have a better understanding of bullying, know what to look for, and more importantly, know how to intervene. All students have the right to come to a school that fosters a safe and caring environment, and it is my genuine hope that school districts see this study as a window into how teachers perceive bullying and bullying

policies so policies can become more effective and put an end to bullying in schools.

REFERENCES

Allen, K. P. (2010). A bullying intervention system in high school: A two-year school-wide follow-up. *Studies in Educational Evaluation, 36,* 83–92.

Aluede, O., Adeleke, F., Omoike, D., & Afen-Akpaida, J. (2008). A review of the extent, nature, characteristics and effects of bullying behavior in schools. *Journal of Instructional Psychology, 35*(2), 151–158.

Anderman, E. M., & Anderman, L. H. (2009). Information processing theory. In *Psychology of Classroom Learning: An Encyclopedia.* (pp. 493-497). Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA.

Arsenio, W. F., & Lemerise, E. A. (2001). Varieties of childhood bullying: Values, emotion process, and social competence. *Social Development, 10*(1), 60–73.

Baddeley, A. (2010). Working memory. *Current Biology, 20*(4), 136-140.

Binulal, K. R., & Aravind, A. (2013). Brain based learning: Feel the difference in meaningful learning. *Asian Journal of Research in Social Sciences and Humanities, 3*(9), 228-232.

Black, S., Weinles, D., & Washingotn, E. (2010). Victim strategies to stop bullying. *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice, 8*(2), 138–147.

Bosworth, K., Ford, L., & Hernandez, D. (2011). School climate factors contributing to student and faculty perceptions of safety in select Arizona schools. *Journal of School Health, 81*(4), 194-201.

Bradshaw, C. P., & Waasdorp, T. E. (2009). Measuring and changing a "culture of bullying." *School Psychology Review, 38*(3), 356–361.

Camodeca, M., Goossens, F. A., Schuengel, C., & Terwogt, M. M. (2003). Links between social information processing in middle childhood and involvement of bullying. *Aggressive Behavior, 29,* 116–127.

Cash, R. E. (2003). When it hurts to be a teenager. *Principal Leadership Magazine, 4*(2), 11–15.

Cole, J. C. M., Cornell, D. G., & Sheras, P. (2006). Identification of school bullies by survey methods. *Professional School Counseling, 9*(4), 305–314.

Craig, W., Pepler, D., & Blais, J. (2007). Responding to bullying: What works? *School Psychology International, 28*(4), 465–477.

Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Crick, N. R., & Dodge, K. A. (1996). Social information-processing mechanisms in reactive and proactive aggression. *Child Development, 67*(3), 993–1002.

Crothers, L. M., & Kolbert, J. B. (2004). Comparing middle school teachers' and students' views on bullying and anti-bullying interventions. *Journal of School Violence, 3*(1), 17–32.

Dake, J. A., Price, J. H., Telljohann, S. K., & Funk, J. B. (2004). Principals' perceptions and practices of school bullying prevention activities. *Health Education & Behavior, 31*(3), 372–387.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.). (2011). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Devers, K. J., & Frankel, R. M. (2000). Study design in qualitative research-2: Sampling and data collection strategies. *Education for Health, 13*(20), 263–271.

Dussich, J. P. J., & Maekoya, C. (2007). Physical child harm and bullying-related behaviors: A comparative study in Japan, South Africa, and the United States. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology, 51*(5), 495–509.

Ellis, A. A., & Shute, R. (2007). Teacher responses to bullying in relation to moral orientation and seriousness of bullying. *British Journal of Educational Psychology, 77*, 649–663.

Erickson, J., & Dyer, L. (2004). Right from the start: Exploring the effects of early team events on subsequent project team development and performance. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 49*(3), 438–471.

Feinberg, T. (2003). Bullying prevention and intervention. *Principal Leadership Magazine, 4*(1), 10–14.

Flashpohler, P. D., Elfstrom, J. L., Vanderzee, K. L., Sink, H. E., & Birchmeier, Z. (2009). Stand by me: The effects of peer and teacher support in mitigating the impact of bullying on quality of life. *Psychology in the Schools, 46*(7), 636–649.

Fox, C. L., & Boulton, M. J. (2005). The social skills problems of victims of bullying: Self, peer, and teacher perceptions. *British Journal of Educational Psychology, 75*, 313–328.

Gould, M. S., Greenberg, T., Velting, D. M., & Shaffer, D. (2003). Youth suicide risk and preventive interventions: A review of the past 10 years. *Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 42*(4), 386–405.

Haeseler, L. A., (2010). Stopping child bullying: Educators' diverse approaches for school improvement. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment, 20*, 952-962.

Haynie, D. L. , Nansel, T., Eitel, P., Crump, A. D., Saylor, K., Yu, K., & Simons-Morton, B. (2001). Bullies, victims, and bully/victims: Distinct groups of at-risk youths. *The Journal of Early Adolescence, 21*(1), 29-49.

Hinduja, S., & Patchin, J. W. (2010). Bullying, cyberbullying, and suicide. *Archives of Suicide Research, 14*(3), 206–221.

Hirschstein, M. K., Edstrom, L. V. S., Frey, K. S., Snell, J. L., & MacKenzie, E. P. (2007). Walking the talk in bullying prevention: Teacher implementation variables related to initial impact of the *Steps to Respect* program. *School Psychology Review, 36*(1), 3–21.

Jacobsen, K. E., Bauman, S. (2007). Bullying in schools: School counselors' responses to three types of bullying incidents. *Professional School Counseling, 11*(1), 1-9.

Johnston, D., & Strong, T. (2008). Reconciling voices writing an autoethnographic thesis. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 7*(3), 47–61.

Kallestad, J. H., & Olweus, D. (2003). Predicting teachers' and schools' implementation of the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program: A multilevel study. *Prevention & Treatment, 6*(21), (np).

Kim, Y. S., Leventhal, B. L., Koh, Y. J., & Boyce, W. T. (2009). Bullying increased suicide risk: Prospective study of Korean adolescents. *Archives of Suicide Research, 13*(1), 15–30.

Lee, C. (2006). Exploring teacher's definitions of bullying. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties, 11*(1), 61–75.

Lloyd-Jones, G. (2003). Design and control issues in qualitative case study research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 2*(2). Article 4.

Luiselli, J. K., Putnam, R. F., Handler, M. W., & Feinberg, A. B. (2005). Whole-school positive behaviour support: Effects on student discipline problems and academic performance. *Educational Psychology, 25*(2), 183–198.

Marshall, C. (2011). *Designing qualitative research* (5th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Maslow, A. H. (1943). A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review, 50*, 370–396.

McCarra, J. F., & Forrester, J. (2013). Making a difference for the bullied: Teacher's responsibilities for responding to bullying. *Journal of Instructional Pedagogies, 10*, 1-6.

Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Mishna, F. (2004). A qualitative study of bullying from multiple perspectives. *Children and Schools, 26*(4), 234–247.

Mishna, F., Pepler, D., & Wiener, J. (2006). Factors associated with perceptions and responses to bullying situations by children, parents, teachers, and principals. *Victims and Offenders, 1*, 255–288.

Mishna, F., Scarcello, I., Pepler, D., & Wiener, J. (2005). Teachers' understanding of bullying. *Canadian Journal of Education, 28*(4), 718–738.

Myers, D. G. (2010). *Psychology* (9th ed.). New York, NY: Worth.

Nicolaides, S., Toda, Y., & Smith, P. K. (2002). Knowledge and attitudes about school bullying in trainee teachers. *British Journal of Educational Psychology, 76*, 553–576.

Nishina, A. (2004). A theoretical review of bullying: Can it be eliminated? In C. E. Sanders & G. D. Phye (Eds.), *Bullying: Implications for the classroom* (pp. 35–62). San Diego, CA: Elsevier.

O'Brennan, L. M., & Furlong, M. J. (2010). Relations between students' perceptions of school connectedness and peer victimization. *Journal of School Violence, 9*, 375-391.

Olthof, T., & Goossens, F. A. (2008). Bullying and the need to belong: Early adolescents' bullying-related behavior and the acceptance they desire and receive from particular classmates. *Social Development, 17*(1), 24–46.

Olweus, D. (1993). *Bullying at school*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Olweus, D. (1994). Annotation: Bullying at school: Basic facts and effects of a school based intervention program. *Journal of Child Psychology & Psychiatry & Allied Disciplines, 35*(7), 1171–1190.

Omizo, M. M., Omizo, S. A., Baxa, G. C. O., & Miyose, R. J. (2006). Bullies and victims: A phenomenological study. *Journal of School Violence, 5*(3), 89–105.

Orpinas, P., Horne, A. M., & Staniszewski, D. (2003). School bullying: Changing the problem by changing the school. *School Psychology Review, 32*(3), 431–444.

Orpinas, P. & Horne, A. M. (2010). Creating a positive school climate and developing social competence. In S. Jimmerson, S. Swearer, and D. Espelage (Eds.), *Handbook of Bullying in Schools: An international perspective*.

Parault, S. J., Davis, H. A., & Pellegrini, A. D. (2007). The social contexts of bullying and victimization. *Journal of Early Adolescence, 27*(2), 145–174.

Payne, A. A., & Gottfredson, D. C. (2004). Schools and bullying: School factors related to bullying and school-based interventions. In C. E. Sanders & G. D. Phye (Eds.), *Bullying: Implications for the classroom* (pp. 159-175). San Diego, CA: Elsevier.

Piotrowski, D., & Hoot, J. (2008). Bullying and violence in schools: What teachers should know and do. *Childhood Education, 84*(6), 357-363.

Resnick, M. D., Bearman, P. S., Blum, R. W., Bauman, K. E., Harris, K. M., Jones, J., Tabor, J., Beuhring, T., Sieving, R. E., Shaw, M., Ireland, M., Bearinger, L. H., & Udry, R. (1997). Protecting adolescents from harm: Findings from the national longitudinal study on adolescent health. *Journal of the American Medical Association, 278*(10), 823-832.

Rigby, K. (2002). *A meta-evaluation of methods and approaches to reducing bullying in preschools and early primary schools in Australia.* Canberra, Australia: National Crime Prevention, Attorney General.

Rigby, K. (2003). Consequences of bullying in schools. *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry, 48*(9), 583–590.

Samples, F. L. (2004). Evaluating curriculum-based intervention programs: An examination of preschool, primary, and elementary intervention programs. In C. E. Sanders & G. D. Phye (Eds.), *Bullying: Implications for the classroom* (pp. 203–227). San Diego, CA: Elsevier.

Sanders, C. E. (2004). What is bullying? In C. E. Sanders & G. D. Phye (Eds.), *Bullying: Implications for the classroom* (pp. 1–16). San Diego, CA: Elsevier.

Sassu, K. A., Elinoff, M. J., Bray, M.A., & Kehle, T. J. (2004). Behavior problems: Bullies and victims. Retrieved from http://www.nasponline.org/resources/handouts/bullying%20template%209_04.pdf

Schwandt, T. A. (2007). *The SAGE dictionary of qualitative inquiry* (3rd ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Seed, P. M., Karkness, K. L., & Quilty, L. C. (2010). Parental maltreatment, bullying, and adolescent depression: Evidence for the mediating role of perceived social support. *Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology, 39*(5), 681-692.

Shochet, I. M., Dadds, M. R., Ham, D., Montague, R. (2006). School connectedness is an underemphasized parameter in adolescent mental health: Results of a community prediction study. *Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology, 35*(2), (170-179).

Simon, H. (1979). Information processing models of cognition. *Annual Review of Psychology, 30,* 363–397.

Slonje, R. & Smith, P. K. (2008). Cyberbullying: Another main type of bullying? *Scandanavian Journal of Psychology, 49*, 147-154.

Smith, H., Polenik, K., Nakasita, S., & Jones, A. P. (2012). Profiling social, emotional and behavioural difficulties of children involved in direct and indirect bullying. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficultions, 17*(3-4), 243-257.

Smith, J. D., Cousins, J. B., & Stewart, R. (2005). Antibullying interventions in schools: Ingredients for effective programs. *Canadian Journal of Education, 28*(4), 739–762.

Smith, J. D., Schneider, B. H., Smith, P. K., & Ananiadou, K. (2004). The effectiveness of whole-school anti-bullying programs: A synthesis of evaluation research. *School Psychology Review, 33*(4), 547–560.

Stein, J. A., Dukes, R. L., & Warren, J. I. (2007). Adolescent male bullies, victims, and bully-victims: A comparison of psychosocial and behavioral characteristics. *Journal of Pediatric Psychology, 32*(3), 273-282.

Sutton, J. (2001). Bullies: Thugs or thinkers? *The Psychologist, 14*(10), 530–534.

Swearer, S. M., & Espelage, D. L. (2004). Introduction: A social-ecological framework of bullying among youth. In D. L. Espelage & S. M. Swearer (Eds.), *Bullying in American schools: A social-ecological perspective on prevention and intervention* (pp. 1–12). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Taormina, R. J., & Gao, J. H. (2013). Maslow and the motivation hierarchy: Measuring satisfaction of the needs. *The American journal of Psychology, 126*(2), 155-177.

Turner, D. W. (2010). Qualitative interview design: A practical guide for novice researchers. *The Qualitative Report, 15*(3), 754–760.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Division of Adolescent and School Health. (2009). National youth risk behavior survey. Retrieved from http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/yrbs/pdf/us_overview_yrbs.pdf

U.S. Department of Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Division of Violence Prevention. (2010). Suicide: Facts at a glance. Retrieved from http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/suicide/

Vaillancourt, T., Brittain, H., Bennett, L., Arnocky, S., McDougall, P., Hymel, S., . . . & Cunningham, L. (2010). Places to avoid: Population-based study of student reports of unsafe and high bullying areas at school. *Canadian Journal of School Psychology, 25*(1), 40–54.

Vossekuil, B., Fein, R. A., Reddy, M., Borum, R., & Modzeleski, W. (2002). *The final report and findings of the safe school initiative: Implications for the prevention of school attacks in the United States.* Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program and U.S. Secret Service, National Threat Assessment Center.

Wolke, D., Copeland, W. E., Angold, A., & Costello, E. J. (2013). Impact of bullying in childhood on adult health, wealth, crime, and social outcomes. *Psychological Science, 24*(10), 1958-1970.

Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Yoon, J. S., & Kerber, K. (2003). Bullying: Elementary teachers' attitudes and intervention strategies. *Research in Education, 69*, 27–35.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL LETTER

August 1, 2012

James Isom IRB Approval 1368.080112: Understanding Teacher Perceptions of Bullying and Effectiveness of an Anti-Bullying Policy: A Case Study of Suburban High School Teachers in the Southwestern U.S.

Dear James, We are pleased to inform you that your above study has been approved by the Liberty IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

Fernando Garzon, Psy.D. Professor, IRB Chair Counseling

(434) 592-4054

Liberty University | Training Champions for Christ since 1971

APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

CONSENT FORM

UNDERSTANDING TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF BULLYING AND EFFECTIVENESS OF AN ANTI-BULLYING POLICY:
A CASE STUDY OF SUBURBAN HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS IN THE SOUTHWESTERN U.S.

James Chandler Isom
Liberty University
School of Education

You are invited to be in a research study of a case study of teacher perceptions of bullying and the effectiveness of an anti-bullying policy. You were selected as a possible participant because of your knowledge of the policy and experience as a classroom teacher. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by: James Chandler Isom, EdD Candidate, Liberty University

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is: Bullying is a major problem amongst children, particularly at school. In an alarming study, as high as 70% of children have been affected by bullying as either a bully, victim, or witness. Since bullying was first identified as a serious problem in the 1970's, educators, psychologists, and other professionals have attempted to shed light onto this problem. The purpose of this study is to gain insight into teacher perceptions of bullying intervention/prevention in order to better understand how current policy is implemented.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:
In this study you will be observed at school, interviewed, and asked to keep a journal. Observations should not interfere with normal daily routines and will occur periodically throughout the duration of the study. Interviews will be audio recorded and use semi-structured, open-ended questions with the flexibility to ask probing questions if needed. These should not last more than one hour. The reason for audio recording is to check for accuracy during analysis. You will also be asked to keep a detailed journal related to this study and record your observations.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study:

The study has several risks: The risks are no more than the participant would encounter in everyday life. As with any study it is impossible to 100% guarantee that no risks exist by participating in this study. As a participant, colleagues and other school personnel will know you are involved in a study due to the data collection methods, which include an interview, keeping a journal, and classroom observations. There is a possibility that at some point I may become privy to information that triggers the mandatory reporting requirements for child abuse, child neglect, or intent to harm self or others. Unless mandatory reporting is triggered your anonymity and information will be protected.

The benefits to participation are: Benefits to participating in this study potentially include increasing the awareness of the bullying problem, reducing number of bullying incidents, and increasing the effectiveness of anti-bullying policies.

Compensation:

No compensation will be provided for participation in this study.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers will have access to the records. Audio from taped interviews, teacher journals, and researcher notes will be kept securely in a locked cabinet. Audio will be erased, and paper will be destroyed using a shredder at the conclusion of the required three year time period. Electronic data will be stored as password protected files and then deleted at the conclusion of the required three year time period. The researcher is the only person who will have access to any identifying information.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or the school district. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships. If you withdraw from the study, any data collected from you will be destroyed as described above.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study: James Chandler Isom. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact me at 972-955-8265 or jcisom@liberty.edu. You may also contact the faculty advisor, Dr. Russell Yocum at 434-592-5462 or ryocum@liberty.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, Dr. Fernando Garzon, Chair, 1971 University Blvd, Suite 1582, Lynchburg, VA 24502 or email at fgarzon@liberty.edu.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

I (please check one) ☐ agree ☐ disagree to have interviews audio recorded.

Signature:_____ Date: _____

Signature of Investigator:_____ Date: _____

APPENDIX C: OBSERVATION CHART

Type of bullying incident observed	Level of bullying	Teacher intervention	Notes