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I'm Gonna Write That Down: Research on Bullying and Recognition of Perception Toward Initiation of Intervention a Whole-School Approach to Bringing all Stakeholders' Perceptions on Bullying in Line and Training Students to Distinguish Tattling from Reporting in Grades 3-6

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*I'M GONNA WRITE THAT DOWN: RESEARCH ON BULLYING AND
RECOGNITION OF PERCEPTION TOWARD INITIATION OF INTERVENTION
A WHOLE-SCHOOL APPROACH TO BRINGING ALL STAKEHOLDERS'
PERCEPTIONS ON BULLYING IN LINE AND TRAINING STUDENTS TO
DISTINGUISH TATTLING FROM REPORTING IN GRADES 3-6*

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the College of Education and Behavioral Sciences
Western Kentucky University
Bowling Green, Kentucky

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

By
Brad Tassell

December 2013

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To my wife, Janet Tassell, Ph.D., whose incredible love and example create a need for me to be more than the sum of my parts, and to Darby Tassell, who fills me with awe and wonder every day. You truly are incredible!

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CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iv
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION	1
The Purpose.....	1
Focus of the Review.....	3
Plan of Action.....	5
Definition of Terms.....	7
Bullying.....	7
Protocol for Correction or District, State or School Rules/Mandates/Laws.....	8
Bullying Programs.....	9
Effectiveness.....	9
Empathy.....	9
Emotional Intelligence.....	10
I'm Gonna Write That Down.....	10
Write That Down.....	11
Tattling.....	11
Reporting.....	11
Self-Efficacy.....	11
Scope and Sequence.....	11
Summary.....	12
CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE	13
Introduction to Concept.....	13
Whole-School Program Overview.....	15
A Review of Studies.....	15
The Steps Approach in Two Districts.....	18
Narrowing the Vision to the School.....	21

Reflection on the Whole-School Approach Research.....	23
Perceptions of All Stakeholders.....	24
Perception in Stakeholders Survey.....	25
Comparison Report.....	26
Teacher and Administrator Perceptual Differences.....	31
Children's Perception of What Stops Bullying.....	35
Perception of Students in Oklahoma.....	38
Chapter Reflection.....	42
CHAPTER III: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS,	
DISCUSSION, AND REFLECTION.....	44
Program Explanation.....	45
Future Research Study.....	46
Helping Those Who Bully.....	47
Limitations and Assessment.....	48
Conclusion.....	49
REFERENCES.....	51

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Research on whole-school bullying programs shows some effectiveness in creating awareness and a reduction in overall bullying with vigilant supervision. Role-playing games repeatedly taught to students help them deal with bullying in specific situations, but all these interventions leave a great deal to be desired when conditions are not in line with the training, most of which most are not (Smith, Schneider, Smith, & Ananiadou, 2004). In addition, student perceptions can differ from the staff and administration. A wide gap exists between how students, parents, teachers, and administrators perceive bullying. Students remain confused and flounder in the moment when they feel bullied, while bystanders are statistically shown to be scared and even help the bully in many cases (Mishna, Pepler, & Wiener, 2006). This study examines research from the past 10 years on the effectiveness of whole-school programs. Two main criteria include: (1) A comprehensive “macro” comparison study of research leading to a “micro” examination of specific school research, and (2) an examination of the importance of recognizing perception and creating interventions that any student can utilize no matter their level of fear. In addition, an introduction and an explanation of the ideas and concepts of the *I'm Gonna Write That Down* program are included.

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

What if a whole-school bullying program existed that was teachable in a day with or without professional training? What if this program gave students a simple, clear signal when they felt bullied? What if a signal existed for all stakeholders indicating when a student's perception was, "I am being bullied," requiring the bully (ies) to be put on notice to stop? If the behavior continued, the steps to consequences were clear to everyone, and the school would be notified that this child felt emotionally compromised. No matter how the teacher or principal defined bullying, the student's perception was fear. A program designed to foster strong school and peer leadership. Last, some students use tattling to bully others, trying to get them into trouble. What if a specific technique existed, implemented by teachers, that helped students determine the difference between tattling or reporting, causing students to consider their actions and assess the true level of danger before telling on someone without just cause?

These questions led to this research study. After more than eight years of work in hundreds of schools with tens of thousands of students, educators, administrators, and parents, the overwhelming qualitative evidence begs the need to search for a more quantitative basis to create a program that fills the holes uncovered by the research. The data presented show that bullying will decrease when everyone learns to say, "I'm gonna write that down."

The Purpose

School personnel spend a great deal of time discussing bullying. Forty-nine states have anti-bullying laws, and many require similar programs (bullypolice.org, 2012).

Legislation in the Commonwealth of Kentucky states:

KRS 158.148 states that each local board of education shall be responsible for formulating a code of acceptable behavior and discipline to apply to the students in each school operated by the board. The code shall be updated no less frequently than every two (2) years, with the first update being completed by November 30, 2008.

(a) The superintendent, or designee, shall be responsible for overall implementation and supervision, and each school principal shall be responsible for administration and implementation within each school.

Each school council shall select and implement the appropriate discipline and classroom management techniques necessary to carry out the code.

The board shall establish a process for a two-way communication system for teachers and other employees to notify a principal, supervisor, or other administrator of an existing emergency.

(b) The code shall contain the type of behavior expected from each student, the consequences of failure to obey the standards, and the importance of the standards to the maintenance of a safe learning environment where orderly learning is possible and encouraged. (KY State Government, 2008b)

The U.S. Department of Education (2010) calls for schools to protect students from the physical and emotional harm associated with bullying, but, for the most part, schools focus their efforts on managing behavior and codes of conduct rather than teaching preventative means specifically related to bullying (Walton, 2010). Regardless of the amount of training students receive regarding bullying, they still do not know how to react when it occurs. After 15 years of bully prevention work, Maunder, Harrop, and Tattersall (2010) found no consensus on preventing bullying or a resource advocating one approach. Every student group is asked the question that is written in bold red letters on the front cover of my book, *Don't Feed the Bully* (Tassell, 2006). What does “Don’t feed the bully” mean? Responses are given, but none truly grasp the complex and varied situations involved in bullying. Answers include: “Ignore them,” or “Walk away” or “Go tell a teacher.” A myriad of responses are given -- and all are right -- but none are correct

for every situation. The author's explanation is that "Don't feed the bully" means a victim should avoid reacting in a way that is expected by the bully, but this issue remains a complex concept for students in grade 9, let alone those in grades 3-6. When one considers the fear and emotions attached to the perception of a bullying situation, the possibility of students advocating on their own behalf is next to impossible. Chapter I of this review will focus on the creation of a plan of action, definition of terms needed for a completed understanding, scope and sequence, and summary.

Focus of the review

Students may not be aware of Olweus' (1993a) definition of bullying, but they know when they are scared and when they perceive danger and emotional pain. Ross and Horner (2009) stated, "A major emphasis focuses on teaching students that disrespectful behavior typically keeps happening because it results in attention and praise from others" (p. 753). Students were encouraged to "take away the attention that serves as oxygen which maintains the flame of disrespectful behavior" (p. 753). A major focus of this study consists of an investigation into research pertaining to student reactions when they perceive that bullying is occurring and the effectiveness of their responses.

This study also will examine school programs primarily in grades 3-6 that intend to create 100% stakeholders in all students, teachers, administrators, and parents in closing the perception gap that exists between perceptions of bullying. Waasdorp, Elise, O'Brennan, and Bradshaw (2011) noted, "Few studies have examined perceptual differences regarding peer victimization and the broader bullying climate among students, staff, and parents" (p.115) and how those differences in such definitions could affect the success of any prevention program (Maunder et al., 2010).

The first section of this review examines past research on the effectiveness of whole-school approaches. The literature review begins with attempts by Smith et al. (2004) to identify all articles on bullying intervention plans and distills them down to those that worked based on their criteria model. This study presents a “macro” attempt to evaluate effectiveness, and the addition of the Smith et al. (2004) article to this review becomes a basis to introduce the scope of the problem of quantifying effectiveness in whole-school bullying approaches. The “micro” aspect of more recent research into whole-school programs includes studies by Hirschstein, Edstrom, Frey, Snell, and MacKenzie (2007) and the impact of the “steps to respect” program in two school districts, along with Ross and Horner (2009) and their investigation of Positive Behavior Support (PBS) with the addition of bully prevention techniques (BP) as it applies to a whole-school environment.

The studies on perception in the second half of this review represent most of the research today. One group of authors indicated they could find no research on techniques that bullied youth felt worked best for them in bullying situations; therefore, they conducted their own study (Davis & Nixon, 2011). In addition to a review of the research by Waadorp et al. (2011), Kennedy, Russom, and Kevorkian (2012) completed an exploration of the differences between teacher and administrator perceptions of bullying. Research by Frisen, Jonsson, and Persson (2007) examined students' perceptions about bullying, and a final study by Newgent et al. (2009) examined peer victimization as it related to the perceptions of all aforementioned groups. Additional research by Hughes, Middleton, and Marshall (2009) attempted to determine the perceptions of all students in the state of Oklahoma.

Plan of Action

The objective of this research is to create concrete and impossible-to-misunderstand rules and steps when any stakeholder in a school system perceives a situation of bullying. These interventions will encompass a whole-school bullying prevention program entitled *I'm Gonna Write That Down*, which is easy to implement in any school with minimum training and adaptable by schools and districts to address their particular needs. This perceptual gap is closed with one sentence for students: "I'm gonna write that down" and "Write it down" for teachers. This protocol creates a simple standard and serves as a clear indication that a student feels bullied. When a teacher, counselor, administrator, or staff member responds with "write that down," students can assess their motives as to whether they are tattling or reporting and create evidence for their perception. The perception is taken seriously at that point.

This work hypothesizes that, when implemented with school support in grades 3-6, the *I'm Gonna Write That Down* program will close the perception gap between all stakeholders for recognizing bullying and empowering students to voice their fears because of assurances of support and interventions. This study further purports that teachers will see a gradual decrease of incidences of tattling when the "Write that down" sentence is utilized with students in grades 3-6 to teach them how to self-assess the difference between tattling and reporting.

Bullies frequently are unable to recognize that they are bullying. Richards (2006) noted that what seems harmless often can be bullying and can lead to students who are bystanders feeling terrorized. Teachers and administrators tend to underestimate the fear of students by gauging a threat according to their own scale of what constitutes bullying

(Newgent et al., 2009). All school personnel may be correct, yet have different views of conflict situations. The research base for the *I'm Gonna Write That Down* theory (Gordillo, 2011) indicated that every perception, when recognized as equal and paired with a specific protocol, created a vision of safety and belongingness. Skill training better prepares students (Hirschstein et al., 2007). Furthermore, when only one skill is needed and is easily remembered, rather than a menu of actions, a much greater chance exists that the student will remember and implement that skill (Craig, Pepler, & Atlas, 2000; Olweus, 1993a). Also, students will more likely be able to stay calm, which is difficult during highly emotional conditions (Hirschstein et al., 2007).

The ability to possess and understanding empathy is two-fold. Many students lack empathy for others because they are unable to understand emotional pain (emotional intelligence), as they have not personally experienced the anxiety. Research shows that the type of empathy taught to students is not the important factor for reducing victimization. Kokkinos and Kipritsi (2012) investigated the understanding of empathy (cognitive empathy) in those who bully and those who feel empathy (affective empathy) to determine the levels of reduction in bullying behaviors. The authors found that understanding and/or experiencing the emotions of others inhibited the bullying behavior. Important to note is the study by Munoz, Qualter, and Padgett (2011), which found that understanding empathy (cognitive) inhibited bullying only when the student was caring and not callous. The research showed that callous and uncaring students often used their understanding of empathy to victimize others to a greater degree. The *I'm Gonna Write That Down* program hypothesizes that the importance is not in whether aggressors or bystanders feel or understand emotional pain or fear. The program postulates aggressors

will cease victimization, and bystanders will intervene, once the perception has been recognized. Students also will be aware that the school, parents, and district will intervene when bullying has been recognized. This definitive understanding of all stakeholders will fill the victimization gap left by those students who understand empathy, yet continue to bully, because they know they will not be held accountable.

Definition of Terms

Prior to discussion or exploration of any research into the cognitive aspects of bullying and the importance of perception, pertinent terms will be defined. Words and concepts may have multiple meanings depending upon usage and need. The aim is two-fold in stating the intended meaning of key terms for specific research. First is the creation of a base of unambiguous concepts, allowing readers to begin from a cohesive understanding. The second aim is to fulfill the need of the *I'm Gonna Write That Down* program to enable any school or group to achieve all the steps and concepts in their school, district, or system.

Bullying

Olweus's (1993a) defined bullying as, "A person is bullied when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other persons, and he or she has difficulty defending himself or herself" (p. 9). Operationally, bullying is in the eye of the beholder, which creates problems for stakeholders. An understanding of bullying must include all perceptions, even if the intervention is to change that perception. The word "bullying" is problematic, as the definition for a perceived aggressor is very different from that of a perceived victim. Furthermore, the perceptions of bystanders and stakeholder adults may have a wide range of degrees of

severity. The importance of this distinction and definition is not to define the intentions of the aggressor, even if the aggressor's intent is to bully, as defined by Olweus (1993a). The perception of bullying and the mental state of those who feel victimized take precedence for all stakeholders, but this understanding is only the basis for creating interventions and not a suggestion of such interventions. The protocol is found in the program.

The goal is to stop the sense of bullying according to the Olweus (1993a) definition, for all who experience bullying as victims or aggressors. In many cases, stakeholders who do not perceive bullying need no interventions to stop what they believe do not exist.

Protocol for Correction or District, State or School Rules/Mandates/Laws

All states, districts, schools, and school systems are creating varied protocols to define and create interventions for bullying. The definitions are their guidelines stated by administration or state legislation; an example from the state of Kentucky (KRS 158.148) appeared previously in this document. These laws and definitions not only are different in scope, but disagreement can be found on what constitutes compliance and application of these laws. Operationally, arguments continue on what specifically constitutes compliance and noncompliance, but the goal of creating a safe environment for learning is the rationale in all cases. This study, and the *I'm Gonna Write That Down* program, will attempt to focus those motives through examination of research and the creation of a comprehensive program that will fit all the legislative molds in order to obtain the key goal of creating safety and security in all educational settings.

Bullying Programs

A bullying program consists of any curriculum, plan, or intervention utilized by schools to stop bullying. A bullying program is one that uses any set of interventions or steps that has at its core the goal of school safety. This research investigates the effectiveness of bullying programs in general terms, i.e., reviewing data collected from a selection of research, but beginning with a wide-ranging view of all research. The second goal of this definition is a clearer understanding of a narrowing focus on specific schools and programs. The effort is to identify a base of what works and does not work, as defined by the effectiveness of the goal for a safe school by all stakeholders. This research specifically recognizes a working program as one that examines the diverging perceptions of all persons, with special emphasis on those who perceive themselves as victims.

Effectiveness

The definition of effectiveness is to produce a decided, decisive, or desired effect or intent (Merriam-Webster, 2013). For purposes of this study, effectiveness will answer the question concerning whether the program does what it is said to do? The effectiveness needs to have sufficient measures of reliability and validity, so the requirements for any program, including *I'm Gonna Write That Down*, fulfill the intended goals without bias.

Empathy

Empathy is the function of understanding, awareness of, sensitivity toward, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and actions of another in the past or present without those feelings, thoughts, and actions being fully communicated in an objectively explicit manner. The term empathy is derived from the Greek word

empathia, which Merriam-Webster (2013) states, “Literally means emotional passion.”

The Greek definition has the strongest connection to this study and the goal of the *I'm Gonna Write That Down* program, as bullying connects to emotional empathy and, to a lesser extent, physical empathy, which is the ability to receive and understand the similarities between people's feelings and assess their underlying emotional needs (Assanova & McGuire, 2009). The development of empathy relates to inherent and learned emotional intelligence.

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence is the innate potential to feel, use, communicate, recognize, remember, describe, identify, manage, understand, explain, and learn from emotions. It can be described as the basic skills needed to develop empathy. Research has revealed an innate ability in infants, which can be developed or delayed as children grow, depending upon environmental factors (Hein, 2007).

I'm Gonna Write That Down

The title of the program for which this research purports to test its effectiveness, as well as a statement made by a student who feels bullied or fearful, indicates the perception that “I am being bullied” and all stakeholders have been trained to understand. The sentence creates a cue or signal that is immediately understood, with the goal of removing vague meanings or confusion from any situation perceived as bullying. When the statement appears in this paper, the inference relates to the program and/or its components.

Write That Down

This statement aligns with the definition of *I'm Gonna Write That Down*, and educators use it when speaking with students who tell the teacher about a problem or tell on another student. This assists them in assessing whether they are reporting harm or tattling.

Tattling

The definition of tattling is “idle talk or chatter” (Merriam-Webster, 2013). In the school setting and for this paper, tattling entails “telling on someone to try and get them into trouble,” even though there is no harm or hurt to an individual or to property.

Reporting

In the verb form, the definition of reporting is “to give an account for” (Merriam-Webster, 2013). Operationally, for this paper and for educational purposes, reporting means “to alert supervising faculty, staff, etc., that there is harm to another person, whether it is physical, threatening, or vandalism. Someone or something is being or is hurt.”

Self-Efficacy

Self-Efficacy is an individual's belief in his or her ability to produce a designated level of performance in specific situations (Bandura, 1977). Kennedy et al. (2012) defined self-efficacy as educators' and administrators' level of confidence in conferring with parents of both the bully and the victim.

Scope and Sequence

This study presents a review of research on whole-school bullying program effectiveness, beginning with a “macro” view of researchers who attempted to uncover

relevant data on whether whole-school programs were working using specific key words and criteria. Previous relevant studies and articles were explored and narrowed down to fit the model of successful programs (Smith et al., 2004). An overview is presented on the problems associated with the study of bullying and the reliability and validity of early research. Three research articles are highlighted that look closely at more recent and specific schools, systems, and districts in an effort to present measures that authenticate the concept of *I'm Gonna Write That Down* as a sound model for exploration and development in schools. Studies were chosen for their reliability measures, validity, and their representation of a diverse section of all levels of education from single school, district, and multiple schools.

The last section of review will examine recent research on the importance of recognizing perception and will consider possible consequences when wide differences exist between administration, educators, students, and parents. The premise of *I'm Gonna Write That Down* intends to show a link between aligning perceptions and safer schools.

Summary

The continuing problem with bullying in schools has been established in Chapter I, and the need for continued research is necessary. Questions were posed on the importance of recognizing perception and how it can lead to the creation of interventions in schools to bring about a safer environment for all stakeholders in education. The purpose of this study is to present research that serves as a basis or justification for the need in grades 3-6 in all schools for the *I'm Gonna Write That Down* program. The need will extrapolate up to grade 8 that the components and model are convenient and valid for implementation.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Chapter I stated the case that schools continue to struggle with preventing bullying and that perception plays a key role in bringing stakeholders together in completing the goal of safer school environments. Furthermore, keywords and term definitions help with technical, as well as with operational, definitions. The purpose provides a clear understanding of the ideas and concepts presented. Last, explaining the scope of this work creates the justification and implementation for the *I'm Gonna Write That Down* program, for which the research, data, and real-life circumstances of schools have shown a need.

Chapter II will bring to light the information regarding bullying research based on past and current whole-school models from a “macro” and “micro” perspective. The literature contains articles and research on understanding perceptions and the differences between all participants in the school setting. The organization of this chapter first introduces a “macro” review of the effectiveness of the whole-school approach and then presents recent research on specific studies that highlight relevant data. The second half of the chapter presents current research on perception identification efforts and examines the probable causes, problems, and reasons for, and of, those differences.

Introduction to Concept

Society continues to struggle with bullying. In recent years, bullying has become the topic *du jour*. A simple Google search of “anti-bullying programs” reveals hundreds of pages of programs. Smith et al. (2004) identified 240 programs. As the topic has grown in popularity, everyone from magicians like Sarah Lewis's Anti-Bullying Magician program (Lewis, 2012) to Lady Gaga's Born This Way Foundation (Born This

Way Foundation, 2013) are working with schools to try to stop bullying. The question remains: Are these programs effective? They can be expensive. Safe School Ambassadors charge more than \$4300 to train one school (Community Matters, 2012). School personnel continue to be confused as to the perception of bullying. Students remain confused and flounder when they feel bullied, and bystanders statistically are shown to be scared, and in many cases even help the bully (Mishna et al., 2006). A great deal of time is spent discussing bullying, and one problem continually emerges. No matter how much training students have had in bullying, they still do not know how to react when it happens. They are unable to explain Olweus' (1993a) concept of bullying, but they know when they are scared and when they perceive danger and emotional pain. However, the teachers and staff generally possess a different view of bullying behavior, and they spend less energy intervening on a student's behalf when they do not possess the level of perception as the child (Bauman & Del Rio, 2006).

Resources for this review were gathered using EBSCO host database, along with five years of work in hundreds of schools. The purpose is to justify, create, and implement a program with emphasis on grades 3-6 that will create 100% stakeholders in all students, teachers, administrators, and parents in closing the perception gap that exists among what is seen as bullying. Furthermore, other areas investigated in this review range from broad to narrow and include a spectrum of research concerning the effectiveness of whole-school approaches across the country, specific cases, and a program utilizing the general approach of the *I'm Gonna Write That Down* program.

Whole-School Program Overview

A Review of Studies

In a study conducted by Smith et al. (2004), Psycho INFO, ERIC, and dissertation abstracts were searched to locate articles related to the effectiveness of bullying programs using the specific keywords of bullying, intervention, and anti-bullying. It was no surprise that the authors received an incredible 241 documents and hundreds more that were unpublished. The parameters were narrowed to 14 pertinent/criterion aligned with their model of programs, with the intent to reduce the degree of bullying and incidences of violence in schools (Smith et al., 2004). Those studies included Munthe (1989); Olweus (1993a); Whitney, Rivers, Smith, and Sharp (1994); Pepler, Craig, Ziegler, and Charach (1994); Hanewinkel and Knaack (1997); Ciucci and Smorti (1998); Rahey and Craig (2002); Melton, Limber, Cunningham, Osgood, Chambers, Flerx, . . . Nation (1998); Twemlow et al. (1999); Peterson and Rigby (1999); Stevens, De Bourdeaudhuij, and Van Oost (2000); Alsaker and Valkanover (2001); Salmivalli, Kaukiainen, and Voeten (2003); and Rosenbluth and Sanchez (2002).

The premise of such studies was to evaluate effectiveness of each program, with a comparison to the original Olweus (1993a) study, as most bullying intervention programs base their results on the Olweus program in Norway. In this case, the authors indicated that their research revealed, “The dramatic success of the Olweus (1993a) program in Norway has not been replicated elsewhere” (Smith et al., 2004, p. 557). The intent was to use only empirically sound evidence, but they found they would have no studies with which to work if the parameters were so strict. The results showed that 7 of the 14 studies incorporated some systematic verification that delivered the intervention with integrity

(Smith et al., 2004). Programs with increased monitoring yielded more positive outcomes, with the link between program monitoring and outcomes reaching statistical significance for victimization self-reports ($X^2 = 5.33, p = .02$). *However*, it fell short of significance for bullying self-reports ($X^2 = 2.86, p = .09$) (Smith et al., 2004). The p represented the probability of chance; the smaller the number, the more confident the size of the sample was not due to chance, i.e., at 99% confidence level $p = .01$. The sample size was significant for those reporting victimization. Yet, with the relaxed question base, their conclusion illuminated many important pros and cons to the whole-school approach. They added that the potential was present, but the mechanisms were not in place to yield sufficient results (Smith et al., 2004). One problem was discovered that bullying was a process rather than a thing, which was reiterated in the definition and repetitive nature that what resulted in bullying did not always begin as such. In addition, perceptions may differ for stakeholders (Newgent et al., 2009). Hence, interventions should be built upon discovering a time in the process when a fissure can be created to stop the perception of fear for the student who feels bullied, even if other stakeholders feel the behaviors never reached the level of true harassment (Newgent et al., 2009). Ortega and Lera (2000) suggested that the previous environmental factors rarely are a part of anti-bullying programs, and the processes are not systematic in their interventions.

Most of the programs in the study lacked any aspects that addressed broader issues relative to the school climate (Fernandez, 2001), in which a school addressed interpersonal relationships and the benefits of an atmosphere of cooperation. Thousands of schools utilize the Olweus (1993a) study, and evidence revealed that the program components alone did not significantly decrease the amount of victimization or make

significant strides in recognizing student perception of bullying. Some report success, which points to other contextual factors, ecological factors, or that the desire for success was strong enough that they said it worked (Fernandez, 2001).

Many whole-school approaches are implemented because states create anti-bullying legislation. An example included is the Commonwealth of Kentucky's anti-bullying legislation:

KRS 158.156 was codified in 2008 after the passage of House Bill 91. This legislation requires the Kentucky Department of Education to provide guidance to local school districts to assist with the implementation of the law at the local level. Additionally, the legislation requires that "model policies" (bullying, code of conduct, and supervision of students) be provided to school districts." (KY State Government, 2008a)

With the mandate in place, schools looked to other programs and coached students to be better bystanders, in an attempt to get a handle on the persistent fear of student victimization nationwide. Results show that the larger sections of students are siding with the bully (Craig et al., 2000). The only way to protect all students from being emotionally compromised is to have a happy loving home. Yet, as family dynamics have splintered to more single parent households and less home structure, school personnel are becoming, not only educators, but also social services and role models of behavior for many children (Olweus, 1993b).

Bullying is becoming a more complex problem, as students' feelings of annoyance with others can move to terror and loss of hope because they lack a support system or the coping mechanism due to a poor developmental structure in the home. The consequences indicate that bystanders are less likely to step in (Olweus, 1993b).

The call becomes incredibly important for a deeper understanding of perceptions and tiered interventions on a wider scale and on multiple levels with 100% of the

stakeholders. Author Jeff Daniels conducted a 10-year study of the Columbine High School shooting, *Lessons from Columbine*. An informal respectful contact between staff and students was found in schools that have minimized violence, foiled attacks, and less bullying (Toppo & Elias, 2009). It was noted that if one visited these schools, during lunch, almost every cafeteria table sported a teacher interacting and visiting with students (Toppo & Elias, 2009).

Tassell and Tassell (2012) wrote, “When caring, respectful supervision is always highly visible in the school setting, bullying has a very hard time taking root” (p. 74). This type of vigilance and intervention can be a catalyst in changing student perception.

The Steps Approach in Two Districts

Hirschstein et al. (2007) studied the impact of the Steps to Respect program for bullying prevention that being implemented in two suburban districts in the Pacific Northwest of the United States. The authors investigated the program’s effectiveness in greater self-reporting of victimization and assessed whether the reporting was related to quality of the lesson instruction. They further considered whether generalizations about student outcomes would be possible along with reductions in behavior problems. The program was implemented and measured in grades 3-6, with 100% student participation and 80% staff inclusion, where all students were instructed in the Steps to Respect program (Frey, Hirschstein, Edstrom, & Snell, 2005; Frey et al., 2005; Hirschstein et al., 2007). No other programs were implemented, and the control and intervention conditions were randomly selected. All students were pretested and post tested, and 859 were randomly observed during playground activity for 5 minutes once per week (Hirschstein et al., 2007). The study was implemented for one year, with teachers rating students on

the Peer-preferred Social Behavior Subscale of the Walker McConnell Scale of Social Competence and School Adjustment, Elementary Version (Walker & McConnell, 1995). The process included teachers guiding students by “talk” (lesson adherence and quality) and “walk” (support for skill generalization and coaching individuals), and students were observed in their understanding of how their social skills and behaviors matched with their beliefs and self-reported behavioral patterns (Hirschstein et al., 2007).

Implementation measures reflected the key features of classroom practices thought to contribute to program efficacy—both “talk” (adherence to essential lesson components and provision of quality lesson instruction) and “walk” (support for generalizing social-emotional and bullying prevention skills and coaching of students involved in bully-victim problems). Coaching was associated with student perceptions of adult responsiveness to bullying ($t = 2.17$, $p < .05$). Students of teachers who provided high levels of coaching gave slightly lower ratings for perceived adult responsiveness than those in low-coaching classrooms. The magnitude of the effect size ($d = 0.12$) and predicted means (1.31 and 1.39, respectively) indicated this finding was not practically significant. Coaching was associated with less observed victimization by bullying among those victimized at pretest ($t = -2.28$, $p < .05$, $d = 0.48$). Among pretest victims ($n = 93$), those in high-coaching classrooms experienced a lower rate of subsequent victimization than those in low-coaching classrooms.

Coaching also related to less observed encouragement of bullying among students who encouraged bullying at pretest ($t = -2.28$, $p < .05$, $d = 0.50$). Within this group ($n = 89$), those in high-coaching classrooms decreased more from fall to spring than those in low-coaching classrooms. Teacher coaching of students involved in bullying situations also

was related to change over time in observed playground aggression among fifth- and sixth-grade students ($t = -2.26, p < .05, d = 1.15$) (Hirschstein et al. 2007).

Quality predicted greater perceived difficulty responding to bullying ($t = 2.22, p < .05, d = 0.44$). Students whose teachers presented high-quality lessons indicated more perceived difficulty, as compared to those whose teachers presented low-quality lessons. In addition, high-quality instruction was associated with more self-reported victimization ($t = 3.25, p < .01, d = 0.36$) (Hirschstein et al. 2007).

A compelling finding revealed that the authors' observations were contrary to their predictions. They believed students who received intensive coaching and high-quality training would be more assertive in response to bullying, as opposed to what was observed, that students had more difficulty responding to bullying and reported more victimization (Hirschstein et al., 2007). This may relate to the fact that the program did not give one specific action for all bullying, along with teaching students how to stay calm and building self-esteem. Yet, when coaching was involved at all levels, students appeared to be less aggressive, and less victimization was observed. According to the researchers, this may suggest that coaching helped students to realize that adults will be responsive to bullying, but training did not create a perception that adults will be responsive. The authors were encouraged by another finding that older children may be more equipped to resolve, rather than escalate, playground conflicts when given specific bully preventions skills (Hirschstein et al., 2007). They speculated that age related to increased cognitive skill. The study found at its conclusion that teachers reported positive changes in playground behavior. A limitation to this study was whether the perceived effectiveness was due to children's awareness of being observed or due to other variables

in the program itself. The next step was to determine whether the techniques worked independent of the program measures in place. Will the students return to old habits when they know the teachers and authors are not watching? The research indicated that teachers must be vigilant in their observations and play a major role in continuing to help students work on their skills. Hirschstein et al. (2007) stated, “Teachers influenced their students’ performance of new skills by encouraging and prompting skill use in the moment” (p.15), but the skills must be specific and no more than can be remembered or utilized.

A relationship was found in teaching students about bullying and their capability to self-report bullying and victimization. With further research on students’ knowledge about bullying, examining students’ understanding of the different forms of bullying, and investigating students’ knowledge of the frequencies of repeated problems, improved data and measuring of prevention efforts might be generated (Hirschstein et al., 2007). This leads to the assertion that recognizing perception is the key to understanding what interventions need to take place. In addition, the role of bystanders in this study indicated that children should be part of the solution (e.g., empathizing and reporting), rather than part of the problem (e.g., watching and laughing), and may reduce their contribution to peer aggression (Snell, MacKenzie, & Frey, 2002).

Narrowing the Vision to the School

The last study reviewed was Ross and Horner’s (2009) investigation of Positive Behavior Support (PBS), with the addition of bully prevention (BP) (BP-PBS) techniques applied to a whole-school environment. This work resembled the *I’m Gonna Write That Down* concept, as it empowered students with “one thing” to say when they felt bullied,

including “stop” and one action to “walk away.” The primary question was whether the BP-PBS program implementation resulted in a reduction of physical and verbal aggression on the playground during recess. Second, would students say “stop” and walk away when bullied, and would bystanders step up and say, “Stop,” if they noticed bullying behaviors?

This study utilized three elementary schools in an Oregon school district, all having implemented PBS school-wide (Sugai & Horner, 2009). All were grades K-5, with each meeting an 80% criterion on the School-wide Evaluation Tool (Todd et al., 2003). Additionally, two students at each school were chosen by principals based on their high levels of aggression, and all students in grades 3-5 received varying levels of parent consent depending upon their level of participation (Ross & Horner, 2009). The primary tier of the PBS approach, “creating positive, predictable environments for all students at all times of the day” (Ross & Horner, 2009, p. 749), was studied, along with providing additional support for at-risk students and those displaying negative behavior patterns (Ross & Horner, 2009).

Simply stated, the questions were (a) Will students taught BP-PBS say “stop” and then walk away when they think they are being bullied?; (b) Did bystanders do the same?; and (c) Did those with high tendencies toward bullying slow their aggression? Furthermore, did students self-report victimization? The data indicated that BP-PBS increased the responses to bullying behavior in all three schools, the use of “stop” by victims and bystanders increased by the largest percentage, and the decrease in negative responses changed significantly. The students and staff also showed a high level of fidelity of retention when asked about their knowledge of the program components, a

level of 93% to 100% (Ross & Horner, 2009). Last, of particular importance was the conclusion that the use of bullying language was not necessary, because the complex definitions and descriptions included more information than students could process and remember or recognize (Ross & Horner, 2009).

Definite limitations were found in this type of study, as the authors stated that “At some times students may have become aware they were being observed. This recognition, coupled with the implementation of BP-PBS curriculum training, may have affected behavior” (Ross & Horner, 2009, p. 757). Only one location was observed by the teacher team on the playground. This research must be replicated in other areas of the school to increase validity. Yet, a functional relationship between providing students with easily understood ideas and positive support from staff can create a decrease in bullying victimization and an overall perception that the school is a safe place. The other limitation involved the use of the word “stop” to show perception. This term can be used in games and mean different things. Frequently, it is used in a vague manner in society to be playful or simply to mean “hold” or often “don’t stop.” The practice of teaching BP-PBS would have to include the concept that all other uses of “stop” cease to exist, which would cause confusion when students continue to use it in play.

Reflection on the Whole School Approach Research

In searching for relevant updated research on whether any whole-school approach is positively affecting school bullying, the body of work is limited. Many reviews of books and programs are more recent, but they generally involve opinion and less methodology. Subsequent to 2009, few studies have been conducted other than dissertations. The same programs reviewed by Smith et al. (2004) are in use today for

whole-school approaches to bullying. Research on the effectiveness of specific approaches has lost favor, perhaps due to this earlier study or because effectiveness is associated more with perception alignment as opposed to the steps you take. In recent years, the more compelling research has investigated the perception of all stakeholders and the level of victimization when there is a large disparity between parents, teachers, administrators, and students (Waasdorp et al., 2011). Does a bullying program work only when all perceptions are recognized and each includes interventions on an appropriate level? The second section of Chapter II will investigate recent studies on stakeholder perceptions of bullying.

Perceptions of All Stakeholders

Bradshaw, Sawyer, and O'Brennan (2007) found that approximately 70% of elementary staff thought 10% or less of their students were victims of frequent bullying. In contrast, 33% of students reported being victims. The finding showed a startling difference of perception when added with the tendency for school staff to underestimate or downplay the severity of school bullying. Included are important practical implications for children who are chronically bullied and at risk for later maladjustment. Bullied children face an imbalance of power (Craig & Pepler, 1997; Olweus, 1993a) but often are reluctant to ask for help (Fekkes, Pijpers, & Verloove-Vanhorick, 2005; Rigby, 2002; Unnever & Cornell, 2003; Whitney & Smith, 1993). These works reiterated the need for more study and the alignment of perception of what constitutes bullying and safety in schools. The study of the understanding of teacher and administrator perceptions is of value and crucial to the success of bullying prevention efforts (Kennedy et al., 2012). Without an increased perceptual understanding by educators and administrators, the

extent of bullying in schools may not be completely understood (Dake, Price, Telljohann, & Funk, 2004).

Perception in Stakeholders Survey

Waasdorp et al. (2011) published a study that delved into the perceptions of more than 12,500 stakeholders in bullying at 44 schools in Maryland, with over 76% participation. Surveys were utilized to measure the perceptions and witnessing of bullying through a parallel questionnaire to students and staff and using a 4-point Likert. Parents responded to parallel questions regarding child safety in school. The study explored the broader climate among students, staff, and parents to assess differences in perceptions of bullying across all stakeholders, with the addition of school contextual factors to obtain a more comprehensive view of peer victimization. The strength of the study was not in the means by which to correct a bullying problem; however, to show that a problem existed for different people on different levels, and the data was sufficient for increased intervention. The staff surveys showed a perception that bullies were students who lacked interpersonal skills, such as communication and belongingness, and who possessed low self-concepts or were socially isolated (Carney, Hazler, & Higgins, 2002). Conversely, students viewed bullies as very powerful and influential (Bradshaw et al., 2007). The authors also found wide discrepancies between staff, students, and parents on safety and belongingness. In addition, contextual factors associated with bullying were found to create a further belongingness vacuum (Waasdorp et al., 2011). The need for a more cohesive mindset between all participants became even more crucial.

The staff was determined to be 4.6 times more likely to report feeling safe, as compared to students (Waasdorp et al., 2011), which led to questions of whether a

teacher will be less likely to intervene when they feel the atmosphere of the school is essentially safe. The broader message of the study was the differences in perceptions of bullying, witnessing of bullying, and how belongingness played a large part in how bullying spread, how it was interpreted by staff, and how it would be dealt with when it happens. The authors discovered an important link between how a climate supportive of bullying related directly with the perceptions of safety between staff, parents, and students. Other important lessons included: (a) When staff and parents marginalized the perceptions of students who did not belong and felt bullied, the school climate fostered more fear and victimization; (b) Staff who witnessed bullying were not compelled to intervene because they did not feel victimized, which created an imbalance in perception of school safety (Waasdrop et al., 2011). Parents who underestimated the harm and fear of bullying by their children, and who did not contact the school when issues arose, affected the child's perceptions of his safety and the level of victimization in the school atmosphere (Waasdrop & Bradshaw, 2009).

Comparison Report

A study by Newgent et al. (2009) sought to show the differential perceptions of bullying among all stakeholders including students, parents, teachers, principals, and counselors. The research focused on students in grades 4 and 5 in four different elementary schools in the central and southern United States. A subsample of 120 participating parents were interviewed separately. Data was collected at three points: (a) Time 1 was considered the fall semester of Year 1 when the students of all four schools were in grades 4 and 5, (b) Time 2 was the spring of Year 1, and (c) Time 3 was the first semester of Year 2 when the students had advanced to grades 5 and 6. Time 1

participants were students ($n = 378$), parents ($n = 67$), and teachers ($n = 20$), along with qualitative interviews conducted with four counselors and four principals, or one from each school. Time 2 participants were students ($n = 342$) and teachers ($n = 24$). Time 3 participants were students ($n = 333$), with 180 having advanced to grade 6.

Student participants completed a 13-question Experiences Questionnaire (Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2004) in a group setting, which evaluated student self-rated experiences with verbal, physical, and relational forms of peer victimization. Ratings utilized a 3-point scale (1 = never, 2 = sometimes, 3 = a lot), with each type of victimization represented by three items. Internal consistency estimates for combined student reports of peer victimization were (a) .89, (b) .90, and (c) .89 (Newgent et al., 2009).

Parents and teachers rated all eligible students through their own perceptions of the level they believed students experienced physical, verbal, and relational aggression. A single-item scale was employed for each level on a 3-point scale (1 = never, 2 = sometimes, 3 = a lot). Internal consistency estimates for combined teacher reports of peer victimization by parents were (a) .88, (b) .91, and (c) .77 (Newgent et al., 2009). Along with quantitative measures, qualitative interviews evaluated the perceptual differentiation of school counselors and principals. The study included all four principals and counselors from each of the participating schools. Two questions were used for this assessment: (a) In general, do you characterize bullying as a problem in your school? and (b) In general, how often do you encounter bullying behavior? (Newgent et al., 2009).

The summary findings of the Newgent et al. (2004) study were as follows. Students reported relational victimization as the most frequent form of peer victimization

during Time 1 ($M = 1.60$, $SD = .48$), and physical as the least frequent form of peer victimization ($M = 1.45$, $SD = .48$). At Time 2, relational victimization was again reported as the most frequent form of victimization ($M = 1.57$, $SD = .48$), followed by verbal ($M = 1.56$, $SD = .55$). Students' reports of victimization at Time 3 were consistent with previous reports, in that relational victimization was the most frequently reported ($M = 1.51$, $SD = .48$). Parents reported verbal victimization as most frequent during Time 1 ($M = 1.77$, $SD = .64$) and physical as the least frequent ($M = 1.52$, $SD = .59$). Teachers reported verbal victimization as most frequent during Time 1 ($M = 1.59$, $SD = .56$) and physical as the least ($M = 1.46$, $SD = .55$). During Time 2, verbal was again reported as the most frequent ($M = 1.43$, $SD = .57$), followed by relational ($M = 1.47$, $SD = .57$). Teachers perceived that combined level of peer victimization decreased from Time 1 to Time 2.

Students overall reported increased victimization from Time 1 to Time 2, with a decrease from Time 2 to Time 3, and a larger decrease for those moving into middle school. Parents showed a much higher perception of bullying for all types of peer victimization during Time 1 and teachers overall reported levels similar to that of students, but the types of victimization varied.

This data highlighted important discrepancies among the groups studied. Parents rated their perception of bullying higher in all three categories. The Newgent et al. (2004) study questioned whether this indicated that parents with a bullied student may have been more sensitive to their own child's victimization. The answer might be that the child would be more likely to tell the parent and not the teacher, which is consistent with Smith and Shu (2000), who found that 35% of victims told teachers and 45% told parents.

Another perceptual disconnect that the study highlighted was the difference in the types of bullying the teachers perceived as important versus the students' perceptions. Of most concern was that "students rated relational bullying as the most prevalent form of bullying at each time point, but teachers reported verbal bullying as most frequent" (Newgent et al., 2009, p. 19). A strong possibility can be noted that this inconsistency caused a victimized child to feel unsupported and even unprotected by the school. The authors went on to question whether students felt that any covert bullying that was not displayed with "gestures and words" would be discounted and not taken seriously. Another area of concern could be that many girls did not get the needed assistance and intervention to work out their relational victimization problems when teachers were less responsible to social bullying behaviors (Yoon & Kerber, 2003).

During the qualitative component of this study, each of the four school counselors was assigned a letter from A-D, female, to replace their name. Counselors stated that bullying was a problem, but not major, and that the concern was due to its presence in so many areas. School counselor A echoed this sentiment and stated that bullying was everywhere, which caused it to be a problem. It was an inherent part of life at that time. She also indicated she encountered the behavior on a daily basis. School counselor B noted that relational bullying problems indicated hurt feelings and friendship appeared to be most prominent. During that year, she observed two instances of bullying encounters for repeated victims and several daily friendship issues. School counselor C indicated that bullying occurred but was not a major concern. She encountered issues on a weekly basis. School counselor D indicated that bullying was not a major problem in her school. She noted, "There is intimidation by some, but it is limited to a few per grade level. It doesn't

consume my time on a daily basis.” Counselor D encountered bullying behavior on average three times per week, being more frequent in the spring (i.e., bickering, verbal harassment) (Newgent et al., 2009).

The four female principals were coded with the same letters A-D. Principals did not characterize bullying as a problem in their schools. Principal A indicated that bullying was a problem “at times,” or that she encountered it once every other week. Principals B, C, and D each noted that bullying was not a problem at their schools. Principal B stated, “Kids don’t usually realize it (that they are bullying), but they get sent to the office.” Principal C said it “has to do with the definitions as kids are learning to communicate with each other.” She observed bullying only about once a month. Principal D encountered bullying behavior “usually on the trip home from school” (Newgent et al., 2009).

School counselors frequently were identified as the individual responsible for dealing with bullying behaviors. However, this study revealed inconsistencies between the counselors, parents, teachers, and students, which led to the idea that most bullying behavior was not brought to the attention of the counselor (Newgent et al., 2009). The question asked, “Are only the most extreme cases moving up to the counselor’s desk?” The principals appeared to be even more removed from the perceptions of the students and teachers. The authors recommended that counselors take the opportunity to start or maintain a dialogue when perceptions of bullying differed to that degree between stakeholders (Newgent et al., 2009). The study reiterated the need for such communication between all stakeholders to promote a bully-free atmosphere aligned with

the ASCA National Model (ASCA, 2005) that encourages all school counselors to collaborate with every stakeholder for the benefit of all children.

Teacher and Administrator Perceptual Differences

The effectiveness of the components of any anti-bullying program is enhanced when analyzed for internal validity. Without support from all key players, a quality program cannot be effectively implemented. Marachi, Astor, and Benbenishty (2007) reported that teacher buy-in was essential to the success of any program, and teacher attitudes and perceptions toward bullying and bullying prevention needed further investigation. Furthermore, a key element to the effectiveness of bullying prevention policies was the interpretation of the policy by teachers, administrators, and students (Vreeman & Carroll, 2007). Biggs, Vernberg, Twemlow, Fonago, and Dill (2008) examined the differences between teacher and administrator perceptions in an effort to underscore the importance of including teachers' perceptions of bullying and school violence as a component of preventions efforts. Whereas most school efforts on bullying prevention focused on controlling student behavior and observation/supervision, the important role of promoting healthy relationships was missed (Bickmore, 2010).

Kennedy et al. (2012) investigated the occupational differences between teacher and school administrator perceptions of bullying. An important component for this updated study was the perceptual differences highlighted by Hazler, Miller, Carney, and Green (2001), who had asked teachers and counselors to rate the presence of bullying in 21 scenarios. Those who were surveyed felt that physical threats and abuse were more serious than verbal abuse, and physical aggression was more likely to be rated as bullying (Hazler et al., 2001). The researchers questioned the existence of a correlation between

teachers and administrators who did not perceive relational bullying and exclusion as a threat, and whether that perception impeded efforts to create a safer school. The conclusion can be drawn that teacher misconceptions may inhibit bullying prevention efforts; thus, improved training is essential (Hazler et al., 2001). The fact that teachers continued to struggle with identification of bullying behavior highlighted the need for additional development in this area.

The Kennedy et al. (2012) study focused on a general sample composed of 139 participants from schools across the country (32 male, 107 female; age = 40.55 years; SD = 15.55; age range 22-80). Of the 200 participants who attended a conference in southern Florida, 139 completed surveys, including 98 teachers and 41 administrators from 139 schools. The study was non-experimental and utilized a survey approach with cross-sectional design.

The Bully Perception Survey-10 (BPS-10) targeted attitudes and perceptions toward bullying and its prevention (Kevorkian, Kennedy, & Russom, 2008) and contained 10 items that assessed an individual's perceptions of bullying across four factors: (a) role of educators, (b) bullying in school curriculum, (c) bullying prevention training/professional development, and (d) self-efficacy. Ordinal response choices also were included. Responses ranged from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree) on a Likert scale. The dimensionality of the 10 survey questions was analyzed using the maximum likelihood factor analysis (Kennedy et al., 2012).

Analysis of the results revealed that 93% of educators and administrators were interested in receiving professional development on bullying prevention, 93.4% believed it should be part of the elementary school curriculum, and 94.9% believed it should be

part of the middle school curriculum (Kennedy et al., 2012). On factor (a) role of educators, participants were asked if they believed educators played a large role in bullying prevention. The mean rank of the ratings was 63.58 for the teachers and 85.35 for administrators. Using a Mann-Whitney U test, the two distributions of ratings were found to differ significantly ($z = -3.24$, $p < .0125$, $\text{abs}(r) = .27$). The absolute value of r , or $\text{abs}(r)$, represented the effect size for the Mann-Whitney U. Values of .1, .3, and .5, respectively, represented a small, medium, and large effect size for $\text{abs}(r)$ (Kennedy et al., 2012).

On factor (b) bullying in the school curriculum, participants rated their perceptions regarding the necessity of bullying prevention training in elementary, middle, and high school curricula (separate questions). The mean rank was 68.83 for teachers and 72.80 for administrators. Using a Mann-Whitney U test, the two distributions of ratings were not found to differ significantly ($z = -.60$, $p > .0125$, $\text{abs}(r) = .05$). Significant gender differences were found in the participant views that bullying prevention should be part of the school curriculum. The mean ranks of the ratings for the male participants were significantly higher than for females ($z = -3.08$, $p < .0125$, $\text{abs}(r) = .26$) (Kennedy et al., 2012).

On factor (c), bullying prevention training/professional development participants' differences were found in teacher and administrator views related to bullying training and development. The participants answered four questions related to training and professional development that should be provided. The mean rank was 62.92 for teachers and 86.93 for administrators. The two distributions were found to differ significantly ($z = -3.47$, $p < .0125$, $\text{abs}(r) = .30$). On factor (d) self-efficacy, differences were found

regarding the confidence of teachers and administrators relative to meeting with the victim's and the bully's parents. The mean rank was 76.16 for teacher participants and 55.27 for administrators, which revealed that administrators felt more confident discussing issues of bullying with parents whose children were involved in bullying. The two distributions were found to differ significantly ($z = -3.16$, $p < .0125$, $\text{abs}(r) = .13$) (Kennedy et al., 2012).

These findings highlighted the difference in scope and size of the role of teachers and administrators in bullying prevention (Kennedy et al., 2012). The results further suggested a need for more discussion and transparency between teachers and administrators concerning the roles of each and aligning their perceptions to enable both groups to work together to "buy in" collaboratively on a program that will solve any bullying problems. Kallestad and Olweus (2003) suggested a need for a shift in educator and administrator perceptions in order to increase the success of school-based bullying prevention programs. No agreement exists on what educators consider to be bullying (Langdon & Preble, 2008; Naylor, Cowi, Cossin, de Bettencourt, & Lemme, 2006). Therefore, little headway can be made in protecting students. This misaligned perception, general disagreement, and lack of buy-in causes reluctance in children to report bullying for fear teachers will do nothing or make the situation worse (Rigby & Bagshaw, 2003; Rigby & Barnes, 2002). The effort to align such perceptions and recognize the importance of these data echoed the efforts to implement prevention measures supported by the Department of Education, which strongly supports programs that target the reduction of bullying in schools. In fact, the Office for Civil Rights issued a letter

implored schools to review policies and practices regarding bullying to ensure that mandated federal civil rights laws are followed (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

The authors of the Kennedy et al. (2012) study highlighted a few limitations. The first was the 3:1 ratio of teachers to administrators and of females to males, and equivalent sample increased statistical power. The study also used convenience sampling, and a selection bias was in place because volunteers were asked to participate, making inclusion a subjective decision (Kennedy et al., 2012, p. 9).

Children's Perception of What Stops Bullying

In the previously cited studies, adults were aware of a fraction of the bullying behaviors occurring in schools, according to students. Studies such as the work by Boulton, Bucci, and Hawker (1999) suggested that students disagree with the view of adults and researchers on the specific types of behaviors that should be considered bullying. A need is evident for studies of student views about bullying, and the information could be used to seek stronger mechanisms to prevent bullying and methods for intervention when it occurs (Frisen et al., 2007).

Frisen et al. (2007) focused their research on describing student perception and on experiences of bullying. One of the goals of their study was to investigate what students believe is important in preventing bullying and their perceptions of the victims. The study group was comprised 119 adolescents (48 males, 71 females) from six classes at two high schools in Göteborg, the second largest city in Sweden. Participants ages were 15 to 20 years ($M = 17.1$, $S = 1.2$). Most students responded that they were victims between the ages of 7-9, and those who bullied reported most incidents occurred between ages 10-12

(Frisen et al., 2007). A definition of bullying was given at the beginning of the questionnaire (Olweus, 1999).

The Frisen et al. (2007) study asked six classes of students from two high schools to complete questionnaires, and 95% agreed. When asked who gets bullied, students were coded in five categories:

1. Victim's appearance, example: thin, fat, ugly
2. Victim's behavior, example: behaves strangely, talks with different dialect, shy, insecure
3. Characteristics of bullies, example: bullies think they are cool, bullies want to feel superior, bullies want to show that they have power
4. Social background, example: different culture, religion, economic situation
5. Other, examples: bad luck, the victim has no friends, the victim bullies others

The most common response as to why individuals were bullied was their different appearance, whether the individuals were victims or the bullies (Frisen et al., 2007). Of the adolescents who reported, 39% indicated that they had been bullied at some time during their school years, 28% said they had bullied others, and 13% reported being both victim and bully.

When asked what could stop bullies, the students were coded in nine categories:

1. The victim changes class or school, example: the victim moves
2. The victim stands up for himself/herself, example: the victim becomes psychologically stronger, is fed up, and dares to stand up for himself/herself
3. The victim stops being different from others, example: the victim obtains the proper clothes, the victim loses weight

4. The bully matures, example: the bully gets older
5. The bully becomes tired of bullying, example: the bully finds other victims
6. The bully feels a sense of guilt, example: the bully realizes it is wrong to bully others and feels badly
7. Adults intervene, example: the school, teachers, or others intervene
8. The victim gets revenge

Other example: the victim no longer cares, example: the victim makes new friends. Of the participant statements, 43% suggested that the victim was the important factor in stopping bullying, 36% noted the bully was the important factor, and 14% indicated it was adult intervention. The single most common reply was that the bully matured, and the next most frequent response was the victim stood up for himself/herself. Of those uninvolved in bullying during their school years, 24% of their statements were coded in this category, while only 4% of the victims' answers were coded as such ($\chi^2(1) = 8.29, p < .01$). The category "The bully matures" was more common among those who were uninvolved in bullying (31%) than among victims (15%) ($\chi^2(1) = 4.12, p < .05$). Among the victims, the category "Adults intervene" was most common (21%); those who were uninvolved utilized this category less frequently (9%) ($\chi(1) = 3.85, p < .05$) (Frisen et al., 2007).

The most startling finding was the student perception that teachers and authority were less trustworthy than the maturation of the bully and standing up for oneself, and that those uninvolved in bullying generally felt standing up for oneself was an option (Frisen et al., 2007). Results revealed that relational bullying, i.e. appearance, was considered the most common reason for bullying by peers, which was much different

than the previous studies on teachers who were less likely to intervene when the altercation was not physical (Hazler et al., 2001). This finding could result in adolescents exhibiting little faith in the adults' intervening. Whitney and Smith (1993) found that only half of the participants in their study felt teachers would intervene if they detected bullying. The results revealed that lack of intervention by staff was the most frequently used category for victims (21%) (Frisen et al., 2007). The study also highlighted the perception of students that victims were partly to blame for their own victimization (Oliver, Hoover, & Hazier, 1994), which may indicate a strong need for student training.

Perception of Students in Oklahoma

In a final look at research on perception, Hughes et al. (2009) conducted a study to determine student perceptions of bullying in the state of Oklahoma. The research focused on how seriously students were involved as victims/perpetrators, their responses to being bullied or seeing someone being bullied, and their thoughts on what adults should do to improve the situation. The authors' particular emphasis was on the perception of students who experienced frequent bullying.

The final sample consisted of students from 83 of 540 (15%) public school districts in Oklahoma, and was a non-probability, volunteer sample that covered all geographic areas and district sizes, by the size of the sample ($n = 7,848$). The size of the sample provided reliable estimates of population parameters, with statistical power above 90% for detecting even small population effects. Participants included students in third grade ($n = 2,651$), fifth grade ($n = 2,731$), and seventh grade ($n = 2,466$), totaling 7,848. Of the total sample that identified their gender, 51.2% were female, and 48.8% were male. Of the 2,466 seventh-grade students, 41% ($n = 1007$) provided narrative comments

in addition to the multiple-choice answers. The students recorded their thoughts about the seriousness, hurtfulness, and their involvement in bullying (as victim or perpetrator) and what they wanted adults to do to make the situation better (Hughes et al., 2009).

Several instruments were reviewed for applicability (Garrity, Jens, Porter, Sager, & Short-Camilli, 2000; Olweus, 1996), and a survey developed by the Hazelden Foundation (1996, 2001) was adapted for the study. The teachers administered the surveys at the classroom level, reading the definition of bullying to the students before they completed the questionnaire (Hughes et al., 2009). Crosstabs, Chi-square, and odds ratios for the analyses were utilized because the data were categorical and nominal. Descriptive statistics were computed, all analyses were completed using SPSS 14.0, and data collection was qualitative for seventh-grade students.

The authors calculated a total victimization score for each student (Hughes et al., 2009), which was completed in steps, first determining the frequency of physical, social, and sexual bullying experienced. A student received a 0 if the response was *never* for experiencing bullying in the category. If a student replied positively to being bullied *once in a while*, the answer received a 1. When the responses indicated being bullied *often*, the answer received a 2. Experiencing bullying *every day* received a 3. All scores were summed for all three types of bullying and divided by three for students in fifth and seventh grades (physical, social, and sexual) and by two for those in third grade (physical and social), to arrive at a total victimization score (Hughes et al., 2009, p. 220). When asked, "How hurtful is bullying?" overall, 90% of the children stated that bullying others was hurtful sometimes (33%) or very hurtful (58%). However, as the age of the students increased, their perceptions of the hurtfulness decreased ($\chi^2(6, 7783) = 242.0, p < .001$,

Cramer's $V = .125$). Females reported that bullying was more hurtful than did males ($\chi^2(3, 7724) = 88.7, p < .001, \text{Cramer's } V = .107$) (Hughes et al., 2009).

When asked, "How much do you worry about being bullied?" overall, 19% worried often or daily. Girls worried more than boys (21% and 17%, respectively) ($\chi^2(3, 7760) = 119.2, p < .001, \text{Cramer's } V = .124$). Younger students worried more (often or daily) than older students (26% for third, 18% for fifth, and 15% for seventh graders) ($\chi^2(6, 7817) = 150.2, p < .001, \text{Cramer's } V = .098$) (Hughes et al., 2009).

Upon examination of the perceptions of physical bullying, the authors noted that, overall, 13.7% reported being physically bullied often or daily (1,068 of 7,808 children). A significant Chi Square emerged for grade and physical bullying ($\chi^2(6, 7808) = 77.2, p < .001, \text{Cramer's } V = .070$), with a decrease in the percentage reporting being physically bullied as they aged. A significant association was revealed for gender and physical bullying ($\chi^2(3, 7750) = 34.7, p < .001, \text{Cramer's } V = .067$), with 11.6% of girls reporting being physically bullied often or daily, compared to 15.9% of boys (Hughes et al., 2009).

A significant perceptual difference was noted, as social bullying was reported more frequently than physical bullying by both genders. Overall, 23.3% (1,824 of 7,814) of the students reported experiencing social bullying often or daily. Again, the Chi Square was significant for gender and social bullying ($\chi^2(3, 7756) = 64.8, p < .001, \text{Cramer's } V = .091$), with 24.4% of girls and 22.3% of boys reporting social bullying occurred often or daily. A slight decrease was found in social bullying reported by grade level ($\chi^2(6, 7814) = 36.4, p < .001, \text{Cramer's } V = .048$), with the decrease slightly more pronounced than for physical bullying (third grade = 25.1%, fifth grade = 23.8%, seventh grade = 21.0%) (Hughes et al., 2009). Those who were physically bullied on a daily basis

worried a great deal more than non-bullied children ($\chi^2(9, 7782) = 2,354.2, p < .001, CC = .482$). For children who were socially bullied often or every day, the results were significant for worry ($\chi^2(9, 7789) = 2,530.8, p < .001, CC = .495$). The results for sexual bullying again were significant ($\chi^2(9, 5149) = 515.7, p < .001, CC = .302$) (Hughes et al., 2009).

This study found a higher percentage of victims in the sample from across the state than previous studies (Juvonen, Graham, & Schuster, 2003; Nansel et al., 2001), which implied a larger problem when perceptions were not aligned with adults. Stockdale, Hangaduambo, Duys, Larson, and Sarvela (2002) discovered that school administrators contributed, even unwittingly, to a climate more conducive to bullying by not acknowledging the seriousness, addressing its consequences, or creating necessary policies and practices. Students noticed these problems, as many were negative about the effectiveness of strategies used to deter bullying (Crothers & Kolbert, 2004). Although fewer seventh graders reported being bullied than younger children did, the more meaningful indication from the study was that older children generally had ceased asking for help from adults, including parents. This finding suggested that they perceived nothing positive would result if they reported the incident. Across grade levels, ordering the aggressor to stop, doing nothing, and reporting it to another student changed little over time, suggesting that those strategies worked for only some children (Hughes et al., 2009). Hunter, Boyle, and Warden (2004) posited that students who anticipated positive outcomes from seeking help were more motivated to ask for assistance. The authors found that students felt adults were uncaring, or they were not aware of the extent of bullying (Hughes et al., 2009).

Hughes et al. (2009) also suggested the necessity of examining how bullied children respond to questions about adult roles in prohibiting the behavior, as their perceptions created worry, anxiety, and fear. Those students who were habitually or seriously victimized worried much more than their non-victimized peers (Holt, Finkelhor, & Kantor, 2007). Furthermore, the continuation of incidents of bullying created further social problems and was accompanied by lower academic scores (Arseneault et al., 2006).

Limitations to be noted were:

1. The study was conducted among only Oklahoma students and may not be generalizable to all children in the U.S. and elsewhere.
2. Although every school in the state was commissioned, perhaps a significant number of individuals responded because they had a stronger interest in bullying issues.

Schools that required parent consent reported a larger preponderance of parents whose children were victimized allowed their child to participate (Hughes et al., 2009). In addition, the authors recognized that, although bully definitions were paired with “behavioral indicators” (p. 230), some students replied that they were bullied on some, but not all, places on the questionnaire.

Chapter Reflection

The literature reviewed in this chapter helped in gaining clarity on what works in whole-school bullying programs, beginning with the study of other research and narrowing the focus to a district and then a specific school and program. The hundreds of studies reviewed by Smith et al. (2004) represented the programs utilized for bullying by

a majority of schools in the U.S. The most compelling finding was that few recent studies have been conducted in these areas, and the Smith et al. (2004) research continues to represent the most comprehensive investigation on effectiveness.

The second goal of this research was to highlight the need for delving deeper into the diverging perceptions of students, teachers, parents, and administrators utilizing the more recent endeavors and those that encompass all groups. The preceding four studies addressed the research questions and hypotheses of this work. Chapter III will focus on discussion, reflection, and justification of the concept for the whole-school program, *I'm Gonna Write That Down*.

CHAPTER III: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS, DISCUSSION, AND REFLECTION

Bullying can be destructive. A school that does little to combat the presence of victimization MAY find itself with a growing number of fearful children, even when the problem is perceived to fit the definition of bullying. The situation intensifies when children are reluctant to inform teachers about bullying for fear nothing will be done or they will exacerbate the situation (Rigby & Bagshaw, 2003). Olweus (1993b) noted that nearly 40% of primary students who have been bullied, and up to 60% of junior/secondary high students, reported that teachers attempted to stop bullying “once in a while” or “almost never.” Yet, in many cases teachers believed they were intervening, even though they intercepted only about 15-18% of incidences (Craig et al., 2000). Students, parents, and school staff often possess very different views of the degree of safety in the climate of the school. These studies suggested that teachers often misjudged the perceptions of the amount of bullying that existed. Students also seem to struggle with understanding complicated definitions and extensive curricula. Schools have reported positive results from a variety of programs, but none reveal significant outcomes other than improved awareness of bullying (Smith et al., 2004).

Positive results have been noted when teachers and observers were vigilant with supervision and created an atmosphere where students felt they were taken seriously (Hughes et al., 2009). The atmosphere can then be reversed from one of victimization. Schools are more successful when there is an open environment where students feel safe and can report bullying (McNamee & Mercurio, 2008). The need exists for a whole-school program that provides students with one option for all perceived bullying and creates a sense of multi-tiered support when that option is exercised. Biggs et al. (2008)

found that teacher adherence to a bullying program was affected by their perceptions and attitudes, and a program that enhanced those attitudes and perceptions correlated with the degree of success in reducing violence and bullying behaviors.

The research presented suggests that all programs are effective if stakeholder buy-in is 100% and all students receive support when bullying is perceived or they assist in preventing another student's victimization. Perceptions need to be understood, and interventions should be initiated in a faster and more specific process that is easily implemented by students and employed by teachers and staff without undue stress or additional work.

Program Explanation

Newgent et al. (2009) described a potential strategy for removing the ambiguity surrounding the concept of bullying by all students, staff, parents, and administrators, collectively defining and collaborating on what it means for a school. This research shows support for administering a program that recognizes perceptions and for creating reliable interventions for all stakeholders when victimization occurs. This study strived to create a program to eliminate differences in the definition of bullying – one that creates a process to close what Newgent et al. (2009) referred to as “the many holes in our efforts to detect and prevent future victimization” (p. 18). (This entire program with components and research study are to be added later as chapters IV and V in completion of a dissertation.)

I'm Gonna Write That Down/Write That Down provides a method for all students to clearly communicate when they feel bullied, afraid, or harassed at school or on the bus. When students can say, “I'm gonna write that down,” they will impart to those who are

teasing, harassing, bullying, threatening, or threatening violence that their perception is, “You are bullying me” and should stop. The message also clearly communicates that the perpetrator(s) can stop any repetition of the situation, and no action, punishment, or correction will occur for the first incident. The school personnel promise to seriously consider every incident report, and they will respect the perception and act according to the protocol. The plan will give specific instructions for the student role on all levels (perceived victim, perceived perpetrator/perpetrators, bystanders), and the role of the teacher, support staff, counselor principal, coach, and parent, along with ideas on creating a bystander group. Implicit instructions will be included for teaching techniques on ending tattling, and efforts to combat cyber-bullying. Furthermore, the program will contain explicit instructions for students with disabilities, i.e., those on the autism spectrum or ADHD.

Future Research Study

Chapters IV and V outlines specific program component details for *I'm Gonna Write That Down*, along with a study on effectiveness in the school setting. The research will be conducted in grades 3-6 in an elementary school (extrapolated for middle school). Permission for training will be solicited from parents, and students and parents will be notified of any protocols and kept abreast on progress. Teachers, staff, and all stakeholders, i.e., bus drivers and support staff, will be trained and surveyed using qualitative measures as to degree of acceptance and effectiveness of the program. All permissions and procedures will be followed for maximum validity and reliability.

Helping Those Who Bully

Chapters I and II, contained much research about victimization, as well as helping and recognizing those who are bullied. Yet, an important part of implementation of the *I'm Gonna Write That Down* program is recognizing that those who bully are in need of intervention. Bullying behaviors and those who commit them are not served by being “called out” or having negative attention brought to their actions, which can create a feeling of victimization for the perpetrator or, in other cases, project them as heroes. Tassell and Tassell (2012) related the story of a parent who stopped a bullying situation before it became repetitive or harassment by informally speaking to students. No sense of “getting in trouble” was perceived by the student or others who did not receive information on such conversations. The students felt respect rather than the possibility of punishment. Teachers tend to categorize bullying as physical more than verbal or emotional (Kennedy et al., 2012), even though no physical abuse occurred, which can lead to harsher treatment for those exhibiting the behavior instead of quietly correcting the problem.

Counselors should collaboratively speak with students suspected of bullying by first asking them about the situation informally discussing how these issues could impact their future academic and school life. Researcher Jeff Daniels communicated the idea of using the lunchroom and other areas to create an informal closer relationship between staff and students to allow for productive discussions without creating unneeded drama or feelings of authoritative measures (Toppo & Elias, 2009). Counselors or teachers can document their conversations and include notations about student reactions. The discussion can conclude by thanking the student and highlighting the perception of others

to determine whether the student wishes that perception to continue. They can dialog about what may happen if the perception becomes repetitive and outline the student's choices in helping them to move to the next step toward correction.

Counselors should follow the advice of De Jong and Berg (2011) relative to helping students create their own solutions rather than dictating how to act. In *Lost in School*, Greene (2008) discussed the fact that students work against their own best interests because they have no other ideas, even though their actions are the opposite of what is understood to help in their situation. By leading students to create their own solutions, everyone partners in correcting the problems that can destroy their lives, rather than feeling as though they are the problem and need to be fixed.

Limitations and Assessment

Several limitations were discovered, and most dealt with the unwillingness of staff/teachers/administrators to work within the confines of the program. Staff often will underestimate or downplay the severity of bullying, which can have practical implications for students who experience it on a regular basis (Craig & Pepler, 1997; Olweus, 1993b). Any program's effectiveness in detecting and preventing school bullying must guard against the tendency of administrators to underestimate the frequency of these behaviors (Newgent et al., 2009). In addition, teachers need to change their paradigm of involvement only when physical bullying occurs. Educators who remain uninvolved must begin to focus on building empathy and intervention for those who suffer from exclusion and relational bullying. Yoon and Kerber (2003) reported that teachers exhibit less caring attitudes toward non-physical types of victimization. Training of new educators in the concept of bullying should better explain the definitions, as pre-

service teachers rarely recognize an imbalance of power as bullying (Bauman & Del Rio, 2006) and are unlikely to understand the importance of the repeated nature of bullying.

Conclusion

The tactics and outcomes of bullying continue to exist in schools, although everyone is well aware of it. As has been shown, the research indicates that awareness does little to quell the fear of many children and does not prepare them for the moment when bullying happens. Finkelhor, Turner, and Ormrod (2006) found that bullied children suffer traumatic symptoms, and an especially severe case can create developmental delays, problems with social connectivity, and understanding and perceiving threat (Brenner, 2006; Cicchetti & Curtis, 2006). The student is not at fault when targeted for repetitive harassment, but the response to the perceived victimization can be crucial. Students need to understand that no actions deserve bullying. The capability of all stakeholders to recognize every perception as real and valid can make a significant difference between an event that is terrorizing, or simply an annoyance in the process of growing up, that will build self-esteem and problem-solving skills for a lifetime. When a fifth-grade class was recently asked to define bullying, one student responded with great passion. “It’s when they drive you into a rage.” The class agreed that it is terrible that others try to do that, and it is bullying. However, no matter the cause, the decision to rage is personal. The student was asked, “What if it was impossible to get you to rage? What is it you think they would do?” He replied, “They would stop trying.” This author replied,

Not overnight. They would test you for a while to see if you really were incapable of raging. You are giving them exactly what they want, and it might be time to see how it

would go if you did not give them exactly what they want.
You can never rage again. Try it and see.

Along with that advice, the school initiated a program validating his perception of bullying and options to replace rage. All children are in the process of developing emotional intelligence; bullying behaviors have more to do with a lack of emotional empathy, as most students lack an evolved emotional intelligence. They are unable to truly understand the effect of their victimization. Through highlighting all perceptions, the *I'm Gonna Write That Down program* helps students and educators develop an understanding of, and in some cases the ability to feel, emotional empathy, which in turn builds emotional intelligence. A clear protocol is present when those students who understand empathy, but are callous and uncaring, use that understanding to harm others.

When we talk with stakeholders about preventing bullying, we must ensure that everyone is included, from those who bully, to those on the edge of suicide, to every school staff member from the principal to the janitorial staff and bus drivers. When all stakeholders agree, and students feel empowered to shine their light in the dark corners of bullying around the school, strong leaders will be created from victims, bullies, and bystanders. Society will learn how to distinguish between actual bullying and dealing maturely with peer conflict and problems.

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