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An Examination of Bullying in Catholic Middle Schools in the Pacific and Mountain States in the United States

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AN EXAMINATION OF BULLYING IN CATHOLIC MIDDLE SCHOOLS IN THE PACIFIC AND MOUNTAIN STATES IN THE UNITES STATED

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Dissertation Abstract
An Examination of Bullying in Catholic Middle Schools
in the Pacific and Mountain States
in the United States

Every child has a right to feel safe at school. The highest prevalence of bullying occurred in middle school grades 6 through 8. In a school environment, bullying can inhibit student learning, as it may cause a great deal of pain, anxiety, and stress for the victim. Bullying and aggressive behavior have negative effects on student learning and students' attitudes toward school. The occurrence of bullying can change the expectation of security in a school climate. Schools need to teach acceptance toward all differences, an appreciation of diversity, and the significance of various collective customs and social characteristics that all live together in the same school environment.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the issues of bullying behavior in grades 6-8 in Catholic schools in the Pacific and Mountain States in the United States. A survey-method approach was used for the 282 participates from 9 different states. The investigation looked at how students get along with their peers and how they feel about various forms of bullying. The researcher assessed what Catholic middle school students' thoughts and feelings are about their peers, teachers, and staff that support students who are bullied.

The Ecological Model of Child Development was applied to this research. This model explains the characteristics of a child who is the bully, the students who are bullied, the bystanders, the school staff, the school environment, and the child's perceptions. The benefits of an approach that includes families, peers, neighborhoods, and social and

environmental aspects can present better understanding of this problem. There is a need in schools to see bullying as a range of behaviors rather than merely labeling the bully.

Catholic middle school students felt their school was important and a good place to be. The research showed that the majority of students do not encourage others to hurt weaker students. More than half the participants stated that they do not tell lies or make fun of other on the Internet. Student-victims felt more support from their teachers than from their peers. Bullying was explored through the lens of social justice.

This dissertation, written under the direction of the candidate's dissertation committee and approved by the members of the committee, has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty of the School of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education. The content and research methodologies presented in this work represent the work of the candidate alone.

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CHAPTER I

THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Statement of the Problem

School bullying has been a pervasive problem. Bullying is a form of intentional aggressive behavior that is hurtful, threatening, and creates unjust power (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2016). More than one in five students stated they had been bullied. Of students who were bullied, 33% reported that bullying occurred at least once or twice a month during school (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2016).

The highest prevalence of bullying occurred in middle school Grades 6 through 8 among students aged 11 through 14 and bullying has happened in all urban, suburban, and rural schools (Bradshaw, Waasdorp, & O'Brennan, 2013; Charmaraman, Jones, Stein, & Espelage, 2013; D'Esposito, Blake, & Riccio, 2011; Gould, 2009). Social aggression tends to peak in early adolescence, making intervention efforts in the middle school vital (Bradshaw et al., 2013). Before planning and implementing prevention and intervention programs, leaders and teachers in schools must recognize the extent of bullying, the characteristics of bullying, and the effects of these actions on victims (Adams & Lawrence, 2011; Carney & Hazler, 2016; Milsom & Gallo, 2006; Phillips & Cornell, 2012; Seaman, 2012).

Educators have begun to take a more active approach to understanding the dynamics of bullying, the possible warning signs of the victims of bullying, and the involvement of students, parents, school boards, and pastors (Carney, Hazler, & Higgins, 2002; Domino, 2013; LaFee, 2012). Schools have started to communicate openly and clearly with parents collaborating to solve these issues. Communities can work with

students who bully their peers as well (Cornell & Mehta, 2011; Gould, 2009; Mitchell & Brendtro, 2013; Simmons, 2011).

In a school environment, bullying can prevent student learning, as it may cause a great deal of pain, anxiety, and stress for the victim. Long-term effects may damage a student's self-esteem, confidence level, and emotional health (Adams & Lawrence, 2011; Beane, 2009; Mitchell & Brendtro, 2013; Peterson & Ray, 2006). The strongest predictor in the prevention of bullying activities is a positive school climate (Richard, Schneider, & Mallet, 2012; Roman & Taylor, 2013; Studer & Mynatt, 2015).

Intervention strategies with bullies are necessary because a single bully may have multiple victims. Helping students improve their social skills, manage anger and aggressive feelings, develop empathy for others, and learn better problem-solving strategies is critical (Bradshaw et al., 2013; Carney & Hazler, 2016; Clarke & Kiselica, 1997; Hoover & Oliver, 1996; Vieno, Gini, & Santinello, 2011).

Social aggression and bullying were once viewed as a normal part of growing up. Some adults thought of bullying as a right of passage (Richard et al., 2012; Roman & Taylor, 2013). Educators now view bullying as unacceptable behavior (Orpinas, Horne, & Staniszewski, 2003; Swear, Espelage, & Napolitano, 2009). In 47 states, legislation has required schools to take an active leadership role in preventing bullying. Initiatives to develop and implement prevention programs that protect students from danger and create a positive school climate have allowed students to achieve academic, social, and emotional strength and confidence in their lives (National Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention, 2011).

Victims are less likely to seek help if they believe their school tolerates or ignores bullying behavior (Di Stasio, Savage, & Burgos, 2016; Unnever & Cornell, 2004). Boys are more likely than girls to tell an adult about harassment. Girls preferred to describe bullying confrontations to their peers, rather than to an adult (Simmons, 2011). Victims in lower grades also report the incidences to an adult more often than victims in the higher grades (Mitchell & Brendtro, 2013; Unnever & Cornell, 2004).

Bullying and aggressive behavior have negative effects on student learning and students' attitudes toward school (Bazelon, 2013; LaFee, 2012; Phillips & Cornell, 2012; Preble & Gordon, 2011). Victims of bullies suffer not only emotional distress, but also are avoided by classmates. Students who are bullied are often rejected by their peers, rendering those victims with the highest level of depression and loneliness (Allen, 2010; Juvonen, Graham, & Schuster, 2003; LaFee, 2012; Vieno et al., 2011).

All students have a right to feel safe at school, yet bullying may occur in any of our school communities. Bullying is not a contemporary issue; it has occurred throughout history (Accordino & Accordino, 2011; Glenn, 2004; Hoover, Oliver, & Hazler, 1992; Roman & Taylor, 2013). Bullying has a negative impact on how students feel about themselves (19%), their interactions with friends and family, their school achievement (14%), and their physical over all health (9%; National Center for Educational Statistics, 2016).

Graham (2010) stated that a generation ago, if students were asked what they were most worried about, they might have responded, "Passing exams and being promoted to the next grade." Today, students' concerns about school often revolve around safety and security, as much as academic success (Brady, 2008; Darder, 2016;

Holladay, 2011; LaFee, 2012). The perpetrators of bullying are seen as more destructive, and the victims feel more defenseless (Mitchell & Brendtro, 2013; Unnever & Cornell, 2004). Educators who want to understand the dynamics of school bullying will need to learn that the complications of victims and bullies are not the same as years ago (Domino, 2013; Duplechain & Morris, 2014; Graham, 2010; Peterson & Ray, 2006; Studer & Mynatt, 2015).

This researcher explored the problem of bullying and aggressive behavior in Grades 6 through 8 in Catholic schools. Limited research existed on the topic of bullying in the middle school grades in U.S. Catholic schools. Hence, the goal of this research was to fill the gap in the current research. Specifically, this research explored (a) the studies on bullying, (b) the school climate and bullying, (c) targets and victims of bullying, (d) Catholic schools and social justice, and (e) strategies to increase bully awareness.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the issues of bullying behavior in Grades 6 through 8 in Catholic schools in the Pacific and Mountain States of the United States. This research examined the attitudes of middle school students regarding their school climate. This investigation considered how students get along with their peers and how they feel about various forms of bullying. The researcher assessed Catholic middle school students' thoughts and feelings about their peers, teachers, and staff that support students who are bullied. This exploration used a survey-methods approach to explore student bullying to gain greater insight into this issue. This study will add to the research

to better understand the social problem of bullying in the middle grades in schools and identify preventive measures that are currently in place.

Research Questions

The following questions guided this study:

1. What are Catholic middle school students' attitudes toward their school climate?
2. How do students in Catholic middle schools get along with their peers?
3. How do Catholic middle school students think and feel about various forms of bullying?
4. What are Catholic middle school students' thoughts and feelings about support from their peers at their school regarding students who are bullied?
5. How do Catholic middle school students feel about their teachers and staff supporting students who are bullied?

Background and Need for the Study

All students have a right to feel safe at school, yet bullying may occur in any school community. Bullying is repeated aggression or harassment by one person toward another person. It is a form of violence that often occurs in situations where the victim is unable to escape because the bully is either physically or verbally stronger than the victim (Bauman & Del Rio, 2006; Donoghue, Almeida, & Brandwein, 2014; Hazler, 1996).

Boy bullies are more physically aggressive than girls. Boys usually harass their victims directly through physical aggression, whereas girls bully indirectly by using subtle gestures, such as social exclusion and gossip (Datta, Cornell, & Huang, 2016; Maccoby, 1986; Simmons, 2011). Frequent exposure to either type of aggression is a

primary factor in predicting trauma in students (Bhatta, Shakya, & Jefferis, 2014; Bowllan, 2011; Carney, 2008; Cornell & Mehta, 2011; Duplechain & Morris, 2014; Salmivalli, 2014).

In the middle school years, adolescents experience various types of bullying: verbal, physical, emotional, cyber, and relational (Bauman & Del Rio, 2006; Bradshaw et al., 2013; Brady, 2008). School administrators and teachers need to be attentive to the specific areas in schools that might not be supervised, making them accessible for bullying (Jenkins, Demaray, Fredrick, & Summers, 2016; Juvonen & Graham (2001). The most frequent reasons students are bullied are based on their physical appearance, race/ethnicity, gender, disability, religion, or sexual orientation (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2016).

Bullying is often covert, which poses a challenge for educators to help victims. Bullying is likely to occur when adult supervision is inadequate. Teachers often do not identify bullying and many victims of bullying are reluctant to seek help because they believe teachers will not take effective action (Bazelon, 2013; Belmont & Cranston, 2009; Gould, 2009; Semerci, 2016; Unnever & Cornell, 2004).

Bullies tend to have negative attitudes toward school and are more likely to have disciplinary issues in school (Clarke & Kiselica, 1997; Di Stasio et al., 2016; Espelage, Bosworth, & Simon, 2000; Mitchell & Brendtro, 2013). Olweus (1991) found that students identified as bullies in Grades 6 through 9 were four times more likely to be involved in criminal activity in adulthood. Schools need to identify and support bullies so they can prevent victimization, now and later in their lives, and encourage aggressive students to learn to interact in appropriate ways with their peers (Adams & Lawrence,

2011; Beane, 2009; Couvillon & Ilieva, 2011; Datta et al., 2016; Duplechain & Morris, 2014). Middle school students who bully tend to experience low levels of empathy and the victims of bullying tend to have low self-esteem (Cornell & Mehta, 2011; Espelage et al., 2000; Jenkins et al., 2016; Twemlow, Fonagy, & Sacco, 2004).

This study explored the issue of peer bullying as a sociocultural attribute with social groups with various levels of perceived power. Schools that embrace the mitigation of bullying may be more likely to create an environment that enhances a welcoming environment in which every student feels empowered to speak and be heard (Bowllan, 2011; Donoghue et al., 2014; Jenkins et al., 2016; Smith, Pepler, & Rigby, 2004; Swearer et al., 2009).

Limited data existed among the middle school grades in Catholic schools on the subject of bullying. This researcher delved into this topic to add to the research and fill the gap in the current research. This study was designed to improve Catholic schools' climate, assist in developing common language associated with bullying and harassment, and help provide a needed perspective to assist school personnel in the challenges of facilitating students' acceptance and tolerance of difference among the student community.

Conceptual Rationale

The conceptual model used for this study is the ecological model of child development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). This theory has influenced many psychologists in analyzing people and the effects of different environments people encounter (Walls, 2016). Figure 1 explains why bullying behavior arises differently in distinctive situations.

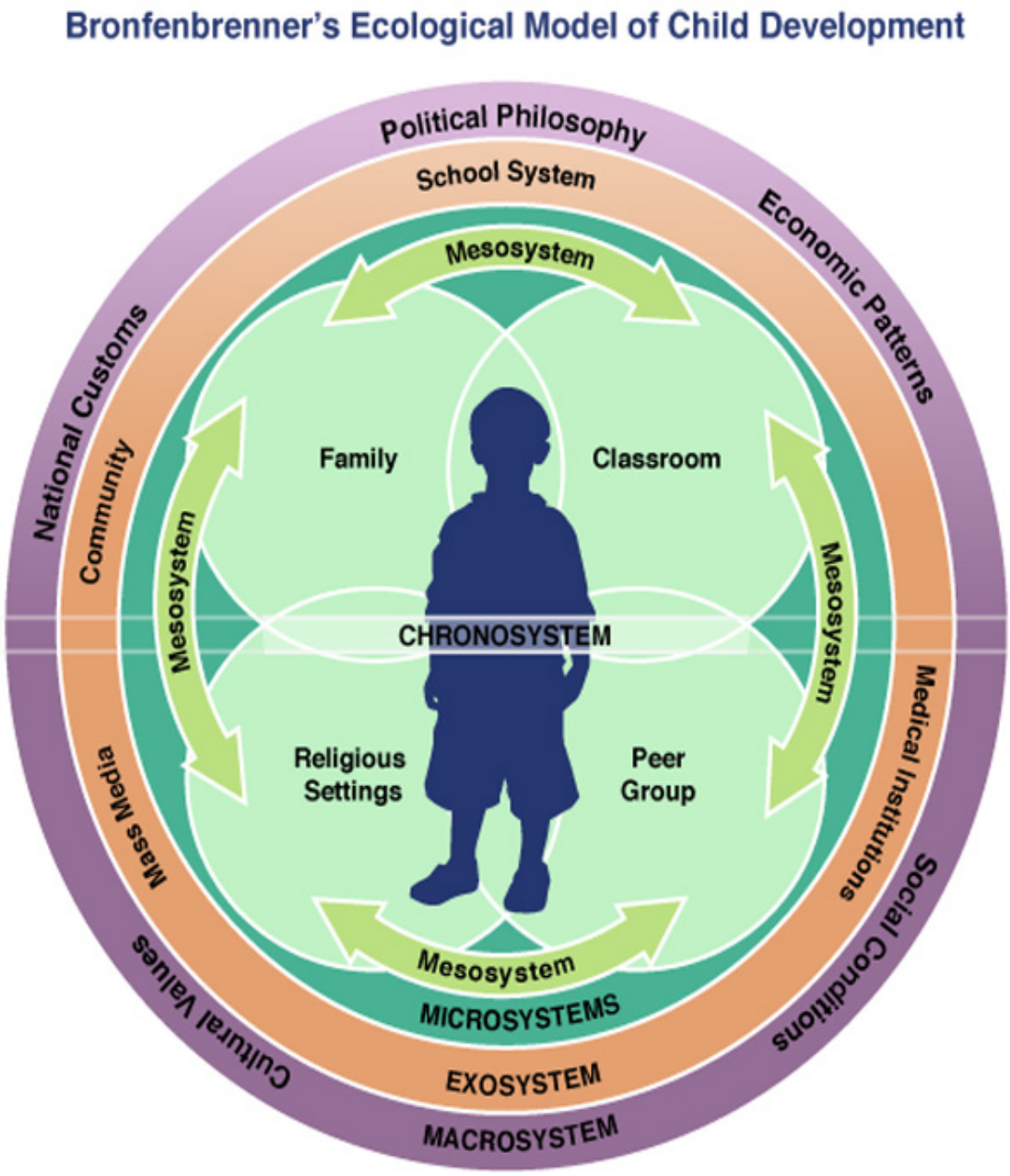

Figure 1. The human ecology theory by Bronfenbrenner.
From *The Child*, by C. B. Kopp & J. B. Krakow, 1982, Boston, MA: Addison-Wesley.

This model rationalizes the characteristics of a child who is the bully, the students who are bullied, the bystanders, the school staff, the school environment, and the child's

perceptions (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). An additional strength of the Bronfenbrenner (1977) framework is that it partitions not just the environment, but also students' insights, which is crucial in understanding why students in similar environments may express different behaviors regarding bullying.

Educators can use an ecological model to describe and explain the effects of many factors regarding a child's behaviors. The learning process encompasses how an individual relates to their environmental circumstances (Rose, Espelage, Monda-Amaya, Shogren, & Aragon, 2015). Individual behavior governs the social context that accompanies most of human learning. The repetitions, patterns, and nuances of people's culture and their environment define human behavior (Bronfenbrenner, 1989; Domino, 2013; Glenn, 2004; Santrock, 2011; Smedley & Syme, 2000).

Researchers found a shift from defining bullying based solely on individual differences, such as strength and personality, toward bullying in the social context, especially in a school environment (Jenkins et al., 2016, LaFee, 2012). Ecological-systems theory presents a very fluent argument for a bullying program, with interventions and research based on the psychological foundations of behaviorism. The child is in the center and all the circles represent interactions that can impact the child's life. This contextual framework can enable schools to apply this knowledge for better understanding of bullying behavior. This model also underlines environmental influences on individual behavior: family, classroom, peer groups, social, economics, cultural, and religious situations (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Espelage, Rose, & Polanin, 2015, Walls, 2016).

Bronfenbrenner's ecological-systems theory (1994, 1997) includes five levels: the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, the macrosystem, and the chronosystem.

1. The microsystem comprises the environment. Direct interactions with people include family, friends, classmates, teachers, neighbors, and anyone with whom one is in contact. The microsystem is the setting in which people have social interactions with others. People relate, mingle, give information, and receive knowledge in the microsystem.
2. The mesosystem encompasses the interactions between two microsystems. Family experiences may relate to school experiences, positively or negatively. Teacher-to-teacher communication may occur on behalf of a child. One's friends may influence relationships in a family.
3. The exosystem reflects the connection that is not actively involved with the child. A person who does not have a direct role but has a secondary effect on the child is part of the child's exosystem. For example, a child may be quite attached to their father. If the father works oversees for a time, conflict may arise between the mother and child, which may result in a tighter bond between the mother and child.
4. The macrosystem includes broader cultural aspects of an individual's situation. The macrosystem comprises the socioeconomic status of the family, ethnicity, and type of living situation. Financial acuity affects the types of schools that are available in a student's area, the student's access to technology, and the student's academic success.

5. The chronosystem, the outer most stratum, incorporates transitions and environmental changes in a person's life. Divorce, repeated home moves, loss of job or wage reductions, and career moves are part of the chronosystem.

Significance of the Study

The knowledge gained from this study added insight to why the phenomenon of bullying occurs in the Catholic middle schools under investigation. Some explanations of bullying drew on an understanding of child development (Bazelon, 2013; Datta et al., 2016; Rigby & Johnson, 2006). This investigation of peer bullying may assist leaders in schools in modifying policies in their school environments to create and build on current bullying-awareness programs. Students should have a sense of safety at school (Allen, 2010; Couvillon & Ilieva, 2011; Merrell, Gueldner, Ross, & Isava, 2008; Phillips & Cornell, 2012). Parents should also feel that their children are safe in a school environment. The occurrence of bullying can change expectations of security in a school climate (Bauman & Del Rio, 2006; Donoghue et al., 2014; Preble & Gordon, 2011; Swearer et al., 2009).

Bullying is a current topic today for several reasons. Technology available to sixth through eighth grade students has dramatically changed over the last several years, creating a digital world that did not previously exist (Bauman, Toomey, & Walker, 2013; Brady, 2008; Hoglund, Hosan, & Leadbeater, 2012). Cyberbullying and the ability to harass one another anonymously from a keyboard is a contemporary problem that is difficult for parents to monitor (Semerci, 2016). Today's adolescents can now bully each other without physical contact and without being known, thereby creating a new virtual reality in which one does not have to physically see an attacker to feel the emotional

effects of torment (Couvillon & Ilieva, 2011; Hase, Goldberg, & Smith, 2015; Holladay, 2011). In middle school, 24% of students are cyberbullied and 45% happen on school grounds (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2015).

Another issue that brought this topic to the forefront of educational studies was the significant number of suicides reported in the last several years. High school counselors are on alert to watch for certain behaviors and triggers that could correspond to suicidal behavior (Adams & Lawrence, 2011; Bauman et al., 2013; Duplechain & Morris, 2014). Today, such caution extends to the middle school level. Students who bully, are bullied, or perceive bullying behavior are more likely to report higher rates of suicide-related behaviors than students who indicated they had no bullying involvement in school (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2015). Bullying is a contributing factor in suicidal behavior among adolescents aligned with extremely publicized suicides among teens in the Unites States (Bhatta, Shakya, & Jefferis, 2014; Mynard & Joseph, 2000; Nixon, 2014; Pergolizzi, Richmond, & Macario, 2009).

Depression can connect bullying and suicide attempts in children of both genders (Espelage & Hong, 2017; Seals & Young, 2003; Studer & Mynatt, 2015). A large number of suicides link to long-term aggressive bullying behavior, online and in person. A link exists between being bullied in a school environment and thoughts of suicide or plans of suicide. Programs implemented in middle schools for the prevention of bullying can benefit adolescents in coping with suicidal ideation (Bhatta et al., 2014; Carney, 2008; Cornell & Mehta, 2011; Studer & Mynatt, 2015).

School shootings have been another factor in retaliation against bullying, even though school shootings are a minor part of the bigger picture of school safety

(Duplechain & Morris, 2014). Many incidents that involve guns or weapons link to perpetrator(s) who often experienced harassment at school, rather than a place of comfort and protection to learn. Some students who feel isolated, lonely, depressed, or angry may lash out in harmful ways, and their own violent acts represent an extension of the bullying they experienced (Carney, 2008; Hong, Cho, & Lee, 2010; Mitchell & Brendtro, 2013; Seals & Young, 2003).

In school tragedies, four important factors affected the offender: the perpetrator felt excluded in the social world, imagined violence would solve their problems and even elevate their status as a "hero," the community has failed them, and they had access to guns and weapons (Viadero, 2009). School shootings are rare but they are highly publicized, which can make parents, teachers, and administrators nervous (Duplechain & Morris, 2014). The best prevention for schools is to build an environment and climate in which students feel comfortable to share any of their fears with school personnel (Gereluk, Donlevy, & Thompson, 2015; Jenkins et al., 2016; Mitchell & Brendtro, 2013; Studer & Mynatt, 2015).

The tragedies of these shooting are life changing and create escalating levels of violence as retribution for the pain and anguish put upon perpetrators by other bullies (Bhatta et al, 2014; Hase et al., 2015). Conflicts are part of the natural order of life and relationships, and schools need to teach problem-solving skills (Duplechain & Morris, 2014; Hong et al., 2010; Viadero, 2009).

The media has often documented issues surrounding bullying, and has brought this important issue to the forefront so that students, teachers, administrators, parents, school boards, and families are now talking about bullying in schools (Hase et al., 2015).

Instead of using complex statistics and graphs, magazine articles found in the aisles of supermarkets show broad overviews and current events surrounding bullying as a means of encouraging conversations and discussions among peers. Thus, the media has assisted in bringing awareness of this issue by speaking to the general population (Jenkins et al., 2016; Studer & Mynatt, 2015).

The majority of students bullied do not report this behavior to their teachers or parents. Bullies students feel unhappiness, loneliness, and tend to have fewer friends (Coloroso, 2003; Jenkins et al., 2016). Teachers and parents need to watch for depression, anxiety, stress, and feelings of negative self-image and low self-esteem. Students who are victimized can have issues with social development. In contrast, schools should be a place where students build friendships, social acceptance, trust, and confidence (Donoghue et al., 2014; Glenn, 2004; Jenkins et al., 2016).

Victims of bullying lack friendships and social skills (Olweus, 1993, 1997). Students who address long-term bullying see the school environment as unfriendly and frightening, at times. Their levels of fear, anxiety, and insecurity lead them to feel vulnerable not just during the school day, but later in their lives as adults (Adams & Lawrence, 2011; Graham, 2010; Mynard & Joseph, 2000).

Students who are bullied manifest physical symptoms such as headaches, stomach issues, sleeping and eating difficulties, anxiety, depression, or difficulty concentrating (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2015). Also, pupils who bully are more likely to misbehave, participate in or instigate fights, have poor grades, break rules, and abuse alcohol and drugs later in life (Carney et al., 2002; Datta et al., 2016; Scanlan, 2011). The impact of bullying on the bystander is also disturbing. Bystanders can feel

guilty, helpless, anxious, and fear they are next (Jenkins et al., 2016; Juvonen & Graham, 2001; Salmivalli 2014; Seals & Young, 2003;).

The environment of the school is also affected by bullying behavior. When schools ignore bullying, the school climate can become a place of insecurity, where perceived power is not equal for all students. Learning is hindered because students feel the environment is hostile and believe they are disrespected (Datta et al., 2016; Espelage et al., 2015; Maccoby, 1986; Schwartz, Stiefel, & Rothbart, 2016).

Limitations

The researcher hired an online company to survey Catholic middle school students. Even though 13 states were included, not all the states responded. The level of honesty might not be accurate because some students may have been hesitant to admit that their school had an issue with bullying. Self-reporting can be a problem in any survey, but especially with a sensitive subject. Some students may have become upset during the survey, but the surveys were not taken in a school setting, so no information is available and the researcher has no way to follow up.

The biggest limitation to this research is the lack of validity and reliability in the original survey. The researcher received an e-mail from Dr. Csuti, Vice President of Research, Evaluation & Strategic Learning at The Colorado Trust stating no information exists on validity and reliability scores. All researchers who worked on those studies have moved to other work and Dr. Csuti has lost touch with them. All available information is online, consisting of the surveys themselves. The researcher had already completed the survey when this information emerged.

This study investigated Catholic schools in 13 states. The sample may not be generalizable to other school settings. Parents and students were only able to use technology to complete the online survey. This research did not capture the location of the school in the state or other demographic data. This study did not inquire information on the size of various schools or the size of the communities in which they are located. Students who live in large urban city, suburbs, or small rural areas were not differentiated for the questionnaire. This study also did not include gender differences.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are operational for clarification purposes in this research. The definition of bullying and types of bullying need to be clearly stated for teachers, administrators, students, parents, and school communities (Bradshaw et al., 2013; Carney & Hazler, 2016; Donoghue et al., 2014; Hase et at., 2015; Roman & Taylor, 2013).

An *aggressor* is a student who engages in bullying, cyberbullying, or vengeance (Donoghue et al., 2014).

A *bully* is a person who is trying to hurt or control someone else or a situation (Bazelon, 2013; Sidanius & Pratto, 2001). The American Psychological Association (2011) described bullying as follows:

> Commonly labeled as peer victimization or peer harassment, school bullying is defined as repeated physical, verbal or psychological abuse of victims by perpetrators who intend to cause them harm. The critical features that distinguish bullying from simple conflict between peers are: intentions to cause harm, repeated incidences of harm, and an imbalance of power between perpetrators and victim. Hitting, kicking, shoving, name-calling, spreading of rumors, exclusion

> and intimidating gestures (e.g., eye rolling) by powerful peers are all examples of behaviors that constitute abuse that is physical, verbal or psychological in nature. (p. 3)

The *bystander* is aware that bullying is happening and watches bullying in action. Bystanders can offer assistance by reporting the incident or they can be silent victims (Adams & Lawrence, 2011; Datta et al., 2016).

Cyberbullying is bullying with the use of any technological device or electronic platform such as computers, cell phones, and tablets. Communicating on social-networking sites, text messages, e-mails, instant messaging, chat rooms, and websites can be sources of cyberbullying (Donoghue et al., 2014; Ortega et al., 2012). Mean and harassing text messages, rumors spread by e-mail, posts on social-network sites, and posting inappropriate pictures or videos are some examples of cyberbullying (Bradshaw et al., 2013; Holladay, 2011; Kite, Gable, & Filippelli, 2010).

Students who *exclude* others students perform an act of bullying. Exclusion includes the act of not letting others join in a group or an activity and is considered a way of dominating a situation. Peers who would like to connect felt rejected and left out (Sidanius & Pratto, 2001).

A *hostile environment* is a condition in which bullying causes the school environment to be infiltrated with pressure, contempt, or rudeness that is unambiguous to change or alter the student's academic or social success in education (Hase et al., 2015).

Name-calling is using a name other than their given name in a derogatory manner (Solberg & Olweus, 2003).

Physical bullying involves purposely hurting someone's body or damaging their possessions. Physical bullying can include fighting, hitting, punching, shoving, kicking, pushing, pinching, tripping, spitting, stealing, breaking someone's possessions, using weapons, and making malicious or vulgar hand gestures (Carney, 2008; Mynard & Joseph, 2000).

Power can be defined as someone older, stronger, or smarter (real or perceived) in any given setting (Bradshaw et al., 2013; Roth, Kanat-Maymon, & Bibi, 2011; Sidanius & Pratto, 2001).

Prejudicial or racial bullying rests on an individual's or group' attitude toward people of different races, religions, social standing, or sexual orientations. This form of bullying can include all other types of bullying (Donoghue et al., 2014). Some examples are inappropriate gestures, racial slurs, name calling, or making fun of someone's culture, accent, food, or skin color. These types of hate crimes can be severe (Juvonen et al., 2003; Richard et al., 2012).

Retaliation is any form of harassment or intimidation directly against another student who comes forward to report bullying behavior, provides pertinent information about bullying, or has witnessed any form of bullying (Datta et al., 2016; Schwartz et al., 2016).

Social bullying is also called *relational bullying*. Social bullying involves hurting a person's reputation, their relationship with friends or others, or their social lives (Phillips & Cornell, 2012; Schwartz et al., 2016). Social bullying can include ostracizing another person on purpose, making someone feel unwanted, telling someone not to be friends with someone else, damaging someone's reputation, starting or spreading rumors

about others, gaining someone's trust and then purposely breaking it, and embarrassing a person in public. The leading justification the bully uses is to harm relationships among others (Orpinas et al., 2003).

The *target* is a person being bullied (Cornell & Mehta, 2011; Donoghue et al., 2014, Schwartz et al., 2016). In this research, *target, victim, and bullied* are used interchangeably and have the same meaning.

Verbal bullying is saying or writing mean or intimating things. Verbal bullying can include teasing, mocking, making fun of others, name calling, spreading rumors and lies, inappropriate sexual comments, and verbally threatening someone (Hase et al., 2015; Orpinas et al., 2003; Phillips & Cornell, 2012; Polanin, Espelage, & Pigott, 2012; Roman & Taylor, 2013).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Overview

This study investigated students' attitudes toward bullying in Catholic middle schools. To provide context and clarity for this study, the review of literature examined (a) studies on the topic of bullying, (b) the affects of bullying in the school climate, (c) the affects that bullying had on bullies and their targets, (d) Catholic schools and social justice related to bullying, and (e) strategies that can be implemented to increase bully awareness in the school environment.

Studies on Bullying

Limited research was conducted on the topic of bullying prior to 1960. Norwegian researcher Olweus (1978) was a pioneer in the investigation of bullying in the early 1970s in Scandinavia. Olweus's groundbreaking research and first book in 1978 are considered seminal works on this challenging topic. Olweus's (1978) book introduced the world to the issue of bullying and formed the basis of further research. Olweus (1978) discovered that students who demonstrated behaviors of physical weakness, emotional issues, or lack of social skills were more likely at risk to be targeted for bullying.

Olweus (1991) developed the first version of the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP) in Norway and later led the way for many studies throughout the world. The OBPP aims to decrease bullying in elementary, middle, and junior high (students aged 5 to 15). This program addresses bullying in schools, classrooms, with individuals, and in the community. The goals are to decrease bullying among students, counteract new bullying issues, and enhance peer relationships (Limber, 2011). Olweus (1993)

expanded on this sensitive issue in school communities, which led to many research studies during the 1980s and 1990s that focused on bullying in school settings (Boulton & Underwood, 1992; Glenn, 2004; Hoover & Hazler, 1991; Whitney & Smith, 1993).

Studies on bullying in the United States span from the early 1980 to the present. This researcher chose four studies, dated 1994 - 2013, to compare the evolution of changing attitudes toward bullying. Behaviors tolerated in the 1990s are not acceptable in the classrooms today (Bowllan, 2011; Duplechain & Morris, 2014; Graham, 2010; Phillips & Cornell, 2012; Semerci, 2016; Solberg & Olweus, 2003; Whiney & Smith, 1993).

Oliver, Hoover, and Hazler (1994) surveyed middle and high school students (n = 207) from Ohio, Minnesota, and South Dakota. Students ranged from seventh through 12th grade; 97 were girls and 103 were boys; and 95% were Caucasian. Oliver et al. presented several questions to middle and high school students, surveying the students in the classroom in groups of 10 to 30 and at least one researcher was present to answer questions. Researchers told students to answer "as they really felt" and that all responses would be confidential. Oliver et al. investigated the following six statements using a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 6 (strongly disagree):

1. In my opinion, most victims of bullying brought it on themselves.
2. Bullying often helps the bullied person(s) by making them tougher.
3. Bullying often helps the bullied person(s) by teaching them about behavior that is unacceptable to the group.
4. In junior high (or middle school), if I became friends (or was friendly) with a person who was often bullied, I would have lost social status.

5. In my middle school (or junior high), bullies and high-status (are more popular) than people who were picked on.
6. Most teasing I witnessed was done "in fun" (not done to hurt others' feelings).

Oliver et al. (1994) found the following results. For Question 1, 43.5% (n = 64) of participants strongly agreed or agreed that "victims brought it on themselves." A total of 60 participates did not respond to this question. None of the participants disagreed or strongly disagreed.

For Question 2, "bullying makes victims stronger," results showed 39.5% (n = 80) of students strongly agreed or agreed and 21% (n = 44) disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement.

The third question, "bullying teaches about behavior that is unacceptable to groups" was divided by gender: 39.1% of boys (n = 41) disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement and 52.6% of girls (n = 51) also felt the same. Girls tended to disagree more strongly than boys, but both groups fell on the disagree side of neutral.

The fourth statement, "perceived loss of social status" had no impact in that the study results showed no strong patterns: 35% (n = 73) strongly agreed or agreed and 41.7% (n = 83) disagreed or strongly disagreed that being friendly with the bullied meant one could lose friends.

The fifth section "social status of bullies" was divided by gender. Boys agreed that bullies had a higher status only 23.2% (n = 24) compared to girls 34.4% (n = 32). Of boys, 32.6% (n = 34) compared to girls 22.6% (n = 21) children believed bullies did not have higher social status. Girls tended to agree with this statement more than boys

with the average score dropping on the agree side of the scale's midpoint, whereas boys were on the disagree side.

The final question "teasing as playful" was significant: 50.5% (*n* = 102) of participants thought that most teasing was done in fun, not hurtful. Only 18.8% (*n* = 38) disagreed.

Participants in this study believed bullied victims were partially to blame for their persecution. Blaming the victim justified bullying and placed students in great danger (Seals & Young, 2003). The study showed that only a minority agreed that bullying could make weaker students tougher. For students who participate in bullying thinking that they will "teach" the victim about group values, a possible remedy might be to teach less aggressive interaction skills (Smedley & Syme, 2000). Students may ignore other students that who are perceived to have lower status because students perceived bullying hurts their own status (Valadez & Mirci, 2015).

All the participants in this 1994 study agreed that bullies have a higher social status compared to victims. More importantly, students agreed that teasing was done in fun. Students perceived teasing that was playful and have had little understanding that it was perceived as bullying by victims. These kinds of misconceptions represent a mediation theme for counselors and professionals (Mynard & Joseph, 2000; Studer & Mynatt, 2015). This research was exploratory and descriptive and stated that more research was needed on this topic (Oliver et al., 1994).

Espelage et al. (2000) guided a study in a large middle school in the Midwest. Answering a survey were 558 participates in sixth through eighth grades; 54% were female (*n* = 300) and 258 were male; 42% were sixth-grade students (*n* = 232), 31% were

seventh-grade students (*n* = 173), and 27% were eighth-grade children (*n* = 153). Approximately 84% were White (*n* = 468), 9% (*n* = 52) were African American, 3% (*n* = 19) were biracial, and 3% (*n* = 19) stated other races. In this investigation, the authors include the following demographics: gender, grade, race, free/reduced-priced lunch, Chapter 1 status, and zip code. Researchers also classified students into "family types": two parents (biological/adoptive), single parent, and stepfamily.

To discern *bullying behaviors,* Espelage et al. (2000) asked students how many times in the last 30 days they participated in the following behaviors:

1. "I called other students names";
2. "I teased students";
3. "I said things about students to make other students laugh";
4. "I threatened to hit or hurt another student"; and
5. " I pushed, shoved, slapped, or kicked other students."

The answer choices ranged 0 = *never,* 1 = *1 or 2 times,* 2 = *3 or 4 times,* and 3 = *5 or more times* (Cronbach's alpha = .83).

The researchers asked participants about *positive adult messages about violence.* Students responded to questions about the adults they spend the longest amount of time with and to specify how many of them say the following:

1. "If another student hits you, hit them back";
2. "If another student wants to fight, you should try to talk your way out of the fight";
3. "If another student asks you to fight, you should tell a teacher or someone older"; and

4. "Fighting is not good, there are other ways to solve problems."

Reponses included 0 = *none,* 1 = *few,* 2 = *most,* and 3 = *all* (Cronbach's alpha = .77).

Another area was *family physical discipline.* Researchers asked students, "If you break a rule in your home, how often are you spanked, hit, or slapped?" Response choices were 0 = *never,* 1 = *seldom,* 2 = *sometimes,* 3 = *often,* and 4 = *always*.

The final area concerned *adult contact and time with family.* Students judged, "On an average weekday, how many hours a day do you spend without an adult around you?" and "On an average weekday, how many hours a day do you talk to or do activities with your family?" The responses were 0 = *0 minutes,* 1 = *1 to 30 minutes,* 2 = *30 minutes to 1 hour,* 3 = *1 to 2 hours,* and 4 = *2 to 4 hours*. The other three features in this study were neighborhood safety, access to guns, and feeling unsafe at school.

Major findings showed that 19.5% (15.5% of the male students and 23% of females) stated they had not bullied in the past 30 days. Results showed that 82.8% (n = 462) of students *never or seldom* were spanked, hit, or slapped, whereas 17.25 (n = 96) reported *sometimes, often, or always*. Student results indicated that 33.9% (n = 189) spend more than 1 hour a day without an adult whereas 41.3% (n = 230) spent 30 minutes or less without supervision. This study also found that 75.8% (n = 423) of students did not have access to a gun, but 24.2% (n = 135) stated they could get a gun very easily (Espelage et al., 2000).

These results also showed that adults play a significant part in a student's development and the message is substantial that they relay to their children, especially their attitude and behavior regarding fighting, discipline, and the amount of time they spend with their child. These factors need to be considered when schools are evaluating

their bully programs. Administrators and teachers often recommend school counselors for students regarding bullying. Counselors should understand all perspectives in the students' lives in mediation to discover family and environmental dynamics. The benefits of an approach that includes families, peers, neighborhoods, and social and environmental aspects can present better understanding of this problem. A need persists to see bullying as a range of behaviors rather than merely labeling the bully (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1979; Olweus, 1997; Walls, 2016).

This research targeted bullying behaviors among middle school students in the context of family and adult influences, peer influences, and environmental factors. For gender, male students reported higher rates of bullying compared to females. Family structure was not a significant factor in bullying, but family physical discipline significantly linked to bullying behavior. Students who recounted that their families used physical discipline when they broke rules at home were more likely to participate in bullying at school (Carney, 2008; Coloroso, 2003; Mitchell & Brendtro, 2013; Whitney & Smith, 1993).

Spriggs, Iannotti, Nansel, and Haynie (2007) steered a large-scale study (n = 11,033) of students in sixth through 10th grades in public and private schools from the from Quality Education Data's list of U.S. schools. Black and Hispanic students were oversampled to provide a higher estimate for these groups: Whites (n = 6,466), Blacks (n = 2,262), and Hispanics (n = 2,305). The demographic break down was male (46%), low income (27%), moderate income (53%), and high income (21%); middle school students comprised 61% in this study.

Spriggs et al. (2007) used self-reporting questionnaires. After receiving parental consent, surveys were self-administered in the classrooms. Topics included information about personal and social means, health issues, health outcomes, and demographic items. The main categories were *bully occurrence*, *family-living organization*, *peer relations*, and *school factors*.

The questionnaire included a standard definition of bullying. The researchers gauged bullying by asking the frequency at which a student was bullied or bullies other classmates. The choices of responses were "*not at all,*" "*once or twice,*" "*two or three times a month,*" "*about once a week,*" and "*several times a week*." Spriggs et al. (2007) categorized results as "*bully-victims,*" "*victims,*" or "*bullies*." For each label, students had to report at least two or three times per month. The last label was "*noninvolved*" for those students that marked "not at all" or "once or twice."

The major findings presented from this research indicated that in "*noninvolvement*" with bullying, results were similar: Whites (79%), Blacks (81%), and Hispanics (78%; Spriggs et al., 2007). The "*victim*" label presented Whites (9%), Blacks (6%), and Hispanics (9%). The "*bully*" label showed Whites (9%), Blacks (10%), and Hispanics (11%). In all ethnic groups, the "*bully-victims*" reported 3%.

The results also compared these three groups in family situations. Living with two biological parents was Whites (66%), Blacks (36%), and Hispanics (59%). All three groups indicated a high level of parent support: Whites (70%), Blacks (67%), and Hispanics (58%) and parent communication Whites (81%), Blacks (79%), and Hispanics (78%). In classmate relationships, survey results demonstrated that students felt equally good with an average score of 34% in all three groups (Spriggs, et al., 2007).

This questionnaire also presented issues in the school such as "*perceived academic achievement,*" "*school satisfaction,"* and "*felt safe at school.*" Students rated overall academic success 26% very good, 68% good/average, and below average was 6%. The average score of students feeling safe at school was 64%, Whites (69%), Blacks (52%), and Hispanics (57%).

The Spriggs et al. (2007) study explored bullying behavior by ethnicity. School performance was below average for White and Hispanic students. School satisfaction was also below average for Black and Hispanic adolescents. All groups that claimed negative peer relationships in conjunction with social isolation predominantly aligned with the issue of bullying (Coloroso, 2003; Gould, 2009; Whitney & Smith, 1993).

The biggest impact of this study was the investigation of the bully-victim as one group rather than one group being categorized as the victim and another group being labeled as bullies. The group of bully-victims did not differ from peers that were not involved in most school factors such as peer relations, academics, school satisfaction, and feeling safe at school (Spriggs et al., 2007).

The researchers did not explore all components of family life in this study but this and others research that delved into bullying explored not only the lens of demographics of gender, race, and affluence, but added in a student's family life styles, peer relationships, academic achievement, and feeling safe at school, clearly yielding a better picture of human behavior (Bhatta et al., 2014; Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994; Charmaraman et al., 2013; Espelage et al., 2015). Programs may need to address family communications and participation in young teens when preparing for interventions (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2015; Collopy et al., 2012; Domino, 2013).

Spriggs et al. (2007) also pointed out that mitigating bullying has no single solution. Programs that are most effective consider all aspects of a child's life. Teenage behaviors need to be investigated as socially learned adaptions to a broader ecological scale. Most programs ignore family issues (life-style, living arrangement, parent-school involvement, and family communication (Hase et al., 2015; Kowaleski-Jones & Dunifon, 2006; Unnever, 2005; Viadero, 2009).

Kowalski and Limber's (2013) research considered traditional bullying and cyberbullying. Bullying is no longer limited to schools with a burst of electronic and online bullying (Espelage & Hong, 2017; Patchin & Hinduja, 2010). These researchers theorized a connection between these two types of bullying. Because cyberbullying is often anonymous, they tested the connection between targets of traditional bullying and cyberbullying behaviors.

The researchers studied students from two schools in Pennsylvania who volunteered to complete a school-based survey. Both schools did not use any organized bullying-prevention program at the time of this study. A total of 931 students, female (n = 433), male (n = 485), and unspecified (n = 13) participated from Grades 6 through 12. Students' age ranges were 11 to 19. Parents received written notice ahead of time that their child would be taking the survey and researchers requested parents contact the school if they did not want their child to contribute. Pupils answered questions in the following five areas.

Measure of Traditional Bullying

Students answered demographic questions, some of which were from the Olweus Bullying Questionnaire (Kowalski & Limber, 2013). The researchers provided the

definition of bullying and gave examples of these types of behaviors. Then, participants answered questions: “How often have you been bullied at school in the past couple of months?” and “How often have you taken part in bullying another student(s) at school in the past couple of months?” Kowalski and Limber (2013) use a 5-point scale to rate responses according to these labels: “I haven’t been bullied,” “It happened once or twice,” “2 - 3 times a month or more,” “About once a week,” or “Several times a week”.

Measure of Cyberbullying

Students then read a definition of cyberbullying: bullied through e-mail, instant messaging, in a chat room, on a website, or through a text message sent to a cell phone. Kowalski and Limber (2013) asked participants to answer questions about their own experiences using the same 5-point scale to assess students’ responses.

Measures of School Performance

In this section, Kowalski and Limber (2013) asked students, “In the last couple of months, how often have you been absent from school?” and “In the last couple of months, how often have you had to leave school because you were sick? Then students specified the grades they typically get in school by indicating one of nine responses: “mostly As,” “mostly As and Bs,” “mostly Bs,” “mostly Bs and Cs,” “mostly Cs,” “mostly Cs and Ds,” “mostly Ds,” “mostly Ds and Fs,” and “mostly Fs.” The researchers rated scores 1 though 9, with higher numbers representing lower grades.

Measure of Physical Health Outcomes

Kowalski and Limber (2013) asked participants to specify how often in the past 4 weeks they felt 10 symptoms of any of the following: anxiety, problems sleeping, irritability, headache, tension, fatigue, poor appetite, sadness, skin problems, and bed-

wetting. The choices were “never,’ “sometimes,” and “often.” The average score was taken to stipulate an overall indictor of students’ health. Higher numbers suggested more health issues. The internal consistency with this sample was .85 (Kowalski & Limber, 2013).

Measures of Self-Esteem, Depression, and Anxiety

In this section, students answered questions from the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (10 items), the Beck Youth Depression Scale 9 (20 items assessing characteristics of depression), and the Beck Youth Anxiety Scale (20 items of signs of anxiety; Kowalski & Limber, 2013). The first test used a 5-point scale. The last two used a 4-point scale.

Major study findings showed that 15% (*n* = 132) indicated they were bullied at school at least once (victim only), 17% (*n* = 156) showed they bullied others at school (bully only), 19% (*n* = 173) specified bullying others and being bullied (bully-victim), and 49% (*n* = 442) were not involved in traditional bullying (Kowalski & Limber, 2013). Results showed that, when it came to cyberbullying, 10% (*n* = 88) stated at least once (victim only), 6% (*n* = 54) reported they cyberbullied others (bullying only), 5% (*n* = 47) admitted they had cyberbullied others and been cyberbullied (cyber bully-victim), and 79% (698) claimed they did not participate in the previous 2 months (Kowalski & Limber, 2013).

Of the total, three quarters (77.1%) of students were not involved in either traditional bullying or cyberbullying. More importantly, victims of traditional bullying were not involved in cyberbullying. Also, this study showed that a larger percentage of students were victims (1.6%) compared with bullies (0.1%) or bully-victims (0.2%). The

traditional bully-victim was not involved in cyberbullying, but were cyber-bully victims (Kowalski & Limber, 2013).

These results aligned with previous research showing 21% of students were involved at least once in the past couple of months with cyberbullying as a victim, bully, or bully-victim (Kowalski & Limber, 2013). For traditional bullying, 51% of participants claimed to be involved at least once as victim, bully, or bully-victim (Kowalski & Limber, 2013).

Outcomes of this study revealed that the anxiety and depression level of males who bullied others was the same for those who were not involved in bullying, whether it traditional bullying or cyberbullying. Compared to girls who bullied, boys' level of anxiety and depression were higher than that of girls uninvolved in either form of bullying (Kowalski & Limber, 2013).

Results also showed a correlational with depression, anxiety, self-esteem, health issues, school absences, and grades achieved in school, related to students' linked to bullying and cyberbullying. The connection was highest between (a) cyberbullying victims and depression, (b) traditional victimization and anxiety, and (c) traditional victimization and health issues. The idea of suicide was not significant in this study, but the authors noted that the status of suicide is a complicated behavior and mindset with many risk elements that need further study (Kowalski & Limber, 2013).

Understanding traditional bullying and cyberbullying is vitally important for school communities. Interventions and school programs should be designed to target and help the victims and culprits. The assumption that both types of bullying should be

treated the same is incorrect (Couvillon & Ilieva, 2011; Espelage & Hong, 2017; Kite et al., 2010; Nixon; 2014; Semerci, 2016).

School Climate and Bullying

As researchers suggested, bullying victimization can be entrenched in the environmental framework of any school (Datta et al., 2016; Hase et al., 2015; Sidanius & Pratto, 2001). Bullying may happen in all school communities and is currently the most frequently reported discipline issue (Belmonte & Cranston, 2009; Bowllan, 2011; Domino, 2013; Studer & Mynatt, 2015). Exploring and considering the entire school climate, which should include all staff members, parents, board members, clergy, and students, can provide clarity for this problem. By looking at the broad view, school leaders can begin to know the contextual opportunities in schools that can counteract bullying behavior and improve the school's climate (Clarke & Kiselica, 1997; Cornell & Mehta, 2011; Graham, 2010; Jenkins et al., 2016; Roman & Taylor, 2013; Swearer et al., 2009; Whitney & Smith, 1993).

School administrators who fail to provide professional development on bullying impact the school climate (Charmaraman et al., 2013; Roth et al., 2011). Teachers and staff may not understand the undercurrent among students (Hase et al., 2015; Holladay, 2011; Roman & Taylor, 2013). Staff may be unaware of policies to protect students from destructive and hurtful experiences in the educational settings, and are not likely to recognize their own role in preventing them (Graham, 2010). Teachers may not be able to assess or recognize bullying behavior if they lack familiarity with current definitions, as these have changed over the years (Adams & Lawrence, 2011; Charmaraman et al., 2013; Phillips & Cornell, 2012).

Despite the current research on bullying, numerous myths persist (Adams & Lawrence, 2011; Hazler, 1996; Hoglund et al., 2012). Some myths are that getting bullied is an accepted part of growing up and will "toughen " children; another is that victims will always continue to be victims (D'Esposito et al., 2011; Graham, 2010). Additional myths are that boys are physical and girls are relational victims and bullies, zero-tolerance policies decrease bullying activities, and bullying involves only a perpetrator and a target. If teachers and staff are unaware of these misunderstandings, the school climate may suffer (Charmaraman et al., 2013; Domino, 2013; Graham, 2010; Simmons, 2011).

The whole school community can be affected by bullying. For example, recent media attention regarding school shootings across the United States can directly impact students' stress and anxiety levels (Collopy et al., 2012; Richard et al., 2012; Roman & Taylor, 2013). Bullying and other factors such as isolation, mental illness, anti social behavior, economic stresses in the family, and dysfunctional home situations may contribute to these news stories (Datta et al., 2016; Duplechain & Morris, 2014; Mitchell & Brendtro, 2013). Teachers and parents worry about students feeling depressed and lonely (Cornell & Mehta, 2011; LaFee, 2012; Preble & Gordon, 2011; Seals & Young, 2003; Stephenson & Smith, 1987; Vieno et al., 2011).

If schools do not include language to help bullied students or ignore the issues of bullying, they are part of the problem and are allowing the bullying to occur (Adams & Lawrence, 2011; Charmaraman et al., 2013; Coloroso, 2003; Veenstra, Linndenberg, Oldehinlel, De Winter, & Ormael, 2005; Wolke, Woods, Bloomfield, & Karstadt, 2001). Teachers may be oblivious to the many complicated aspects of bullying (Mitchell &

Brendtro, 2013; Phillips & Cornell, 2012). Schools may have students who are being bullied who are at risk of dropping out; of experimenting with drugs, alcohol, and unsafe sex; and of considering suicide (Di Stasio et al., 2016; LaFee, 2012; Milsom & Gallo, 2013; Studer & Mynatt, 2015).

Bullies are everywhere. Identifying victims of bullying is important for the school climate because teachers need to intervene promptly (Donoghue et al., 2014; Graham, 2010; Roth et al., 2011; Seaman, 2012). Researchers found that students are often reluctant to seek help for bullying issues and school staffs are unlikely to spot bullying through direct observation (Allen, 2010; Carney, 2008; Phillips & Cornell, 2012; Whitney & Smith, 1987). A safe school environment means well-lit halls, classrooms, fields, access to water and safe equipment, and a healthy learning atmosphere for all students, but also an environment free from violence and victimization (Bowllan, 2011; Domino, 2013; Roman & Taylor, 2013).

The literature review showed schools are challenged to reduce bullying and provide a safe learning environment for all students (Graham, 2010; Mitchell & Brendtro, 2013; Preble & Gordon, 2011; Seaman, 2012). Ignoring bullying can have immediate and long-term consequences on student learning, social atmosphere, and long-term impact on their development (Adams & Lawrence, 2011; Donoghue et al., 2014; Hase et al., 2015; Scanlan, 2011). Positive effects accrue from safety and security in the school, the optimism of students and teachers, and the improvement of academic and social learning (Bowllan, 2011; Nixon, 2014; Phillips & Cornell, 2012; Richard et al., 2012; Roman & Taylor, 2013; Scanlan, 2011).

Targets and Victims of Bullying

Adolescents in peer groups often encourage each other's anti social behavior, especially when the criteria for appropriate conduct are unclear (Bazelon, 2013; Vieno et al., 2011). Having friends is not necessarily a guarantee that one will avoid being bullied (Bradshaw et al., 2013; Carney, 2008). Almost one third of bullying events occurred in the framework of friendship or the perception of friendship (D'Esposito et al., 2011; Donoghue et al., 2014). Some groups in adolescence can be skilled manipulators as well as aggressive (Espelage et al., 2015; LaFee, 2012; Milsom & Gallo, 2006; Roman & Taylor, 2013; Salmivalli, 2014).

Researchers found some students are frequently targeted by bullies, with no single "reason" for an individual becoming a victim (Brown, Birch, & Kancheria, 2005; Carney, 2008; Hase et al., 2015; Wolke et al., 2001). Minority groups, students whose sexual orientation or gender identity are questioned, students with weight issues, and students with learning issues are often besieged by bullies (Bhatta et al., 2014; Darder, 2016; Phillips & Cornell, 2012, Vieno et al., 2011). Students who are gay do not deserve to be harassed. Everyone has a right to come to school and be accepted for who they are (Bauman & Del Rio, 2006; Charmaraman et al., 2013; Coloroso, 2003; LaFee, 2012; Phillips & Cornell, 2012).

Students, who are struggling socially, as well as students with special needs are targets (Cornell & Mehta, 2011; Espelage et al., 2015). Bigger students pick on smaller ones, people lacking social skills are harassed, and academically successful students who appear "normal" are also bullied (Hase et al., 2015; Juvonen & Graham, 2001). Children know how to get a reaction from their victims (Carney, 2008; Hoglund et al., 2012;

Jenkins et al., 2016; Veenstra et al., 2005). In many research studies, students from all over the world describe their experiences and attitudes of hurt, loneliness, and helplessness and how it affected their health and well-being (Adams & Lawrence, 2011; Brown et al., 2005; Charmaraman et al., 2013; Mitchell & Brendtro, 2013; Seals & Young, 2003; Vieno et al., 2011).

Students who reported being bullied missed more days of physical activities during the school year (Jenkins et al., 2016; LaFee, 2012). Physical education and other sport activities play a critical role for middle school students. These students are not just missing out on physical education, but also have a tendency toward sedentary behaviors and obesity (Donoghue et al., 2014; Milsom & Gallo, 2006). School administrators need to consider the environment in which physical education occurs. Students' perceptions in school physical activities and whether the school climate prevents bullying or weight criticism during physical education or recess is crucial (Bowllan, 2011; Cornell & Mehta, 2011; Hoglund et al., 2012; Roman & Taylor, 2013).

In 2011, Adams and Lawrence concluded that the process of bullying is complex, confusing for students, and involves many levels. No single causal reason exists for a bully to select one or many victims, but individuals who are already struggling socially to "fit in" and who appear awkward in various social settings are much more vulnerable to the bully (Domino, 2013; LaFee, 2012; Veenstra et al., 2005). Victims feel that no one will listen to them (Mucci, 2015). Victims also reported they do not know how to fight back when individuals say hurtful things to them (Brown et al., 2005; Phillips & Cornell, 2012; Semerci, 2016; Vieno et al., 2011).

Researchers listed four main mindsets with which victims identify: exclusion, isolation, alienation, and feeling lonely. Victims have an impression of being "left out" of conversations and lack a sense of being a member of a group. Victims feel they are often excluded from group activities (Cornell & Mehta, 2011; LaFee, 2012; Mucci, 2015; Roth et al., 2011). These students feel alone and isolated much of the day and feel that no one will listen to them. They sense an inability to connect or communicate in a positive manner with other individuals or groups. Victims found it difficult and awkward to make friends (Adams & Lawrence, 2011; Bowllan, 2011; Brown et al., 2005; Mitchell & Brendtro, 2013, Semerci, 2016; Smith & Brain, 2000).

Catholic Schools and Social Justice

Catholic schools are dedicated to the mission of the church. They provide academic excellence in faith-centered communities. Their mission is to development the whole child in collaboration with teachers, principals, school staff, parents, pastors, clergy, and the parish community (Valadez & Mirci, 2015). This education rests in religious instruction to help students grow in faith, hope, and love (Aldana, 2016; Davis, 2015). Catholic schools have a long history of commitment to social-justice activities, advocacy for justice, and guiding the poor to overcome oppression (Belmonte & Cranston, 2009; Denig & Dosen, 2009; Bradley-Levine & Carr, 2015; Valadez & Mirci, 2015).

Catholic schools teach social justice and religion on a daily basis. These core values seek to develop individuals with interests for the needs of other in the community and a commitment to justice and fairness. Individuals succeed in educational goals, but

also are indoctrinated with injustices in society so they can promote the common good (Denig & Dosen, 2009; Mucci, 2015; Scanlan, 2011).

As Valadez and Mirci, 2015 stated "social justice provides a framework for social critique with particular utility for examining the unequal distribution of wealth, power, and opportunity that characterizes U.S. society" (p. 161). Schools have the duty to cultivate a moral framework that underlies caring relationships with others. Catholic schools form with social-justice principles as their underlying beliefs (Callahan, 2014; Darder, 2016).

Social-justice leaders call for students to serve and care for others in need, supporting all members of a community to generate positive values by strengthening the foundations of society. Catholic educators encourage students to embrace social justice, often transforming themselves through social consciousness (Belmonte & Cranston, 2009; Bradley-Levine & Carr, 2015; Collopy et al., 2012; Denig & Dosen, 2009; Scanlan, 2011).

In Catholic schools, teachers create classrooms where students believe they have the potential and opportunity to transform society. Students address causes for poverty, prison reform, global interconnectivity, diversity, respect and dignity for humanity, and racism, and begin to identify the self-worth and dignity in others (Collopy et al., 2012; Mucci, 2015; Scanlan, 2011). This need for individuals to work in solidarity, to examine social issues, begin to feel concern for others, and the possibility of reducing injustice are fundamental to the teachings of Catholic schools (Bradley-Levine & Carr, 2015; Callahan, 2014; Davis, 2015).

All schools agree: it takes a village to achieve social awareness, to identify alternatives to address bullying issues, and to create and promote an atmosphere of a learning environment for all students (D'Esposito et al., 2011; Domino, 2013; Hoglund et al., 2012). Catholic schools experience increased pressure to address bullying so students feel safe and have a strong connection with the school (D. B. Accordino & Accordino, 2011; Belmonte & Cranston, 2009; Mucci, 2015; Smedley & Syme, 2000). Teachers are aware that bullying experiences can hinder student learning and lead to numerous social, emotional, and academic problems for students (Brown et al., 2005; Holladay, 2011; Phillips & Cornell, 2012; Roman & Taylor, 2013). School personnel admit that a curriculum designed to improve social competencies for all students can improve their academic success (Center for Disease Control, 2015; Cornell & Mehta, 2011; Davis, 2015; Denig & Dosen, 2009; Domino, 2013; Gould, 2009; Mitchell & Brendtro, 2013; Roman & Taylor, 2013).

Political, social, and cultural obstacles hamper the ability to examine bullying in Catholic school, and educators often must discover their own way through these debates (Bradley-Levine & Carr, 2015; Belmonte & Cranston, 2009; Bowllan, 2011; LaFee, 2012; Scanlan, 2011). Often missing in anti-bullying directives from state and federal entities is how exactly school are supposed to implement them, particularly if the mandates are unfunded (Adams & Lawrence, 2011; Darder, 2016; LaFee, 2012). Educators believe that identifying intervention alternatives to address bullying behaviors must remain a research priority (Bowllan, 2011; Brown et al., 2005; Coloroso, 2003; Denig & Dosen, 2009; Hoglund et al., 2012).

Administrations, teachers, and districts are working toward creating and promoting an atmosphere of trust between children and adults (Belmonte & Cranston, 2009; Charmaraman et al., 2013; Graham, 2010; Roth et al., 2011; Seaman, 2012). One such community school board, located in Alameda, California, adopted a plan of action with community leaders in their inter active community. Over the years, the school board worked to define and refine its anti bullying program. "We provided professional development, crafted school and district policies, enacted instructional leadership practices to guide and shape those efforts … issues of bullying to educate students about our legal and moral imperative of safeguarding the rights of all people" (LaFee, 2012, p. 29).

Schools were cognizant of a relationship between bullying and harassment (Adams & Lawrence, 2011; Callahan, 2014; Darder, 2016; Gould, 2009). Bullying is a violation of students' civil rights and school officials must take prompt and effective steps to stop the aggravation, to evaluate the intimidating environment, and to prevent its recurrence (LaFee, 2012; Roth et al., 2011). Educators are aware that these steps must be taken, irrespective of whether a student or a parent complains of bullying or asks for "official action" (Aldana, 2016; Charmaraman et al., 2013; Cornell & Mehta, 2011; Phillips & Cornell, 2012).

Teachers and principals also acknowledged that bullies do not only attack their victims in the cafeteria, hallway, or on the playground (Boulton & Underwood, 1992; Graham, 2010; Mucci, 2015; Seaman, 2012). Students use their computers or phones to potentially bully at any time (D. B. Accordino & Accordino, 2011; Cornell & Mehta, 2011; Holladay, 2011). Also, teachers observed elementary-age students using gay slurs

and teasing children with gay or lesbian parents (Carney, 2008; DiClemente et al., 2009). Teachers and principals can incorporate social-justice aspects by eliciting the support of students, parents, civic and community leaders, and clergy to adequately address larger societal issue (D. B. Accordino & Accordino, 2011; Beane, 2009; LaFee, 2012; Milsom & Gallo, 2006).

School leaders know they cannot and should not avoid the issues of bullying (Cornell & Mehta, 2011; LaFee, 2012; Mitchell & Brendtro, 2013). School communities are pursuing building confidence in a teacher-student and a counselor-student relationship (Bradley-Levine & Carr, 2015; Merrell et al., 2008). Catholic school communities are considering future intervention programs with attention on social justice to bring exposure to the emotional distress that bullies and their victims face (D. B. Accordino & Accordino, 2011; Collopy et al., 2012; Denig & Dosen, 2009; Phillips & Cornell, 2012; Roman & Taylor, 2013; Sairanen & Pfeffer, 2011).

Strategies to Increase Bully Awareness

The literature recounted many ways to increase bully awareness in school communities, as well as empathy for students who are targets. Researchers mentioned, reviewed, explored, and implemented various strategies. The common element was to protect students from harm, enable students to self-advocate, and get the support they need in a timely fashion (Bowllan, 2011; Charmaraman et al., 2013; Merrell et al., 2008; Seaman, 2012; Stephenson & Smith, 1987).

In 1994, Smith and Sharp reported that the studying of bullying behaviors is vital and needs to continue. Characteristics of the relationships between the bullies and victims give educators valuable information regarding the interventions schools

implement. If a program is successful, schools gain insight. Failures or limited successes may provide schools much better information.

The guidelines that D. B. Accordino and Accordino (2001) mentioned in their cyberbullying study supported children's mental health. These rules, regulations, conduct, and interactions with peers include the following:

1. Straightforward and understood rules of conduct and self-control practices;
2. Ensured adult presence in common school spaces (i.e., hallways, cafeteria, locker rooms, playgrounds, and computer rooms) and reinforcing the availability of adult supervision;
3. Trained adolescents to work cooperatively, especially in groups, to support the victims and stand up to bullies; and
4. Encouraging students to reach out and include lonely students.

Such efforts include educating students regarding safe Internet behavior through a code of ethics and providing ways to report early indications of possible bullying behavior. Students need instructions on how to avoid and deescalate cyber bullying (Bauman et al., 2013; Juvonen & Gross, 2008; Nixon, 2014; Patchin & Hinduja, 2010). Schools should be required to post a list of contact personnel or develop a school task force on cyber bullying to address incidents that reach harmful levels (D. B. Accordino & Accordino, 2011; Bauman, et al., 2013; Hase et al., 2015; Kowalski & Limber, 2013; Sairanen & Pfeffer, 2011; Semerci, 2016).

Students would also benefit from critical-thinking skills when viewing material on the Internet. For example, when students view a photograph that was altered or a video that was edited to make another student look unfavorable, they should have the skill to

see through the manipulation and quickly report it to a school official (Merrell et al., 2008; Roman & Taylor, 2013; Roth et al., 2011; Studer & Mynatt, 2015). Overall, it is important for students to feel connected and cared for, whether at school or home. Students who do not have strong connections tend to be more vulnerable (D. B. Accordino & Accordino, 2011; Bowllan, 2011; Charmaraman et al., 2013; Seaman, 2012; Veenstra et al., 2005).

Holladay (2011) recognized four defensive practices that encouraged school leaders to be straight forward with students and parents about the limits of online use and cyber bullying. The main points were the following:

1. Identify misunderstandings about digital use;
2. Model and promote empathy and understanding among students;
3. Teach online safety skills for computers and cell phones; and
4. Teach students the strategies needed to address digital abuse.

Due to the rise in violence of youth, it is fundamental that early interventions decrease this momentous societal issue (D. B. Accordino & Accordino, 2011; Bauman et al., 2013; Espelage & Hong, 2017; Juvonen & Gross, 2008; Roman & Taylor, 2013). When educators contemplate a school-wide bullying-prevention program it is vital to include appropriate stakeholders such as parents, students, teachers, and support personnel along with school administrators and school board members throughout the decision-making, planning, implementation, and assessment phases of any program (Bowllan, 2011; Domino, 2013; Hase et al., 2015; Kite et al., 2010; Nixon, 2014; Ortega et al., 2012; Richard et al., 2012).

Furthermore, strong policies and communication instruments need to be established in schools to report on precise responses to students who are bullying other students, the students who are being bullied, and the bystanders, who do nothing (Bauman et al., 2013; Carney, 2008; Holladay, 2011; LaFee, 2012). Many schools accomplish this through their handbooks, websites, and newsletters (Bowllan, 2011; Richard et al., 2012). School administrators, teachers, and resource personnel, such as guidance counselors who follow up on bullying episodes, need to be clearly identified. Also, written guidelines that address the commitment of parents in response to bullying occurrences should be defined (Belmonte & Cranston, 2009; Bowllan, 2011; Cornell & Mehta, 2011; Richard et al., 2012; Roman & Taylor, 2013).

New Jersey may have the most stringent anti bullying policy in the United States (LaFee, 2012). The state's Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights resulted from the death of an 18-year-old Rutgers University freshman who committed suicide by jumping off the George Washington Bridge in 2010. The student's roommate's roommate had taped and posted a sexual encounter between the student and another male student on the Internet. This was a highly publicized event worldwide. The law contains 18 pages of required components that every new Jersey school district must now follow. Among them are the following:

1. Increased staff training and tight deadlines (a 1-day turnaround) for investigating alleged incidents, on campus or off;
2. Designated anti bullying specialists on each campus and a district wide coordinator;
3. Twice-a-year reports to the state department of education, which will post compliance scores; and

4. A penalty for the loss of professional licenses for failure to comply.

In 2013, Domino's research revealed that the rate of bullying incidents has risen over the years. This is partly due to the increase of social media and student cyberbullying. School' intervention plans must be a significance issue for the school community. Classroom teachers enthusiastically adopted these comprehensive programs that resulted in diminished bullying in schools. School districts must attentively and collaboratively focus on the opportunities for alternatives that promote social skills among all students (Bradshaw et al., 2013; Seaman, 2012). Educators, school counselors, and other school professionals can learn to expand bullying awareness efforts, endorse a positive school climate, and extend the available options to address this growing public health problem (Domino, 2013; Espelage & Hong, 2017; Graham, 2010; LaFee, 2012; Ortega et al., 2012; Polanin et al., 2012).

Bullying and harassment prevention programs executed in the early elementary school years can have a positive effect on students later in the middle school years (Hoglund et al., 2012). Programs that create a positive classroom environment should be continued through middle school because of the encouraging improvements and advantages that have emerged (Charmaraman et al., 2013; Phillips & Cornell, 2012). The transition for some students into the middle school years can be socially difficult. Schools that have addressed bullying with a whole-school approach emphasized that relational bullying and committed awareness of victims, particularly during the elementary years, had the greatest success in addressing this issue (Bowllan, 2011; Charmaraman et al., 2013; Hoglund et al., 2012).

Bullying intervention is critical in every school. Students understand the importance of guidelines and acceptable behavior. For students to feel safe at school, standards must be in place and followed to prevent bullying. Most schools have adopted parameters of behavior for all students, but research shows that the follow up may not always be consistent. The following partial list accrued from various school sites and studies. Schools that follow up, set limits, and continue to be aware of bullying behavior are more successful in hindering this behavior (Gereluk et al., 2015; Jenkins et al., 2016; Semerci, 2016; Studer & Smith, 2015; Valadez & Mirci, 2015; Viadero, 2009).

1. Do not ignore bullying behavior. Bullying is different from conflict;
2. Mediate as quickly as possible;
3. Separate the bully and the target;
4. Stay neutral and calm;
5. Do not make pacts or agreements until the investigation is complete and comprehensive;
6. Commend the target(s) for reporting the issue and reassure them that they will be safeguarded from retribution;
7. Counsel the aggressor on behavior changes. Teach the bullies specific strategies to change their attitude and conduct;
8. Support confidentiality, but additional action is needed. Information on bullying needs to be documented;
9. Stay objective in all statements: notes, e-mails, texts, and official school reports; and

10. Reports need to be timely: the earlier reports are made, the fewer possibilities that student will vary their stories.

Assistance and help for bullies do not always have to involve emphasis on their own self-esteem. Bullies also need to learn and use many strategies to regulate their resentment and anger issues (Graham, 2010; Stephenson & Smith, 1987; Veenstra et al., 2005; Vieno et al., 2011). Often, bullies blame other students for their difficulties. In addition, victims also need coping skills. They need tactics that can help them improve their outlook and possibly begin to feel, experience, and demonstration a more positive identity. Victims also need to be coached that they are not to blame themselves for bullying behaviors from others (Adams & Lawrence, 2011; Hoglund et al., 2012; Phillips & Cornell, 2012). Other classmates need to learn that, as bystanders to bullying, their responses are significant. Whether they react, tell an adult, get immediate help, or do nothing at all is a factor of the problem of bullying behaviors (Cornell & Mehta, 2011; D'Esposito et al., 2011; Graham, 2010; Seaman, 2012).

Summary

Schools need to teach tolerance and acceptance toward all differences, an appreciation of diversity, and the significance of various collective customs and social characteristics that all live together in the same school environment (D. B. Accordino & Accordino, 2011; Phillips & Cornell, 2012; Roman & Taylor, 2013; Roth et al., 2011). The goal is to convey bullying awareness by supporting compassion in classrooms. Teachers need to find opportunities to teach and instill a sense of empathy, concern, and kindness through the school day. The effects of teaching tolerance may last a lifetime (Graham, 2010; Roman & Taylor, 2013; Seaman, 2012).

This literature review explored research that suggested ways to improve Catholic schools' climate, assist in developing a common language associated with bullying and harassment, and help provide needed perspectives in assisting school personnel in the challenges of facilitating students' acceptance and tolerance of difference. Improving the schools' climate can raise the level of sensitivity of all students toward bullying issues (Aldana, 2016; D'Esposito et al., 2011; Graham, 2010; Patchin & Hinduja, 2010; Sidanius & Pratto, 2001; Smith & Brain, 2000).

Schools that create an atmosphere that welcomes other cross-institutional and multidisciplinary cooperative trusts have better strategies at their fingertips to address bullying (D. B. Accordino & Accordino, 2011; Bowllan, 2011; Hoover et al.,1992; Seaman, 2012). Schools can create further research in the area of bullying and bullying-prevention programs and hypothetically develop meaningful influences to establish procedures to successfully improve the whole school climate. Such programs support the environment so students feel safe in their own schools (Graham, 2010; Hoglund et al., 2012; Mitchell & Brendtro, 2013; Scanlan, 2001; Seaman, 2012; Wolke et al., 2001). Faculties can introduce language and phrases to help students and parents understand the real issues. Teachers need to have the full support of parents and the community because this is such a sensitive matter (Hoglund et al., 2012; Holladay, 2011; Kowalski & Limber, 2013; Semerci, 2016).

By allowing bullying students to put themselves in place of someone who has been bullied, the chances of becoming a bully would seem to diminish. Furthermore, by raising the sensitivity of students toward the victims of bullying, the chances of students supporting these victims should also increase. Consequently, positive peer relationships

among adolescent students would potentially increase (B. A. Accordino & Accordino, 2011; Hoglund et al., 2012; Kite et al., 2010; Richard et al., 2012; Seaman, 2012; Studer & Mynatt, 2015; Wall, 2016).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Restatement of the Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the issues of bullying behavior in Grades 6-8 in Catholic schools in the Pacific and Mountain States of the United States. This research entailed examining the attitudes of middle school students on their school climate. The investigation considered how students get along with their peers and how they feel about various forms of bullying. The researcher assessed Catholic middle school students' thoughts and feelings about their peers, teachers, and staff that support students who are bullied. This investigation used a survey-method approach to explore student bullying, aiming to gain greater insight into this issue. This study will add to the research to better understand the social problem of bullying in the middle grades in schools and identify preventive measures that are currently in place.

The Research Questions

This study answered the following research questions regarding bullying in Catholic middle schools through quantitative data collection and analysis:

1. What are Catholic middle school students' attitudes toward their school climate?
2. How do students in Catholic middle schools get along with their peers?
3. How do Catholic middle school students think and feel about various forms of bullying?
4. What are Catholic middle school students' thoughts and feelings about support from their peers at their school regarding students who are bullied?

5. How do Catholic middle school students feel about their teachers and staff supporting students who are bullied?

Research Design

The researcher used a survey-method design for this study. A survey-method design can offer a comprehensive perspective for a research study (Creswell, 2008). Specific questions were asked to acquire measurable data. A questionnaire contained all closed questions. Quantitative research can give a thorough analysis of a sensitive issue, such as bullying. The survey method was chosen to give readers greater depth and better perspective on the topic of bullying (Bowllan, 2011; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Fink, 2013).

A quantitative study is a logical method used for a particular set of research questions and then data are collected. The data were evaluated to establish if the findings supported or negated the research questions (as in Creswell, 2008). By using the questionnaire with middle school students, the researcher trusted that students felt sufficiently secure to express any concerns, embarrassing situations, anger, or hurt feelings.

Research Setting

Catholic schools are faith-centered and strive to develop the whole child. They provide learning communities of faith that encourage and support the role of parents as the primary educators of their children. The goals of Catholic schools are to help each student reach their full potential academically, physically, emotionally, and spiritually (National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1972).

Traditionally, families that send their children to Catholic schools are almost all Roman Catholic; today, this population has changed. Students who attend Catholic schools are still predominately Catholic, but are more diverse. Every religion is represented in Catholic grammar schools because people of all faiths are welcomed (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988).

This study was conducted through FocusVision, an online marketing-research company. A partial list of corporations who have used FocusVision for their company surveys are eBay, Facebook, Microsoft, and Pepsi. This business has a committed programming team that assists with launching surveys to a targeted area on any device: mobile, tablet, or computer. FocusVision sent the survey with pre-questions to target only Catholic middle school students. Parents responded to the pre-questions and then students were able to continue with the rest of the survey.

The pre-questions were essential to this study for several reasons. First, they eliminated students who were in preschool, elementary (Grades 1 - 5), and high school. Second, it excluded participants who were not in Catholic schools. Last, it served as parental permission for their child to continue with the rest of the survey. The researcher was able to obtain the target sample quickly and efficiently (Fink, 2013).

Population

The population for this study was students who attend Catholic schools in the United States. “A sample is a subgroup of the target population that the researcher plans to study for generalizing about a target population” (Creswell, 2008, p. 152). The sample chosen to participate in this study provided the researcher with data used to clarify behaviors about the larger population (Groves et al., 2009; Orcher, 2007). Researchers

used samples in studies to represent the population that it closely resembles so results can be used to make inferences and suggestions (Fink, 2013; Fowler, 2009; Roberts, 2010; Salkind, 2011).

Sample

The sample for this research study was students in Grades 6 - 8 who attend a Catholic school in 13 states. The five Pacific states were Alaska, California, Hawaii, Oregon, and Washington. The eight Mountain states were Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming (see Table 1). The following four states did not participate in the survey: Alaska, Hawaii, Montana, and New Mexico.

California had the highest participation with 82.6% (n = 233). Washington followed with 6.0% (n = 17) and Oregon 5.0% (n = 14). Arizona and Nevada both had 2.1% (n = 6). The rest of the states had 1% or less.

Table 1

Distribution of Students by State

	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Arizona	6	2.1	2.1	2.1
California	233	82.6	82.6	84.8
Colorado	3	1.1	1.1	85.8
Idaho	1	.4	.4	86.2
Nevada	6	2.1	2.1	88.3
Oregon	14	5.0	5.0	93.3
Utah	1	.4	.4	93.6
Washington	17	6.0	6.0	99.6
Wyoming	1	.4	.4	100.0
Total	282	100.0	100.0	

The number of participates that clicked onto this survey, but did not qualify to complete the survey was 4,431. This number reflects the amount of interest in the topic of bullying. The total number of completed responses was 282 from Grades 6 - 8 (see Table 2) throughout the Pacific and Mountain states (n = 282). The sample by grade level was 6th grade, 24% (n = 68); 7th grade, 48% (n = 135); and 8th grade, 28% (n = 79). In addition, respondents answered the survey questions using their desktop computers 89%, (n = 251), Smartphones 9% (n = 25), and tablets 2%, (n = 6).

Table 2

Distribution of Students by Grade

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	6th grade	68	24.1	24.1	24.1
	7th grade	135	47.9	47.9	72.0
	8th grade	79	28.0	28.0	100.0
	Total	282	100.0	100.0	

Instrumentation

Survey: Bullying Prevention Initiative, Student Survey

The survey used for this study was adapted by the researcher from the *Bullying Prevention Initiative Student Survey* designed by The Colorado Trust (Williams & Guerra, 2008). The authors of the original study were Williams and Guerra, both presently working at the University of Delaware. The Colorado Trust launched a $9 million Bullying Prevention Initiative in 2005. It consisted of surveys, focus groups, and analysis of school environments. The surveys were conducted semi annually in 75 schools and reached more than 3,000 students in Grades 5, 8, and 11. This program ended in 2008

when The Colorado Trust changed its focus to grant writing in the areas of healthcare coverage and care.

This study retained the survey instrument (see Appendix B) to measure student attitudes on bullying of the sample population. The researcher did not need permission to use the *Bullying Prevention Initiative Student Survey* by The Colorado Trust (Williams & Guerra, 2008) because the instrument is in the public domain (the title page indicated permission was not needed for use). The survey was administered through FocusVision. The data gathered from the surveys accounted for students' feelings, values, and behaviors. To gain information directly from people about what they believe, know, and think, a survey is one of the best methods (Fink, 2013). In this study, surveys were used to seek information, feelings, perceptions, and attitudes about a very delicate subject: bullying.

A survey examines behaviors and attitudes through self-reporting (Creswell, 2008; Groves et al., 2009; Orcher, 2007). "Modifying an instrument means locating an existing instrument, obtaining permission to change it, and making changes in it to fit you requirements" (Creswell, 2008, p.167). The original survey had seven sections with a total of 73 items under the following headings: (a) My School, (b) How Big a Problem, (c) Getting Along With Others, (d) About Me and Others, (e) Wrong and Right, (f) Situations, and (g) Demographics. The researcher revised this survey to omit the demographics because that information was unnecessary. The survey was also revised to omit the "pass" column to force an answer. The survey took approximately 10 - 15 minutes to complete.

Validity and Reliability

Creswell (2008) defined validity as "scores from an instrument make sense, are meaningful, and enables…the researcher to draw good conclusions from the sample you are studying to the population" (p. 169). The scores on an instrument should be significant, stable, consistent, and meaningful. The researcher used a random sample of students from 13 states.

To measure the reliability of the survey, internal consistency reliability was used. This student survey by The Colorado Trust was replicated with more than 3,000 students in the years 2005 through 2008. The Colorado Trust's Bullying Prevention Initiative was used in 17 school districts, five schools, and 23 community associations (Williams & Guerra, 2008). Scores from a survey are reliable if an individual's scores are internally consistent over time (Creswell, 2008).

Data Collection

The surveys were sent out through FocusVision. This company provided a comprehensive approach to the researcher's survey and was able to add the pre-questions to ensure the survey only targeted Catholic middle school students. FocusVision was able to distribute the surveys to the 13 states efficiently. The researcher was able to track the data online daily. The data accrued between December 20, 2017 and January 26, 2018. The incentive to complete the survey varied by state.

Data Analysis

The data from the study were analyzed. With any survey data, researchers need to adjust in some areas (Fowler, 2009). Adjustments were made for questions that were worded in the negative.

All statistical procedures and calculations were used. Tables were created to further explain key findings. The descriptive analysis of the data was analyzed and the results included the means, medians, modes, and standard deviations. Frequencies and percentages were calculated for the five research questions related to perceptions of bullying.

The following data analyses were conducted to address each of the research questions:

1. What are Catholic middle school students' attitudes toward their school climate?

Students' attitudes toward bullying were answered in the survey, Questions 1 - 16 and 45 - 53. Results indicated how students felt toward their school environment, their peers, their teachers, and how they felt they fit in with their peers. Some examples of questions are my school is important to me, my school is a good place to be, my teachers respect me, teachers and staff in my school usually get along with students, and the principal asks students about their ideas at my school. These questions had four choices for students: (a) Really Disagree, (b) Disagree, (c) Agree, or (d) Really Agree.

To discern how students felt about how they fit in with their peers, students were asked questions about their self-worth. Some examples of questions were, I feel I am just as good as other students, I feel there are lots of good things about me, I take a positive attitude toward myself, and all in all, I feel like a failure. Students also rated the responses: (a) Really Disagree, (b) Disagree, (c) Agree, or (d) Really Agree.

2. How do students in Catholic middle schools get along with their peers?

The second research question uncovered how student felt about getting along with others, based on their own behavior (Survey Questions 23 - 34) and how they felt about other students' behaviors (Questions 35 - 38). Some examples of questions about students' own behaviors were, I spread rumors about some students, I encourage students to push, shove, or trip weaker students, I join in when students told lies about other student, and I tried to defend the students who always get pushed or shoved around.

Four questions were asked that pertained to what students felt had happened to them in school: a student or group of students told lies or made fun of me using the Internet (e-mail, instant messaging, cell phone text messaging, or website), and a particular student or group of students teased and said mean things to me. In both these sections, students responded (a) A Lot, (b) Several Times, (c) Once or Twice, or (d) Never.

3. How do Catholic middle school students think and feel about various forms of bullying?

Research question 3 was answered by the survey (Questions 53 - 62). The rating of these accounts revealed the level of how right and wrong students felt about other students' bullying behavior. Examples of the questions were, students go to the teacher or an adult for help when someone is getting beaten up, students go to the teacher or an adult for help when others are spreading rumors and lies about someone, and students push, shove, or pick fights with weaker students. The students rated these statements: (a) Really Wrong, (b) Sort of Wrong, (c) Sort of OK, or (d) Perfectly OK

4. What are Catholic middle school students' thoughts and feelings about support from their peers, teachers, and staff at their school regarding students who are bullied?

The fourth research question was answered in survey Questions 63 - 66. The questionnaire keyed in how students thought most of their school peers would assist a fellow student who was being bullied. The survey asked, a student or group of students is pushing, shoving, or trying to pick a fight with a weaker student, and a student is spreading rumors and lies about another student without their knowledge. Participants rated their responses: (a) Never, (b) Sometimes, (c) Most of the Time, or (d) Always.

5. How do Catholic middle school students feel about their teachers and staff supporting students who are bullied?

The final research question was answered in survey Questions 67 - 70. The final questions focused on students' feeling about if their teachers would intervene if they witnessed or were alerted to bullying behavior. Examples of questions in this section were, a student is making fun of and teasing another student who is obviously weaker, and a student is spreading rumors and lies about another student without their knowledge. Students rated their responses: (a) Never, (b) Sometimes, (c) Most of the Time, or (d) Always.

Protection of Human Subjects

The researcher obtained approval to perform this research from the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at the University of San Francisco (see Appendix A). There was a small risk that some students would become upset about the content of this survey. Participants were informed of their right to participate in this

survey voluntarily. Completion of the pre questionnaires served as parents' informed consent. The confidentiality of all participants was maintained in the analysis and data reporting. The surveys will be kept secure throughout this study and will remain on file for 12 months after the study is completed.

Background of Researcher

The researcher is a native Californian who completed an undergraduate degree in Liberal Studies at San Francisco State University with a teaching credential and a Master of Arts degree in Education at San Francisco State University. The researcher began a career in teaching in Catholic elementary schools in San Francisco. In high school, tutoring middle school students in a Catholic inner-city school in San Francisco was inspirational. Also, later in college, this researcher was the first-grade aide for 2 years at the same inner-city school. This community of students hailed from diverse backgrounds and faced many hardships.

In the early 1980s, this researcher was the third-grade teacher at a Catholic school in San Francisco for 14 years. Many student teachers from San Francisco State University were welcomed into this third-grade classroom. This researcher worked closely with these student teachers. Their high energy was contagious and their eagerness to connect with and be able to motivate students was a very rewarding experience. Most importantly, being able to inspire, encourage, and mentor others was an honor. During these years, computers were just being introduced to the schools. Most schools were setting up computer laboratories for technology and complete very little integration with subject areas.

In the early 1990s, after moving to Marin County to raise two daughters, the researcher continued to substitute teaching for 12 years in Catholic schools in southern Marin. The schools where the researcher worked experienced many changes in technology. Integrating computers into subject areas in the classroom was at the creation stage. Personal use of computers was commonplace.

In 2011, this researcher was hired as the Assistant Principal at a Catholic grammar school. In this position, the researcher valued open communication with teachers, parents, school boards, and the pastor as vital. She understood the importance of students developing social skills to grow into successful adults and to be able to show compassion for others. As a leader, it was essential to teach all students the responsibilities that come with communicating with others using technology.

The strengths of the researcher have been in the organization of the classroom, leadership roles of the teacher, classroom management, mentoring new teachers, collaboratively working in the classroom and school environments, and the success of student learning at all levels. In 35 years of teaching, the researcher has been involved with conflict resolution and management among middle school students and has witnessed an increase in the level of bullying among middle school students through the years. The researcher is a member of Pi Lambda Theta since 1986, a member of Phi Delta Kappa since 2009, and the Special Education Advisory Board member of Dominican University.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Restatement of the Purpose

The purpose of this study was to investigate the issues of bullying behavior in Grades 6 - 8 in Catholic schools in the Pacific and Mountain States of the Unites States. This research examined attitudes among middle school students regarding their school climate. The investigation considered how students get along with their peers and how they feel about various forms of bullying. The researcher assessed Catholic middle school students' thoughts and feelings about their peers, teachers, and staff that support students who are bullied. This exploration used a survey-methods approach to explore student bullying to gain greater insight into this issue. This study will add to the research to better understand the social problem of bullying in the middle grades in schools and identify preventive measures that are currently in place.

Research Question 1

What are Catholic middle school students' attitudes toward their school climate?

To answer this question, the researcher analyzed the data from the questions students answered regarding how they felt about their school environment, specifically about their peers and teachers (see Table 3). More than half of students "really agreed" and another third "agreed" that school was important to them. For My school is a good place to be, students half really agreed and another two fifths agreed. Students also claimed their teachers respected them: 46.1% "really agreed" and the same percentage agreed.

Table 3

Frequencies, Mean, and Standard Deviations for School Climate

	Really disagree		Disagree		Agree		Really agree			
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	Mean	Standard deviation
Q15: My school is important to me.	4	1.4	17	6.0	108	38.3	153	54.3	3.45	0.67
Q13: My school is a good place to be.	5	1.8	12	4.3	126	44.7	139	49.3	3.41	0.66
Q8: My teachers respect me.	2	0.7	19	6.7	131	46.5	130	46.1	3.38	0.64
Q10: Teachers in my school are nice people.	3	1.1	16	5.7	138	48.9	125	44.3	3.37	0.64
Q14: I feel like I belong at my school.	2	0.7	23	8.2	131	46.5	126	44.7	3.35	0.66
Q1: Students in my school can be trusted.	5	1.8	23	8.2	125	44.3	129	45.7	3.34	0.70
Q4: Teachers and staff in my school can be trusted.	6	2.1	17	6.0	134	47.5	125	44.3	3.34	0.69
Q16: Teachers and staff at my school are doing the right things to prevent bullying.	2	0.7	30	10.6	126	44.7	124	44.0	3.32	0.69
Q9: My teachers are fair.	7	2.5	20	7.1	134	47.5	121	42.9	3.31	0.71
Q5: Teachers and staff in my school usually get along with students.	4	1.4	27	9.6	132	46.8	119	42.2	3.30	0.70
Q7: This is a pretty close-knit school where everyone looks out for each other.	4	1.4	31	11.0	131	46.5	116	41.1	3.27	0.71
Q2: Students in my school generally get along with each other.	1	0.4	24	8.5	165	58.5	92	32.6	3.23	0.61
Q11: When students break rules at my school, they are treated fairly.	4	1.4	35	12.4	151	53.5	92	32.6	3.17	0.69
Q6: Teachers and staff in my school generally feel the same way about things.	5	1.8	49	17.4	126	44.7	102	36.2	3.15	0.76
Q3: Students in my school generally feel the same way about things.	2	0.7	63	22.3	137	48.6	80	28.4	3.05	0.73
Q12: The principal asks students about their ideas at my school.	11	3.9	61	21.6	122	43.3	88	31.2	3.02	0.83

An important question in this research was if teachers and staff at school were taking effective action to prevent bullying. Students responded positively with 44% strongly agreeing and 44.7% agreeing. Participants' responses to My teachers are fair showed four fifths really agreed or agreed. When students were asked if the principal asked students about their ideas at school, few really disagreed and a fifth of respondents disagreed. Table 3 had a Cronbach's alpha scale of .89 for reliability.

Another aspect of school climate investigated in this study was how students felt about themselves compared to other students in their school (see Table 4). Results showed that students felt just as good as other students: more than half really agreed and another two fifths agreed. Positive results were similar for students feeling they

Table 4

Frequencies, Means, and Standard Deviations for Self Worth Issues

	Really disagree		Disagree		Agree		Really agree			
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	Mean	Standard deviation
Q45: I feel I am just as good as other students.	6	2.1	12	4.3	118	41.8	146	51.8	3.43	0.68
Q46: I feel there are lots of good things about me	1	0.4	17	6.0	137	48.6	127	45.0	3.38	0.62
Q50: I take a positive attitude toward myself.	4	1.4	20	7.1	130	46.1	28	45.4	3.35	0.68
Q48: I am able to do things as well as most other people.	9	3.2	16	5.7	132	46.8	125	44.3	3.32	0.72
Q51: I wish I could have more respect for myself.	42	14.9	75	26.6	98	34.8	67	23.8	2.67	1.00
Q52: I certainly feel useless at times.	88	31.2	49	17.4	89	31.6	56	19.9	2.40	1.13
Q49: I feel I do not have much to be proud of.	102	36.2	63	22.3	70	24.8	47	16.7	2.22	1.11
Q47: All in all, I feel like a failure.	117	41.5	57	20.2	60	21.3	48	17.0	2.14	1.14

themselves had many good attributes with 93.6% really agreeing or agreeing. Most students felt they were able to do things as well as most other people: 91.1%.

When asked about feeling like a failure, more than a third of students responded really agree or agree and 41.5% really disagreed. The reliability for Table 4 showed a Cronbach's alpha of .73 for these 8 items. The negatively worded items (Q47, 49, 51, and 52) were reversed coded so the scale consistently measured positive self-worth.

Research Question 2

How do students in Catholic middle schools get along with their peers?

The major finding on how Catholic middle school students felt they got along with their peers was positive (see Table 5). For the item indicating, I spread rumors about some students, two thirds of the students said they never did that. Two thirds also indicated they never encourage students to push, shove, or trip weaker students, although 10.3% stated they did this "a lot." On this survey, I tease or said mean things to certain students, showed that a third never did so and a third did so once or twice. Almost 20% said they teased or did mean things several times. The two statements I ignore rumors or lies that I heard about other students and I try to defend the students who always get pushed or shoved around was fairly evenly divided between the four choices of a lot, several times, once or twice, and never. This table's Cronbach's alpha was .93, indicating reliability.

Table 5

Frequencies, Means, and Standard Deviations for Students' Own Behavior

	A lot		Several times		Once or twice		Never		Mean	Standard deviation
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%		
Q25: I spread rumors about some students.	22	7.8	34	12.1	47	16.7	179	63.5	3.36	0.97
Q27: I encouraged students to push, shove, or trip weaker students.	29	10.3	39	13.8	33	11.7	181	64.2	3.30	1.05
Q30: I joined in when students told lies about other students.	20	7.1	43	15.2	55	19.5	164	58.2	3.29	0.97
Q26: I told lies or made fun of some students using the Internet (email, instant messaging, cell phone text messaging, or websites).	29	10.3	35	12.4	51	18.1	167	59.2	3.26	10.3
Q28: I cheered when someone was beating up another student.	30	10.6	34	12.1	51	18.1	167	59.2	3.26	1.04
Q29: I joined in when students were teasing and being mean to certain students.	34	12.1	34	12.1	49	17.4	165	58.5	3.22	1.07
Q23: I pushed, shoved, tripped, or picked fights with students who I know are weaker than me.	48	17.0	19	6.7	51	18.1	164	58.2	3.17	1.14
Q31: I stood by and watched other students getting hit, pushed, shoved, or tripped.	35	12.4	36	12.8	80	28.4	131	46.5	3.09	1.04
Q24: I teased or said mean things to certain students.	20	7.1	54	19.1	99	35.1	109	38.7	3.05	0.93
Q34: I asked an adult to help someone whom was getting teased, pushed, or shoved around by other students.	60	21.3	62	22.0	96	34.0	64	22.7	2.58	1.06
Q32: I ignored rumors or lies that I heard about other students.	63	22.3	72	25.5	69	24.5	78	27.7	2.57	1.12
Q33: I tried to defend the students who always get pushed or shoved around.	58	20.6	78	27.7	83	29.4	63	22.3	2.54	1.05

Note. 32.6% (*n* = 92) "Once or Twice," 24.5% (*n* = 69) "Several Times," and 8.5% (*n* = 24) stated "A Lot." The Cronbach's Alpha for this table was .90.

To answer the second research question, the investigator also included four questions about What has happened to me (see Table 6). Fully half of participates answered the question, A student or group of students told lies or made fun of me using the Internet, never. Responses for students or groups of students who teased and said mean things to me was also positive: a third answered never.

Table 6

Frequencies, Means, and Standard Deviations for What Has Happened to Me

	A lot		Several times		Once or twice		Never		Mean	Standard deviation
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%		
Q38: A student or group of students told lies or made fun of me using the Internet (email, instant messaging, cell phone text messaging, or websites).	41	14.5	36	12.8	55	19.5	150	53.2	3.11	1.11
Q37: A particular student or group of students spread rumors or made fun of me.	27	9.6	48	17.0	90	31.9	117	41.5	3.05	0.98
Q35: A particular student or group of students pushed, shoved, tripped, or picked fights with me.	49	17.4	32	11.3	88	31.2	113	40.1	2.94	1.10
Q36: A particular student or group of students teased and said mean things to me.	24	8.5	69	24.5	92	32.6	97	34.4	2.93	0.96

Research Question 3

How do Catholic middle school students think and feel about various forms of bullying?

The survey revealed the following information on how students think and feeling about various forms of bullying (see Table 7). When asked if it is wrong or okay for students to go to the teacher or an adult for help when someone is getting beat up, almost two thirds of participants responded perfectly okay. When students were asked about spreading rumors and lies, the results were very similar: almost 60% said perfectly okay.

When students were asked about other students telling lies or making fun of less popular students using the Internet, half said it was really wrong. These results were vey similar to the questions about pushing, shoving, or instigating fights with weaker students and students encouraging others to fight weaker students and cheer them on. The reliability statistics for judgments about bullying behavior showed a Cronbach's Alpha of .85.

Table 7

Frequencies, Means, and Standard Deviations for Judgments About Bullying Behavior

	Really wrong		Sort of wrong		Sort of OK		Perfectly OK			
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	Mean	Standard deviation
Q61: Students go to the teacher or an adult for help when someone is getting beaten up.	16	5.7	31	11.0	62	22.0	173	61.3	3.39	0.90
Q62: Students go to the teacher or an adult for help when others are spreading rumors and lies about someone.	21	7.4	26	9.2	66	23.4	169	59.9	3.36	0.93
Q60: Students defend others who are being shoved around by stronger students.	37	13.1	28	9.9	65	23.0	152	53.9	3.18	1.07
Q53: Students tease weaker students in front of others.	140	49.6	39	13.8	49	17.4	54	19.1	2.06	1.20
Q59: Students ignore it when someone weaker is being pushed around.	123	43.6	70	24.8	50	17.7	39	13.8	2.02	1.08
Q54: Students spread rumors and lies about other students behind their back.	139	49.3	52	18.4	56	19.9	35	12.4	1.95	1.09
Q58: Students encourage others to be mean and spread lies about less popular students.	140	49.6	64	22.7	33	11.7	45	16.0	1.94	1.12
Q57: Students encourage others to fight weaker students and cheer them on.	151	53.5	38	13.5	55	19.5	38	13.5	1.93	1.13
Q56: Students push, shove, or pick fights with weaker students.	154	54.6	41	14.5	44	15.6	43	15.2	1.91	1.14
Q55: Students telling lies or making fun of less popular students using the Internet (email, instant messaging, cell phone text messaging, or websites).	149	52.8	48	17.0	48	17.0	37	13.1	1.90	1.10

Research Question 4

What are Catholic middle school students' thoughts and feelings about support from their peers at their school regarding students who are bullied?

The researcher noted the results for the level of support victims received from their peers (see Table 8). These showed a positive school climate in how students reached out to help other students. When a student or group of students was pushing, shoving, or trying to instigate a fight with weaker students, victims were supported by their peers always (29.8%), most of the time (31.6%), sometimes (28.7%), and never (9.9%).

Table 8

Frequencies, Means, and Standard Deviations for Victim Support by Peers

	Never		Sometimes		Most of the time		Always		Mean	Standard deviation
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%		
Q66: A student or group of students is pushing, shoving, or trying to pick a fight with a weaker student.	28	9.9	81	28.7	89	31.6	84	29.8	2.81	0.97
Q63: A student is making fun of and teasing another student who is obviously weaker.	22	7.8	97	34.4	77	27.3	86	30.5	2.80	0.96
Q65: A student in my school is telling lies or making fun of another student who gets picked on a lot using the Internet (email, instant messaging, cell phone text messaging, or websites).	42	14.9	88	31.2	82	29.1	70	24.8	2.64	1.01
Q64: A student is spreading rumors and lies about another student behind their back.	34	12.1	106	37.6	95	33.7	47	16.7	2.55	0.91

If a student was making fun of and teasing another student who was obviously weaker, student support of the victim revealed a third always and a quarter mostly supported the victim. Another third sometimes supported the victim. Support for victims was not as strong when students were asked about a student spreading rumors and lies about another student without their knowledge. Only 16.7% stated always and 21% responded Never. Reliability statistics for support for victims by peers had a Cronbach's alpha of .84.

Research Question 5

How do Catholic middle school students feel about their teachers and staff supporting students who are bullied?

The final research question raised the question of support victims felt they receive from their teachers and staff members (see Table 9). When a student or group of students was pushing, shoving, or trying to instigate a fight with weaker students, half said teachers always support victims and another quarter said most of the time. Similarly, if a student was making fun of and teasing another student who was obviously weaker, half the students said teachers and staff supported the victim always and another quarter said most of the time.

Again, support for victims by teachers was not as strong when pupils were asked about a student spreading rumors and lies about another student without their knowledge: only a third indicated always. Participants felt teachers always provided support (41.8%) if another student was telling lies or making fun of another student who was picked on a great deal when using the Internet; in contrast 7.8% who indicated never. The reliability statistics for support for victims by teachers and staff had a Cronbach's Alpha of .85.

Table 9

Frequencies, Means, and Standard Deviations for Victim Support by Teachers

	Never		Sometimes		Most of the time		Always		Mean	Standard deviation
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%		
Q70: A student or group of students is pushing, shoving, or trying to pick a fight with a weaker student.	18	6.4	38	13.5	81	28.7	145	51.4	3.25	0.92
Q67: A student is making fun of and teasing another student who is obviously weaker.	17	6.0	44	15.6	74	26.2	147	52.1	3.24	0.93
Q69: A student in your school is telling lies or making fun of another student who gets picked on a lot using the Internet (email, instant messaging, cell phone text messaging, or websites).	22	7.8	55	19.5	87	30.9	118	41.8	3.07	0.96
Q68: A student is spreading rumors and lies about another student behind their back.	20	7.1	49	17.4	125	44.3	88	31.2	3.00	0.88

Additional Findings

The survey revealed pertinent information about degrees of bullying behavior (see Table 10). Students who hurt or threatened to hurt teachers or adults at school were not a major problem in Catholic middle school: more than half indicated not at all or only sort of a problem. In contrast, 20.9% thought it was a pretty big problem and another fifth identified it as a huge problem. Students were evenly divided about students teasing, spreading rumors and lies, or saying mean things to other students. The Cronbach's alpha was .89 for these 16 items.

Table 10

Frequencies, Means, and Standard Deviations for Degrees of Bullying

	A huge problem		A pretty big problem		Sort of a problem		Not at all		Mean	Standard deviation
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%		
Q19: Students who hurt or threaten to hurt teachers or adults at school.	51	18.1	59	20.9	50	17.7	122	43.3	2.86	1.16
Q21: Students saying mean things about teachers to make them feel bad.	53	18.8	56	19.9	73	25.9	100	35.5	2.78	1.12
Q17: Students picking fights with other students.	69	24.5	26	9.2	109	38.7	78	27.7	2.70	1.12
Q18: Students who push, shove, or trip weaker students.	48	17.0	71	25.2	86	30.5	77	27.3	2.68	1.05
Q22: Students telling lies or making fun of other students using the Internet (email, instant messaging, cell phone text messaging, or websites).	57	20.2	66	23.4	84	29.8	75	26.6	2.63	1.08
Q20: Students teasing, spreading rumors and lies, or saying mean things to other students.	66	23.4	60	21.3	93	33.0	63	22.3	2.54	1.08

The survey also revealed how students felt about their peers (see Table 11). Two thirds thought their peers could be completely trusted or mostly trusted. Of student respondents, 44.7% believed their peers were available to them whenever they needed help. Students indicated if their peers had bad thoughts about them: the study revealed that 41.5% were confident that was not the case. Some questions were negatively worded and reversed coded; the Cronbach's alpha was .77. It seemed these six items probed two different concepts.

Table 11

Frequencies, Means, and Standard Deviations for Student's Attitudes About Their Peers

	No, not at all		A little		Pretty much		Yes, completely		Mean	Standard deviation
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%		
Q41: Can be trusted a lot.	17	6.0	65	23.0	107	37.9	93	33.0	2.98	0.90
Q39: Really care about what happens to me.	28	9.9	68	24.1	84	29.8	102	36.2	2.92	1.00
Q40: Are there for me whenever I need help.	20	7.1	61	21.6	126	44.7	75	26.6	2.91	0.87
Q42: Care about my feelings.	27	9.6	67	23.8	108	38.3	80	28.4	2.85	0.94
Q43: Only think about themselves.	46	16.3	67	23.8	87	30.9	82	29.1	2.73	1.05
Q44: Think bad things about me.	117	41.5	63	22.3	51	18.1	51	18.1	2.13	1.14

Summary

Major survey findings showed that 54.3% of students in Catholic middle schools really agreed that their school was important to them. Students really agreed (49.3%) their school was a good place to be. Students agreed (58.5%) that students generally get along with each other. Students felt they were just as good as other students 51.8% and 46.8% believed they could do things as well as most other people.

In this research, students were asked about spreading rumors: 63.5% stated they never participate. Students claimed (64.2%) they never encourage students to push, shove, or trip weaker students and 46.5% indicated they never stood by and watched other students getting hit, pushed, shoved, or tripped. However, 12.4% admitted they had stood by and watched.

Students were asked how frequently a student or group of students told lies or made fun of them using the Internet: 14.5% stated a great deal and 53.2% said never.

When asked about a particular student or group of students teasing and saying mean things to them, 8.5% claimed that happened a great deal, but a third said never. Students were asked to critique and make a judgment about bullying behaviors. Fully 61.3% stated it was perfectly fine to get a teacher involved when someone is being beaten up. Almost 60% stated students should go to the teacher for help when others are spreading rumors and lies. Over 49% of students think it is really wrong for students to tease weaker students and to spread rumors and lies about other students without their knowledge. Over 53% of students thought it was really wrong for students to encourage others to fight weaker students almost 55% thought it was really wrong to push, shove, or pick fights with weaker students.

Students were asked to rate how they felt their peers support victims of bullying. Over 61% stated students are supported most of the time or always, but almost 10% claimed they were never supported. More than 80% of students-victims felt their teachers and staff supported them always or most of the time when students are instigating a fight. Almost 20% of students felt their teachers sometimes or never supported them.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMEDATIONS

Summary of Findings

The purpose of this study was to investigate bullying issues in Catholic middle school students. Very few studies have investigated bullying in Catholic schools. The highest prevalence of bullying occurs in the middle school grades and can happen in any school community (Bradshaw et al., 2013). School leaders need to recognize the magnitude and range of bullying to understand the dynamics and implement changes, if needed. Bullying can prevent student learning and change the school climate (Mitchell & Brendtro, 2013; Nansel, Overpeck, Pilla, Ruan, Simons-Morton, & Scheidt, 2001). Adolescents are able to bully without physical contact and without being known. All students have a right to feel safe at school (Carney & Hazler, 2016).

This study investigated the issue of bullying as a sociocultural quality and used the ecological model of child development by Bronfenbrenner (1977) to clarify many aspects regarding behaviors, especially the complex problem of bullying. Researchers identified the importance of investigating bullying in the whole social context by considering individual behavior, family dynamics, classroom setting, peer groups, economics, culture, and religious circumstances (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Espelage et al., 2015).

This study used a survey-method design. Participants were Catholic middle school students from 13 states. Participants (n = 282) took the survey online through a

private company, FocusVision. The researcher was able to monitor the results throughout the study.

Discussion

Research Question 1

What are Catholic middle school students' attitudes toward their school climate?

Catholic middle school students believed their school was important to them and that it was a good place to be. Students thought their teachers respected them. More than 88% of students agreed or really agreed that their teachers and staff were doing the right things to prevent bullying at school. When asked if they thought their teachers were fair, over 90% of Catholic middle school students agreed. These results are consistent with prior research (Belmonte & Cranston, 2009; Valadez & Mirci, 2015).

Students also responded to questions about their feelings of self-worth. The survey showed that the majority of students felt they were as good as other students, thought much about themselves was good, and were performing as well as their peers. This sense of self-worth increases students' chance of success in academics and future learning. These students have a good outlook and most likely will be successful in high school and college (Scanlan, 2011).

Research Question 2

How do students in Catholic middle schools get along with their peers?

This research showed that the majority of Catholic middle school students do not participate in spreading rumors. They also do not encourage others to hurt weaker students and do not stand by and witness others being harmed. This outcome shows a sense of high morality and wisdom for social justice.

When asked if students ignored rumors and tried to defend others who get pushed or shoved, responses were evenly mixed. This showed that middle school students are hesitant to get involved when others are being bullied. Research exposed that students may ignore bullying because it may diminish their own status (Mynard & Joseph, 2000; Nansel et al., 2001; Studer & Mynatt, 2015; Valadez & Mirci, 2015).

Students were quite willing to affirm themselves (over 50%) if they were bullied through the Internet. About a quarter of the students revealed that others have spread rumors or made fun of them and almost 29% stated they have been pushed, shoved, or tripped. These results show that schools need to monitor students' behaviors carefully to ensure safety, especially during recess and lunchtime. Teacher training should be reviewed. Rules may need to be clarified in some classes and consequences should be reasonable.

More than half the students surveyed stated that they do not tell lies or make fun of others by using the Internet. The other half admitted they have, sometimes, a little, or a lot. Many researchers found this also to be the case with the Internet (Bauman et al., 2013; Ortega et al., 2012; Patchin & Hinduja, 2010). This is a major concern. Middle school students do not have an adult perspective. They do not always realize that words and pictures are permanent on the computer, even after they are deleted. These actions can seriously impact students in their future college and job applications.

Almost 34% of students stated they never tease and say mean things to other students. Most students (66%) admitted to doing so. The same claims were made throughout the research (Espelage et al., 2000; Hoglund et al., 2012). This is also a

concern. Students need to be less judgmental and think about keeping their opinions of others to themselves. These mean actions have escalated in schools and in society.

Research Question 3

How do Catholic middle school students think and feel about various forms of bullying?

This question asked students to make a judgment about bullying behaviors. Most middle school students believed it was acceptable to get teachers and staff involved when students are being beaten. Also, the majority of students would ask for help from a teacher when others were spreading rumors. This was a good sign. Students realized that words hurt. Almost half the students in this survey thought it wrong to tease weaker students, spread rumors, and lie about them behind their backs. The other half thought it was only sort of wrong or acceptable.

This is an issue for the schools and disheartening to find that some students' attitudes toward their fellow classmates could reach this level. It is hard for students to speak out against bullying by themselves. Schools need to help students join with others to stand up to a bully and get an adult involved (D'Esposito et al., 2011; Merrell et al., 2008).

Research Question 4

What are Catholic middle school students' thoughts and feelings about support from their peers at their school regarding students who are bullied?

The questionnaire revealed how students felt about the support the bullied victims received from their peers. Over 60% of victims felt support from their classmates whereas 38% did not feel supported when it came to pushing, shoving, or picking a fight.

Even less, students felt their peers' support when it came to making fun and teasing. Results also showed that only half the student-victims felt supported by peers when students were spreading rumors and lies (Domino, 2013; Spriggs et al., 2007).

Social-justice issues should be the focus in the curriculum. Getting along with others needs to be stressed. Students should be able to defend for their peers. Speaking out about an injustice can bring clarity and wisdom. Students need to take responsibility for what happens among themselves.

Research Question 5

How do Catholic middle school students feel about their teachers and staff supporting students who are bullied?

Overall, students felt more support from their teachers and staff than from other students. Over 80% of students claimed teachers support victims when they are pushed and shoved. Students understand that their peers are powerless and sometimes afraid to get involved because they do not want to become the next victim. Schools need to be diligent and aware of these issues.

Almost three quarters of victims felt their teachers supported them if anyone was making fun of them, teasing them, or spreading rumors. Over a quarter of the victims did not feel teachers support if the Internet was used to bully. This is consistent with the research. Teachers are hesitant to get involved with Internet bullying because it usually does not happen on school property (Espelage & Hong, 2017; Hase et al., 2015; Nixon, 2014; Semerci, 2016).

Conclusion

Conclusion and Implications

Catholic middle schools are aware of bullying behavior. Students are feeling more pressure than ever to fit in, be accepted, and belong to a group. Physical bullying peaks in the middle school years (Bradshaw et al., 2013). All adults play a significant role in this problem. Students, parents, teachers, staff, administrators, counselors, pastors, and the community need to work together and take a proactive role in addressing concerns of bullying. Bullying includes an array of behaviors and concerns, not merely identifying the bully (Carney & Hazler, 2016).

Schools need to target bullying behaviors among middle school students in the context of family and adult influences, peer influences, and environmental factors to see the whole child. Addressing bullying, not only through the lens of the demographics of gender, race, and affluence, but also a student's family lifestyle, peer relationships, academic achievement, and feeling safe at school, clearly produces a better picture of human behavior (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).

Regular training for teachers and staff is vital. All personnel should know how to identify and take immediate action if a bully situation happens. These important teaching tools are needed for all teachers to assist in helping students learn proper ways of addressing conflicts (Studer & Mynatt, 2015). Some examples of activities in which middle school students can participate to assist in raising bullying awareness are listed here:

1. Assignments that require students to research specific topics of bullying.
2. Group presentations about recent activities.

3. Role-playing skits to foster understanding.
4. Small-group discussions.
5. Anonymous box labeled only for bullying incidents.
6. Creative-writing assignments or poster campaigns.
7. Confidential class meetings.
8. Student task force that reports to homeroom teachers.
9. Middle school buddies between sixth-and eighth-grade students.

The greatest implications for schools are levels of depression and anxiety among students, decline in school attendance, potential lower academic grades, students' self-esteem, less participation in extracurricular events, emotional suffering, and students' socioemotional overall health. Students involved in bullying are less engaged in school activities, which are an important bonding time for friends, and students who are involved feel less isolated (LaFee, 2012). Some bullying behaviors can lead to problems with law enforcement. Researchers found a correlation between bullying and the use of alcohol and drugs. Some students engage with gangs, experience violent behavior, and become victimized. Recently, an array of mental health issues and suicides has been linked to bullying (Hase et al., 2015; Jenkins et al, 2016).

Schools do not want students to feel powerless, humiliated, depressed, anxious, isolated, and withdrawn. Bullying is a serious problem that can damage a person's self-image, confidence, and health status (Bhatta et al., 2014; D'Esposito et al., 2011; Vieno et al., 2011).

Bullying is also a social-justice issue. Reaching out and helping the marginalized students is at the core of Catholic education (Bradley-Levine & Carr, 2015). Students are

taught to feel compassion for others, work together in solidarity, and find the goodness in others who are less fortunate. This strongly applies to bullying because power is at the core of bullying behavior (Bazelon, 2013; Collopy et al., 2012; Mucci, 2015).

Recommendations

Recommendations for Future Research

Many aspects of bullying need further study. Future studies could focus on gender issues, suicide, and sexual orientation. Research needs to explore the overall health of students, which includes eating, sleeping, and exercise. Isolation, loneliness, depression, and loss of hope need investigation among students not only for bullying, but for their overall health and outlook on life.

Research is needed on how groups form. Belonging to a group is very important and how those groupings come about could be a very interesting research project. Examining students' insecurities is another aspect of bullying that needs to be investigated. Tracking a group of student through the years would also be helpful to the issue of bullying.

Future research is needed on social-justice matters. The transformation of students' awareness after experiences with appreciation of diversity, finding dignity in others, working in solidarity, and discovering concerns for others could be enlightening. Giving support and kindness toward a disadvantaged group can change people's hearts. Students should have the opportunity to become aware of others' needs and rights, whether or not they agree with them. Being vulnerable can make a person strong. Social justice can make people think outside themselves. Those discoveries could be part of profound research.

Additional investigation is warranted on the habits of families. When young minds witness stressful events, insecurities can form. Family violence forms bullying behavior through mimicking aggressive conduct. Long periods of unsupervised behavior links with deviant manners, not just bullying. Other dynamics in a family need further research: lack of parental love and warmth, absence of family cohesion, and uninvolved parents can be indicators for bullying. The foundations of confidence and self-reliance are formed at home.

Recommendations for Future Practice

Schools need to have a strong bullying-awareness program. At the beginning of each school year, these directives should be clarified to teachers, parents, and students. Follow-up training also needs to be in place. Encompassing social justice to teach kindness, respect, responsibility, values, compassion, goodwill, empathy, and kindness will improve the school climate. All students have a right to be in a safe environment at school and free from any dangerous behavior.

"Differences" is a very important word that students need to hear at home and at school. People may feel threatened by differences and unconsciously pass judgment. Bullying is dangerous when people project their own insecurities on others. Teaching acceptance, tolerance, and a sense of peace within oneself can be inspirational for all.

Students need to witness good behaviors at home and school from adults. Students also need to be taught strong social tools at home so they can use them at school and social events. If children learn how to be friendly, how to share cooperatively, have the skills to join in a group of children, and own a sense of humor, they are less likely to be bullied or become a victim.

Students should be respected and accepted for who they are, as long as it does not infringe on any other student's rights. Consequences for bad behavior must be fair, direct, and timely. Schools that follow up, set limits, and continue to be aware of bullying are more effective in stopping this behavior.

Schools have a variety of ways to monitor and change unfavorable student behavior at school and at home. Children need assistance to have confidence in themselves and the ability to make a difference. Follow is a list of ideas for adults in children's lives:

1. Intervene instantly with firm and fair discipline and consequences,
2. Create opportunities to "do good;"
3. Foster empathy skills;
4. Support strong healthy friendships;
5. Monitor TV time, video games, and computer sites;
6. Model respect and healthy relationships;
7. Participate in relevant, constructive, and healthy activities; and
8. Teach children to respect and think good things of others.

Final Thoughts

As this researcher thinks about personal experiences as a teacher's aide, classroom teacher, substitute teacher, and assistant principal, the realization of the impact on students' learning and behavior is informative. Educators impart so much more than facts. Educators give students the tools to guide and survive. This researcher's career has led many young adults to think independently. Educators model behaviors that students witness and learn from each day.

Supervision is essential in the school environment. Students want to know that they feel safe in the classroom, during recess, lunch, break times, and between classes. Locker rooms and hallways need monitoring. As assistant principal, scheduling teachers and staff to supervise these areas is significant.

As a former classroom teacher it is vital to recognize and identify aggressive students, both boys and girls. These students need to learn tools for coping with their feeling and understand their triggers. Teachers should not reward aggressive behavior, but set clear limits. It is important to intervene immediately to stop bully/victim situations. Teachers also need resources available for aggressive students.

This researcher, and mom, has also seen the increase of violence on TV, movies, videos, video games, and social media. This can have an affect on middle school students. This constant exposure to undesirable behavior can increase aggression and fear among children and also decrease their level of empathy for others.

As assistant principal, I talked with students about various topics. The most common theme was issues with their relationships with their peers. Students worried, fretted, and were concerned about fitting in among their classmates. This is a change from when this researcher started teaching over 35 years ago. The major concerns for students were class assignments, homework, and grades.

Educators can impart four major tools to students. The first is that every child needs one good friend for camaraderie. Second, all children want to belong to a group. Next, students need a strong sense of self. Last, students need to learn how to be a good friend.

People must extend compassion to themselves first so they can extend compassion to others. All adults need to model this behavior. Students are less likely to attack others if they feel compassion. Students need to be aware of their own triggers. Student will note how mindful the community around them acts. Educators should teach students to be inclusive. Helping students think about their own behavior before taking action can change how students react to others.

This researcher believes that the old rules do not apply. The new generation thinks differently, requiring a more creative approach. Young students need guidance more than ever. Educators should think collaboratively, modeling and teaching awareness of oneself and others and reflect before they take action.

For all the students that have been involved in any type of bullying behavior, this researcher feels empathy for the pain and suffering experienced. Being kind and thinking good thoughts are tenets to live by. The Golden Rule is a perfect ending: People should treat others as they wish to be treated.

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APPENDIX A
USF IRB Approval Letter

UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO — Protocol Exemption Notification

To: Margaret Murphy
From: Terence Patterson, IRB Chair
Subject: Protocol #414
Date: 03/31/2015

The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS) at the University of San Francisco (USF) has reviewed your request for human subjects approval regarding your study.

Your project (IRB Protocol **#414**) with the title **AN EXAMINATION OF BULLYING IN CATHOLIC MIDDLE SCHOOLS IN NORTHERN CALIFORNIA** has been approved by the University of San Francisco IRBPHS as **Exempt** according to 45CFR46.101(b). Your application for exemption has been verified because your project involves minimal risk to subjects as reviewed by the IRB on 03/31/2015.

Please note that changes to your protocol may affect its exempt status. Please submit a modification application within ten working days, indicating any changes to your research. Please include the Protocol number assigned to your application in your correspondence.

On behalf of the IRBPHS committee, I wish you much success in your endeavors.

Sincerely,

Terence Patterson,
Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects
IRBPHS - Univeristy of San Francisco
IRBPHS@usfca.edu

APPENDIX B

Survey Instrument

Bullying Prevention Initiative Student Survey

WELCOME TO THE SURVEY!

Pre-A: How many children under the age of 18 do you currently have living in your household?
*include None option
*terminate if None is selected

Pre-B: What grade level(s) is/are your child/children currently enrolled in? _Kindergarten _Elementary (1st through 5th grade) _Middle School (6th through 8th grade) _High School (9th through 12th grade)
*terminate if Middle School not selected

Pre-C: For your child currently enrolled in middle school, what type of school is he/she enrolled in?
_Public _Private (non-religion) _Catholic _Christian (non-Catholic) _Boarding School _None of the above
*terminate if Catholic not selected

Pre-D: I currently have a child enrolled in: __ 6th grade __ 7th grade __ 8th grade

Pre-E: My child attending a Catholic school in California is currently available to take remainder of the survey. (yes/no)
*if NO show page (with no continue button) – Please come back when your child is available to take the survey.
*If YES show page – Please have your child answer the remainder of the survey.

This survey is a series of statements allowing you to tell us how you think and feel about things in your school. We are only asking for what you think, not what other people think. There are no right and wrong answers, so please choose the answer that best tells us how you think or feel about each statement.

MY SCHOOL

Think about how strongly you disagree or agree with the following statements about your school. Mark the answer that best shows us what you feel based on your experience since this past year.

	REALLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	AGREE	REALLY AGREE
1. Students in my school can be trusted.				
2. Students in my school generally get along with each others.				
3. Students in my school generally feel the same way about things.				
4. Teachers and staff in my school can be trusted.				
5. Teachers and staff in my school usually get along with students.				
6. Teachers and staff in my school generally feel the same way about things.				
7. This is a pretty close-knit school where everyone looks out for each other.				
8. My teachers respect me.				
9. My teachers are fair.				
10. Teachers in my school are nice people.				
11. When students break rules at my school, they are treated fairly.				
12. The principal asks students about their ideas at my school.				
13. My school is a good place to be.				
14. I feel like I belong at my school.				
15. My school is important to me.				
16. Teachers and staff at my school are doing the right things to prevent bullying.				

HOW BIG A PROBLEM

Think about whether the following things are problems at your school. Mark the answer that shows how big of a problem you think they have been since this past year.

How much of a problem is:	A HUGE PROBLEM	A PRETTY BIG PROBLEM	SORT OF A PROBLEM	NOT AT ALL
17. Students picking fights with other students.				
18. Students who push, shove, or trip weaker students.				
19. Students who hurt or threaten to hurt teachers or adults at school.				
20. Students teasing, spreading rumors and lies, or saying mean things to other students.				
21. Students saying mean things about teachers to make them feel bad.				
22. Students telling lies or making fun of other students using the Internet (email, instant messaging, cell phone text messaging, or websites).				

GETTING ALONG WITH OTHERS

Think about how many times each of the following things has happened in over the past year. Mark how often these things have happened since this past year.

First, think about things you might have done.	A LOT	SEVERAL TIMES	ONCE OR TWICE	NEVER
23. I pushed, shoved, tripped, or picked fights with students who I know are weaker than me.				
24. I teased or said mean things to certain students.				
25. I spread rumors about some students.				
26. I told lies or made fun of some students using the Internet (email, instant messaging, cell phone text messaging, or websites).				
27. I encouraged students to push, shove, or trip weaker students.				
28. I cheered when someone was beating up another student.				
29. I joined in when students were teasing and being mean to certain students.				
30. I joined in when students told lies about other students.				
31. I stood by and watched other students getting hit, pushed, shoved, or tripped.				
32. I ignored rumors or lies that I heard about other students.				
33. I tried to defend the students who always get pushed or shoved around.				
34. I asked an adult to help someone whom was getting teased, pushed, or shoved around by other students.				

Now, think about things that might have happened to you.	A LOT	SEVERAL TIMES	ONCE OR TWICE	NEVER
35. A particular student or group of students pushed, shoved, tripped, or picked fights with me.				
36. A particular student or group of students teased and said mean things to me.				
37. A particular student or group of students spread rumors or made fun of me.				
38. A student or group of students told lies or made fun of me using the Internet (email, instant messaging, cell phone text messaging, or websites).				

ABOUT ME AND OTHERS

Now, think about students your age (not just your closest friends) since this past year. Mark how true each of the following statements are for you.

STUDENTS MY AGE:	NO, NOT AT ALL	A LITTLE	PRETTY MUCH	YES, COMPLETELY
39. Really care about what happens to me.				
40. Are there for me whenever I need help.				
41. Can be trusted a lot.				
42. Care about my feelings.				
43. Only think about themselves.				
44. Think bad things about me.				

Now, think about your opinion of yourself since this past year. Mark whether or not you agree or disagree with each of the statements below.

	REALLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	AGREE	REALLY AGREE
45. I feel I am just as good as other students.				
46. I feel there are lots of good things about me.				
47. All in all, I feel like a failure.				
48. I am able to do things as well as most other people.				
49. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.				
50. I take a positive attitude toward myself.				
51. I wish I could have more respect for myself.				
52. I certainly feel useless at times.				

WRONG AND RIGHT

Now think about whether the following actions are WRONG or OK for students your age based on our experience since this past year. Mark whether you think the actions are really wrong, sort of wrong, sort of OK or perfectly OK.

Is it Wrong or Ok when . . .	REALLY WRONG	SORT OF WRONG	SORT OF OK	PERFECTLY OK
53. Students tease weaker students in front of others.				
54. Students spread rumors and lies about other students behind their back.				
55. Students telling lies or making fun of less popular students using the Internet (email, instant messaging, cell phone text messaging, or websites).				
56. Students push, shove, or pick fights with weaker students.				
57. Students encourage others to fight weaker students and cheer them on.				
58. Students encourage others to be mean and spread lies about less popular students.				
59. Students ignore it when someone weaker is being pushed around.				
60. Students defend others who are being shoved around by stronger students.				
61. Students go to the teacher or an adult for help when someone is getting beaten up.				
62. Students go to the teacher or an adult for help when others are spreading rumors and lies about someone.				

SITUATIONS

Think about what most STUDENTS in your SCHOOL would do in the following situations since this past year. Could MOST STUDENTS IN YOUR SCHOOL be counted on to stop what is happening?

STUDENTS in your school would help out if:	NEVER	SOMETIMES	MOST OF THE TIME	ALWAYS
63. A student is making fun of and teasing another student who is obviously weaker.				
64. A student is spreading rumors and lies about another student behind their back.				
65. A student in my school is telling lies or making fun of another student who gets picked on a lot using the Internet (email, instant messaging, cell phone text messaging, or websites).				
66. A student or group of students is pushing, shoving, or trying to pick a fight with a weaker student.				

Now think about what TEACHERS and STAFF at school would do in the following situations since this past year. Could TEACHERS AND STAFFAT YOUR SCHOOL be counted on to stop what is happening?

TEACHERS AND STAFF in your school would help out if:	NEVER	SOMETIMES	MOST OF THE TIME	ALWAYS
67. A student is making fun of and teasing another student who is obviously weaker.				
68. A student is spreading rumors and lies about another student behind their back.				
69. A student in your school is telling lies or making fun of another student who gets picked on a lot using the Internet (email, instant messaging, cell phone text messaging, or websites).				
70. A student or group of students is pushing, shoving, or trying to pick a fight with a weaker student.				