

A STUDY TO IDENTIFY SCHOOL SUPPORT STAFF MEMBERS'  
PERCEPTIONS OF BULLYING EXPERIENCES REGARDING  
FIFTH THROUGH EIGHTH GRADERS IN A  
MIDWESTERN SCHOOL DISTRICT

By

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A Research Paper

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of  
Education Specialist  
With a Major in  
Counseling and Psychological Services

Approved: 6 Semester Credits

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**ABSTRACT**

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A Study to Identify School Support Staff Members' Perceptions of Bullying Experiences regarding 5th through 8th Graders in a Midwestern School District

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**(Style Manual Used in this Study)**

The purpose of this study was to identify school support staff members' perceptions of bullying experiences regarding 5th through 8th graders in a midwestern school district. Data was collected during the Spring semester of 2000 through the use of a fourteen item survey. The survey was administered to a sampling of school support staff members and confidentiality was guaranteed. The nature of bullying experiences which were witnessed by, reported to, and/or suspected by school support staff members was determined. Also, the issue of whether intervention was sought and/or perceived as effective according to the school support staff respondents was ascertained.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A very special thanks to all three of my committee members: Dr. Ed Biggerstaff, Dr. Amy Gillett, and Dr. Harlyn Misfeldt.

I am still astounded at how smoothly the entire project progressed from start to finish. Thank you all for your role in that. I appreciate how each of you responded to each phase in a timely manner with helpful input. I appreciate everything each of you did to help me meet my goal of starting and finishing the entire six credits in less than a semester's time. We did it!!!

Ed deserves a special round of applause for guiding me in my committee selection. I cannot imagine a better team to work with. I also appreciated his initial contributions while I was deciding my area of focus as well as his latter suggestions which allowed the project to constantly move forward.

Since I devoted three "thank you's" to Dr. Amy Gillett in my thesis paper, it is only fitting that I at least top that for my field study...Thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you to Amy for all of her helpful efforts. I am extremely grateful to her for offering to organize and calculate my data into usable information. The process got me so "jazzed" that I spent the next two days finishing my paper!!! In all regards, Amy is a tremendously gifted teacher, and I feel lucky to have crossed her path.

Also in my thesis acknowledgements, I thanked Harlyn for sharing his first-hand knowledge that if there is a will, there is a way to complete a thesis in an expeditious manner. His story gave me hope and inspiration at the outset of that project. Likewise, from the start of this undertaking, I was filled with an enthusiastic belief that with this somewhat kindred spirit on my team, this project would advance satisfactorily. As the saying goes, "Great minds think alike!"

I am extremely grateful to the school support staff members, principal, guidance counselor, and all others who provided me with the resources and information I needed to bring this project to fruition. I deeply respect the courage it takes to explore an issue which is oftentimes avoided or ignored.

I would like to extend my love and gratitude to my entire family: Mom, Dad, Tina, Todd & Marla, Tim & Marcia, Kellen, and Katie. Remember years from now that "I know this world that we live in can be hard now and then, and it will be again...Many times, we've been down...Yet love has kept us

together" no matter what we do, who we are, or where we go!  
:)

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## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

The U.S. Department of Justice reports that each year, three million violent acts occur in or around schools (Sautter, 1995).

In the recent past, a horrific series of mass homicides has been committed within several U.S. schools. In these instances, unsuspecting victims fell prey to a student(s) who for various reasons took steps to acquire high powered weapons, carry large quantities of ammunition, and indiscriminately shoot anyone in the vicinity.

It is difficult to understand what could possibly motivate youngsters to take such heinous action against students and staff they knew intimately, as well as anonymous faces they encountered while pulling the trigger. The murderous acts committed by students in such states as Colorado, Kentucky, Arkansas, Mississippi, and Oregon are seemingly inexplicable and random. However, a common thread appears to exist among many of the recent school shootings.

Bullying, in one form or another, was a problem encountered by many of the perpetrators of massive school homicidal acts. For example, on October 1, 1997, sixteen year old Luke Woodham used a hunting rifle to kill two students and wound seven others at Pearl High School in Mississippi (Chua-Eoan, 1997). When asked why he went on the killing rampage, Woodham stated "...the world has

wronged me" (Hewlitt, 1997, p. 116). Also pertaining to motive he wrote, "I killed because people like me are mistreated every day" (Hewlitt, 1997, p. 118). Woodham was the "...target of taunting and ridicule from other classmates for his pudginess and shy, introverted manner" (Hewlitt, 1997, p. 117). This case illustrates the severe maladjustment which can result from a direct form of verbal bullying. A different form of bullying can be exemplified by Mitchell Johnson of Jonesboro, Arkansas. This student-turned-mass murderer was characterized as a pudgy outcast (Mulrine, 1999). This case demonstrates a less attended problem involving an indirect form of bullying. Social exclusion, ignoring, and ostracism are all too often dismissed as insignificant events by parents and school staff. Unfortunately, bullying victims are likely to encounter school personnel who do relatively little when notified of a bullying situation, particularly when it takes the form of verbal intimidation, isolation, and exclusion (Batsche & Knoff, 1994). The heinous actions of Luke Woodham and Mitchell Johnson provide two pieces of anecdotal evidence which attest to the fact that schools and adults in the general community need to validate and offer help to a child who has been victimized by direct and/or indirect forms of bullying.

In an effort to prevent continued occurrences of violent atrocities within our schools, bullying is an issue which requires serious investigation. Furlong et al. (cited

in Gable et al., 1997, p. 40) revealed that "...most bouts of aggression consist of bullying, verbal/physical threats, shoving, fist fights, and other simple assaults." Sometimes students are protecting themselves from real or perceived physical threats to personal safety. Other times students attempt to empower themselves against those who have threatened or caused them psychological harm. Several experts (Ducette-Gates; Flay; Furlong; Gottfredson; Yung; cited in Dusenbury et al., 1997, p. 409) "agreed that it is appropriate for schools to be interested in reducing the daily disruptions such as name-calling, bullying, and general intimidation, which spoil the school climate and are themselves precursors to more violence."

In an ever increasing haphazardly violent and desensitized world, we need to attend to the fact that bullying may be exponentially more dangerous in today's schools than in the past. Such an acknowledgement requires all school personnel to be aware of the nature of bullying experiences, the factors that foster bullying, and a thorough understanding of intervention and prevention strategies in regards to bullying. Realistically, every member of the school community must undertake these challenges with the promise of creating an environment conducive to physical safety and psychological well-being rather than violence and aggression.

Statement of the Problem

Research suggests that bullying behavior tends to take place when and where there is limited supervision (Craig & Pepler, 1997; Olweus, 1993; Stephenson & Smith, 1989; Whitney & Smith, 1993; Ziegler & Pepler, 1993; cited in Atlas & Pepler, 1998). Typically, areas such as playgrounds, hallways, and buses are not supervised by teachers nor administrators. Therefore, these adult members of the school environment may have limited insight into and understanding of bullying problems. Thus, it seems practical to obtain data from adults within the school system who may have better access into the covert world in which bullying experiences occur. Hence, it appears that there is a need to identify school support staff members' perceptions of bullying experiences as it is this group of adults who may be afforded the best vantage point into the bullying issue.

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to identify school support staff members' perceptions of bullying experiences regarding 5th through 8th grade students in a midwestern school district. Data will be collected during the Spring semester of 2000 through the use of a survey designed specifically for this investigation.

#### Research Questions

There are fifteen questions this research wishes to address. They are:

1. What percentage of support staff members identify themselves as being a witness of bullying which appeared to have a detrimental effect(s) on the victims?
2. What percentage of support staff members identify themselves as suspecting or having been told about the occurrence of bullying which appeared to have a detrimental effect(s) on the victim(s)?
3. Which environments did support staff members rank highly as common places where bullying behaviors were witnessed?
4. Which environments did support staff members rank highly as common places where bullying behaviors were suspected or reported?
5. What percentage of support staff members believed that increased adult supervision would dramatically decrease bullying behaviors from occurring on and/or around school grounds?
6. What percentage of support staff members believed that increased adult supervision would prevent bullying behaviors from occurring on and/or around school grounds?
7. What percentage of support staff members believed that bullying experiences are likely to escalate beyond the verbal realm and into the physical?
8. Which type of bullying, physical or verbal, did support staff members believe middle schoolers experience most frequently?
9. What was identified by support staff members

as the most blatant forms of verbal bullying in the school?

10. In which time frame do support staff members believe most bullying behaviors occur?

11. What percentage of support staff members indicated that a student reported incidences of bullying to them?

12. What percentage of support staff members reported playing an instrumental role in stopping bullying behaviors which were brought to their attention?

13. What were the most common reasons provided by support staff members regarding failure to stop reported bullying behaviors?

14. What percentage of support staff members believe that bullying is an issue that has been dealt with effectively within their school system?

15. Overall, what is the perception of the bullying issue by support staff members in this school?

#### Definition of Terms

For clarity of understanding, the following terms need definition:

Bullying - "...a situation when a student or group of students is mean to you over a long period of time (weeks or even months). Bullying can either be physical (hitting, kicking, and so on) or it can be verbal (threats, name calling, gossiping, or ignoring)" (Barone, 1997, p. 81).

Support staff members - those employees or volunteers within the school district who are not administrators, teachers, counselors, and/or other education specialists

(i.e. speech and language pathologists, physical therapists, occupational therapists, etc.).

### Assumptions

There is one assumption which is apparent in this research:

1. The support staff members will respond honestly and accurately to the items on the survey.

### Limitations

There are two limitations which are apparent in this research. These are:

1. The support staff members may not respond honestly and accurately to the survey because the topic is potentially embarrassing if bullying situations were not addressed properly.

2. This study and its findings are by its design and nature not generalizable to other populations.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Literature Review

#### Introduction

This chapter includes a brief look at the evidence which suggests that bullying experiences foster the violent climate in our schools, with primary focus on bullying. The definitions of the term "bullying," characteristics of victims and perpetrators, frequently targeted subjects, outcomes, interventions, and prevention strategies recommended for bullying are discussed in detail.

#### Evidence of Bullying Fostering School Violence

To establish the importance of gathering information about school support staff members' perceptions of 5th through 8th graders' bullying experiences, a limited presentation of evidence which links bullying to the broader issue of school violence was appropriate. Two pieces of anecdotal evidence (Greenbaum, cited in Barone, 1997; Chua-Eoan, 1997; Hewlitt, 1997) which pointed to one such link involved the victims of bullying going to the extreme by exacting deadly revenge with loaded guns on the classmates that had taunted and rejected them. These scenarios would not have surprised the many experts and researchers (Barone, 1997; Ducette-Gates; Flay; Furlong; Gottfredson; Yung; cited in Dusenbury et al., 1997; Furlong et al., cited in Gable et

al., 1997; Garrity et al., 1997; Horne & Socherman, 1996; Levine, 1997; Hoover & Oliver, cited in Rosen, 1997; Stephens, 1997) who contended that many incidences of school violence and/or aggression began in some way at the bullying level. Since bullying was recognized as a precursor to more serious school violence and aggression by experts in that field of research (Ducette-Gates; Flay; Furlong; Gottfredson; Yung; cited in Dusenbury et al., 1997) and examples of brutal school violence which involved bullying experiences were presented, the importance of this study was established. After all, a logical step in addressing the bullying issue is to identify the extent to which the adults, who by definition of job role/position are in close proximity to students in limited supervision areas, view bullying as a problem.

### Bullying

Bullying has been explored in terms of its definitions, characteristics of victims and perpetrators, frequently targeted subjects, outcomes, interventions, and prevention strategies.

### Definitions

Bullying has been defined in several ways, but Olweus' (cited in Horne & Socherman, 1996, p. 77) definition is one that is widely used. It reads, "A student is being bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more of the students...It is a negative action when someone

intentionally inflicts, or attempts to inflict, injury or discomfort on another..." Furthermore, Olweus pointed out that there are two types of bullying (Olweus, 1993). Direct bullying was defined as an open attack made on the victim and indirect bullying was defined as social isolation and intentional exclusion.

On a survey designed to gather information on eighth graders' bullying experiences, Barone (1997, p. 81) defined bullying as "...a situation when a student or group of students is mean to you over a long period of time (weeks or even months). Bullying can either be physical (hitting, kicking, and so on) or it can be verbal (threats, name calling, gossiping, or ignoring)." Based on this definition, 58.8% of the students reported that they had been bullied. Barone's was the operational definition used for this study.

Levine (1997, p. 34) defined bullying as "putting another person down through physical threats or verbal taunting." This definition lacked Olweus' and Barone's implication for the occurrence of actual physical abuse, as well as the criteria of repeated occurrence and subjection over a minimum duration of time.

#### Characteristics of Victims

Common characteristics of victims of bullying were clumsiness; disabilities; lack of social skills; isolated; anxious; insecure; easy to cry; low or fragile self-esteem; prior traumatic experiences; emotional, behavioral, or

attentional difficulties; physically weak; small-sized bodies; use of materialistic items as bribes to protect themselves; and new kids in a school who had not adjusted well (Garrity et al., 1997; Horne & Socherman, 1996; Olweus, 1993). Additionally, Garrity et al. indicated that "Special education students may be at greater risk of being victimized" (1997, p. 242). The majority of victims possessed a submissive behavioral style (Olweus, 1993; Olweus; Kupersmidt et al.; Perry et al.; cited in Schwartz et al., 1997).

However, these same researchers (Olweus, 1993; Olweus; Kupersmidt et al.; Perry et al.; cited in Schwartz et al., 1997) identified a smaller group of victims which displayed an aggressive behavioral style; such victims were referred to as "aggressive or provocative victims." Aggressive victims had serious behavior problems in school and oftentimes experienced peer rejection (Olweus, 1993; Olweus; Kupersmidt et al.; Perry et al.; cited in Schwartz et al., 1997). One factor found among these victims was low socioeconomic status (Schwartz et al., 1997). Schwartz et al. concurred with Olweus (cited in Schwartz et al., 1997) that aggressive victims had harsh, disorganized home environments involving hostile, potentially physically abusive, restrictive, or punitive parenting and exposure to marital conflict.

#### Characteristics of Bullies

Olweus dispelled a commonly accepted myth that bullies compensate for low self-esteem by lashing out at others in attempts to veil their own haunting insecurities (1993). On the contrary, Olweus found that bullies were not anxious nor insecure. Typically, bullies held positive views about themselves. Bullies exhibited a need for power and attention (Garrity et al., 1997; Horne & Socherman, 1996; Olweus, 1993). Olweus wrote that bullies displayed an aggressive personality pattern and reacted aggressively (cited in Horne & Socherman, 1996). Batsche and Knoff (1994) reported that bullies at school were often victims of bullying themselves at home. Schwartz et al. (1997) concurred with this finding. Experts agreed that oftentimes parents of bullies engaged in physical discipline, provided little supervision of their children, did not possess effective problem-solving skills, projected hostility and rejection, demonstrated inconsistent parenting, taught their children to lash out during confrontation, engaged in physical and verbal spousal abuse, and possessed punitive parenting styles (Cummings et al.; Dodge et al.; Holden & Ritchie; cited in Horne & Socherman, 1996; Olweus, 1993; Schwartz et al., 1997). Poor attachment to parents resulted in a lack of empathy which was stated as a common characteristic of bullies by Horne and Socherman (1996), as well as by Levine (1997) and Olweus (1993). Bullies often lacked effective social skills which may have led to

rejection by peers and aggression towards peers. According to Horne and Socherman (1996, p. 78):

The bully begins to emerge, then, as one who has a compassionate and supportive of other children; and one who uses power and aggression rather than social skills and peer relationships to meet needs and expectations.

Also, bullies had frequent exposure to violence in television, movies, video games, and extremely physical contact sports (Pearl et al; Eron & Huesmann; cited in Olweus, 1993). Another common characteristic of bullies was low socioeconomic status (Schwartz et al., 1997).

#### Frequently Targeted Subjects

The accumulated literature noted weight, height, appearance, smell/odor, athletic ability, academic ability, race, religion, socioeconomic status, families, friendships, sexual identity, hair color, interests/hobbies, differences, and disabilities (Garrity et al., 1997; Levine, 1997) as frequently targeted subjects which bullies focused on for harassment purposes. Material for the survey designed specifically for this study was drawn from these sources.

It is appropriate to note that Olweus (1993) pointed out that such external deviations were not found to be the cause of bullying. Instead, it was suggested that bullies may use external deviations as a source of bullying after targeting a physically and/or emotionally weaker victim.

#### Outcomes for Victims

Outcomes indicated for victims were lowered self-esteem and development of the belief that they deserved to be treated poorly (Garrity et al., 1997; Olweus, 1993). Victims experienced a sense of powerlessness (Garrity et al., 1997). After years of enduring bullying, many engaged in self-destructive or retaliatory acts (Garrity et al., 1997). A victim of bullying often experienced isolation (Garrity et al., 1997; Olweus, 1993). Fear was produced in victims (Horne & Socherman, 1996) because they found themselves in situations that they did not know how to handle effectively. Some victims felt "...bad, mad, sad, angry, like I want to hit someone, like dirt...put down, afraid, and alone" (Levine, 1997, p. 34). Such feelings oftentimes resulted in the victims suffering with long-term depression (Olweus, 1993).

#### Outcomes for Bullies

Experts agreed that outcomes indicated for bullies who did not receive adequate intervention dismally pointed to a cycle of continuing and escalating levels of violence and aggression (Ducette-Gates; Flay; Furlong; Gottfredson; Yung; cited in Dusenbury et al., 1997; Furlong et al., cited in Gable et al., 1997; Olweus, 1993). Without intervention, bullies were likely to never acquire the proper social skills or empathy necessary for developing and maintaining healthy, meaningful relationships (Garrity et al., 1997; Olweus, 1993). Also, youth who are aggressive towards peers and adults are more likely to partake in antisocial behavior

such as alcohol abuse and criminality (Olweus, 1993). Olweus found that "Approximately 60 percent of boys who were characterized as bullies in grades 6-9 had at least one conviction by the age of 24" (1993, p. 36) and, even more startling, that 35-40 percent had three or more convictions.

#### Interventions for Victims

Interventions for victims were to increase their self-esteem, provide opportunities for the victim to succeed, and model positive thinking (Garrity et al., 1997; Olweus, 1993). Victims needed support, protection, and assistance from the school, their parents, and other students (Barone, 1997; Garrity et al., 1997; Olweus, 1993) when facing bullies and dealing with the aftermath of traumatic bullying experiences. Victims were taught ways to increase their social and interpersonal skills (Garrity et al., 1997; Horne & Socherman, 1996). A specific way this was accomplished was to teach ways of effectively joining groups (Garrity et al., 1997). Victims learned how to project themselves in a way that made them less susceptible to bullying (i.e. straight posture, confident voice, and overall presentation of self). Teaching victims how to give and receive the right messages empowered them (Garrity et al., 1997; Horne & Socherman, 1996; Olweus, 1993). Personal respect and confidence needed to be restored in the victims (Garrity et al., 1997; Olweus, 1993). Victims of bullying needed to have an adult to confide in after a bullying event so that they had an advocate to constantly reinforce and review the

positive social and interpersonal skills which they learned (Garrity et al., 1997). Parents encouraged their children to become involved in sports, join social organizations, or develop potential talents or positive traits (Olweus, 1993). A victim's parents should be engaged in the process of teaching their children to inhibit the occurrence of future bullying incidences (Horne & Socherman, 1996; Olweus, 1993). Olweus stated that in extreme cases traumatized victims may need to change classes or even schools (1993).

#### Interventions for Bullies

Interventions for bullies included direct confrontation of bullies by staff which sent a clear message that bullying behavior would not be tolerated at school (Garrity et al., 1997; Litke, 1996; Olweus, 1993). The use of punishment was not viewed as an effective intervention with bullies; instead, no-nonsense behavioral correction was suggested to encourage positive replacement behaviors for power-seeking bullies. Prosocial consequences needed to consistently fit the offense (Garrity et al., 1997; Horne & Socherman, 1996; Olweus, 1993). A logical step was to determine if moving the bully to another class was necessary or if specific interventions would ameliorate the particular bullying situation (Olweus, 1993).

Garrity et al. stated that staff members must divert the power and attention needs of the bully into prosocial directions (1997). These same researchers also contended that staff needed to understand and recognize the social

problem-solving disabilities of bullies. With proper understanding, staff would then attempt to correct the bully's erroneous thinking patterns (Garrity et al., 1997). Also according to Garrity et al., in some cases bullies required therapy to address antisocial thinking patterns (1997). The importance of not engaging in power struggles with bullies was stressed; instead, staff were coached to rechannel the focus on caring, kindness, and empathy of the victims. It was necessary to build empathy skills in bullies (Barone, 1997; Garrity et al., 1997; Levine, 1997). Bullies were taught to be leaders by utilizing their positive strengths and making positive choices (Garrity et al., 1997; Levine, 1997).

Parents of bullies were notified of bullying offenses in a no-nonsense, factual manner (Garrity et al., 1997; Olweus, 1993). Educators helped parents of bullies to understand the urgency of reducing school violence and aggression (Horne & Socherman, 1996; Olweus, 1993).

Peer intervention was a key component because oftentimes adults were not around when bullying occurred. Thus, when peer intervention in the form of standing up for victims was a clear school and classroom expectation, the "caring majority" rose to the occasion (Barone, 1997; Garrity et al., 1997). These findings concur with Olweus' statement that "neutral" students need to help keep bullying in check (1993). Student-generated discussions about bullying in general were more effective interventions than

the teacher-generated lectures (Greenbaum, cited in Barone, 1997; Garrity et al., 1997; Levine, 1997; Olweus, 1993).

### Prevention Strategies

A recommended starting point for the implementation of a bully prevention program was the recognition that bullying is a serious problem that exists or could easily develop in any school (Garrity et al., 1997; Horne & Socherman, 1996; Litke, 1996; Olweus, 1993; Rosen, 1997; Stephens, 1997).

Another logical preventative step was to ensure clarity in a school's mission statement and student behavior code in regards to the definition of bullying and its actionable offenses (Horne & Socherman, 1996; Litke, 1996; Olweus, 1993; Stephens, 1997). Olweus (1993) suggested implementing three simple rules as a starting point to foster a positive, anti-bully climate: "1) We shall not bully other students.; 2) We shall try to help students who are bullied.; 3) We shall make a point to include students who become easily left out" (p. 82). These simple rules address direct and indirect forms of bullying.

Several experts highly recommended that the support of staff, parents, students, and concerned community members be enlisted in the implementation of a bully prevention program because a combined effort was imperative to the establishment of a successful program (Garrity et al., 1997; Horne & Socherman, 1996; Litke, 1996; Olweus, 1993; Stephens, 1997). It was deemed important to train the staff and community on the specifics of the problem,

interventions, and prevention strategies (Garrity et al., 1997; Horne & Socherman, 1996; Olweus, 1993). Another recommendation for staff members was that each should indicate which aspect of intervention they were best suited for (i.e. confronting bullies or helping victims) to ensure everyone's strengths would be utilized to the fullest (Garrity et al., 1997).

Experts felt it necessary to create a climate of zero tolerance of physical and/or emotional aggression by anyone (Barone, 1997; Garrity et al., 1997; Horne & Socherman, 1996; Litke, 1996). Garrity et al. (1997) indicated that this positive, prosocial climate must be created and maintained by the "caring majority" who are neither bullies nor victims. It was viewed as vitally important that this group promotes kindness and feels empowered to intervene to help victims instead of surrendering their power to bullies while remaining silent witnesses to hostile behavior. Furthermore, Garrity et al. (1997), along with Levine (1997) and Olweus (1993), contended that students who created a positive climate by valuing and demonstrating compassion and empathy needed to be recognized for their role in making the school environment a safe one. Horne and Socherman (1996) and Olweus (1993) suggested that a new code be established which replaced the old one of "not telling," to one that expects students to report bullying incidences.

The establishment of clear, concise, widely-known, and effectively enforced consequences of bullying behavior was

strongly recommended (Barone, 1997; Litke, 1996; Olweus, 1993; Stephens, 1997). Olweus contended that equally important counterparts to sanctions were praise and positive attention from teachers when positive, prosocial behaviors were displayed by any students, especially by those who have bullied others (1993).

It was suggested that there be an increase in effective staff supervision of known trouble spots such as lunchrooms, hallways, outside areas, lockerrooms, and bathrooms because student misbehavior and violence frequently occurred in those locations (Barone, 1997; Horne & Socherman, 1996; Litke, 1996; Olweus, 1993; Stephens, 1997). Although most of the accumulated literature de-emphasized the effectiveness of high-tech solutions versus the involvement and support of the school and community, Litke (1996) shared that the use of video cameras increased supervision of school grounds and sent a clear message to students that they would be held accountable for aggressive or violent behaviors.

Another suggestion was to teach students the skills to problem-solve in order to provide them with a peaceful alternative to violence and aggression. Examples of programs which built such proactive social skills were peer mediation and conflict resolution (Garrity et al., 1997; Horne & Socherman, 1996; Litke, 1996; Stephens, 1997).

A final recommendation was the introduction of anti-bullying curriculum for the classroom via literature units,

writing units, role playing, artwork, and other creative adaptations of class material (Barone, 1997; Garrity et al., 1997; Olweus, 1993) which would teach values such as tolerance, respect, and/or acceptance of differences (Levine, 1997; Litke, 1996).

#### Summary

In this chapter there was a brief presentation of the evidence which suggested that bullying experiences foster the violent climate in our schools. That evidence established the importance of conducting this study which identified school support staff members' perceptions of 5th through 8th graders' bullying experiences in a given school district. A better understanding of bullying was achieved by examining relevant aspects of the term. The relevant aspects included the definitions of the term "bullying," characteristics of victims and perpetrators, frequently targeted subjects, outcomes, interventions, and prevention strategies recommended for bullying.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Methodology

#### Introduction

This chapter will describe the subjects under study as well as how they were selected for inclusion in this study. Additionally, the instrument which was used will be discussed as to its content, validity, and reliability. Information on data collection and analysis procedures will then follow. The chapter will conclude with an enumeration of the identified methodological limitations.

#### Description of Subjects

All of the subjects for this study were either employed or were adult volunteers in the same midwestern school district during the Spring semester of 2000. Every school support staff member had the opportunity to participate. For the purposes of this study, the school support staff consisted of seven males and thirteen females for a total of 20 adults surveyed. Age ranges of the participants included one respondent in the 18-24 group, two respondents in the 25-29 group, four respondents in the 30-39 group, six respondents in the 40-49 group, and seven respondents in the 50-59 group. Years of employment in the district reported by the participants ranged from less than five years to more than ten years.

### Sample Selection

One entire middle school was chosen for participation in this study. School support staff members were identified by the building principal and the school guidance counselor. Therefore, every adult identified at the middle school as a school support staff member had the opportunity to participate. Subjects were informed that participation was voluntary and confidentiality would be guaranteed.

### Instrumentation

A survey specifically developed to gather information pertaining to school support staff members' perceptions of bullying experiences regarding 5th through 8th graders was designed. Items on bullying were included on the survey with which participants could identify themselves as witnesses to, suspicious of, and/or being told about the bullying experiences of middle schoolers. Further probes were made regarding the nature of perceived bullying behaviors and relevant factors in the general scope of the bullying problem. The literature review generated many of the ideas for the items included in the survey (Barone, 1997; Dusenbury et al., 1997; Horne & Socherman, 1996; Gable et al., 1997; Garrity et al., 1997; Litke, 1996; Olweus, 1993; Rosen, 1997; Stephens, 1997). The survey collected demographic information including respondents' gender, age range, years employed in the school district, and function within the school. Furthermore, the survey, consisting of fourteen items related to bullying, offered the respondents

a variety of answer choices for each item to help quantify the perceptions of the school staff members. The survey was examined by this researcher's advisory committee and face validity was established. Because this survey was specifically designed for this population, no other measures of validity or reliability were available.

#### Data Collection

All support staff members in a particular middle school were given the opportunity to participate in the study. The principal and guidance counselor distributed the surveys to all school support staff members via workroom mailboxes or by hand-delivery. The support staff members were then informed by the attached consent form that participation was voluntary and confidentiality was guaranteed. The survey form reminded the respondents of their right to voluntary and confidential participation. Also, the survey form told participants not to write their names on the survey, and everyone was asked to respond as honestly and accurately as possible. Upon completion, the school support staff members placed the survey in a manilla envelope located in the principal's office. The researcher picked up completed surveys three weeks after the distribution of the surveys.

#### Data Analysis

All appropriate descriptive statistics were used on the data to address the fifteen research questions. Certain items pertained to the frequency of bullying events. Only those surveys which indicated the behavior as occurring

either "Daily," "Weekly," or "Monthly" were included in calculating percentages for such items to ensure compliance with the operational definition of "bullying."

#### Limitations

Two limitations were apparent in this methodology:

1. The sampling method employed a sample of convenience in terms of surveying only one school district. Therefore, these descriptive statistics may not be generalizable to a larger population.

2. Some school support staff members identified in the sample did not fill out the survey for various reasons (i.e. choosing not to participate for personal reasons, etc.). Therefore, caution should be exercised due to the small population of respondents (N=20).

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Results

This chapter will present the results from a survey which identified school support staff members' perceptions of bullying experiences regarding 5th through 8th grade students in a midwestern school district. The demographic information will be reported first. Then, each of the fifteen research questions will be addressed with the disclosure of relevant descriptive statistics. Additionally, three pieces of illuminating anecdotal information will be supplied following the corresponding research question. These inclusions should provide more accurate insight into three respondents' perceptions of the bullying issue.

#### Demographic Information

The sample for this study consisted of 65% (n=13) females and 35% (n=7) males. Age ranges of the participants included one respondent in the 18-24 group, two respondents in the 25-29 group, four respondents in the 30-39 group, six respondents in the 40-49 group, and seven respondents in the 50-59 group. Regarding years of employment in the district, seven respondents indicated less than five years, six respondents indicated between five and ten years, while another seven respondents indicated more than ten years of employment in the district. Of the twenty respondents, one

participant did not respond to the position/role identification item. Thus, of the nineteen participants who did indicate their job position/role, five were office staff, four were custodians, four were bus drivers, four were athletic coaches, one was a librarian, and one was a school aide.

#### Research Question 1

1. What percentage of support staff members identify themselves as being a witness of bullying which appeared to have a detrimental effect(s) on the victims?

Sixty percent of the respondents indicated that they witnessed bullying (5% Daily, 20% Weekly, 35% Monthly).

#### Research Question 2

2. What percentage of support staff members identify themselves as suspecting or having been told about the occurrence of bullying which appeared to have a detrimental effect(s) on the victim(s)?

Fifty percent of the respondents indicated that they suspected or were told about bullying events (5% Daily, 20% Weekly, 25% Monthly).

#### Research Question 3

3. Which environments did support staff members rank highly as common places where bullying behaviors were witnessed?

Outdoor areas (n=10); hallways (n=10); and bus stops/lines (n=5) were identified as common places where bullying was witnessed.

#### Research Question 4

4. Which environments did support staff members rank highly as common places where bullying behaviors were suspected or reported?

Outdoor areas (n=10); hallways (n=9); bus stops/lines (n=7); and on the bus (n=7) were identified as common places where bullying was suspected or reported.

#### Research Question 5

5. What percentage of support staff members believed that increased adult supervision would dramatically decrease bullying behaviors from occurring on and/or around school grounds?

Exactly 73.7% of the respondents (14 out of 19 respondents to this item) believed that increased supervision would decrease bullying behavior.

#### Research Question 6

6. What percentage of support staff members believed that increased adult supervision would prevent bullying behaviors from occurring on and/or around school grounds?

Exactly 21.1% of the respondents (4 out of 19 respondents to this item) believed that increased supervision would prevent bullying behavior.

#### Research Question 7

7. What percentage of support staff members believed that bullying experiences are likely to escalate beyond the verbal realm and into the physical?

Ninety-five percent of the respondents (n=19; of those, 21.1% Often, 78.9% Sometimes) believed that bullying escalated beyond the verbal realm and into the physical.

#### Research Question 8

8. Which type of bullying, physical or verbal, did support staff members believe middle schoolers experience most frequently?

Verbal bullying (n=20) was identified as the type middle schoolers experience most frequently.

#### Research Question 9

9. What was identified by support staff members as the most blatant forms of verbal bullying in the school?

Name calling (9 out of 15 respondents) and gossiping (6 out of 15 respondents) were identified as the most blatant forms of verbal bullying.

#### Research Question 10

10. In which time frame do support staff members believe most bullying behaviors occur?

During school hours (9 out of 17 respondents) was identified as the time frame when most bullying occurs.

#### Research Question 11

11. What percentage of support staff members indicated that a student reported incidences of bullying to them?

Seventy percent of the respondents (n=14) indicated that bullying incidences were reported to them.

#### Research Question 12

12. What percentage of support staff members reported playing an instrumental role in stopping bullying behaviors which were brought to their attention?

Exactly 66.7% (10 out of 15 respondents) indicated that they played an instrumental role in stopping bullying.

#### Research Question 13

13. What were the most common reasons provided by support staff members regarding failure to stop reported bullying behaviors?

Do not feel that it is my place or duty to intervene (3 out of the 5 respondents who did not believe themselves to be instrumental in stopping bullying behaviors brought to his/her attention) and did not know how to intervene (2 out of the 5 respondents who did not believe themselves to be instrumental in stopping bullying behaviors).

#### Research Question 14

14. What percentage of support staff members believe that bullying is an issue that has been dealt with effectively within their school system?

Seventy percent of the respondents (n=14) believed that bullying has been dealt with effectively.

#### **\*Note\***

One respondent included within the above percentage wrote, "To the best of their abilities, but no matter what is done it will never be completely stopped."

#### Research Question 15

15. Overall, what is the perception of the bullying issue by support staff members in this school?

Exactly 73.7% perceived bullying to be somewhat of a problem but showing signs of getting better (14 out of 19 respondents); signs of getting worse (2 out of 19 respondents); and none of the nineteen respondents perceived bullying to be a large problem in the school.

**\*Note\***

One respondent who indicated bullying was somewhat of a problem but showing signs of getting better wrote, "I wouldn't say better or worse. It depends on the cast of characters. Some classes have more "bad apples" than others. 7th and 8th grade is an interesting age group. They are trying so hard but just can't quite get with it. They are adolescents...juvenile-like...behaving as adults...but will get better."

**\*Note\***

One respondent who indicated bullying was no problem at all wrote, "Any situations are handled immediately, once adults know about it; therefore, I don't view it as a problem."

Summary

This chapter revealed the results of a survey designed to identify school support staff members' perceptions of bullying experiences regarding 5th through 8th grade students in a midwestern school district. Three pieces of anecdotal information which pertained to the last two

research questions were included. Chapter five focuses on the summarization of these findings, conclusions to be drawn, and implications of this and future research.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Summary, Discussion, Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

#### Introduction

This chapter will briefly review the purpose of this study and the methodology employed. Additionally, a brief discussion regarding the significance of the study will be presented. A more detailed discussion, including conclusions drawn from the results, will follow. Also, implications of this study and recommendations for future undertakings involving bullying experiences will conclude the chapter.

#### Summary

The purpose of this study was to gather descriptive statistics from school support staff members regarding their perceptions of bullying experiences of 5th through 8th graders in a midwestern school district. Data was collected via a survey designed specifically for this investigation. Appropriate descriptive statistics including frequencies and percentages were used on the data to address the fifteen research questions.

The review of literature looked at the evidence which suggests that bullying experiences foster the violent climate in our schools as well as the definitions of the term "bullying," characteristics of victims and perpetrators, frequently targeted subjects, outcomes, interventions, and recommended prevention strategies.

## Discussion

Research has indicated that bullying is a widespread problem that needs to be framed as such...a problem and not a "rite of passage" for children (Garrity et al., 1997; Litke, 1996; Olweus, 1993). Researchers indicate that the first step in addressing the bullying issue is to assess the nature and scope of bullying within the particular environment (Garrity et al., 1997; Horne & Socherman, 1996; Litke, 1996; Olweus, 1993; Rosen, 1997; Stephens, 1997). Furthermore, emphasis is placed on the entire school community's involvement in intervention and prevention efforts (Garrity et al., 1997; Horne & Socherman, 1996; Litke, 1996; Olweus, 1993; Stephens, 1997).

The middle school which participated in this survey has continued the process of understanding the worldwide phenomenon known as bullying. This was accomplished by becoming aware of its existence within the learning environment as perceived by one specified segment of the adult population from the district.

This researcher feels that the results of this study could have been more precise given more trials and revisions to the survey. For example, when respondents indicated that they did not believe themselves to be instrumental in stopping bullying behaviors which were brought to his/her attention, they were then given an opportunity to identify some reasons this was so. However, those respondents who believed they were instrumental in stopping bullying

behaviors which were brought to his/her attention were not given an opportunity to share the action taken to adequately inhibit further bullying events. This data could have been shared with others as effective methods of dealing with school bullies.

Also, this researcher must emphasize that the population sought out for this study is a small percentage of the entire school community. In any case, it is believed that certain conclusions may be drawn and helpful insights may be gained despite the extremely small sample in this study (N=20). Thus, conclusions have been drawn cautiously utilizing all the data and breaking percentages down and reporting frequencies when necessary.

### Conclusions

First, within the school surveyed, it is clear that a majority of school support staff have witnessed students being victimized by bullies to varying degrees. One school support staff member indicated that students were bullied on a daily basis, while four school support staff members identified students as being bullied on a weekly basis, and seven school support staff members reported that students were bullied on a monthly basis. Overall, this accounts for 60% of the 20 school support staff members who participated in the survey. Furthermore, another 50% of the 20 respondents reported suspecting or having been told about the occurrence of bullying.

School support staff members indicated that the most common places where bullying behaviors have been witnessed include outdoor areas, hallways, and bus stops/lines. Also, they suspected or have been told that bullying occurs on the bus in addition to the preceding three areas. These findings are compatible with the research which contends that bullying behaviors are most likely to occur in areas with low levels of vigilant adult supervision (Barone, 1997; Craig & Pepler, 1997; Horne & Socherman, 1996; Litke, 1996; Olweus, 1993; Stephens, 1997; Stephenson & Smith, 1989; Whitney & Smith, 1993; Ziegler & Pepler, 1993; cited in Atlas & Pepler, 1998). Arguably, all four specified areas have low numbers of active adult supervisors to high numbers of students. Perhaps that is why nearly seventy-five percent of the respondents (14 out of 19 respondents) indicated that they believed increased adult supervision would dramatically decrease the occurrence of bullying behaviors on and/or around school grounds. Additionally, one out of five respondents indicated that increased supervision would prevent bullying.

In this survey, 95% of the school support staff members reported believing that bullying experiences had escalated beyond the verbal realm and into the physical. Of those who shared this belief, 21.1% reported this happened "often" and 78.9% reported this "sometimes" happened. This finding is compatible with the research which contends that bullying is a source of fear and perpetuates the violent climate within

today's schools (Barone, 1997; Ducette-Gates; Flay; Furlong; Gottfredson; Yung; cited in Dusenbury et al., 1997; Furlong et al., cited in Gable et al., 1997; Garrity et al., 1997; Horne & Socherman, 1996; Levine, 1997; Hoover & Oliver, cited in Rosen, 1997; Stephens, 1997).

When compared to physical forms of bullying, verbal forms of bullying were perceived as most prevalent by 100% of school support staff members. Thus, they believed a student in this school is more likely to be threatened, called names, ignored, or gossiped about than hit, kicked, pushed, etc. Furthermore, the most blatant forms of verbal bullying were thought to be name calling and gossiping. Again, this is an important finding since these behaviors are oftentimes overlooked or discounted, despite growing evidence that the psychological harm that results can escalate into physical harm to oneself and to others (Batsche & Knoff, 1994; Chua-Eoan, 1997; Ducette-Gates; Flay; Furlong; Gottfredson; Yung; cited in Dusenbury et al., 1997; Hewlitt, 1997; Mulrine, 1999).

School support staff members believed that most bullying behaviors occur during school hours (9 out of 17 respondents). Therefore, since it is perceived as happening within school most often, individuals within the climate must address bullying issues.

Seventy percent of school support staff members indicated that a student had reported incidences of bullying to them. Of those, 66.7% (10 out of 15 respondents)

believed they were instrumental in stopping bullying behaviors brought to their attention. This means that perhaps as many as one-third of students who sought assistance in bullying matters may not have received any relief from a detrimental situation. Of the 25% of respondents who reported failing to stop witnessed and/or reported bullying behaviors, 60% concluded that it was not their place or duty to intervene, while 40% indicated that they did not know how to intervene.

In a global sense, 70% of school support staff members believed that bullying is an issue that has been dealt with effectively within their school district. Overall, 73.3% of school support staff members perceived bullying to be somewhat of a problem but showing signs of getting better (14 out of 19 respondents); 15.8% perceived bullying to be no problem at all (3 out of 19 respondents); 10.5% perceived bullying to be somewhat of a problem and showing signs of getting worse; and none of the nineteen respondents perceived bullying to be a large problem in the school.

### Implications

This study illustrates that bullying issues exist in a typical midwestern middle school. A certain segment of the school's adult community has witnessed bullying on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis. Likewise, a certain segment of the school support staff has suspected or been told about bullying events on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis.

The results suggest that increased adult supervision would promote an atmosphere less conducive to bullying behaviors. Along with more adult supervision, the results demonstrate that adults must attend and address prevalent forms of verbal bullying such as name calling and gossiping.

Since one-fourth of the respondents indicated that they either did not feel that it was their place or duty to intervene or did not know how to intervene, it seems that in-service training on bullying would be beneficial. Emphasis should be placed on the fact that the research purports that everyone must help intervene and prevent this problem once aware of its existence (Garrity et al., 1997; Horne & Socherman, 1996; Litke, 1996; Olweus, 1993; Stephens, 1997). Thus, it seems that this school would benefit from opening the channels of communication amongst students, parents, support staff, teachers, and administrators alike regarding bullying. Involved parties should work collaboratively toward developing and implementing intervention and prevention strategies which promote the physical and emotional safety, health, and well-being of all students.

#### Recommendations for Further Research

Considering the preceding discussion and conclusions, the following recommendations are made:

1. Gather more information such as where bullying occurs, when it occurs, why victims do not choose to report incidences, etc.

2. Attempt to get at the feelings that are experienced by both victims and perpetrators. For example, identify the types of "self talk" which follows a bullying experience.

3. Given the nature of this topic and the varying perceptions of what individual students constitute as bullying experiences, conduct a qualitative investigation of this topic which coincides with a quantitative study to lend more confidence in the results.

4. Gather information from the entire faculty, including administrators, regarding their perceptions of the bullying experiences of the student body.

5. Involve the parents by determining their perceptions of the bullying experiences of the student body and, in particular, of their child or children.

6. Gather information from bullies regarding what intervention and/or prevention strategies encouraged positive behavioral changes.

7. Gather information from adults and students as to which intervention and/or prevention strategies have been successful in curbing bullying behaviors/events.

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## APPENDIX A

**Bullying Survey**

Thank you for participating in this survey. Please respond as honestly and accurately as possible. Participation is voluntary and confidentiality is guaranteed which means nobody will know how you answered. **Do not write your name on this paper.**

**Circle One For Each Category:**

A) Gender: Female or Male

B) Age Range: 18-24 25-29 30-39 40-49 50-59 60-69 70-79

C) Years Employed in District: Less than 5 years  
Between 5 and 10 years  
More than 10 years

**D) Mark an "X" next to the descriptor which best categorizes your school support staff position/role:**

_____custodian worker	_____bus driver	_____lunch
_____librarian staff	_____school aide	_____office
_____nurse	_____hall monitor	_____outdoor supervisor
_____club leader	_____athletic coach	_____academic coach
_____volunteer	_____D.A.R.E. officer	
Other:_____		

**Please read the following definition:**

**Bullying-** a situation when a student or group of students is mean to another **over a long period of time** (**weeks or even months**).

- such long-term treatment can **either** be:

1) **physical** (hitting, kicking, pushing, etc.)

**or**

2) **verbal** (threats, name calling, gossiping, ignoring)

**-Go To Next Page-**

**Use the definition of "Bullying" (shown on previous page) while responding to the following items/questions:**

1. While working in or around middle school, **I have witnessed** one or more students bullying someone else to the point of making him/her cry or appear to experience feelings of frustration, sadness, anxiety, badness, anger, loneliness, and/or worthlessness:  
(Mark only one choice.)

Daily     Weekly     Monthly     Once a year  
 Never

2. While working in or around middle school, **I have suspected or been told** that one or more students has bullied someone else to the point of making him/her cry or appear to experience feelings of frustration, sadness, anxiety, badness, anger, loneliness, and/or worthlessness:  
(Mark only one choice.)

Daily     Weekly     Monthly     Once a year  
 Never

**Respond to the following statements which apply to you.**  
**Note: questions #3, #4, #7, & #11 may require you to place an "X" in more than one spot.**

3. While working in or around middle school, **I have witnessed** one or more students bullying someone to the point of making him/her cry or appear to experience feelings of frustration, sadness, anxiety, badness, anger, loneliness, and/or worthlessness in which of the following environments (Read each selection and mark an "X" next to all that apply):

<input type="checkbox"/> bus stops/lines	<input type="checkbox"/> outdoor areas
<input type="checkbox"/> on the bus	<input type="checkbox"/> library
<input type="checkbox"/> hallway	<input type="checkbox"/> cafeteria
<input type="checkbox"/> bathroom	<input type="checkbox"/> classroom
<input type="checkbox"/> gymnasium	<input type="checkbox"/> commons area
<input type="checkbox"/> athletic fields	<input type="checkbox"/> locker rooms

**-Go To #4 On Next Page-**

4. While working in or around middle school, **I have suspected or been told** that one or more students has bullied someone to the point of making him/her cry or appear to experience feelings of frustration, sadness, anxiety, badness, anger, loneliness, and/or worthlessness in which of the following environments (**Read each selection and mark an "X" next to all that apply**):

<input type="checkbox"/> bus stops/lines	<input type="checkbox"/> outdoor areas
<input type="checkbox"/> on the bus	<input type="checkbox"/> library
<input type="checkbox"/> hallway	<input type="checkbox"/> cafeteria
<input type="checkbox"/> bathroom	<input type="checkbox"/> classroom
<input type="checkbox"/> gymnasium	<input type="checkbox"/> commons area
<input type="checkbox"/> athletic fields	<input type="checkbox"/> locker rooms

5. Do you believe that increased adult supervision would **dramatically decrease** bullying behaviors from occurring on and/or around school grounds?

Yes       No

6. Do you believe that increased adult supervision would **prevent** bullying behaviors from occurring on and/or around school grounds?

Yes       No

7. Do you believe that a situation of verbal bullying (i.e. called names, threatened, taunted, goaded, etc.) is at some point likely to turn into a situation of pushing, shoving, hitting, kicking, punching, etc.?

Yes\*       No

\*If "Yes," mark one of the following frequency choices:

Always     Often     Sometimes     Once

8. Which type of bullying do you believe middle schoolers experience the **most**?

Physical     Verbal     Both Equally  
 Neither

**-Go To #9 On Next Page-**

9. In your opinion, what is the most blatant form of verbal bullying present at this school?

\_\_\_\_\_Threats    \_\_\_\_\_Name calling    \_\_\_\_\_Gossip    \_\_\_\_\_Ignoring  
 \_\_\_\_\_None

10. In your best estimation, when do you believe bullying behaviors occur with the most frequency?

\_\_\_\_\_Before school    \_\_\_\_\_During school    \_\_\_\_\_After school    \_\_\_\_\_None

11. Has a student ever reported his/her bullying experiences to you?

\_\_\_\_\_Yes    \_\_\_\_\_No

12. Do you believe that you were instrumental in stopping bullying behaviors which were brought to your attention?

\_\_\_\_\_Yes    \_\_\_\_\_No\*

\*If "No," mark **all** of the following choices which apply:

\_\_\_\_\_I did not know how to intervene.

\_\_\_\_\_I did not receive support by other school personnel.

\_\_\_\_\_I do not feel that it is my place or duty to intervene.

13. Do you believe that bullying is an issue that has been dealt with in a clear, preventative manner by your entire school community including coworkers, administrators, teachers, counselors, community members, etc.?

\_\_\_\_\_Yes    \_\_\_\_\_No

14. Overall, in your opinion, how would you characterize the bullying situation at this middle school?

\_\_\_\_\_A large problem

\_\_\_\_\_Somewhat of a problem and showing signs of getting worse

\_\_\_\_\_Somewhat of a problem but showing signs of getting better

\_\_\_\_\_No problem at all

**Thank you for filling this out completely.**



ignoring)

**-Go To Next Page-**

**Use the definition of "Bullying" (shown on previous page) while responding to the following items/questions:**

1. While working in or around middle school, **I have witnessed** one or more students bullying someone else to the point of making him/her cry or appear to experience feelings of frustration, sadness, anxiety, badness, anger, loneliness, and/or worthlessness:  
(Mark only one choice.)

  1   Daily     4   Weekly     7   Monthly     3   Once a year     5   Never

2. While working in or around middle school, **I have suspected or been told** that one or more students has bullied someone else to the point of making him/her cry or appear to experience feelings of frustration, sadness, anxiety, badness, anger, loneliness, and/or worthlessness:  
(Mark only one choice.)

  1   Daily     4   Weekly     5   Monthly     6   Once a year     4   Never

**Respond to the following statements which apply to you.**

**Note: questions #3, #4, #7, & #11 may require you to place an "X" in more than one spot.**

3. While working in or around middle school, **I have witnessed** one or more students bullying someone to the point of making him/her cry or appear to experience feelings of frustration, sadness, anxiety, badness, anger, loneliness, and/or worthlessness in which of the following environments (Read each selection and mark an "X" next to all that apply):

<u>  5  </u> bus stops/lines	<u> 10  </u> outdoor areas
<u>  3  </u> on the bus	<u>  1  </u> library
<u> 10  </u> hallway	<u>  4  </u> cafeteria
<u>  0  </u> bathroom	<u>  0  </u> classroom
<u>  4  </u> gymnasium	<u>  1  </u> commons area
<u>  2  </u> athletic fields	<u>  2  </u> locker rooms

**-Go To #4 On Next Page-**

4. While working in or around middle school, **I have suspected or been told** that one or more students has bullied someone to the point of making him/her cry or appear to experience feelings of frustration, sadness, anxiety, badness, anger, loneliness, and/or worthlessness in which of the following environments (**Read each selection and mark an "X" next to all that apply**):

<u>  7  </u> bus stops/lines	<u> 10 </u> outdoor areas
<u>  7  </u> on the bus	<u>  2  </u> library
<u>  9  </u> hallway	<u>  4  </u> cafeteria
<u>  3  </u> bathroom	<u>  4  </u> classroom
<u>  5  </u> gymnasium	<u>  4  </u> commons area
<u>  4  </u> athletic fields	<u>  4  </u> locker rooms

5. Do you believe that increased adult supervision would **dramatically decrease** bullying behaviors from occurring on and/or around school grounds?

 14  Yes      5  No    (1 missing)

6. Do you believe that increased adult supervision would **prevent** bullying behaviors from occurring on and/or around school grounds?

  4  Yes     15  No    (1 missing)

7. Do you believe that a situation of verbal bullying (i.e. called names, threatened, taunted, goaded, etc.) is at some point likely to turn into a situation of pushing, shoving, hitting, kicking, punching, etc.?

 19  Yes\*      1  No

\*If "Yes," mark one of the following frequency choices:

      Always      4  Often     15  Sometimes          Once

8. Which type of bullying do you believe middle schoolers experience the **most**?

      Physical     20  Verbal          Both Equally          Neither

**-Go To #9 On Next Page-**

9. In your opinion, what is the most blatant form of verbal bullying present at this school?

     Threats   9   Name calling   6   Gossip      Ignoring      None  
 (5 missing or excluded)

10. In your best estimation, when do you believe bullying behaviors occur with the most frequency?

  1   Before school   9   During school   7   After school      None  
 (3 missing or excluded)

11. Has a student ever reported his/her bullying experiences to you?

  14   Yes     6   No

12. Do you believe that you were instrumental in stopping bullying behaviors which were brought to your attention?

  10   Yes     5   No\* (5 missing or excluded)

\*If "No," mark **all** of the following choices which apply:

  2   I did not know how to intervene.

     I did not receive support by other school personnel.

  3   I do not feel that it is my place or duty to intervene.

13. Do you believe that bullying is an issue that has been dealt with in a clear, preventative manner by your entire school community including coworkers, administrators, teachers, counselors, community members, etc.?

  14   Yes     6   No

14. Overall, in your opinion, how would you characterize the bullying situation at this middle school?

     A large problem

    2   Somewhat of a problem and showing signs of getting

  14   Somewhat of a problem but showing signs of getting

    3   No problem at all (1 missing or excluded)

**Thank you for filling this out completely.**

## APPENDIX C

Dear School Support Staff Member:

I am a graduate student at UW-Stout in the Counseling and Psychological Services program. In order to fulfill all of the requirements for my Educational Specialist's degree, I must conduct a field study and write a research paper. I have chosen the topic of "bullying." Thus, I have developed a brief survey to gather information on your perceptions of the bullying experiences of 5th through 8th graders. With your cooperation, I will collect such data and share the results that the survey will provide.

Thus, you have an opportunity to participate in this study about the bullying experiences of 5th through 8th graders by filling out the brief survey at your convenience. Completed surveys will be placed in an envelope and will not be viewed until all have been collected. Participation in this study is strictly voluntary and confidentiality is guaranteed. Withdrawal from participation at any time during the study will be respected with no adverse consequences. The basic purpose of conducting the study is to gather information for a Education Specialist's research project to determine the nature of bullying experiences at the middle school level as perceived by school support staff members, and there is no risk to you in filling out the survey. The data will be shared with the administration at **(confidential)** and will help them to continue their efforts at creating a positive learning environment. It is my obligation as a researcher to ensure that permission is granted and the rights of participants are upheld.

It is understood that by returning the survey, you are giving your informed consent as a participating volunteer in the study. Additionally, you understand the basic nature of the study and agree that any potential risks are exceedingly small. You also understand the potential benefits that might be realized from the successful completion of this study. You are aware that the information is being sought in a specific manner so that no names are needed and so that confidentiality is guaranteed. Furthermore, you realize that you have the right to refuse to participate and to withdraw from participation at any time during the study.

NOTE: Questions or concerns about participation in the research or subsequent complaints should be addressed first to the researcher or research advisor, Ed Biggerstaff at (715) 232-2410, and second to Dr. Ted Knous, Chair, UW-Stout Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research, 11 HH, UW-Stout, Menomonie, WI, 54751, Phone: (715) 232-1126.

Thank you for your time and consideration,  
Tricia Sturz