"YOU ARE WELCOME HERE": PROFESSIONAL MIDDLE SCHOOL COUNSELORS AS

ADVOCATES FOR SCHOOL-WIDE BULLYING PREVENTION INITIATIVES

by

CHRISTY WINN LAND

(Under the Direction of Jolie Daigle)

ABSTRACT

This paper presents findings of a consensual qualitative research study which explored the experiences of professional middle school counselors who advocate for the successful implementation of school-wide bullying prevention initiatives. The researcher identified domains, categories, and sub-categories from participant's responses and provided recommendations and implications for practicing school counselors and counselor educators. The paper concludes with a discussion of social justice implications and recommendations for future research.

INDEX WORDS: Bullying and Harassment, Social Justice, Social Justice Change Agent, Advocacy, School-Wide Bullying Prevention Initiative, Professional School Counselor

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial

Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ATHENS, GEORIGA

2014

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DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to all young people who have had the unfortunate experience of being involved with bullying and to all professional school counselors who strive to create a safe, positive school environment in the schools in which they work. This study is also dedicated to all of the parents and family members who have lost a loved one as a result of bullying. It is my sincere hope that this study will initiate beneficial change so that bullying prevention will be a priority in every school, so that every child can come to school and feel at home. In particular, this study is dedicated to my own son, John Ryder Land, whom I love more than words can express, may he continue through his educational journey in a safe, happy, and healthy manner.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I will be forever grateful for my experiences at UGA, moving through the Ed.S. Program into the doctoral program has been a life-changing experience. I have grown tremendously personally and professionally and I am truly blessed beyond belief to be part of the UGA community. Dr. Jenny Penny Oliver was instrumental in making my dream of starting the Ph.D. program while finishing the Ed.S. Program a reality. Dr. Oliver's support, belief in me, and her willingness to take a risk to help me achieve my goals will never be forgotten.

I am tremendously thankful for my committee. Their perfect balance of challenge and support has been essential to me throughout my journey. Dr. Daigle, as my committee chair, has been an invaluable resource and inspiration to me all along the way. My success would not be possible without her encouragement and feedback. Dr. Daigle has provided me with mentorship and has been a positive role model for me. Dr. Paisley is "who I want to be when I grow up", her practical experience and knowledge and sweet spirit has forever enriched my professional and personal identities. Dr. Haskins added so much value to my work and committee by pushing me to "always go a little deeper". It is so evident how much she cares about her work and her students and I feel honored to be one of her students.

My research committee was made up of a team of dynamic ladies that I am proud to call colleagues but more importantly to call friends. I am so thankful for their time, energy, and hard work that they too, dedicated to my study. Dr. Lauren Moss is so important to me as a friend and co-worker and I am thankful every day that God has blessed me with her. Dr. Moss's positive outlook, giving spirit, and calm presence helped me to stay grounded in the most stressful times

while trying to manage family, work, and graduate school. Many times, her perspective on things is just what I needed to keep on, keepin' on. I truly do not know what I would do without her. Malti Tuttle has been on this journey with me from the beginning and as we have grown, so has our friendship. Her kindness and support, and afternoons sitting on my deck talking have helped me to stay sane throughout this journey. Kim Lee Hughes is one of the strongest women I have ever come to know. Her authenticity and genuineness has made an imprint on my heart that will last forever.

I am especially thankful for my parents Charles and Cheryl Winn and my husband and son Joey and Ryder Land. I believe I have the best family in the whole world. They believe in me and tell me every day how much they love me and how proud they are of me. It is an honor to be called their daughter, wife, and mother.

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INTRODUCTION

"He is my hero…he did the right thing and was bullied to death for it". Devin Brown, a

thirteen year old boy from Columbus, Georgia was found by his parents hanged to death in the

laundry room of his family home on April 5, 2013 as a result of being bullied at school. The six

months prior to his suicide Devin endured continuous verbal and non-verbal harassment as a

result of being labeled a "snitch" for reporting that a fellow student had planned a violent act

against a teacher at the middle school he attended in Columbus, Georgia. Devin's father shared

that Devin loved to cook, loved martial arts, and loved being with his friends and family;

however, the pain that he felt on a daily basis as a result of being bullied broke Devin down until

nothing could put him back together (Salek, 2013). Devin's father also commented *"I am going*

to do whatever I can in his name to stop it, there is no reason any kid should be afraid to go to

school" (As reported by Salek).

Devin Brown is one of several middle school students in the state of Georgia to take his

own life as a result of being bullied and harassed by his peers. Professional school counselors

play an integral role in advocating for the implementation of school-wide bullying prevention

initiatives that may prevent such tragedies (ASCA, 2012; Griffin, 2012; Jarvos, 2010). Bullying

is a complex problem that must be addressed through collaborative and comprehensive school-

wide bullying prevention initiatives (Davis & Nixon, 2011; Farrington & Ttofi, 2010; Serwacki

& Nickerson, 2012; Young et al, 2009). Bullying and harassment are defined by experts in the

field as aggressive behavior characterized by repetitions of actions over time and an imbalance of

power (Olweus, 2007; Pergolizzi et al., 2009). Bullying impacts young people across gender, age, and ethnicity, however, research demonstrates that middle schools appear to be the centralized location where most bullying behaviors occur (Green, 2007; Pergozzi et al., 2009; Serwacki & Nickers, 2012). Professional School Counselors at the middle school level, as social justice change agents, are in an ideal position to advocate for bullying prevention programs that promote safer and more equitable environments for all students (ASCA, 2012; Field & Baker, 2004; House & Martin, 1999; Stone, 2003). Of particular concern are students who are members of historically marginalized populations, as certain groups are particularly vulnerable to being bullied: students with disabilities and mental health issues, students who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or questioning, and students who are members of ethnic and immigrant marginalized populations (Bates, 2011; Carter & Spencer, 2006; Green, 2007; Jarvos, 2011; Liberman & Cowan, 2007). School counselors acting as social justice change agents have the beliefs, knowledge, and skills to take responsibility for eradicating systemic barriers to success by first recognizing the inequalities that may exist for vulnerable groups (ASCA; Griffin & Steen, 2010).

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA, 2012) maintains that professional school counselors work towards socially just outcomes by acting as leaders, advocates, collaborators, and as systemic change agents. Furthermore, the American School Counselor Association position statement on bullying indicates that professional school counselors recognize the need for all students to attend school in a safe, orderly, and caring environment that promotes a positive school climate and fosters growth (ASCA). Therefore, a school counselor implementing the ASCA National Model and operating from a social justice framework may advocate for the development and implementation of policies and practices to address bullying

prevention that will result in more equitable and harmonious outcomes for all students (Crethar, Rivera & Nash, 2008).

Under Georgia law, the state and local boards of education must have policies in place to address bullying (Georgia Department of Education, 2011). Specifically, the Georgia Department of Education issued a policy prohibiting bullying and outlined requirements for how local schools are to handle incidents of bullying. However, current law does not recommend or encourage bullying education or require that evidenced-based practices be included in positive behavior interventions and supports, in spite of the fact that research indicates that interventions to prevent or minimize bullying in schools must include school-level interventions that are aimed at improving the overall school culture (Goodwin, 2011; Farrington & Ttofi, 2010; Olweus, 2007; Sacco et al., 2012; Whitted & Dupper, 2005). Therefore, ultimately the implementation of school-wide bullying prevention initiatives are crafted at the local school level and professional school counselors, as social justice change agents and advocates, can lead the charge at the local school level for the initiation of whole school bullying prevention efforts (Aikos & Galassi, 2004; ASCA, 20120; Limber & Small, 2003;).

The purpose of this study was to describe the experiences of middle school counselors who successfully advocate for the implementation of school-wide bullying prevention initiatives. Singh, Urbano, Haston, and McMahon (2010) identified the following overarching strategies that can be utilized by school counselors to advocate for social justice change in school environments: (a) initiate difficult conversations, (b) educate stakeholders about the school counselor's role as an advocate, (c) utilize data for marketing purposes, (d) teach self-advocacy skills to students, and (e) build intentional relationships. Furthermore, Singh et al. asserted the school counselors must know when and how to intervene serving as a prerequisite for the

aforementioned strategies as a way to raise consciousness in the pursuit of school-wide change.

There is a plethora of research on the impact of bullying and bullying prevention programs and

scholars continue to investigate the school counselor's role in social change and advocacy

(Olweuse, 2007; Goodwin, 2011; Crethera, Rivera & Nash, 2008). However, research is

currently lacking in the area of the school counselor's role as a social justice change agent in

specifically advocating for the implementation of school-wide efforts to address bullying.

In this chapter, an overview of literature is presented which explores (a) the definition of

bullying, (b) the impact of bullying on middle school youth, (c) school-wide bullying prevention

programs, (d) laws governing bullying at the federal, state, and local school levels, and (e) the

professional school counselor's role in advocating for systemic change with the implementation

of school-wide bullying programs and initiatives. Additionally, in this chapter a statement of the

problem, the background of the problem, the purpose of the study, and an overview of the

qualitative methodology is presented to the reader. Chapter Two will more comprehensively

explore relevant literature and Chapter Three will thoroughly outline the methodology of this

proposed qualitative research study. Chapter Four will present the findings of the study and

Chapter Five will provide a discussion of the study and findings.

Statement of the Problem

Bullying amongst middle school youth is a common and complex problem which may be

most effectively addressed through the implementation of school-wide bullying prevention

initiatives that work to change the overall school climate where bullying is not tolerated

(Serwacki & Nickerson, 2012; Davis & Nixon, 2011; Young et al, 2009; Farrington & Ttofi,

2010; Pergolizzi, 2009; Goodwin, 2011). Bullying is defined by scholars as negative actions on

the part of another that occurs repeatedly and over time and involves an imbalance of power

(Olweus, 2007; Pergolizz, 2009). Professional school counselors, as social justice change agents and advocates, are in an ideal position to advocate for the implementation of school-wide bullying prevention initiatives (ASCA, 2012).

Understanding Bullying and Harassment

Students are being bullied and harassed overtly and covertly verbally, physically, through isolation, and the use of expanding technology known as cyber bullying. Bullying is typically defined by researchers as aggressive behavior characterized by repetition of actions and an imbalance of power (Olweus, 2007; Pergolizzi, 2009). A person is bullied or harassed 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 is unable to defend him or herself (Olweus). Members of minority and marginalized populations can attest that bullying is not a new issue and those who are "other" are particularly vulnerable and often become targets for bullies (Bates, 2011; Green, 2007; Jarvos, 2011; Liberman & Cowan, 2010). Jarvos describes "otherness" as sexual, ethnic, and immigrant students who are members of historically marginalized populations or someone who the bully deems as less powerful (p. 64).

Consequences of Bullying in Schools

Bullying, peaking in the middle school years, can interfere with a young person's ability to reach their maximum potential socially/emotionally and academically (Bowles & Lesperance, 2004; Green, 2007; Lieberman & Cowan, 2011; Olweus, 2007; Pergozzi et al., 2009; Serwacki & Nickerson, 2012). Involvement in bullying creates barriers to learning and is associated with a host of negative outcomes including: depression, suicidal ideation, isolation, low self-esteem, lack of hope, anxieties, feelings of being unsafe, loss of concentration, and being unable to start/finish a task (Dracic, 2009; Klomek et al., 2008; Lieberman & Cowan, 2011; Pranjic &

Bajraktarevic, 2010). Students who bully are more likely to drink alcohol, smoke cigarettes, engage in criminal behavior, drop out of school, experience externalizing problems and have poor coping mechanisms, struggle academically, and even later in life have difficulty maintaining a job (Pergolizzi, Richmond, Macario, Gan, Richmond, & Macario, 2009; Robinson, 2010). Students who are victims of bullying may suffer from anxiety, low self-esteem, depression, and other mental health issues (Olweus; Robinson, 2010). Furthermore, students who are not directly involved but witness bullying may feel afraid, powerless against the situation, and even have feelings of guilt (Olweus; Robinson).

Bates (2010) and Jarvos (2010) noted that between September 2010 and October 2010, there were 12 documented youth suicides reported nationally, of which the public is aware and were reported, as a result of verbal and nonverbal bullying inflicted on them. Suicide is the fourth leading cause of death for middle school youth ages 10-14 and bully victims are between two and nine times more likely to consider suicide than non-victims (Bullying Statistics, 2013; Kim, 2009; Xu, Kochanek, Murphy, & Tejada-Vera, 2011). Furthermore, research indicates that victimization as a result of bullying is directly associated with higher rates of suicidal ideation in young people (Dracic, 2009; Herba et al., 2008; Klomek, Sourander, Kumpulainen, Piha, Tamminen, Moilanen, Almqvieston & Gould 2008; Pranjic & Bajraktarevic, 2010; Xu et al.). The following loss of young lives in the state of Georgia highlights that bullying, particularly in middle school, remains a rampant problem for our youth:

- On April 26, 2013 a Donalsonville, Georgia mother found her fifteen year old son unconscious due to an overdose, with a note indicating that he could no longer deal with being tormented at school (Abel, 2013).

- On April 5, 2013 a 13 year old boy from Columbus, Georgia hanged himself after being bullied both physically and verbally (U.S. News, 2013).

- In October 2010 a north Georgia mentally impaired young boy hanged himself after becoming depressed as a result of being constantly harassed, bullied, and taunted by his classmates (Hennie, 2010).

- In April of 2009 an eleven year old Georgia boy was found hanged to death in his bedroom closet as a result of being repeatedly teased and harassed by his fellow classmates for "being gay" (Fox News, 2009).

Georgia Legislation and Bullying

As of January 2012 forty-eight states in the United States had enacted school anti-bullying legislation (Sacco, Silbaugh, Corredor, Casey & Doherty, 2012). State anti-bullying laws typically prescribe a minimum of what school district policies must contain to address bullying, leaving other decisions to the local school districts and individual schools (Limber & Small, 2003; Sacco et al.). Currently, there is no statutory provisions recommending or encouraging bullying education in the Georgia legislation (Sacco et al., 2012). Georgia legislation does have statutory provisions requiring character education which indicates that local boards shall implement a character education program that promotes parental involvement (Sacco et al.). Further, Georgia legislation does not have a statutory provision requiring evidenced-based practices to include positive behavior interventions and supports (Sacco et al.). However, the Georgia Department of Education (2011) developed a model policy for bullying which focuses on defining and reporting bullying as opposed to a proactive educational model of prevention. Overall, state legislation tends to emphasize the investigation of bullying incidents, a

reporting system to report incidents of bullying, and consequences to address the bully (Sacco et al.; Zubrzycki, 2011).

School-Wide Bullying Prevention Initiatives

Serwacki & Nickerson (2012) maintained that bullying prevention programs are not just a plan of action; careful selection, planning, and preparation of interventions are critical to successful and effective program implementation. Experts on bullying recommend the following program components, regardless of the framework utilized, be integrated as part of a school's bullying prevention efforts: (a) develop and implement a school-wide policy, (b) respond to incidents of bullying in a clear, concise, and fair manner that recognizes the continuum of bullying behaviors, (c) increase supervision or restructure "hot spots" where bullying is most likely to occur, (d) integrate bullying awareness and prevention by integration into the curriculum, and (e) collect reliable and valid data about bullying in the school setting (Farrington & Ttofi, 2010; Serwacki & Nickerson, Olweus, 2007). Moreover, the most effective bullying prevention programs are implemented collaboratively by the administration and staff, parents and community members and work to change the culture of the school climate so that bullying behavior is viewed as socially unacceptable and intolerable by the school administration (Serwacki & Nickerson, 2012; Whitted & Duper; Goodwin, 2011).

School officials may have the false impression that bullying is not a problem in *their* school as teachers and administrators typically only see about four percent of bullying incidents (Goodwin, 2011; Green, 2007). Furthermore, many schools have other pressing problems to address, such as academic performance and standardized testing, and may unintentionally over look obvious signs and acts associated with bullying (Green). Therefore, not recognizing bullying as an issue of priority at the local school level coupled with federal and state laws

failing to mandate bullying prevention initiatives in most states our students are left without access to a school climate that is safe and harmonious placing value on tolerance, acceptance, and bullying prevention. Therefore, a critical first step to bullying prevention in schools may be to eliminate the culture of denial, make bullying prevention a priority and establish an effective school-wide prevention initiative that is acceptable to all stakeholders (Austin, Reynolds, & Barnes, 2012; Goodwin; Whitted & Dupper, 2005).

Professional School Counselors as Advocates for School-Wide Bullying Prevention Efforts

Professional school counselors as leaders are ideally situated to advocate for the academic and personal/social achievement of every student and play a key role in initiating efforts to promote school reform (ASCA, 2012). The American School Counselor Association National Model requires school counselors to become leaders and operate from a new paradigm where school counseling programs are comprehensive in scope and developmental in nature providing all students with opportunity and access that fosters personal/social, academic, and career achievement (ASCA, 2012). Under this innovative national model school counselors have the opportunity and responsibility to assume leadership roles in their school that positively affect student outcomes and eliminate potential barriers to student success (ASCA). Further, professional school counselors are charged to advocate with and on behalf of students through student advocacy, school/community collaboration, and systems advocacy; all of which are applicable to advocating for the implementation of school-wide bullying prevention efforts (ASCA; Toporek, Lewis, & Crethar, 2009).

The number of bullying incidents seemingly continues to rise, therefore, professional school counselors must stop and re-examine our roles and responsibilities specifically as related to advocates for school-wide bullying prevention efforts (Austin, Reynolds, & Barnes, 2012;

Lieberman & Cowan, 2011). Professional school counselors, in conjunction with other

important stakeholders, must use their advocacy and leadership skills, unique educational

background, and their strategic position in schools to initiate the implementation of school-wide

bullying prevention initiatives (Griffin & Steen, 2010). In fact, the ASCA National model aligns

with multiple components of effective school-wide bullying prevention programs and school

counselors, as motivated agents of change, are called to prevent and remove environmental and

institutional barriers that deny students opportunities for equity and access (ASCA, 2012). For

example, the ASCA National Model and effective school-wide bullying prevention programs are

based on the following like program components: (a) comprehensive in nature, (b) utilizes data

to drive decisions, and (c) collaborative in nature (ASCA, Goodwin, 2011, Farrington & Ttofi,

2010).

Background of the Problem

Bullying is not a new phenomenon. It has existed for decades and members of minority

and marginalized populations can attest that bullying is not a new issue in our society or in our

schools (Bates, 2011; Carter & Spencer, 2006; Green, 2007; Jarvos, 2011; Liberman & Cowan,

2010). Jarvos maintains that those who are "other" become targets for bullies and describes

"otherness" as sexual, ethnic, and immigrant minorities or someone who the bully deems as

vulnerable (p. 64). Furthermore, Carter & Spencer (2006) noted that students with mental or

physical disabilities may be at increased risk for victimization as a result of bullying. Individuals

are bullied for a plethora of reasons; however, we must publically address who is being bullied in

order to comprehensively and effectively address the issue.

However, all too often school officials and adults view bullying behavior as a harmless

rite of passage for young people or harmless behavior that helps build character and "thickens

skin" (Goodwin, 2011). Unfortunately, this long-held view suggested that young people accept and learn to deal with bullying in isolation (Carter & Spencer, 2006). Moreover, with the increasingly stringent academic standards in schools, often programming to address the social/emotional concerns of students does not take precedence.

Bullying in middle school remains a serious problem although it has been the center of much media attention, government policy, and school and community organizations since the school shootings in Columbine in 1999 (Austin, Reynolds, & Barnes, 2012). Georgia was the first state to pass anti-bullying legislation in 1999 partly in response to the Columbine shootings (Sacco et al., 2012).   Under Georgia law, the state and local boards of education must have policies in place to address bullying (Georgia Department of Education, 2011). The Georgia Department of Education issued a policy prohibiting bullying and outlined requirements for how local schools are to handle bullying. Currently, the Georgia policy focuses on defining, reporting, and disciplining bullying.

In 2001, the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) spearheaded efforts to reconcile the development of the school counseling profession over the last 100 years and initiated progressive efforts to help school counselors become valuable contributors to student achievement and their overall school mission (ASCA, 2012). In 2003, ASCA introduced the first edition of the ASCA National model to move school counseling from a responsive service delivered in isolation to some students to a comprehensive program for every student (ASCA). This national model requires school counseling programs to be comprehensive in scope, developmental in nature, and results-oriented using data to drive decisions. Further, in 2012 ASCA expanded on the previous model to focus more on the school counselor's role in leadership, advocacy, collaboration, and systemic change (ASCA).

Purpose of the Study

This study and related research question were designed with the following

considerations: (a) impact of bullying on middle school youth, (b) effectiveness of school-wide

bullying prevention initiatives, (c) federal, state, and local school laws governing bullying in

schools, (d) the middle school counselor's role in advocating for bullying prevention efforts, (e)

and tenets of social justice. The purpose of this research study was to describe the experiences of

professional middle school counselors who successfully advocate for the implementation of

school-wide bullying prevention initiatives. As a result of thoroughly examining the

participant's responses to the primary research question, the researcher hopes was able to gain

insight into the social justice and advocacy tools needed for middle school counselors to

successfully advocate for the implementation of effective school-wide bullying prevention

initiatives. Specifically, the researcher's aim was to provide a practical list of recommendations

that middle school counselors can utilize to advocate as social justice change agents in their

settings for the implementation of effective school-wide bullying prevention initiatives. Further,

utilizing social justice theory as a guiding framework, the primary researcher used the results of

the study to advocate and lobby for bullying prevention initiatives in middle schools at the local

school, state, and federal levels.

Overview of Methodology

This study was designed as a qualitative research study. The task of qualitative research

is to understand a phenomenon by talking to or observing individuals affected by the

phenomenon in the most comprehensive and engaged way possible (Creswell, 2009; Hays &

Singh, 2012; Lincoln & Denzin, 2011). Furthermore, qualitative research seeks to appreciate,

understand, and portray the processes that individuals use to give meaning to their own and

other's behavior in context (Lincoln & Denzin; Yeh & Inman, 2007). In qualitative research, knowledge is actively constructed and evolves from an understanding of an individual's internal constructions (Yen & Inman). Qualitative methodology was selected as the methodology for this study as the researcher aimed to identify individual meaning while acknowledging the complexity of a given situation to inductively build from particulars to general themes that will be applicable across settings (Creswell, 2009; Lincoln & Denzin).

Design

Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR) was selected as the research tradition for this qualitative study. Hill, Knox, Thompson, Hess, Williams, & Ladany (2005) maintained that an integral part of CQR is consensus, which relies on mutual respect, equal involvement, and shared power. This research tradition involves the researcher selecting participants who are knowledgeable in regard to the topic being explored and the researcher remaining close to the data without major interpretation with the goal of generalizing the findings to a larger population (Hays & Singh, 2012; Hill et al.). When utilizing CQR, the researcher and the participants have mutual influence over one another; the participants bring to light the phenomenon, while the researcher influences the participants by selecting probes to help the participants explore their experiences. Major tenets of Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR) include: (a) the use of open-ended questions in semi-structured data collection methods, (b) using a research team to analyze the data and arrive at a consensus, (c) the use of at least one auditor to cross-check the data, and (d) cross analyzing the data for domains and core themes (Hill et al.; Hill, Thompson, & Williams, 1997).

Participant Selection

The participants for this study consisted of homogeneous purposeful sampled middle school professional school counselors. Participants met the following criteria: (a) work as a certified middle school professional school counselor in the Southeastern United States in or around a large metropolitan area, (b) identify as a social justice change agent, and (c) successfully advocate for the implementation of school-wide bullying prevention initiatives. The primary researcher contacted potential participants through the bullying prevention committee in the school system where she is employed via an email distribution list. Additionally, a recruitment letter was posted to the Georgia School Counselor's Association website. Potential participants responded via email expressing an interest to participate in the study and provided concrete examples of ways they meet the aforementioned criteria. The researcher then utilized snowball sampling to identify additional participants for the study. Snowball sampling involves using a relationship with one person to identify additional participants for a study (Hays & Singh, 2012). During the participant recruitment process, a thorough description of the purpose and methodology of the study was explained to participants. The researcher also thoroughly informed each participant about potential benefits and possible risks of participating in the research study verbally through the consent for participation sheet. The researcher identified 11 participants who participated in individual semi-structured interviews.

Inquiry

The primary researcher designed an interview protocol consisting of ten interview questions and accompanying probes. Additionally, the primary researcher reviewed participant artifacts that demonstrated successful advocacy efforts in implementing school-wide bullying prevention initiatives. Interview questions and accompanying probes were designed to facilitate

the development of ideas as related to the topic explored: What are the experiences of middle school counselors who successfully advocated for the implementation of school-wide bullying prevention initiatives? The semi-structured interviews took place face-to-face when possible, however, when needed the researcher conducted interviews via telephone. All interviews will be digitally recorded and later transcribed verbatim for data analysis.

Primary Research Question

The present study aimed to describe the experiences of professional school counselors at the middle school level who successfully advocate for the implementation of effective school-wide bullying prevention initiatives. Therefore, this qualitative research study was designed to answer the following research question:

- What are the experiences of middle school counselors who successfully advocate for the implementation of school-wide bullying prevention initiatives?

Definitions and Operational Terms

Throughout this dissertation there are key terms that are utilized. Further, these key terms and their definitions were used to answer the research questions of the present study. The following operational terms will be defined: bullying and harassment, social justice, social justice change agent, advocacy, and school-wide bullying prevention initiatives.

Bullying and Harassment

For this study, the term bullying is defined as aggressive behavior characterized by repetition of actions and an imbalance of power. A person is being 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 is unable to defend him or herself (Olweus, 2007). Specifically, Olweus defined a

negative act as one that intentionally attempts to inflict or inflicts, injury or harm to another person.

Social Justice

For the purpose of this study, social justice is defined as the belief that all people in the world are equally valuable, have human rights worth acknowledging and respecting, and deserve to live in a just harmonious society of equal opportunity (Griffin & Steen, 2010). School counselors who incorporate a social justice perspective into their work view student issues as more contextually based and used advocacy to remove environmental barriers to success (ASCA, 2012; Lewis, Ratts, Paladino & Toporek, 2010; Singh et al, 2010). Furthermore, a shift to a social justice paradigm represents a move from traditional helping models to services that are comprehensive in nature and work to meet the needs of all students (ASCA; Lews et al.;).

Social Justice Change Agent

Throughout this study, social justice change agent refers to professional school counselors who have the beliefs, attitudes, and skills to identify and take responsibility for eradicating systemic barriers to success and advocate on behalf of their student and families to promote empowerment and harmonious opportunity (Griffin & Steen, 2010). Professional school counselors operating as social justice change agents use the following strategies to promote systemic change: initiate difficult conversations, educate stakeholders about the school counselor's role as an advocate, utilize data for marketing purposes, teach self-advocacy skills to students, and build intentional relationships (Singh et al., 2010). Furthermore, Singh et al. asserted the school counselors must know when and how to intervene serving as prerequisite for the aforementioned strategies as a way to raise consciousness in the pursuit of school-wide change.

Advocacy

For the purpose of this study, advocacy is defined as proactive efforts carried out by counseling professionals in response to institutional, systemic, and cultural impediments to their clients' well-being (Crethar, River, & Nash, 2008). Professional school counselors are an in ideal position in schools to advocate for safe and more equitable populations (ASCA, 2012; Field & Baker, 2004; House & Martin, 1999; Stone, 2003). Further, school counselors are ethically obligated to advocate for marginalized populations as the most stigmatized members of the school community (Bates, 2010; Jarvos, 2010). For example, school counselors may advocate on the behalf of students at the school/community level to school administrators for the implementation of a school-wide bullying prevention program aimed at improving the overall school climate (Ratts, Toporek, & Lewis, 2010).

School-Wide Bullying Prevention Initiatives

Throughout this study school-wide bullying prevention initiatives refer to effective anti-bullying efforts that are comprehensive and enlist the help and support of school staff, community members, parents, and students and work to change the school climate so that bullying behavior is viewed as socially unacceptable (Farrington & Ttofi, 2010; Goodwin, 2011). A critical first step to bullying prevention in schools is to establish an effective school-wide prevention initiative that is acceptable to all stakeholders (Austin, Reynolds & Barnes, 2012; Goodwin, 2011; Serwacki & Nickerson, 2012; Whitted & Dupper, 2005). Researchers have found the following school-wide program elements to be associated with a decrease in both bullying and victimization: disciplinary methods, parent trainings and meetings, increased

playground supervision, classroom management, classroom rules pertaining to bullying, increased "hot spot" supervision, and the duration and intensity of the program (Farrington & Ttofi, 2010; Whitted & Dupper; Serwacki & Nickerson).

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented preliminary information regarding the focus of this qualitative research study. Relevant background information related to bullying was presented as well as a statement about the impact of bullying on our middle school youth. The primary researcher developed findings that will become useful additions to available literature related to the middle school counselor's role as a social justice change agent advocating for the implementation of effective school-wide bullying prevention initiatives. The following chapters will discuss previous literature as it relates to the impact of bullying on middle school youth, school-wide prevention programs, governing policies and laws, and the middle school counselor's role as a social justice change agent in advocating for the implementation of bullying prevention efforts. Further, gaps in the current literature will be highlighted and a further need for this study will be discussed. Additionally, the methodology to be utilized for this study will be outlined and explained. The final chapters include the findings and discussion of the study, including a link to previous research and limitations of the study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents a review of relevant literature related to the middle school counselors' role in advocating for the implementation of effective school-wide bullying prevention initiatives. The primary research provides an overview of historical considerations of the school counselor's role in advocacy efforts and discusses the paradigm shift in the field of counseling. Next, the primary researcher provides a definition of bullying and an overview of the various manifestations of bullying behavior. Further, a discussion of bullying in middle school and the impact that bullying may have on middle school students while highlighting the voices of affected students is discussed. The researcher reviewed literature related to bullying laws and policies at the federal, state, and local school levels. An exploration of the extensive literature related to school-wide bullying prevention programs and literature related to interventions tailored to the middle school setting is utilized to inform the study. Through the review of literature, bullying as an issue of social justice is explored as well as how advocacy efforts are critical to systemically addressing bullying in middle school. Specifically, the researcher reviewed literature related to the role of the middle school counselor in working with administrators, staff, parents, and with community members to advocate for and collaboratively implement school-wide bullying prevention initiatives.

Through the research, the primary researcher aimed to describe the middle school counselors' role in advocating for the implementation of school-wide bullying prevention efforts. The intent was to develop research which may be added to the existing pool of literature,

expanding upon the available literature considering bullying prevention as an issue of social justice and the middle school counselors' role in advocating for and implementing school-wide bullying prevention initiatives. Additionally, the intent was to use the research to describe the experiences of middle school counselors who successfully advocate for the implementation of effective school-wide bullying prevention initiatives.

Historical Considerations: The Guidance Counselor's Role in Advocacy

Historically, counseling professionals have acknowledged that to effectively meet the needs of their clients change needed to happen outside of the face-to-face counseling relationship and felt a responsibility to make the environment more suitable to enhance human growth and development (Toporek, Lewis & Crethar, 2009). Moreover, counselors have always acted as advocates and change agents, however, these "courageous counselors" had to work in isolation without professional resources and ethical guidance for effective advocacy (Lee, 2007; Kiselica & Robinson, 2001; Toporek, Lewis & Crethar p. 260). To make case in point, throughout the years that the counseling profession has existed, there were career and employment counselors who individually took a stand against racism and sexism in the workplace, school counselors who fought in isolation to eradicate barriers to student success, and family counselors who fought to acknowledged hidden abuse and violence (Toporek, Lewis, & Crethar; Kiselica & Robinson, 2001). Ratts (2009) argues that this type of microlevel-based approach limits counselor from advocating for proactive systemic change (Vera & Speight, 2007).

Although advocacy has always had some place in the practice of most counselors, it is only in recent years that advocacy and social justice is accepted as a foundation of their professional identities (Change, Crethar & Ratts, 2010; Toporek, Lewis & Crether, 2009; Ratts, 2009). Numerous seemingly separate developments have emerged in a "nonlinear fashion" to

bring the counseling profession to where it is today (Toporek, Lewis, & Crethar, p.87). During the 1990's the TSCI of the Education Trust developed a new visions for school counseling grounded in advocacy, the American Counseling Association created and disseminated the Advocacy Competencies (Appendix D), the multicultural competencies were developed, and social justice counseling has moved from the outside to official status in the field of counseling (Toporek, Lewis, & Crethar; Kiselica; Ratts, Toporek & Lewis, 2010; Robinson, 2001). Therefore, counselors should recognize that the acceptance of advocacy and social justice as central tenets to competent practice represents the culmination of events that gained momentum in the last few decades of the 20th century and are the result of the work of "quite heroes" who believed in the important of advocacy (Toporek, Lewis & Crether, pg. 87).

Paradigm Shift: Social Justice School Counseling and Advocacy

The social justice movement has emerged in the field of counseling and is a powerful approach to the meeting the diverse needs of students and clients (Lee, 2007; Ratts, D'Andrea & Arrendo, 2004). This movement promotes social justice as a fundamental principle of counseling by systemically eliminating various forms of oppression and social injustice (Smith, Reynolds, & Rovnak, 2009). Similarly, Ratts (2009) asserts that a social justice counseling approach utilizes advocacy as a means to address inequitable conditions that may impede on the academic, career, and personal/social development of individuals (p. 160; ASCA, 2012). Social justice reflects a fundamental valuing of equity and fairness; equity in resources, rights, and treatment of marginalized populations who do not share equal power in society (Constantine, Hage, Kindaichi, & Bryant, 2007). Moreover, social justice theory as a guiding framework, conceptualizes the role that oppression plays in shaping human behavior and ways to actualize advocacy in the field of counseling (Ratts, 2009; Lewis, Ratts, Paladino, & Toporek, 2011). In

order to address issues of social justice, counselors and professionals in the field are adopting a professional commitment to global and societal change. This commitment is detrimental to understanding the interdependence of microsystems and macrosystems, particularly in the lives of individuals from marginalized groups (Constantine, Hage, Kindaichi, & Bryant, 2007). Furthermore, viewing clients and/or students within their environment helps counselors to determine when social justice advocacy is appropriate.

Constantine, Hage, Kindaichi & Bryant (2007) identified nine specific social justice competencies that they believe are important for practitioners to consider as they work to meet the increasingly diverse needs of their populations. These competencies are as follows:

- Become knowledgeable about the various ways that oppression and social inequalities can manifest at the individual, societal, and cultural levels.

- Participate in ongoing critical reflection on issues of race, ethnicity, oppression, power, and privileged in their own life.

- Maintain an ongoing awareness of how their own positions of power or privilege might inadvertently replicate experiences of oppression and injustice.

- Question and challenge therapeutic interventions that appears inappropriate.

- Possess knowledge about indigenous models of health and healing and actively collaborate with such entities when necessary.

- Cultivate an ongoing awareness of the various types of social injustices that occur within international contexts.

- Conceptualize, implement, and evaluate comprehensive preventive and remedial mental health interventions that are aimed at addressing the needs of marginalized populations.

- Collaborate with community organizations in democratic partnerships to promote trust and minimize power differentials.

- Develop system intervention and advocacy skills to promote social change processes within institutional, neighborhood, and community settings.

Bullying and Harassment Defined

Bullying is typically defined by researchers as aggressive behavior characterized by repetition of actions and an imbalance of power (Crothers & Kobert, 2004; Olweus, 2007; Farrington & Ttofi, 2010; Espelage & Swearer, 2003). Previously, scholars in the field described bullying behaviors as teasing and dismissed such behaviors as a part of normal childhood development (Stockdale, Hangaduambo, Duys, Larson & Sarvela, 2002). However, there are in fact characteristics of bullying that distinguish such behavior from typical childhood nuances (Whitted & Duper, 2005). According to Olweus a person is being bullied or harassed 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 is unable to defend him or herself. Specifically, Olweus defined a negative act as one that intentionally attempts to inflict or inflicts, injury or harm to another person. More specifically, the definition of school bullying includes the presence of an imbalance of power where a more powerful young person is oppressing a less powerful young person repeatedly over a prolonged period of time (Farrington & Ttofi; Olweus). The two characteristics that distinguish bullying behavior from other forms of aggressive behavior are an imbalance of power and repetition of actions over time (Crothers & Kolbert, 2004; Olweus; Pergolizzi et al., 2009). Espelage and Swearer (2003) asserted that bullying is often viewed as proactive aggression as the bully will often seek out their targets without provocation and continue to do so over time.

Olweus (2007) indicated that there are two forms of bullying: direct and indirect bullying. A student is directly bullied when physical harm occurs while indirect bullying transpires through mental or emotional harm such as name-calling, rumors, or exclusion (Green, 2007; Olweus; Pergolizzi et al., 2009; Robinson, 2010). Both boys and girls engage in direct and indirect bullying, although boys are more likely to use direct physical bullying and girls are most likely to bully by using social exclusion, isolation, and spreading rumors (Green; Olweus; Robinson). Bullying may occur in various forms to include: physical bullying, verbal bullying, through social exclusion or manipulation known as relational aggression, or through electronic means often referred to as "cyberbullying" (Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Olweus; Robinson; Pergolizzi et al.; Serwacki & Nickerson, 2012). Bullying is the most prevalent form of low level violence in schools today; however, if not effectively addressed can lead to more serious and even deadly forms of violence (Whitted & Dupper, 2005).

Bullying in Middle School

Bullying impacts young people across gender, age, and ethnicity, however, research demonstrates that middle schools appear to be the centralized location where much of the problems related to bullying occur (Green, 2007; Pergozzi et al., 2009; Serwacki & Nickerson, 2012). According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, about one-third of middle school students report being physically bullied and over half report being verbally bullied (NCES, 2010). Austin, Reynolds, & Barnes (2012) maintained that bullying begins in elementary school, peaks in middle school, and beings to decline in high school. Green (2007) argued that incidents of bullying are quite common in middle school students as many of these young people are rapidly changing before transitioning into high school. Middle school students are changing biologically, cognitively, and in the development of their self-concept (Harris &

Petrie, 2002; Wigfiled, Lutz & Wagner, 2005). During this developmental period middle school students may begin to go through puberty, increasingly engage in abstract thinking and higher order thinking processes, and the development of self-concept takes center stage during middle adolescence (Wigfield, Lutz, & Wagner). Further, the middle school years are a time of great risk socially when students often need help identifying and managing their emotions (Harris & Petrie). This transformative developmental period when coupled with hormonal changes may result in undesirable negative behaviors. Such negative behaviors are often observed in the school setting in the form of insults, put downs, exclusion, and threats- bullying behaviors (Olweus, 2007). School counselors must possess an in-depth working knowledge of such oppression and the potential negative impact on the development of young people (Ratts, 2009).

Impact of Bullying on Middle School Youth

Recent media attention has placed a spotlight on the brutality of bullying –between September 2010 and October 2010 there were 12 reported youth suicides nationally, several in the state of Georgia, as a result of verbal and nonverbal bullying inflicted on them (Bates, 2011; Jarvos, 2010;). On April 5, 2013 a 13 year old boy from Columbus, Georgia hanged himself after being bullied both physically and verbally (U.S. News, 2013). On April 26, 2013 a Donalsonville, Georgia mother found her 15 year old son unconscious due to an overdose, with a note indicating that he could no longer deal with being tormented at school (Abel, 2013). In April of 2009, an 11 year old Georgia boy was found hanged to death in his bedroom closet as a result of being repeatedly teased and harassed by his fellow classmates (Fox News, 2009). Suicide is the fourth leading cause of death for middle school youth ages 10-14 and bully victims are between two and nine times more likely to consider suicide than non-victims (Xu, Kochanek, Murphy, & Tejada-Vera, 2011; Bullying Statistics, 2013). Further, research indicates that

victimization as a result of bullying is directly associated with higher rates of suicidal ideation in young people (Dracic, 2009; Herba et al., 2008; Klomek, Sourander, Kumpulainen, Piha, Tamminen, Moilanen, Almqvieston & Gould 2008; Pranjic & Bajraktarevic, 2010; Xu et al.).

The effects of bullying range may from loss of opportunity to loss of life. Depression, suicidal ideation, isolation, low self-esteem, and lack of hope are just a few of the characteristics evident in young people victimized as a result of bullying (Klomek et al., 2008; Lieberman & Cowan, 2011; Pranjic & Bajraktarevic, 2010). Klomek et al. and Dracic (2009) found that frequent exposure to bullying was directly related to high risk of depression, suicidal ideation, and suicide attempts compared to students not victimized. Scholars assert that anxieties, feelings of being unsafe, loss of concentration, migraine headaches, being unable to start/finish a task and fear of going to school are consequences of being repeatedly bullied (Dracic; Klomek et al.).

Middle school, is a turbulent time for many youth, as they search for acceptance and esteem from their peer group (Green, 2007). When middle school students perceive a lack of acceptance, they may isolate themselves, start to withdraw from the school community, and begin to exhibit signs of generalized anxiety (Green). Clearly, bullying and other forms of oppression can bring devastating consequences for the individual victims and are connected to mental health and well-being (Chang, Crethar & Ratts, 2010; Ratts, 2009). However, it is important to note that not all young people who are bullied will develop psychosocial or emotional difficulties.

Student Experiences of Being Bullied

Kvarme, Helseth, Saetern, & Natvig (2010) conducted a qualitative study to identify young people's experiences of being bullied. The main findings of the study indicated that the participants felt helpless, excluded, and lonely when they were bullied. Participants also

described their dream day as one where everyone was friendly to each other and got along

(Kvarme et al.) Participants shared "*Why am I here? I have been bullied almost every day and*

very often. I can't manage it anymore. Nobody wants to be with me. They just say, get away"

(Kvarme et al., p.795). The participants in this study also wanted teachers to talk to the bully and

those who had been victimized. Furthermore, the participants wanted an active anti-bullying

program at the school and teachers who watched for bullying during breaks (Kvarme et al.). One

participant shared "*I think it is very bad when the teacher doesn't do anything when I complain*

about being bullied. The teacher should talk seriously about it to the class. They don't care, I

feel unsafe and they bully even more" (Kvarme et al., p. 795).

Letendre and Smith (2011) collected data from seventh and eighth grade girls and found

that middle school girls report significant distress related to relational aggression- a form of

bullying behavior (Espelage & Swearer, 2003). One participant reported *"But like, you get teased*

for dumb stuff…You get teased if your teeth are yellow…You get teased because your hair looks

funny. Like it's just stupid stuff like that" (Letendre & Smith, p. 52). The researchers found that

participants struggled with the complex social-environmental expectations of middle school and

expressed feelings of hurt and despair if they were not perceived to be at the top of the social

hierarchy (Letendre & Smith). Essentially, the student's voices ring clear; middle school students

need support and want adults to recognize what is going on in their world and respond to bullying

in effective, caring, and firm ways (San Antonio & Salzfass, 2007; Varjas, Henrich, & Meyers,

2009). Professional school counselors are uniquely qualified and ideally situated, as helping

professionals, to be in tune with the needs and perspectives of all of the students they serve.

Further, this understanding of student needs highlights that social advocacy is a necessity to

addressing issues for those who are oppressed and marginalized within the school community as a result of bullying (Chang, Crethar, & Ratts, 2010).

Bullying Legislation

As of January 2012, forty-eight states in the United States had enacted school anti-bullying legislation (Sacco, Silbaugh, Corredor, Casey & Doherty, 2012). State anti-bullying laws typically prescribe a minimum of what school district policies must contain to address bullying, leaving other decisions to the local school districts and individual schools (Limber & Small, 2003; Sacco et al.). Overall, state legislation tends to emphasize the investigation of bullying incidents, a reporting system to report incidents of bullying, and consequences to address the bully (Sacco et al.; Zubrzycki, 2011). With various levels of precision, legislation also includes education for staff and students and, in some cases, families. However, few states provide any reference to funding sources to help schools implement the procedures and responses that the laws envision (Sacco et al.)

Laws in 40 states contemplate some type of bullying education and prevention programs for students, while eight states do not refer to education or prevention programs (Sacco et al., 2012). Bullying laws in 17 states have a brief section requiring or encouraging some non-specified form of bullying prevention education for students. Legislation in 13 states require or encourage more comprehensive forms of bullying prevention efforts by including character education and evidenced- based best practices (Sacco et al.). There are six states with ambiguous requirements which could be interpreted to mean some form of bullying education for students. Further, there are laws in 16 states that require or encourage schools to provide professional development on bullying prevention and laws in 10 states encourage school districts to provide professional development training on the school district's bullying policy (Sacco et

al.). It should be noted that nearly every state requires parents to be informed of the school's bullying policy (Sacco et al.)

Georgia Legislation on Bullying

Georgia was the first state to pass anti-bullying legislation in 1999 partly in response to the Columbine shootings (Sacco et al., 2012). Under Georgia law, the state and local boards of education must have policies in place to address bullying (Georgia Department of Education, 2011). The Georgia Department of Education issued a policy prohibiting bullying and outlined requirements for how local schools are to handle bullying. According to the Georgia Department of Education, Georgia has one of the strongest punishments for bullying and if a student in grades six through 12 commits a third offense of bullying in a school year, the student will be expelled and sent to an alternative school setting. Limber & Small (2009) reported that state laws have been the primary legislative vehicle for designing new initiatives to address bullying in schools and have the greatest potential to influence the polices of local school districts.

Currently, there is no statutory provisions recommending or encouraging bullying education in the Georgia legislation (Sacco et al., 2012). Georgia legislation does have statutory provisions requiring character education which indicates that local boards shall implement a character education program that promotes parental involvement (Sacco et al.). Finally, Georgia legislation does not have a statutory provision requiring evidenced-based practices to include positive behavior interventions and supports (Sacco et al.). However, the Georgia Department of Education (2011) developed a model policy for bullying and includes the following tenets:

- A statement prohibiting bullying.
- A requirement that any school employee with reliable information that someone is a target of bullying must report immediately to the school administration.

- A requirement that each school have a procedure for the school administration to promptly investigate bullying.

- An age-appropriate range of consequences for bullying.

- A procedure in place for a teacher, staff member, student, and parent to report bullying anonymously.

- A statement prohibiting retaliation following a report of bullying.

Local School Policy

While schools are governed by a complex set of interwoven federal and state laws, the majority of policies and practices regarding school discipline and school climate are crafted at the local school level (Limber & Small, 2003). According to the Georgia Department of Education (2011) the local schools code of conduct will outline the school's bullying policy. Some school's code of conduct contains specific examples of behaviors that constitute bullying (Georgia Department of Education). For example, one school's policy on bullying states that bullying, harassing, threatening or assaulting of students or the use of abusive language towards other students are unacceptable and will result in a referral to the administration. While Georgia legislation ultimately governs discipline for bullying behavior, penalties may vary from school to school (Georgia Department of Education). For example, penalties may vary from an administrative referral to in our out of school suspension. Regardless of the framework, local school policies to address bullying must be implemented consistently over-time and evaluated regularly to ensure effectiveness (Austin, Reynolds, & Barnes, 2012; Farrington & Ttofi, 2009). Professional school counselors, as advocates, may focus on affecting public opinion, public policy, and legislation governing bullying at the federal, state, and local school levels (Lee & Rodgers, 2009).

School-Wide Bullying Prevention Efforts

School officials may believe that bullying is not a problem in *their* school as teachers and administrators typically only see about four percent of bullying incidents (Goodwin, 2011; Green, 2007). Moreover, many schools have other pressing problems to address, such as academic performance and standardized testing, and may unintentionally over look obvious signs and acts associated with bullying (Green). Therefore, a critical first step to bullying prevention in schools is to eliminate the culture of denial and establish an effective school-wide prevention initiative that is acceptable to all stakeholders (Austin, Reynolds, & Barnes, 2012; Goodwin; Serwacki & Nickerson, 2012Whitted & Dupper, 2005). Additionally, many anti-bullying programs are based on the false assumption that best way for victims to handle bullying is to utilize better coping mechanisms (Austin, Reynolds, & Barnes; Farrigton & Ttofi, 2010; Whitted & Dupper). Effective anti-bullying programs are comprehensive and enlist the help and support of school staff, community members, parents, and students (Farrington & Ttofi; Serwacki & Nickerson; Whitted & Dupper). Furthermore, effective school-wide anti-bullying programs work to change the school climate so that bullying behavior is viewed as socially unacceptable (Goodwin; Lieberman & Cowan, 2011; Serwacki & Nickerson; Whitted & Supper). Professional school counselors operating from a social justice framework may advocate for school-wide bullying prevention programs that address oppressive conditions, such as bullying, that impede on the academic, career, and personal/social development of their students (Ratts, 2009).

Scholars have identified program components that are effective in reducing bullying and victimization and components that prove ineffective. Farrington and Ttofi (2010) conducted a meta-analysis of 44 anti-bullying program evaluations, all including data that permitted

calculation for the effect size for bullying or victimization, and found that; overall, school wide anti-bullying programs are effective in reducing bullying and victimization. The results of the meta analysis, which systematically reviewed 26 years of bullying intervention research, found that on average, bullying decreased by approximately 22 percent and victimization by approximately 19 percent (Farrigton & Ttofi). The researchers found that specific components of anti-bullying programs and interventions were found to decrease both bullying and victimization while other components had a negative effect directly associated with an increase in victimization. The researchers found the following program elements to be associated with a decrease in both bullying and victimization: (a) parent trainings and meetings, (b) disciplinary methods, (c) increased playground supervision, classroom management, (d) classroom rules, and (e) the duration and intensity of the program for the young people and the school staff (Farrington & Ttofi; Serwacki & Nickerson, 2012; Whitted & Dupper, 2005). More specifically, parent trainings, disciplinary methods, and duration and intensity of the program were shown to be most effective in decreasing victimization (Farrington & Ttofi; Serwacki & Nickerson; Whitted & Dupper). The results of Farrington and Ttofi's meta-analysis revealed that anti-bullying programs that utilized 'work with peers' to be directly correlated to an increase of victimization for the young people that were bullied and in turn should not be used as an intervention (Krothers & Colbert, 2004). To take case in point, bringing the bully and victim together for a peer mediation intervention only heightened the imbalance of power leading to future victimizations by the bully (Whitted & Dupper, 2009).

Disciplinary methods were an intervention component that was significantly associated with a decrease in both bullying and victimization (Farrington & Ttofi, 2010; Serwacki & Nickerson, 2012). Davis & Nixon (2011) maintain that how schools plan and implement

disciplinary actions make a difference. Disciplinary methods may include a range of firm

sanctions such as having serious talks with the bullies, sending them to the principal, and

depriving them of privileges. Davis & Nixon (2011) and Young, Hardy, Hamilton, Biernesser,

Sun, & Niebergall (2009) found that when schools implement the following steps bullying

behavior is most likely to decrease:

- Involve students and staff in the development of rules, expectations, and consequences for bullying related behaviors.

- Develop a school-wide climate that is positive, warm, and nurturing that imposes fair consequences in a positive context.

- Develop a school-wide rubric for addressing specific bullying behavior.

- Use smaller, consistent consequences and develop a progress discipline process for addressing more serious actions.

- Have a school-wide reporting system in place that addresses retaliation or threat of retaliation for reporting.

Based on Farington & Ttofi's (2010) findings anti-bullying programs need to be intensive

and long-lasting to have the greatest impact on this troubling issue (Goodwin, 2011). The most

effective school wide anti- bullying programs and initiatives will be a collaborative and

comprehensive effort between the school, families, and the community (Davis & Nixon, 2011;

Serwacki & Nickerson, 2012; Young et al., 2009). Whitted and Dupper (2009) argue that one of

the most common mistakes that schools make is implementing partial programs due to time

constraints resulting in inadequate and sporadic ineffective interventions. Newer bullying

prevention programs should be inspired by existing programs and should include the specific

components that were found to be effective in decreasing both bullying and victimization (Farrington & Ttofi).

Middle School Bullying Prevention Efforts

Crothers & Kolbert (2004) asserted that middle school teachers found the following three interventions to be most successful in addressing bullying: teach young people how to handle bullying, encourage students to report bullying to adults, and availability of the staff to talk with students. The researchers established that middle school students favored the following bullying intervention strategies: create a classroom environment where bullying is not tolerated, teach students how to handle bullying, and teach the students about bullying. The intervention strategy that teachers and students both found to be ineffective was having the bullies and victims work together as "peer helpers" (Crothers & Kolbert; Farrington & Ttofi, 2010). Ultimately, both groups, middle school students and teachers, expect school personnel to play a significant role in addressing bullying at school (Bowlann, 2011; Crothers & Kolbert; Young et al., 2009). Green (2007) discovered that at the middle school level that 41.4 percent of adults surveyed said that there was a need for tougher discipline policies and 33.7 percent said that more supervision of students was needed to combat bullying behaviors.

One middle school, Chime Charter Middle School, made a commitment to change and with buy in from all stakeholders has seen a significant decrease in the number of bullying referrals received (Murawski, Lockwood, Khalili, & Johnston, 2010). Chime Middle School implemented the following environmental and instructional strategies resulting in a motivating and healthy school culture: (a) posting signs promoting a positive and safe school environment, (b) lunch clubs to aid students in nurturing positive friendships in a structured environment, (c) participation in tolerance activities such as "No Name Calling Week", (d) utilizing literature to

help students learn about tolerance and diversity, (e) inviting speakers from diverse cultures to talk with the student body, (f) video discussions, (g) the implementation of a violence prevention curriculum, and (h) involving staff, families, students and community members in prevention efforts (Murawaski et al., 2010).

The Student's Perspective on the Effectiveness of School-Wide Initiatives

The Youth Voice project surveyed more than 13,000 bullied youth in grades five through twelve during the 2009-2010 academic year to determine what actually worked best for the youth with respect to bullying (Davis & Nixon, 2011). The researchers found across all three grade levels, elementary, middle, and high school, that the most successful strategy to combat bullying behavior was reaching out for encouragement, support, and advice from a trusted adult or peer (Davis & Nixon; Pranjic & Bajraktarevic, 2010). Specifically, the students reported when adults in the school building listened to them, gave them support, addressed and supervised the situation, and checked in with them over time to ensure that they were safe at school, the situation greatly improved (Davis & Nixon; Pranjic & Bajraktarevic). Students reported that when adults in the school building ignored the situation or told the students to solve the problem in isolation, the situation escalated (Davis & Nixon).

Further, Barone (1993) surveyed a group of middle school students and a group of middle school personnel and found that their estimation of the occurrence of bullying in their school was vastly different. The students' surveyed reported that 58.8 percent of the school population had been bullied, while the school personnel's estimation was much lower at 16 percent. Green (2007) found that 43 percent of middle school students thought more counseling was needed to help address bullying. Green also found that 25.8 percent felt the school's discipline policies in regards to bullying needed to be stronger and 22 percent recommend better supervision by the

adults in the school building. School counselors working from a social justice paradigm understand that oppressive environmental conditions serve as barriers to success for many students (Ratts, 2009).

Bullying as an Issue of Social Justice

Members of historically marginalized populations can attest that bullying is not a new issue and bullying has occurred for many decades (Bates, 2011; Green, 2007; Jarvos, 2011; Liberman & Cowan, 2010). Jarvos maintains that those who are "other" become targets for bullies and describes "otherness" as sexual, ethnic, and immigrant minorities or someone who the bully deems as vulnerable. Similarly, Lieberman & Cowan noted that certain populations of students are particularly vulnerable to being bullied; students with disabilities and mental health issues or students who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or questioning (Carter & Spencer, 2006). Bates and Stone (2003) maintained that many incidents of bullying are related to a young person's sexual orientation or perceived sexual orientation. Furthermore, Bates and Stone stated that many bullying prevention efforts do not address sexual orientation although research shows that eight out of ten LGBT youth in middle and high school reported being verbally or physically harassed because of their sexual orientation. Research indicates that negative attitude towards one's sexual orientation put LGBT youth at an increased risk for verbal and physical harassment (Center for Disease Control, 2011; Ryan, Huebener, Diaz, & Sanchez, 2009). Moreover, LGBT youth in grades 7 through 12 were twice as likely as their heterosexual peers to attempt suicide (Center for Disease Control). Stone surmised that the lack of recognition and protection by schools is a key contributing factor to the alarmingly high levels of suicide amongst LGBT youth.

The Role of Public School Systems

In 1999, the pivotal Supreme Court case *Davis v. Monroe County Board of Education* established that public schools can be held liable and forced to pay damages for failing to stop peer-on-peer sexual harassment (Davis v. Monroe County Board of Education, 1999). This legal ruling opened a window for change and clearly encourages public schools to protect this minority group of students from bullying and harassment (Stone, 2003). Bullying is a problem that schools need to address and incidents are greatest in schools that have not acted to prevent and respond to problems such as peer-on-peer sexual harassment (Grube & Lens, 2003).

Individuals are bullied for a plethora of reasons; young people are bullied because of their sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity, disability, etc. (Bates, 2011). Ali (2010) maintained that the federal government has paid close attention to reported bullying based on race, color, religion, or sexual orientation. Furthermore, Ali established that if school's fail to address bullying the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights can withhold federal funding. Practitioners can contribute to the solution of intolerance and non-affirming attitudes by intentionally verbalizing challenges that our youth face on a daily basis. Moreover, by educating others and increasing knowledge, in turn fear will be reduced (Grube & Lens, 2003). Bates writes "what is not revealed cannot be healed, and while the issue of intolerance and non-affirming attitudes towards difference may not improve overnight, this problem is certainly more likely to produce colossal and collateral damage if not appropriately exposed and addressed" (p. 83).

Socially Justice Oriented School Counselors

Professional school counselors provide the framework for social justice in the education of students in the elementary and secondary school settings (Dixon, Tucker, & Clark, 2010).

Moreover, school counselors are in a unique position to act as social justice leaders in their school building and advocate on behalf of individual and groups of students, parents and teachers regarding issues of access and equality (Crethar, Rivera, & Nash, 2008; Dixon, Tucker & Clark; Lewis et al., 2010; Singh et al., 2010;). Floyd et al. (as cited in Stone, 2003) surveyed a group of administrators, teachers, and school counselors and found that school counselors were the most informed, supportive, and experienced about the needs of gay, lesbian, and bisexual young people. Crethar, Rivera, & Nash noted that socially justice oriented counselors use the principals of *equity, access, participation,* and *harmony* to ground their work with students. These guiding principles provide a framework for counselors to foster the empowerment of all students with a focus on individuals that have less power and privilege.

ASCA's Position

The American School Counselor Association (2012) maintains that professional school counselors work towards socially just outcomes by acting on the following ASCA national model themes of: (a) leadership, (b) advocacy, (c) collaboration, and (d) systemic change. Therefore, socially justice oriented school counseling programs include advocacy for equity and access for all students as well as special considerations for students who may benefit from additional support; such as student involved in incidents of bullying (ASCA). Professional school counselors are charged to address and advocate for systemic change to meet the needs of the students they service (ASCA; Griffin & Steen, 2010; Lewis et al., 2010; Singh et al, 2010).

Action Strategies for Social Justice Oriented School Counselors

A school counselor operating from a social justice framework will advocate for the development and implementation of policies and practices to address bullying prevention that will result in more equitable and harmonious outcomes (Crethar, Rivera, & Nash, 2008). This

may include negotiating with policy makers and administration for the implementation of bullying prevention efforts, identifying school climate issues, and developing a plan to eradicate barriers to a bully free school environment (Crethar, Rivera, & Nash). A social justice approach to school counseling calls for school counselors to step outside of their traditional roles and move towards a collaborative approach with important stakeholders to provide access to equitable opportunities and programming for all students (Griffin & Steen, 2010; Lewis et al, 2010; Singh et al, 2010). Furthermore, Singh, Urbano, Haston, and McMahon (2010) proposed a framework of social justice strategies that school counselor advocates can implement in working towards systemic change. Tenets of the framework include the school counselor: (a) building intentional relationships, (b) initiating difficult dialogues, (c) educating others about the school counselor's role as an advocate, (d) use data to support programs and interventions, and (e) teach students self-advocacy tools. Similarly, Griffin and Steen recommend the following action strategies that school counselors can take as social justice change agents: (a) develop cultural competence, (b) utilize data to support their comprehensive school counseling program and interventions, (c) gain allies as collective efforts are most productive, (d) speak up and let their opinions and oppositions be heard, (e) work to educate and empower students and families, (f) exhibit confidence in their beliefs and abilities,(g) be persistent in their work to remove barriers to success and initiate beneficial change, and (h) school counselors must collect research to support their comprehensive programs.

Professional School Counselors as Advocates

ASCA (2012) maintains that school counselors are advocates for social justice oriented outcomes when they address inequitable policies and procedures that may impede the academic achievement or personal/social development of students. "*Advocacy* is defined as proactive

efforts carried out by counseling professionals in response to institutional, systemic, and cultural impediments to their clients' well-being. "Counselors with a mind-set toward client advocacy not only think in terms of remediation of problems in individual clients' lives but also direct time and energy to implement preventative helping interventions and services that are intentionally aimed at promoting a greater level of social justice by fostering systemic changes in clients' environmental context. (Crethar, River, & Nash, 2008 p. 6). Although the mind-set towards advocacy and social justice is not without barriers, to take case in point Sue and Sue (2008) ascertain that many people enter the profession driven by a desire to work one-on-one with individual clients (Ratts, 2009). However, the primary role of the school counselor who serves an advocate for all students is to create opportunities for all students to define, nurture, and accomplish high expectations with a focus on removing institutionalized barriers to success (Aikos & Galassi, 2004; ASCA, 2012; Field & Baker, 2004; House & Martin, 1999).

School counselors are specially trained in the developmental needs of young people and are ideally situated to impact the growth of individual students and enhance the overall school climate from hostile ones to productive nurturing learning environments (House & Martin; Aikos & Galassi, 2004; Stone). Moreover, professional school counselors are ethically obligated to advocate for marginalized populations as the most stigmatized members of the school community. Therefore, professional school counselors must actively intervene in the decision making process of student's in the social context that impacts them the most- the school (House & Martin).

The American Counselor Association (ACA) Advocacy competencies provide an additional framework for school counselor's operating from a social justice and advocacy framework (Appendix D). Toporek, Lewis, & Crethar (2009) define advocacy competence as

"the ability, understanding, and knowledge to carry out advocacy ethically and effectively" (p.262). The development of the advocacy competencies acknowledges that oppression and systemic barriers interferes with individual's health and well-being and may even cause distress (Toporek, Lewis, & Crethar). Advocacy extends the impact that counselors can have on their clients and students by working to remove systemic barriers to success, therefore, causing less stress and harm to individuals (Toporek, Lewis, & Crethar). The Advocacy Competencies play an instrumental role in school counselor's advocating for the implementation of school-wide bullying prevention program and initiatives. "There should be no stronger student advocate than school counselors. They must be the heart and soul of the school and lead the charge in creating a school culture that promotes and equitable education for every student" (ASCA, 2012 p. 18).

The Role of the Middle School Counselor

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) national model provides a framework for school counseling programs to reflect a comprehensive approach to program implementation (ASCA, 2012). The ASCA national model not only answers the questions "What do school counselors do?" but requires school counselors to respond to the question, "How are students different as a result of what we do" (ASCA)? The American School Counselor Association position statement on bullying indicates that professional school counselors recognize the need for all students to attend school in a safe, orderly, and caring environment that promotes a positive school climate and fosters growth (ASCA). Furthermore, the American School Counselor Association National Model emphasizes that professional school counselors are leaders in the school and community who serve as advocates for students and work in collaboration with other stakeholders to remove barriers to student success (ASCA, 2012).

The American School Counselor Association (2012) states that "school counselors should possess the knowledge, abilities, skills and attitudes necessary to plan, organize, implement and evaluate a comprehensive, developmental, results-based school counseling program that aligns with the ASCA National Model (p. 148). Professional school counselors practicing as social justice change agents advocating for the implementation of school-wide bullying prevention efforts align with many of the ASCA school counselor competencies (ASCA). Table 1 links the ASCA school counselor competencies, aligning with the ASCA national model, with school counselors' role in advocating for the implementation of whole school bullying prevention initiatives (Appendix A).

Professional school counselors, as advocates, may act as part of the solution to combat bullying and spearhead bullying prevention efforts. Professional school counselors must be proactive and implement school-wide programs to meet the needs of all students that are preventive in nature and comprehensively send the message that bullying is not acceptable (ASCA, 2012; Griffin, 2012). Moreover, all students must know that they can reach out if bulling occurs so that they can receive support, guidance, and encouragement and feel a sense of wellness and belonging in schools which is critical to developing self-confidence and sense of well-being (Griffin).

Collaboration with Administrators and Staff for the Implementation of School-Wide Bullying Prevention Initiatives

School counselors as "change agents" must work closely with administrators to implement school-wide bullying prevention policies and initiatives (ASCA, 2012; Austin, Reynolds, & Barnes, 2012; Young et al., 2009). ASCA believes that "although the school principal serves as the head of the school and is ultimately responsible for student success, the school counselor plays a critical role in making student success a reality" (p. 17). Therefore, In

this role of "change agent", professional school counselors must work with administrators as a team to help teachers, and other support staff to understand personal characteristics of their students and the role they may play in bullying and the overall school climate (Austin, Reynolds, & Barnes). Administrators need school counselor's perspectives on the overall school climate and school counselors require administrative support. Whitted and Dupper (2009) argue that for bullying prevention initiatives to be successful administrators must openly demonstrate support of the initiatives which should be integrated into the overall school curriculum in order to obtain 'buy in' from school personnel.

Further, teachers will benefit from the school counselor's skills and knowledge related to bullying (ASCA). Young et al. and Lieberman & Cowan (2011) noted that bullying is a school wide issue, therefore, a comprehensive systemic approach requires the support and collaboration from all school personnel to effectively address the issue. Moreover, school counselors must work in collaboration with administrators to train staff members to understand bullying behavior and know the steps necessary to effectively deal with bullying (Green, 2007). Additionally, school personnel must be educated on the theoretical rationale on which school-wide bullying prevention initiatives are based (Crothers & Kolbert, 2004).

Crothers & Kolbert (2004) suggested that school personnel overlook incidents of bullying due to the common misconception that bullying is a harmless rite of passage amongst young people (Robinson, 2010). Young et al. (2009) recommend that specific bullying prevention and intervention goals be created and added to the school's overall improvement plan. Administrators and staff can then identify specific work plans to address the issue of bullying and collect data to measure the effectiveness of interventions implemented school wide. Further, researchers found that students do not believe that the intervention strategies utilized by teachers

will help the situation; therefore, often students fail to report bullying behavior (Crothers &
Kobert; Robinson; Young et al.). Young et al. suggested establishing an anti-bullying website,
monitored by the administrators and school counselors, which allow students to report bullying
incidents anonymously.

School counselors must work with other stakeholders to challenge injustices when
administrators work to maintain the status quo (Griffin & Steen, 2013). Therefore, school
counselors must be able to effectively challenge injustices and question authority who is refusing
to address barriers to success (Bemak & Chung, 2008). School counselors can use data as a
transformative tool and share with administrators and staff to understand educational issues that
prevent students from being successful and to evaluate and improve school counseling programs
and initiatives such as bullying prevention (ASCA, 2012; Young et al., 2009). Young et al.
found that collecting, analyzing, and sharing data led to increased support from administrators
and teachers for school wide bullying prevention initiatives and other school counseling services
(ASCA, 2012).

Collaboration with Parents and Community Members for the Implementation of School-Wide Bullying Prevention Initiatives

School-family-community collaboration is defined as "collaborative relationships in
which school counselors, school personnel, students, families, community members and other
stakeholders work jointly to implement school and community based programs and activities that
improve student academic achievement directly within schools, and indirectly by attending to the
needs that may be hindering students and families from these accomplishments" (Griffin &
Steen, 2010 p. 77). Furthermore, the focus on serving students and families must move beyond
individual challenges to external factors that are barriers to success (ASCA, 2012; Griffin &
Steen; Lieberman & Cowan, 2011; Young et al., 2009).

Austin, Reynolds, & Barnes (2012) recommend that agencies that have an identified role in crime prevention and intervention be a part of a local school's bullying prevention efforts. Specifically, it is recommended that secondary school resources, such as coaches and other enrichment teachers be an integral component of school-wide bullying prevention efforts (Austin, Reynolds, & Barnes; Lieberman & Cowan, 2011). Such components promote school and community involvement and encourage students to develop a sense of community and connectedness. Furthermore, when young people have strong connections with adults, they tend to be more resilient and are less likely to be emotional wounded if bullied (Davis & Nixon, 2011).

Farrington and Ttofi (2010) findings suggest that efforts should be made to educate parents about the harmful effects associated with bullying behavior through parent educational workshops and meetings as this intervention was shown to significantly decrease rates of both bullying and victimization (Liberman & Cowan, 2011). The more immersed parents become in regards to bullying the more likely they will be to inquire about their children's experiences fostering an opportunity for open and effective communication if victimization occurs.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of the research cited throughout this chapter was to present information related to the middle school counselors' role as a social justice change agent advocating for the implementation of bullying prevention efforts. The definition and impact of bullying on middle school students was examined as well. The literature has acknowledged bullying as a problem in our schools and evidenced the harmful and devastating impact on our young people. Furthermore, the literature has demonstrated the efficacy of school-wide bullying prevention programs and interventions in decreasing incidents of bullying and supporting students involved

with bullying.   However, additional research is needed to determine the school counselors' role

in advocating for and implementing school wide bullying prevention efforts.

CHATPER 3

METHODOLOGY

The preceding chapters presented a background of the problem studied and discussed the current literature related to the middle school counselors' role as a social justice change agent in advocating for and implementing school-wide bullying prevention programs and initiatives. This chapter begins with a description of the design of the study, followed by a description of the participants, discussion of data collection procedures, data analysis, and explores the methods of trustworthiness utilized for this study.

Method

This study utilized a qualitative research methodology as the guide for collecting and analyzing data related to experiences of middle school counselor's role as advocates for the implementation of effective school-wide bullying prevention initiatives. The primary researcher selected qualitative research methodology for this study as this methodology is ideal for exploratory studies and for researchers who intend to immerse themselves in the context studied (Creswell, 2009; Hays & Singh, 2012; Lincoln, 2010; Yeh & Inman, 2007). Creswell defined qualitative research as "a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (p. 4). Qualitative research is a process that involves emerging questions and procedures, the researcher as an instrument, and research which occurs in a natural setting (Creswell; Hays & Singh;). Moreover, in our multicultural society, the use of qualitative approaches has major implications for social change advocacy within educational and counseling settings (Hays & Singh; Lincoln; Ponteretto, 2005).

Hays & Singh (2012) maintain that the qualitative researcher is an integral part of the qualitative methodology; therefore, the researcher must have an array of interpersonal, technical, and organizational skills. Key skills of a qualitative researcher include: (a) a focus on a research tradition throughout the study, (b) using a multitude of strategies to explore a phenomenon, (c)communicating in a neutral way with understanding and care, (d) reflexivity of the research process, and (e) understanding the importance of collaboration in the research relationship (Hayes & Singh). Furthermore, Maxwell (2005) asserted that a qualitative design is interactive and evolving in nature composed of the following five major interrelated components: goals, conceptual framework, research questions, methods, and trustworthiness.

Kline (2008) noted that in order for qualitative researchers to generate compelling findings they must provide sufficient information about the participants and the settings in order for readers to make generalizations applicable to their own settings. Researchers who engage in qualitative research support a way of looking at research that honors an inductive style, focuses on individual meaning, and understands the importance of the complexity of situations (Creswell, 2009; Hays & Singh, 2012; Yeh & Inman, 2007). Qualitative researchers must use effective data collection methods and thorough data analysis techniques to establish that findings are credible (Creswell; Hays & Singh; Kline). Additionally, Kline noted that researchers must utilize strategies for trustworthiness such as reflexive journaling and the use of an auditor (Creswell; Hays & Singh; Shenton, 2004).

Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR)

Selecting a research tradition creates a solid foundation for the research design (Creswell, Hanson, Plano Clark & Morales, 2007; Hays & Singh, 2012; Lincoln, 2010). The research tradition selected for this study was Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR). CQR was

introduced to the Social Sciences in 1997 and integrates grounded theory, phenomenological, and other approaches to qualitative research (Hays & Singh; Hays & Wood, 2011; Hill, 2012; Hill, Thompson, Williams, 1997). CQR research emphasizes the participant sample as a whole and uses quotes to highlight examples of the phenomenon being explored (Williams & Morrow, 2009). The use of open ended question in semi-structured data collection methods is a central tenet of CQR (Hays & Wood; Hill; Hill et al.). Additional principals of CQR include utilizing a research team to analyze the data for domains and core themes and arriving at a consensus (Hays & Wood; Hill; Hill et al.). Further, CQR uses at least one auditor to cross-check the data and make recommendation to the research team (Hill; Hayes & Wood; Hill, Knox, Thompson, Hess, Williams, & Ladany, 2005).   Additionally, CQR has been noted as ideal for providing highly descriptive and in depth data analysis that can be utilized to advance socially and culturally based research, training, and practice (Hill; Constantine, Miville, Warren, Gainor, & Lewis-Cole, 2006; Ponterotto, 1998).

Consensus

Hill et al. (2005) and Hill (2012) maintains that an integral part of CQR is consensus, which relies on mutual respect, equal involvement, and shared power. This research tradition involves the researcher selecting participants who are knowledgeable in regard to the topic being explored. The researcher remains close to the data without major interpretation with the goal of generalizing the findings to a larger population (Hays & Singh, 2012; Hays & Wood, 2011; Hill). When utilizing CQR, the researcher and the participants have mutual influence over one another; the participants bring to light the phenomenon, while the researcher influences the participants by selected probes to help the participants explore their experiences (Hays & Wood; Hill).

Researcher Bias

Finally, a central component of CQR is acknowledging and accounting for researcher

biases. In fact, the rationale for sharing power is that researcher bias is inevitable in qualitative

inquiry. Therefore, by sharing power, various research team members can discuss and appreciate

the various perspectives of participants for better practice (Chapman & Schwartz, 2012; Hays &

Singh; Hill, 2012). Hill et al., (2005) and Hill (2012) noted that biases may arise from several

different sources such as demographic characteristics of the research team or in values and

beliefs about the topic. Hill et al. and Hill recommends that researchers report potential bias and

include in their discussion section an honest assessment of how expectations and biases

influenced data analysis (Williams & Morrow, 2009). Therefore, prior to collecting data the

researches discussed any biases that they may have related to the study by noting their

expectations of the potential findings.

Constructivist and Post-Positivist Elements

A research paradigm, a belief system based on the core philosophies of science, will be

utilized in conjunction with the methodology and research tradition as a means to inform the

design of this research study (Hays & Singh, 2012; Lincoln & Guba, 1994). The research

paradigm for this study is primarily constructivist with some post-positivist elements.

Constructivist recognize that individuals construct their reality and that there are multiple,

equally valid, socially constructed versions of "the truth" (Hill, 2012; Hill et al., 2005; Morrow,

2005). CQR explores the commonalties between participant's experiences, which is another

form of constructed reality (Hill; Hill et al.; Williams & Morrow, 2009). The researcher and

participants have mutual influence over one another and a collaborative dialogue is highly

valued. The constructivist researcher enters the setting with foreshadowed problems as opposed to main and alternative hypotheses (Hays & Singh; Hill; Hill et al.).

Consensual Qualitative Research is grounded in the belief that researcher biases are inevitable and should be addressed at length (constructivist) to ensure that they do not unduly influence the findings of the study (post-positivistic) (Hill; Hill et al., 2005; Williams & Morrow, 2009). In terms of rhetoric structure, CQR is post-positivist as results are reported in the third person. The researcher using CQR strives to be objective and summarizes the participant's language rather than making interpretations (Hill; Hill et al.). Finally, with regards to methods, CQR is clearly constructivist and relies on highly interactive data collection methods occurring in a naturalistic setting (Hill; Hill et al.). Figure 1 illustrates the commonalities of the research tradition (CQR), paradigm (Constructivist/Post-Positivist), and theoretical framework (Social Justice) utilized for the study (Appendix C).

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher in qualitative inquiry is central to the success of the study and includes the following considerations: reflexivity, "voice" of participants, subjectivity, peer debriefing, and research teams (Hays & Singh, 2012; Williams & Morrow, 2009). The researchers must actively self-reflect on their biases, values, personal background, and history that may shape their interpretations during a study (Creswell, 2007; Hays & Singh). The primary researcher for this study identifies as a White, heterosexual female who currently works as a middle school counselor in a suburban school system positioned outside a large metropolitan city in the Southeast United States. The researcher utilized Roger's core conditions of authenticity, unconditional positive regard, and empathy to guide the reflexivity process (Hays & Singh, 2012). The primary researcher has received extensive training on bullying prevention programs

and initiatives, is the chair of her school's bullying prevention committee and views bullying prevention as a priority for all schools. Additionally, the primary researcher has experience with Consensual Qualitative Research methodology with a previous study on resiliency and victims of bullying for a qualitative academic class. The researcher reflected on reactions throughout the study and will be accountable for how various reactions to participant's data shape interpretation of the data (Hays & Singh; Williams & Morrow). Furthermore, the researcher accounted for and acknowledged any difficult personal reactions throughout the study.

Subjectivity is a qualitative researcher's internal understanding of the phenomenon and is a defining feature of qualitative research (Hays & Singh, 2012; Williams & Morrow, 2009). The researcher embraced subjectivity as way to remain close to the study and understand the data intimately (Hays & Singh). The researcher identifies as a social justice change agent and successfully advocates for the implementation of school-wide bullying prevention initiatives in her school setting. The researcher, as an expert in the phenomenon of inquiry, searched for ways to accurately represent the participants in the study (Hays & Singh, 2012).

A major role of the researcher is to accurately understand and represent the "voice" of the participants in this consensual qualitative research study (Hays & Singh, 2012; Hill, 2012; Hill et al., 2005). Consensus is a central tenant of CQR and involves the researcher using rigorous methods to facilitate agreement in interpretations of data among the researcher, research team, participants in the study, and the general audience (Hays & Singh; Hill; Hill et al.). The consensus process in CQR has been shown to improve decision quality and involves multiple viewpoints and interpretations while unraveling the complexities of the data (Hill; Hill et al.).

Peer debriefing provides an accountability component in the effort to understand the influence of the researcher on the interpretation of the data (Hays & Singh, 2012). The focus of

the peer debriefing sessions was the methodology of the study which ensured that the peer debriefing is an effective collaborative effort as opposed to a debate (Creswell, 2007; Hays & Singh). The researcher engaged in peer debriefing with members of the research team that was utilized for this study.

Hill et al., (2005) believed that research team members must have strong interpersonal skills, like and respect each other, as disagreements and discussions may occur throughout the process (Hill, 2012). A defining feature of CQR is the emphasis on shared power among the researchers, research team, and participants (Hays & Singh, 2012; Hill; Hill et al., 1997). Sharing power permits research team members to openly discuss how their biases and assumptions about the topic influence data collection and analysis (Hays & Singh). Hill et al. recommended using a research team with no less than three members to provide a variety of perspectives. Further, Hill et al. noted that a set or rotating team is appropriate as long as the members remain fully immersed in the data (Hill).

The research team for this study consisted of the primary researcher and three other research assistants. One research assistant was a White female who has extensive experience as a special education teacher and professional school counselor in public school settings. Another research assistant was an African American female who has professional counseling experience and extensive training and research experience in the arena of social justice and multiculturalism. The final research assistant was an Indian female who also has teaching and professional school counseling experience in public school settings. Two research team members, like the primary researcher, are doctoral students in counseling and personnel services with an emphasis on social justice and one is a recent graduate of the same program. The research team was a set team; therefore, all team members were involved in the coding of core ideas and domains and were

fully immersed in the data for the entirety of the study. The auditor of the study was a White female who has experience as a community and school counselor.

Prior to the beginning of the study, the research team met to discuss consensual qualitative research. Hill et al. (2005) wrote that researchers new to CQR must "shift from looking at the trees to looking at the forest" in moving from domains and core-ideas to cross analysis (p. 198). Further, the research team discussed possible biases and assumptions as appropriate. The research team believed that participants would report collaboration and administrative support as key components in successfully advocating for bullying prevention programs. Further, the team felt that access to resources and community support would also be relevant in the findings. The research team met bi-weekly throughout the research process to identify domains and core ideas, cross analyze and arrive at a consensus (Hays & Singh, 2012; Hill, 2012; Hill et al; Hill et al., 1997).

Participant Selection

The primary researcher considered current literature to determine participants for this consensual qualitative research study. Hill et al. (2005) recommended a sample size of eight to 15 participants and suggested that the researcher randomly select from a homogeneous population of participants who are very knowledgeable about the phenomenon under investigation. Therefore, the researcher utilized homogeneous purposeful sampling to select middle school professional school counselors for the participant group. Purposeful sampling is defined as a process of developing selection criteria for participants prior to entering the field of study (Hays & Singh, 2012; Seidman, 2006). Further, homogeneous sampling involves a participant group who shares many similarities with one another for the purpose of gaining comprehensive information about a specific topic (Hays & Singh; Seidman). The researcher

selected 11 professional school counselors who work in public schools in the Southeastern

region of the United States in or surrounding a large metropolitan city. Participant demographic

information can be found in Appendix E. The researcher purposively selected participants who

self-identified as social justice change agents and who have successfully advocated for the

implementation of school-wide bullying prevention initiatives. Participants provided concrete

examples of how they identify as a social justice change agents and how they have successfully

advocated for the implementation of effective school-wide bullying prevention initiatives. Social

justice researchers recognize that individuals are the experts on their own situations (Chapman &

Schwartz, 2012). The primary researcher contacted initial participants through the bullying

prevention committee in the school system where she is employed via an email distribution list

and posted a recruitment letter on the Georgia School Counselor Association website. The

researcher then utilized snowball sampling to identify additional participants for the study.

Snowball sampling involves using a relationship with one person to identify additional

participants for a study (Hayes & Singh).

Procedures

The participants for this study were selected using homogeneous purposeful sampling.

According to Hayes & Singh (2012) purposeful sampling in the current field of educational

research builds rigor into your sampling method by allowing the researcher to dictate the

selection criteria of participants (Seidman, 2006). Participants for this study self-identified as

being interested in participating in this study by responding to an email distribution list of

professionals on a county level bullying prevention committee or to a posting on the Georgia

School Counselor Association website. Further, snowball sampling was used to identify

additional participant contact information gathered from initial participants responding with an

expressed interest to participate in the study via email. The sampling methods utilized allowed

the researcher to gain comprehensive information about the specific subgroup being investigated

and allowed the researcher quick access to a participant population (Hays & Singh).

Participants met the following criteria: (a) worked as a middle school professional school

counselor in the Southeastern United States in or around a large metropolitan area, (b) identified

as a social justice change agent, and (c) had successfully advocate for the implementation of

school-wide bullying prevention initiatives. Prior to recruitment of participants, the primary

researcher requested approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) on studies involving

Human Subjects at the University of Georgia. Upon receiving IRB approval, the primary

researcher activated the aforementioned protocol to recruit participants for the study who met the

predetermined selection criteria.

During the participant recruitment process, a thorough description of the purpose and

methodology of the study was explained to participants. The researcher also thoroughly

informed each participant about potential benefits and possible risks of participating in the

research study verbally through the consent for participation sheet. The researcher identified 11

participants who participated in individual semi-structured interviews and submitted artifacts

representing their advocacy efforts of bullying prevention.   To validate accuracy, the researcher

employed member checking as a strategy to enhance the trustworthiness of the study.   Member

checking is a central component for establishing trustworthiness and is the ongoing consultation

with participants to validate the findings of the study (Hays & Singh, 2012). Therefore,

participants were asked to check the transcript after the data was transcribed and again after the

data had been coded.

Throughout the research study, the primary researcher and the research team maintained confidentiality and adhered to legal and ethical expectations as outlined by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) on studies involving Human Subjects at the University of Georgia. Specifically, the primary researcher considered the participants rights to anonymity. All data to include transcriptions, code books, and interview recordings utilized pseudonyms to protect the privacy and identity of each participant in the study. Further, ethical guidelines for social justice research specify that the researcher address social justice concerns across all aspects of the study to include: (a) identifying research design and questions that advance social justice, (b) managing researcher biases and power differentials, (c) improving research methodologies, (d) disseminating the findings, and (e) advocating for social justice upon conclusion of the research (Chapman & Schwartz, 2012).

Data Sources

Consensual Qualitative Researchers typically develop detailed, semi structured protocols, which involve a number of scripted questions, accompanied by a list of suggested probes to help participants fully explore their experience (Hill, 2012; Hill et al., 2005; Hill et al, 2007). The researcher constructed a semi- structured interview protocol consisting of ten questions and accompanying probes (Appendix B). Hill et al. recommended the researcher asking a few scripted questions, no more than ten, and brainstorm accompany probes ahead of time, in addition to allowing some spontaneity with follow up probes to ensure a thorough exploration of the topic being examined. The researcher used current scholarship and their own personal experience with the phenomenon to develop the interview protocol (Hill et al.) The researcher will complete two pilot interviews with members of the research team to aid in refining the interview protocol. Additionally, the researcher also examined participant artifacts that

demonstrated advocacy efforts resulting in the implementation of school-wide bullying

prevention initiatives.

Data Collection

Chapman and Schwartz (2012) explained that tenets of social justice methodology

include a method of inquiry that allows for complete and accurate representation of participants'

experiences. Further, social justice methodology allows for exploration of how individuals

construct meaning in a social context, and is immersed primarily within a constructivist

paradigm so that information is interpreted via a strength based lens to produce research that is

empowering and initiates beneficial change. Social justice research views the participants as

important agents in affecting change and similarly to CQR views the researcher and participants

as having mutual influence over one another (Chapman & Schwartz, 2012; Hill, 2012; Hill et al.,

2005). Moreover, there is action involved in qualitative data collection as the researcher

connects with participants in an intimate and relational manner (Hays & Singh, 2012; Lincoln,

2012).

Considering social justice as the theoretical perspective for this study in addition to

Consensual Qualitative Research as the research tradition within a constructivist paradigm, the

primary researcher used interactive interviewing as a framework, from which she constructed

the interview process and protocol. A hallmark of CQR lies in the researcher and participants

having mutual influence over one another, therefore interactive interviewing was utilized as a

data collection tool (Hill, 2012; Hill et al., 2005). Hays & Singh (2012) define interactive

interviewing as an interaction between the research and participants in which the two engage in

an open conversational- like dialogue that involves sharing of information. Further, this type of

interviewing will consider not only the content shared but also the context of relationship between the researcher and participants (Seidman, 2006).

Hill et al. (2005) and Hill et al. (1997) recommended conducting a semi-structured interview when using CQR as a research tradition. Hays & Singh (2012) describe the semi-structured interviewing as using an interview protocol to serve as a guide, however, the participants in the interview ultimately shapes the structure and the process of the interaction (Seidman, 2006). As recommended by Hill et al., the primary researcher designed an interview protocol consisting of ten interview questions and accompanying probes. Interview questions and accompanying probes were designed to facilitate the development of ideas as related to the topic explored: What themes are present in data elicited from school counselors who successfully advocate for the implementation of effective school-wide bullying prevention initiatives? The semi-structured interviews took place face-to-face when possible, however, if needed the researcher conducted interviews via telephone. All interviews were digitally recorded and later transcribed verbatim for data analysis purposes.

Data Analysis

Hill et al. (2005) and Hill (2012) noted that data analysis when utilizing consensual qualitative research involves three central steps: domains which are used to cluster data, core ideas which are used to capture the essence of what is said, and cross-analysis which is used to construct common themes across participants. Additional steps in the data analysis phase included conducting both a frequency check and external audit as well as accounting for social justice considerations.

Domain Development and Coding

The primary researcher and research team members reviewed transcripts and artifacts to develop the domains. Hill et al. (2005) and Hill (2012) recommend examining the data to prior to developing domains as the alternative of developing a "start list" of domains may focus on preconceived notions as opposed to interview protocol. Research team members independently segmented data into domains and then came together to reach consensus. Once the domains and coding list were completed on several participant transcripts and artifacts, the primary researcher coded additional transcripts and artifacts, which were then reviewed by the research team members and auditor.

Abstracting Core Ideas within Domains

Hill et al. (2005) and Hill (2012) describe this phase of data analysis as "editing the participant's words into a format that is clear, concise, and comparable across cases" (p. 200). Core ideas should remain close to the data and should be free of assumptions or interpretations (Hill et al.; Constantine et al., 2006). Further, in this stage of data analysis, (a) pronouns are changed to be consistent, (b) repetitions of phrases or words are eliminated, (c) the data are refined down to the core of what participants are saying (Hill et al.). The primary researcher and research team members reached a common understanding of the core ideas abstracted from the data. The primary researcher and research team members reviewed each case to assure the core ideas remain as clear and concise as possible (Constantine et al.; Hill; Hill et al.)

Cross- Analysis

According to Hill et al. (2005) and Hill (2012) cross- analysis involves moving to a higher level of abstraction in the data analysis process. The primary researcher and research

team members generated categories as a group. Further, they reached consensus on the wording of the categories and the placement of core ideas into the categories.

Frequency Check

The categorization process ends with a frequency check which determines the representativeness of the categories from the sample used in the study (Hill et al., 2005). Hill et al. and Constantine et al. (2006) recommend using the following frequency labels to provide a common metric for communicating results: *general* will include all or all but one of the cases, *typical* will include more than half of the cases, *variant* will include at least two cases up to the cutoff for *typical,* and *rare* will include two to three cases. The primary researcher and research team constructed a draft of the cross-analysis, returned to the raw data to ensure the accuracy of placement, and revised the cross-analysis as necessary.

External Auditing

The auditor was involved in reviewing the interview protocol in order to maintain an external perspective outside of the primary researcher and research team members. Furthermore, the auditor's role was to check whether the raw material was in the correct domain, reviewed the core ideas, and conducted cross-analysis. The auditor made written recommendations for changes and the research team members evaluated and made changes based on consensus.

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Social Justice Considerations

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Social justice research is not completed when the study has concluded and the results have been analyzed and discussed (Chapman & Schwartz, 2012). A major hallmark of social justice research is the extent to which the research contributes towards liberation and social change for the community involved (Lincoln, 2010). The lead researcher and research team identified steps they wanted to see occur and developed an action plan related to the professional

school counselor's role as a social justice change agent advocating for the implementation of bullying prevention initiatives (Chapman & Schwartz, 2012). Action plan steps included lobbying at the local school and state levels for policy changes related to school-wide bullying prevention initiatives and gaining media access to discuss the harmful effects of bullying and the importance of preventative measures to address the issue.

Strategies for Trustworthiness

The researcher utilized six strategies of trustworthiness to include: (a) reflexive journaling, (b) field notes, (c) member checking, (d) collaboration with a research team, (e) triangulation of investigators, and (f) maintaining an audit trail (Hays & Singh, 2012; Williams & Morrow, 2009). The researcher reflexively journaled weekly to reflect upon how the participants, data collection, and data analysis are personally and professionally impacting the researcher. Fields notes were kept to record, describe, and analyze interactions with the participants and findings throughout the research study. Member checking was used in a variety of ways in order to clarify participant's responses via probes during the interviews. Further, the researcher requested that the participants review transcripts for authenticity and distributed the final qualitative report to participants for their input. A research team was utilized throughout the study to analyze data and through CQR came to consensus on domains and themes present in the data. The researcher kept an audit trail of several documents throughout the research process. A timeline of research activities was constructed, edited, and followed throughout the study. Further, a summary sheet of participant contacts was completed after each individual interview. The researcher kept all interview protocol, audio recordings, transcriptions, artifacts, and drafts of codebooks to ensure confidentiality.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the methodology utilized for identifying the themes present in data elicited from school counselors who identify as social justice change agents and successfully advocate for the implementation of school-wide bullying prevention initiatives. Within this chapter was an outline of the design, the role of the researcher, participant selection and procedures, data sources, data analysis and trustworthiness strategies of the study. The intention of this chapter and previous chapters was to highlight the need for this data to be added to available literature on the school counselor's role as a social just change agent advocating for the implementation of school-wide bullying prevention initiatives.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings of the study in which qualitative methodology; specifically consensual qualitative research (CQR) procedures were utilized. The purpose of this research study was to describe the experiences of professional middle school counselors who successfully advocated for the implementation of school-wide bullying prevention initiatives. The primary research question guiding this study was:

- What are the experiences of middle school counselors who successfully advocate for the implementation of school-wide bullying prevention initiatives?

This qualitative research included semi-structured interviews (Appendix B) with a total of 11 participants. Participant demographic information is outlined in Table 4.1. Each semi-structured interview lasted approximately 55 minutes and took place face-to face or via telephone. Additionally, each participant submitted artifacts to the primary researcher that were representative of their advocacy efforts resulting in the implementation of school-wide bullying prevention initiatives. All of the interviews were completed between September 2013 and November 2013. The primary researcher recorded and transcribed each interview. Participants were provided with a copy of their individual transcript for member checking to ensure accuracy of the transcribed data (Hays & Singh, 2012; Williams & Morrow, 2009).

Table 4.1 Participant Demographic Information

Gender	Ethnicity	Years of School Counseling Experience	School Setting
Female	Black	8	Suburban
Female	White	3	Suburban
Female	White	16	Urban
Female	White	3	Suburban
Female	Black	2	Rural
Female	White	21	Suburban
Female	White	13	Suburban
Female	Biracial	2	Suburban
Male	White	3	Suburban
Female	Black	9	Suburban
Female	White	25	Suburban

The research tradition selected for this study was consensual qualitative research (CQR). CQR was introduced to the Social Sciences in 1997 and integrates grounded theory, phenomenological, and other approaches to qualitative research (Hays & Singh; Hays & Wood, 2011; Hill, 2012; Hill, Thompson, Williams, 1997). CQR research emphasizes the participant sample as a whole, therefore individual participant pseudonyms were not assigned, and quotes were used to highlight examples of the phenomenon being explored (Williams & Morrow, 2009). Core tenets of CQR include utilizing a research team to analyze the data for domains and core themes and arriving at a consensus on the domains, categories, and subcategories (Hays & Wood; Hill; Hill et al.).

Six domains emerged from the data. First was the *Maintains a Belief System Grounded in Social Justice* domain that arose from the participant's common discussion of commitment to social justice and change. The specific categories within this domain were: a) initiates difficult conversations b) passionate and committed to area c) includes and engage student voices and d) increases equity and access. This domain and supporting categories highlight the participant's commitment to initiating change by addressing inequities and issues of social justice. The second domain was *Actively Engages in Leadership Roles* which arose from the participants' discussion of leadership roles within their schools and communities. The specific categories within this domain were: a) publicizes counseling programs and events b) strongly advocates for bullying prevention initiatives and c) bullying prevention is viewed as a priority. This domain and supporting categories represent the participant's engagement in leadership roles and advocacy efforts for bullying prevention. The third domain was *Awareness of Student Needs* and was comprised of the participants consideration and understanding of diverse student needs and developmental considerations. The specific categories within this domain were: a) considers diverse student needs and b) has an understanding of middle school development. This domain and supporting categories showcase the participant's knowledge and practical skills in working with diverse populations of students.

The first three domains are representative of personal characteristics while the latter domains consist of environmental and practical components. The fourth domain was *Cultivates a Positive School Culture* and emerged from the participant's discussion of working in and contributing to maintaining a positive school climate. Categories and subcategories within this domain were: a) clearly communicates expectations b) collaborates as a team player andc) garners staff buy-in through administrative support, teacher support, and community support.

The fifth domain was *Consistently Utilizes Data to Support Programs* and arose from the

participant's statements regarding the use of data to support the school counselor's role and

programs and interventions that are implemented. Categories within this domain were: a) data

and the school counselor's role b) data and a comprehensive school counseling program and c)

data and bullying prevention. The last domain was *Bullying Prevention through Innovative*

Ideas because it emerged from the participant's discussions of creative and innovative programs

and interventions that were in place to address bullying prevention. Categories within this

domain were: a) educates school community on bullying prevention b) implements special

programs to address bullying prevention and c) comprehensively addresses bullying prevention.

A summary of results across domains, categories, and subcategories can be found in Table 1. A

frequency analysis was conducted to determine how often a domain, category or subcategory

emerged from the data. A frequency label of *general* indicates that the idea was present in all or

all but one of the participants. A frequency label of *typical* indicates that the idea was present in

at least half of the participants.

Table 4.2 Summary of Domains, Categories, and Subcategories from the Cross-Analysis

Domains, Categories, and Subcategories	Illustrative core idea	Frequency
Maintains a belief system grounded in social justice		General
	Broaching sensitive topics	Typical
Initiates difficult conversations	Personal is political	Typical
Passionate and committed to area	Acknowledges student voices	Typical
Includes and engages student voices	Works to make all students	Typical
Increases equity and access	feel included and safe	Typical
Actively engages in leadership roles		General
Publicizes counseling programs and events	Speak up about their programs	Typical
Advocates strongly for bullying prevention	Advocates on all levels	General
Views bullying prevention as a priority	Bullying prevention is non-negotiable	Typical
Has an awareness of student needs		Typical
Considers diverse student needs	Special needs, ethnicity, socio	Typical
Has an understanding of middle school development	Middle school challenges/strength	Typical

Cultivates a positive school culture		Typical
Works to build community and relationships	Events to build community	Typical
Clearly communicates expectations	School-wide expectations	Typical
Collaborates as a team player	On-going collaboration	Typical
Garners staff buy-in	Appeals to staff and gains	Typical
Administrative Support	support	Typical
Teacher Support		Typical
Parental and Community Support		
Consistently utilizes data to support programs		General
Data and the school counselor's role	Collects data on time spent	Typical
Data and a comprehensive school counseling	Data to support programs	General
Data and bullying prevention	Data to support B.P.	Typical
Addresses bullying prevention through innovative ideas	Educates school/parents on B.P.	General
Educates school community on bullying prevention		General
Defines bullying/ establishes reporting procedures		General
		Typical
Address B.P. early in the school year	Creative/innovate programs	General
Implements special programs to address B.P.	Comprehensive B.P. programs	General
Comprehensively addresses B.P.		

Maintains a Belief System Grounded in Social Justice

This domain arose from participants' discussion of bullying prevention as an issue of social justice and their commitment to the area through initiating difficult conversations, including and engaging student voices, and overseeing issues of equity and access. Participants' generally noted and demonstrated that they identified and acted as social justice change agents, specifically related to advocating for bullying prevention efforts. For example, one participant stated,

> When you're talking about bullying prevention especially, just working in a school and you look at the kids who are different…and that is one of the reasons that they are being bullied…students who are different or who don't share the same ethnicity as the majority of the students in their school, or if they are questioning their sexuality or, they're experiencing things like that… and they are being bullied and they do not feel like it is

okay for them to tell or they feel like it's okay for them to be bullied because they are different, for me, that's a problem and that's when it becomes a social justice issue.

Similarly another participant shared their thoughts on bullying prevention as an issue of social justice,

Students are often bullied because of how they look or sometimes where they live, without people really getting to know them, or how much they weigh or, if they're short if they're tall, just the outward stuff, if they're smart, if they struggle, some of those things, and so I would definitely consider bullying prevention to be a social justice component of school.

Another participant poignantly spoke about her thoughts on bullying prevention and social justice change,

If you are a proponent of anti-bulling programs and it's something that you're really passionate about, to some extent, you are affecting change, you are a change agent. And you're helping to promote some kind of change. And then on the flipside, if you call yourself a social justice change agent, part of that is ensuring that all of your students are, their voices are being heard and respected and part of that comes from implementing some kind of anti-bullying campaign.

A participant submitted the following artifact (Figure 4.1) that is representative of her successful advocacy efforts in the implementation of school-wide bullying prevention initiatives and was coded under this domain.

Figure 4.1. Morning Announcement, delivered school-wide, submitted by a participant.

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Mix It Up Day Announcement

The school cafeteria is an interesting place. Students sit with others who look like them, dress the same way, live in the same neighborhoods and have the same interests. The school cafeteria is the one place where you can't ignore the social divisions between students. But it doesn't have to stay that way. Are you ready to MIX IT UP? Our fourth annual MIX IT UP at lunch day will be held on Wednesday, February 20th during ALL grade level lunches. What IS MIX IT UP day??? It's a day of action when teachers and students make a difference and break through the social boundaries in their schools. Let's Mix It Up to break down the barriers between students and improve intergroup relations-so there are fewer misunderstandings that lead to conflicts, bullying and harassment. On Wednesday, February 20th when you enter the cafeteria look for the table that has the card with your birthday month on it. Instead of sitting where you would normally sit at lunch you will sit at the table which represents the month you were born. Try something different, sit with someone new at lunch, and break down the walls that divide us.

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Initiates Difficult Conversations

Participants' typically reported that they were comfortable initiating and engaging in difficult conversations as part of their advocacy efforts to implement school-wide bullying prevention efforts. One participant shared her experience of initiating courageous conversations,

I think any time you are just talking about something controversial, and bullying really can be, it can be a really sensitive topic; definitely some of the reasons that students are bullied can be even more sensitive. So just doing that in a way that's again developmentally appropriate, and in a way that stakeholders are comfortable with, I would say it's been very successful and I feel like we've been very supported by stakeholders.

Passionate and Committed to Area

Participants' typically indicated that issues of social justice and bullying prevention were a priority for them as professional school counselors as well as ideals that they were passionate and committed to on a personal level. One participant discussed her commitment to bullying prevention, "Again, at the end of the day, or at the end of a situation, I want to be able to say that I did what I could to make sure that child felt safe, supported, and that he or she wanted to be at school". Another participant spoke about her passion to the area,

> My role and what I really take seriously is, I want to do whatever I can to make sure that our students are being successful…I try to help remove any barriers, any hindrance I can. And I try to do it with the kids. And so I come from the philosophy that I don't want to do it for you; I want to do it with you.

Includes and Engages Student Voices

Participants' typically responded having an understanding of the importance of hearing and listening to the students in their building. Additionally, participants' make it a priority to ensure that others hear the voices of the students. One participant spoke about her experiences, "Well, I just feel that…our role in the building is to listen to the child's side of…of whatever is going on, help understand it and maybe be their voice when they feel like they don't have a voice". Another participant shared about a poster she put up to promote tolerance in response to an incident at her school, "And so, I guess it was for her, but for you know all the other students who didn't have a voice yet. Another participant shared, "I would say, open the opportunity for students to share, and they will be very forthcoming and I think just hearing those authentic voices and really allowing the students to be genuine in the way they are expressing themselves, is really powerful".

Increases Equity and Access

Participants' typically shared that they worked to ensure equity and access for all students in the schools and communities that they serve. One participant shared about her quest for equity and access for her students,

Kind of minding the gap as far as student achievement and equity and access, because I think without that sometimes, it can be lost, or administration might not be as aware of how those programs really are helping to contribute to the overall well-being of children, and therefore, why they can access the academic education that they need.

Similarly another participant spoke about her social justice action, "As a social justice change agent, you really are looking to level the playing field and you're looking to advocate for equity and access for all students". One participant indicated that, "My role as a middle school counselor is to advocate for students and make sure there is equity and access for all students in my building".

Actively Engages in Leadership Roles

This domain arose from participants' experiences of leadership roles and advocacy efforts to make bullying prevention a priority within their school communities. Participants generally commented and demonstrated that they actively engaged in leadership roles in their schools and communities. One participant spoke overall about her leadership roles,

I happen to be the lead counselor, so in my county we have lead counselors in middle schools, similar to the head counselors in high school. I am the lead counselor in my department and I am the coordinator for a lot of programs in our school.

More specifically, another participant described her leadership roles,

> I am the coordinator for the teacher's advisory committee. I create all of our advisement lessons and I set up our calendar before the year begins, and we have lessons about career, Georgia College 411, I handle the career component…we do bullying, conflict resolution, family dynamics, you name it, whatever topic that middle school student deal with, I plan out the activities and everything.

Publicizes Counseling Programs and Events

Participants' typically indicated that they publicized their counseling program and events to ensure that staff, students, parents, and community members were aware of the support and special programs offered through the counseling department. One participant talked about how she publicizes her counseling programs, "I have PowerPoints for the parents and families that are posted on my counseling website". So, after I have completed a presentation on bullying or transition, or whatever topic, I will post the presentation to my website so that families that could not attend are aware of what is going on in the counseling department". Another participant shared how she advertises her counseling program,

> We do what we call drive-by counseling. We probably have just as many car riders as we do students taking the bus. So whenever we're having a really big program, we advertise by drive-by counseling, we have these shirts that we wear about our counseling department and we go and pass out to the car riders. Any time the school has curriculum night or we have our own presentation or we're assisting with a program we pass out information to the parents.

Strong Advocates for Bullying Prevention

Participants' generally reported and provided examples of how they advocated for the implementation of school-wide bullying prevention initiatives. One participant shared her meaning of advocacy in relation to bullying prevention,

I think advocating really means to me giving voice to an issue or a population, and I think that can be done on behalf of or alongside of, either a student or a parent or colleague. And I think some ways that, I've done that, is partially through the bullying prevention program that we do have here at school. Because it is really looking and saying that systemically, as a school, working the angle of bullying prevention is really helping to advocate for a number of students who are being marginalized for a number of reasons because they're being oppressed based on some identity that they hold, that isn't maybe the norm… it goes ways beyond just being nice to people. I see it more as advocacy than just setting up a cute program.

Bullying Prevention Viewed as a Priority

Participants' typically indicated that they viewed bullying prevention is a priority within their schools and communities. One participant shared, "It's always making sure that it's [Bullying Prevention] on the forefront of everyone's mind. Another participant spoke about the importance of bullying prevention, "we recognize the importance…it's a huge…it's a huge deal. It is something that affects all students, in some way, throughout the year and it must be taken seriously". One participant spoke about making bullying prevention a priority within her school community,

I had written a rant to get Rachel's Challenge to come to our school and do both a student and a community presentation and that was really well-received. I think that really

helped heighten the awareness of students, staff, and parents about the seriousness of bullying and why it's important for them to take action and report incidents of bullying.

Has an Awareness of Student Needs

Participants' typically responded and provided evidence that they had a thorough understanding of a variety of student needs to include an understanding of diverse populations and specific challenges as related to middle school development. One participant spoke about her consideration for the needs of her student population, "I think that's a great way for us to meet the needs of our students. And we administer surveys to the students at the end of advisory, asking them what they think we should do for the next year, what topic, we do get their input as well". Similarly, another participant spoke about her consideration for the needs of her students,

I listen and assess what our students want. For example, some of our eighth grade students said they wanted, for the bullying lessons, something or people closest to their age to talk them about bullying, because sometimes it's hard for teachers to understand what they're going through. So I contacted the high school and I'm working with them to try to get students for our next bullying segment, which will be in November. And some of the students were interested in going to speak to the younger grades about bullying and so that's what I set it up, where our eight graders went to speak to our sixth graders.

Considers Diverse Student Needs

Participants' responses indicated that they typically considered the diverse needs of their students to include racial/ethnic diversity, diverse learning needs, and socioeconomic status to name a few. One participant explained about a situation in her school when a student was dealing with gender identity issues, "If students are different or whether they choose to be

different or because they are just different, and staff members ignore it because they feel like, well, they are a boy, but they want to be called by a girl name in class or they want to be, you know, they dress like a female and I know they're a boy, then and I'm saying because I've had this experience". She explained that through her awareness she was able to provide some training to the staff on how to appropriately interact with the student questioning their gender identity.

Has an Understanding of Middle School Development

Participants' typically commented that they were familiar with middle adolescent challenges, strengths, and developmental concerns. One participant described her view on middle school,

> Middle school is the one place where you're either out or in. When you get to high school, there are so many different…you can be, a different kid, and you won't ever be the only one. There are so many different places and ways to define you, clubs to join, things like that. So I feel like middle school is kind of where it's going to make you or break you as far as your self-esteem, your self-confidence, and then what kind of person you're going to be, who you're going to be and how you're going to choose to treat people, things like that. So I feel like middle school is really the prime time to target kids and make sure that they understand the ramifications of bullying, they understand what it is, what it looks like and how to prevent it and what they can do if they don't want to be part of it.

Similarly another participant shared about the developmental needs of middle school students,

> Well, certainly middle school students are in a unique space developmentally and a lot of times middle school in particular can be a really difficult time for students and, and can

sometimes be a place where bullying is at its worst, unfortunately, just because of all of the developmental changes and hormones and body changes and other things that can be going on outside with families and other things.

Cultivates a Positive School Culture

Participants typically shared that they worked to cultivate a positive school culture through relationship building, setting clear expectations, and collaboration with others in their school community. One participant commented about the culture at her school, "I strive to establish a culture and make everybody have ownership of each other and this building and hopefully that will also help to curb the bullying. With buy-in from the administration this is possible as it has become the expectation of our building". Another participant spoke about her school climate, "So I'm excited about that and I like it when we have a big poster up out front and posters throughout the school and when people come and visit us, they see that…that's just part of our culture". One participant submitted an artifact that was representative of her successful advocacy efforts resulting in the implementation of a school-wide bullying prevention initiative and was coded under this domain (Figure 4.2). The participant described the intervention

> We have a program called "Caught Doing Something Good". And what that is, is we create these cards and they're color coded and teachers have access to them, and if the students are doing something, see somebody fall in the hallway, drop their books, and then all of a sudden his kids goes over and picks up the books and helps the person. Then they were caught doing something good, so, they get a card. It's just things like that, that we'll give rewards for positive behavior. This program has helped our students focus on doing good…doing kind things, instead of bullying one another.

Figure 4.2 Caught Doing Something Good Card

Works to Build Community and Relationships

Participants typically responded that they intentionally worked to build community and relationships within their own school communities. One participant talked about specific ways she works to build community,

And while the students are with the teachers, we meet with the parents. We have a parent meeting and review what we talked about. We give them what's called our nuts and bolts book handbook about sixth grade and middle school, which is a handbook that I created for the parents specifically, and it outlines everything that a parent would need to know about our school and specifically sixth grade. And we give them that, and this year we got one of our neighborhood associations to give us T-shirts for all the sixth grade kids that say on the back, "Class of 2016"…it's all community building.

Clearly Communicates Expectations

Participants typically commented that they set and clearly communicated school-wide expectations to their staff, students, and parents. One participant talked about the expectations within her school for participation in classroom lessons on bullying prevention that provides

opportunities for students to discuss bullying and other social/emotional concerns in a safe space guided by a trusted adult, "They don't really get in the way of the program, they don't get a choice whether or not they want to see the videos, or have those conversations, this is part of what we do". Another participant spoke about the expectations of the teachers in her building to carryout classroom meetings, "It's up to every homeroom teacher and they have the responsibility to carry out that meeting and do so with fidelity and do it appropriately. The administrators put the classroom meetings on our master calendar so they are seen as a non-negotiable by our teachers".

Collaborates as a Team Player

Participants typically indicated that they collaborated with numerous stakeholders and worked as a team to address bullying prevention within their school. One participant shared,

> For me, it's about the stakeholders, it's about promoting that program and making sure that it's always in their mindset. Collaboration is sometimes the best way to get people on board who aren't necessarily on board- you collaborate with them. I think mostly working with them to ensure that it's always out there, that the message is always out there. I think that's the biggest…that's my biggest role in the collaborations.

Similarly another participant talked about collaboration,

> That's probably one of the things that's the most important about being a school counselor, especially at a middle school, is you definitely have to have support from the teachers, the administrators as well as your co-counselors just because we all have to be on the same page. We all can feed off of each other if one person has one idea, we all use it and if another person says, hey, you know, I think this idea might work better with yours, then we'll take it, and we'll collaborate, so yes, we definitely have to stick

together. This is just one situation that we're all in that we always go to stick together and be a team.

Garners Staff Buy-In

Participants typically responded that they worked to gain staff buy-in and support of their programs and interventions to address bullying prevention school-wide. One participant spoke about ways that she involves her teachers in the bullying prevention program to gain their support. She has a student group that creates monthly videos that are played school wide to address bullying prevention and she describes how she involves the staff. "There is a teacher version every year of our bullying prevention video. The teachers wear the t-shirts as well. We wear the t-shirts on advisement Friday and so teachers wear the shirts as well". One participant spoke about how she garners staff buy-in,

> What I do and my suggestion is, when you want to implement something, I come with a
> plan to present to my administration, so it may not all be laid out exactly, but I can give
> you a timeframe, I can give you how teachers will be involved, I can give you the amount
> of kids I'm looking for, and I, I can give you the goals.

Administrative support.

Participants typically commented that they worked to gain and understand the importance of having administrative support for their programs and interventions. One participant shared,

> Every Friday we meet with our administrators. All of our administrators and our
> principal and the counselors, we sit down every Friday at leadership and we talk about
> what we're doing in the counseling department, what we might need support with, if we
> want to ask for permission to do something or tell them about what we're doing. They

talked about their programs; they involve us and then ask us about if they want us to implement something.

Another participant shared,

I think the biggest thing with administration has been having the ongoing support of administration. While they've really put the ball in our court to carry everything out, when we have different events, it's come down to okay, we need to alter the schedule or even just having their support in writing grants to make sure we can get the funding that we need to have different programs or speakers come in or if we need materials just really having that support for our counseling program.

Teacher support.

Participants typically shared that teacher support of their programs and interventions is needed to ensure success and following through. One participant talked about gaining teacher support through collaboration, "Whether it's bullying behavior or whether it's confliction resolution...whatever topic it is, I just feel like a lot of times they take to it much better when there's a collaboration of teachers for sure".

Parental and Community support.

Participants typically responded that they aimed to involve parents and community members in their bullying prevention initiatives to garner their support. One participant shared, "We've also invited parents…for instance, my school had Rachel's Challenge come a few years ago, so that was another kind of special event that we invited community members and parents to attend". Another participant spoke about her work with parents, "I work with a lot of parents, I do our positive behavioral intervention system and I work to involve parents". I believe that the

parents and school have to be on the same page and continuously reinforce what each other are doing in a positive way".

Consistently Utilizes Data to Support Programs

Participants' generally stated that they consistently utilized data to support their role as a school counselor, their comprehensive school counseling programs, and their bulling prevention interventions. One participant spoke about her counties requirements for data collection,

We have a comprehensive counseling program. Our county is very big on implementing the ASCA model. So every school in our county has to abide by certain requirements and standards based upon the ASCA model. With that being said, we have a program called 21-C30. Every year we have to collect data and submit documentation that we are a 21st century comprehensive school counseling program. Every year we have to do what's called a results-based evaluation system, based off of our local school improvement plan and our student data we have to create three program goals for our students. We have one for behavior, one for attendance, and one for academics.

Another participant described her use of data,

Our data sources have looked anything from surveying faculty to get their perceptions of program effectiveness to pre-test and posttests for students participating in small groups, parent survey, so we've collected data from a lot of different sources as well as just anecdotal data, talking to faculty, talking to administration, and really looking at school wide data and seeing where, where the gaps are and how our skills can best be used to fill those gaps.

Data and the Professional School Counselor's Role

Participants' typically responded that they utilized data to support appropriate use of their time and role as a professional school counselor. One participant shared, "I did a three week

time study and I think it came out as 18 percent of my time was non-counseling, or was just clerical type stuff that I have to be doing".

Data and a Comprehensive School Counseling Program

Participants generally commented that they utilized data to assess the effectiveness of various components of their comprehensive school counseling program. One participant spoke about her data collection with one of her small counseling groups,

This past year I did a behavior group for our sixth graders and I collected data. I collected data from the point that they were referred to me and the number of referrals that they had all the way, so basically I looked at the number of referrals they had when we started, and then I looked at the number of referrals for each month. It was an eight week program and I had seven students in the group, 80 percent of them showed improvement, because the goal was for them to have a 50 percent decrease in their referrals.

Data and Bullying Prevention

Participants' typically responded that they collected and utilized data as part of their advocacy efforts to support their school wide-bullying prevention initiatives. One participant stated,

Data has really helped me advocate for bullying prevention initiatives. When you point to the numbers or even qualitative data, I think that's a lot more powerful, then when you're just kind of saying, well; my gut says this going to be a great program.

Addresses Bullying Prevention through Innovative Ideas

Participants' generally responded and provided evidence that they addressed bullying prevention innovatively and comprehensively by educating their school community on the

definition of bullying and their reporting procedures. One participant spoke about her school's

bullying prevention program, "I came up with this program and we were looking for anti-

bullying programs as well, because there was a lot going on in the news at this particular time

about students that were taking their lives because of bullying". Another participant talked about

her school's comprehensive bullying prevention program,

>We looked critically at the data to see where some of the hot areas were, what some of
>
>the general student concerns were. And so from there, we really felt like we needed to
>
>educate students more on the process of how they can report cases of bullying. We
>
>needed a fresh life into our bullying prevention program as far as how the students
>
>perceived it. From there, my co-counselor and I had written a grant to get Rachel's
>
>Challenge to come to our school and do both a student and community presentation and
>
>that was really well-received. I think that really helped heighten the awareness of
>
>students about the seriousness of bullying and why it's important for them to take action
>
>and report. Then from there we really felt like we needed to continue that educational
>
>piece through classroom meetings. It's been really successful as far as heightening the
>
>awareness of students, having that ongoing intervention of the classroom meetings, as
>
>well as having a strong reporting system where students feel comfortable, going to their
>
>teachers because the teachers are the ones leading the classroom meetings, but then also
>
>knowing that our doors are always open as counselors, when you want to make a report.

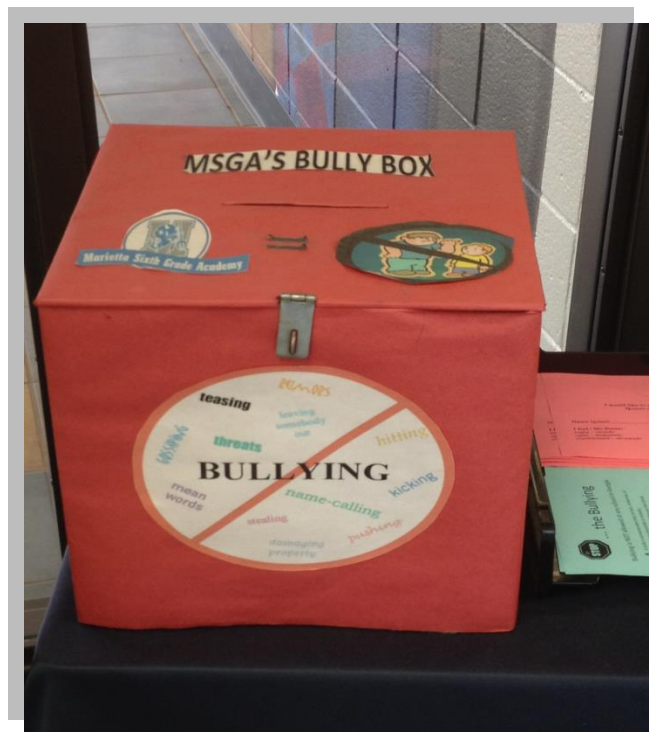**Educates School and Community on Bullying Prevention**

Participants' generally indicated that they educated their school community on bullying

prevention, specifically, what bullying is and how to report incidents of bullying. One

participant described how she comprehensively educates her students on bullying prevention,

Every year, the kids are told how to report bullying, what steps to take, and we go in

through the classroom and do that, the classroom guidance. And then, through the

advisement program, and through the different anti-bullying program, programs, they're

told exactly what to do if someone is being bullied. We practice the scenario, how to tell,

what to tell, what to do if you want to tell and to be honest when you tell that somebody

is being bullied.

Defines bullying and establishes reporting procedures.

Participants generally reported that they worked with their school communities to define

bullying and outlined ways to report incidents of bullying. One participant described ways in

which she helps her students understand what bullying is, "We conceptualized exactly what it

[bullying] is, different types, we used videos, student input, to make sure, sure that our students

understood what bullying was. And those different ways that it can happen, because it can

happen several different ways, passively and aggressively. Another participant described their

reporting procedures, "We have a form, a fill in the blank kind of form that was generated by the

committee a couple of years ago. And it's available in hard copy throughout the school building

and it's also available on our school homepage". One participant submitted an artifact of a

lesson plan that she uses with her students to teach the definition of bullying (Appendix G).

Another participant submitted an artifact of her "Bully Box", which allows student to

anonymously report incidents of bullying (Figure 4.3).

Figure 4.3 The "Bully Box" at one school for anonymously reporting

Addresses bullying prevention early in the school year.

Participants typically added that they addressed bullying prevention within the first month of the school year. One participant shared that at her school they address bullying prevention during the first week of school, "When they come in for the first week of sixth grade, we show them those videos and we talk about why…what it is, what are these videos trying to tell you, what is school about". Another participant stated, "So within the first month of school, we did two advisement lessons on bullying. We conceptualized exactly what it is, different types, we used videos, student input, to make sure, sure that our students understood what bullying was".

Implements Special Programs to Address Bullying Prevention

Participants generally stated that they implemented special programs and interventions to address bullying prevention school-wide in fresh, innovative ways. One participant shared about

two of her special programs and submitted an artifact representing a special week at her school

(Appendix F),

> We have a couple of different anti-bullying components to our program, one being the I
>
> Am [name of school], another one being our Power Over Prejudice club that we have,
>
> that also goes on and teaches kids about racism, prejudice, discrimination, stereotyping,
>
> stuff like that and so because of those two programs we are able to reach the students
>
> school-wide.

Another participant talked about one of her special programs aimed at addressing bullying

prevention school-wide,

> Again, our positive behavioral efforts and things of that nature play out. This month, we
>
> followed up with our peace days. We reward each grade with a peace day if there are no
>
> verbal or physical altercations on their hall, if an administrative team member is not
>
> called to come to a teacher's classroom due to disruptions. Basically, for a grade level
>
> that displays peace for the whole day, in all of their classes, gets a peace day. Then, the
>
> grade level that gets 10 peace days first gets a party in the lunch room. Students get to sit
>
> where they want, we play music and we get them…they get to dress down, because we're
>
> in a uniforms and students love to dress down. And we get them a little treat. It's just an
>
> incentive but it doesn't kind of throw off the school day. We call it a peace party.

Comprehensively Addresses Bullying Prevention

Participants' generally responded and provided evidence that they comprehensively

addressed bullying prevention by implementing school-wide interventions continuously

throughout the school year.   One participant described on-going interventions that she leads

throughout the school year, "During anti-bullying month, we have a mix-it-up day. We have an

assembly, but the assembly doesn't happen until the spring and we'll probably just try to do

some event each week to address bullying prevention school-wide. And this year, I want to try

to have a spirit week where we dress funky socks or hat day or something, but I want it to be

pertaining to something about anti-bullying".

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I provided a summary of the findings of my consensual qualitative

analysis of the experiences of professional middle school counselors who successfully advocate

for the implementation of school-wide bullying prevention initiatives. I presented my results in

terms of six major domains: Acts as social justice change agents, actively engages in leadership

roles, awareness of student needs, cultivates a positive school culture, consistently utilizes data to

support programs, and bullying prevention through innovate ideas. I provided examples of the

data in which the domains, categories, and subcategories emerged. In the next chapter, I aim to

further summarize my findings, relate my findings to current scholarship, and discuss practical

and social justice implications as well as recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Professional school counselors at the middle school level, as social justice change agents, are in an ideal position to advocate for bullying prevention programs that promote safer and more equitable environments for all students (ASCA, 2012; Field & Baker, 2004; House & Martin, 1999; Stone, 2003). Of particular concern are students who are members of historically marginalized populations, as certain groups are particularly vulnerable to being bullied: students with disabilities and mental health issues, students who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or questioning, and students who are members of ethnic and immigrant marginalized populations (Bates, 2011; Carter & Spencer, 2006; Green, 2007; Jarvos, 2011; Liberman & Cowan, 2007). School counselors acting as social justice change agents have the beliefs, knowledge, and skills to take responsibility for eradicating and reducing systemic barriers to success by first recognizing the inequalities that may exist for vulnerable groups (ASCA; Griffin & Steen, 2010).

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA, 2012) maintains that professional school counselors work towards socially just outcomes by acting as leaders, advocates, collaborators, and as systemic change agents. Furthermore, the American School Counselor Association position statement on bullying indicates that professional school counselors recognize the need for all students to attend school in a safe, orderly, and caring environment that promotes a positive school climate and fosters growth (ASCA). Therefore, a school counselor implementing the ASCA National Model and operating from a social justice framework may advocate for the development and implementation of policies and practices to address bullying

prevention that will result in more equitable and harmonious outcomes for all students (Crethar, Rivera & Nash, 2008).

This study and related research question were designed with the following considerations: (a) impact of bullying on middle school youth, (b) effectiveness of school-wide bullying prevention initiatives, (c) federal, state, and local school laws governing bullying in schools, (d) the middle school counselor's role in advocating for bullying prevention efforts, (e) and tenets of social justice. The purpose of this research study was to describe the experiences of professional middle school counselors who successfully advocate for the implementation of school-wide bullying prevention initiatives. The research question was: What are the experiences of professional middle school counselors who successfully advocate for the implementation of school-wide bullying prevention initiatives?

Researcher Biases

Hill et al., (2005) and Hill (2012) noted that biases may arise from several different sources such as demographic characteristics of the research team or in values and beliefs about the topic. Hill et al. and Hill recommends that researchers report potential bias and include in their discussion section an honest assessment of how expectations and biases influenced data analysis (Williams & Morrow, 2009). Further, Consensual Qualitative Research involves the researcher selecting participants who are knowledgeable in regard to the topic being explored. The primary researcher identified as a social justice change agent who successfully advocated for the implementation of school-wide bullying prevention initiatives.

The primary researcher holds a strong belief that bullying prevention should be a priority in every school and this was a bias that arose throughout the study. Specifically, in the assumption that all schools have the support and resources to implement school-wide programs

to comprehensively address bullying prevention. Further, while the primary researcher identified with the participants, it was important to acknowledge the high expectations that the researcher holds for the school counselor's role in effective bullying prevention. For example, the primary researcher had the support and resources to bring a nationally renowned bullying prevention program to her school. However, the researcher acknowledges that all schools may not have the resources to bring such programs and are still able to address bullying prevention in their schools. The researcher reflected and acknowledged that different school cultures bring about various challenges that may serve as barriers to intervening on a whole school level. Additionally, it was important that primary researcher report biases related to bullying prevention interventions that she believed to be worthwhile. Through reflexive journaling after each participant and interview and throughout the data analysis process the primary researcher was able to account for biases and ensure that the data reported was not a result of any such biases. A sample of a reflexive journal written after a participant interview can be found in Appendix G.

Summary of the Results

Utilizing consensual qualitative research data analysis, six domains emerged from the data. The findings of this study indicated that professional middle school counselors who are successfully advocating for the implementation of school-wide bullying prevention initiatives are utilizing the overarching social justice strategies recommended by Singh, Urbano, Haston, and McMahon (2010) as well as implementing components of the American School Counselor Association Nation Model (ASCA, 2012), and are knowledgeable in the arena of effective bullying prevention programs and interventions. My findings can be summarized by the following model (Figure 5.1), which I developed after a constructivist, Consensual Qualitative

Research analysis of the raw data. This 'building block' model consists of the six domains which have been broken down into levels based on the following: beliefs, knowledge, and skills (ASCA, 2012). The bottom block (beliefs), maintains a belief system grounded in social justice, and must be present for the middle blocks (knowledge) to exist, which must be present for the top blocks (skills) to be executed.

Figure 5.1 Building block model representing the experiences of professional school counselors who successfully advocate for the implementation of school-wide bullying prevention initiatives.

Maintains a Belief System Grounded in Social Justice

Professional school counselors provide the framework for social justice in the education of students in the elementary and secondary school settings (Dixon, Tucker, & Clark, 2010).

Moreover, school counselors are in a unique position to act as social justice leaders in their school building and advocate on behalf of individual and groups of students, parents and teachers regarding issues of access and equality (Crethar, Rivera, & Nash, 2008; Dixon, Tucker & Clark; Lewis et al., 2010; Singh et al., 2010;). Participants reported and provided evidence that they act as social justice change agents by initiating difficult conversations, showing passion and commitment to the area of bullying prevention, including and engaging student voices, and consistently striving to increase and equity access for all students.

Actively Engages in Leadership Roles

The American School Counselor Association (2012) maintains that professional school counselors work towards socially just outcomes by acting on the following ASCA national model themes of: (a) leadership, (b) advocacy, (c) collaboration, and (d) systemic change. As part of their successful advocacy efforts towards school-wide bullying preventions initiatives the findings showed that actively engaging in leadership roles is an essential component. Participants shared and exhibited that they were strong advocates on many levels, that they publicize their counseling program and events, and that they view bullying prevention as a priority.

Has an Awareness of Student Needs

Bates writes "what is not revealed cannot be healed, and while the issue of intolerance and non-affirming attitudes towards difference may not improve overnight, this problem is certainly more likely to produce colossal and collateral damage if not appropriately exposed and addressed" (p. 83). Floyd et al. (as cited in Stone, 2003) surveyed a group of administrators, teachers, and school counselors and found that school counselors were the most informed, supportive, and experienced about the needs of gay, lesbian, and bisexual young people.

Crethar, Rivera, & Nash noted that socially justice oriented counselors use the principals of *equity, access, participation,* and *harmony* to ground their work with students. These guiding principles provide a framework for counselors to foster the empowerment of all students with a focus on individuals that have less power and privilege. Participants demonstrated that they are aware and consider diverse student needs as well as have a thorough understanding of middle school development.

Cultivates a Positive School Culture

Effective school-wide anti-bullying programs work to change the school climate so that bullying behavior is viewed as socially unacceptable (Goodwin; Lieberman & Cowan, 2011; Serwacki & Nickerson; Whitted & Supper). Further, effective anti-bullying programs are comprehensive and enlist the help and support of school staff, community members, parents, and students (Farrington & Ttofi; Serwacki & Nickerson; Whitted & Dupper). Participants in the study provided evidence that they strive to cultivate a positive school by building community and relationships, clearly communicating expectations, collaboration, and obtaining the support of school staff.

Consistently Utilizes Data to Support Programs

The American School Counselor Association National Model (2012) not only answers the questions "What do school counselors do?" but requires school counselors to respond to the following question, "How are students different as a result of what we do" (ASCA, 2012)? Through the use of data, professional school counselors can clearly communicate the effectiveness of their school counseling programs and interventions. Participants provided evidence of consistently utilizing data to support the use of their time, their comprehensive school counseling program, and their bullying prevention initiatives.

Addresses Bullying Prevention through Innovative Ideas

Researchers believe that specific components of anti-bullying programs and interventions were effective in decreasing both bullying and victimization while other components had a negative effect directly associated with an increase in victimization. The researchers found the following program elements to be associated with a decrease in both bullying and victimization: (a) parent trainings and meetings, (b) disciplinary methods, (c) increased playground supervision, classroom management, (d) classroom rules, and (e) the duration and intensity of the program for the young people and the school staff (Farrington & Ttofi; Serwacki & Nickerson, 2012; Whitted & Dupper, 2005). Participants in this study provided evidence that they innovatively address bullying prevention school-wide by educating the school community on bullying prevention, comprehensively addressing bullying prevention throughout the school year, and implementing special programs to address bullying prevention.

Study Recommendations and Implications

Results from this Consensual Qualitative Research study described the experiences of professional middle school counselors who successfully advocate for the implementation of school-wide bullying prevention initiatives. Therefore, implications can be made. Implications will be discussed for professional middle school counselors, professional counselors P-12, counselor educators, as well as social justice implications.

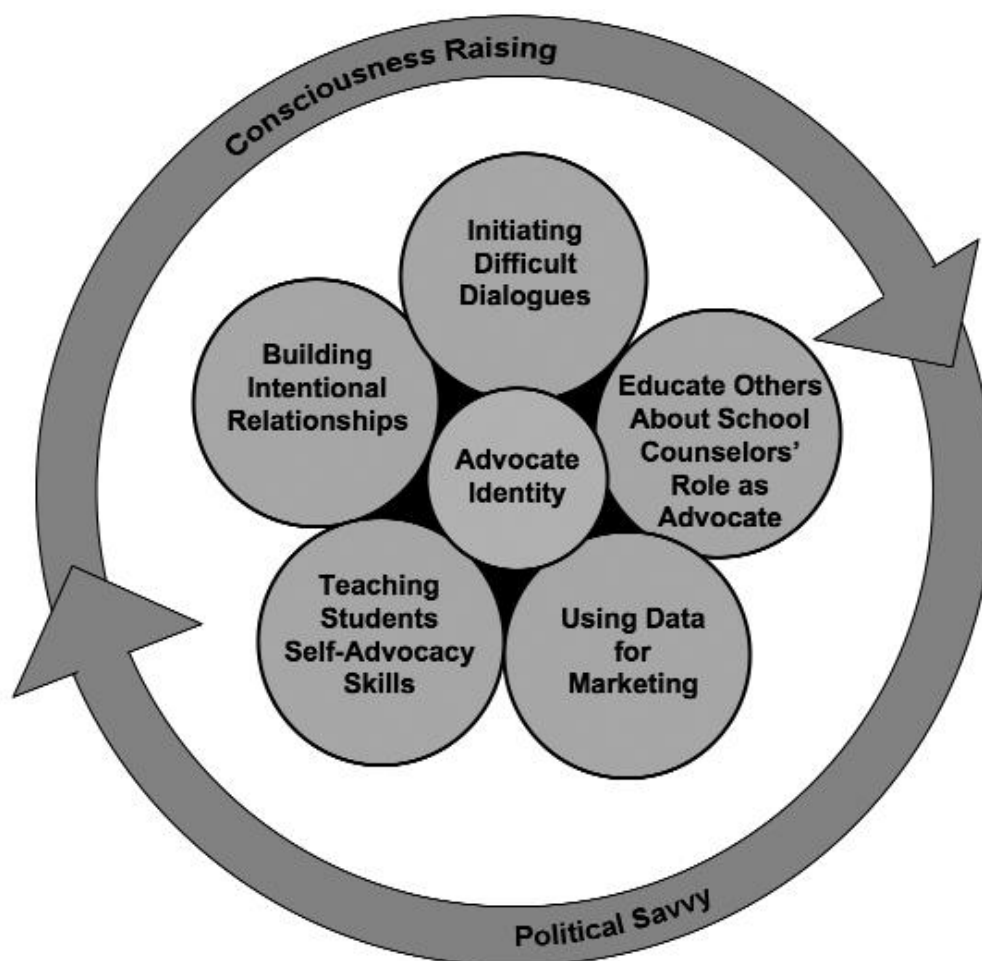**Recommendations and Implications for Professional Middle School Counselors**

As a result of thoroughly examining the participant's responses to the primary research question, the researcher was able to gain insight into the social justice and advocacy tools needed for middle school counselors to successfully advocate for the implementation of effective school-wide bullying prevention initiatives. Specifically, the researcher will provide a practical list of

recommendations that middle school counselors can utilize to advocate as social justice change agents in their settings for the implementation of effective school-wide bullying prevention initiatives. The following are recommendations for professional middle school counselors who strive to utilize their advocacy efforts for the implementation of school-wide bullying prevention initiatives:

Assume the role of social justice change agent.

Professional middle school counselors who aim to successfully advocate for school-wide bullying prevention initiatives must assume the role of a social justice change agent and base their beliefs, knowledge, and skill set in a social justice paradigm. Singh, Urbano, Haston, and McMahon (2010) identified the following overarching strategies that can be utilized by school counselors to advocate for social justice change in school environments: (a) initiate difficult conversations, (b) educate stakeholders about the school counselor's role as an advocate, (c) utilize data for marketing purposes, (d) teach self-advocacy skills to students, and (e) build intentional relationships (Figure 5.2). Furthermore, Singh et al. asserted the school counselors must know when and how to intervene serving as a prerequisite for the aforementioned strategies as a way to raise consciousness in the pursuit of school-wide change. Assuming, the role of social justice change agent is a first and critical step in carrying out advocacy efforts for the implementation of school-wide bullying prevention initiatives.

Figure 5.2 Emergent model of social justice strategies that school counselor advocates use in making systemic change (Singh, Urbano, Haston, and McMahon 2010).

School counselors should actively seek out and engage in leadership roles.

As the role of the professional school counselors continues to evolve the importance of effective leadership skills continues to emerge (Briggs, Kielty, Gilligan, & Davis 2009). Davis (2004) defines leadership as "the process of influencing others to create a shared commitment to a common purpose" (p. 216). This definition includes the following tenets: commitment to the cause, shared responsibility, being driven to the mission, and promoting core values.

Be knowledgeable and have an awareness of diverse student needs.

Professional school counselors must have the beliefs, knowledge, and skills to work with students from diverse backgrounds and be able to service a variety of needs (ASCA, 2012; Ratts, Toporek & Lewis, 2010). Jarvos (2010) maintains that those who are "other" become targets for bullies and describes "otherness" as sexual, ethnic, and immigrant minorities or someone who the bully deems as vulnerable. Similarly, Lieberman & Cowan noted that certain populations of students are particularly vulnerable to being bullied; students with disabilities and mental health issues or students who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or questioning (Carter & Spencer, 2006). Floyd et al. (as cited in Stone, 2003) surveyed a group of administrators, teachers, and school counselors and found that school counselors were the most informed, supportive, and experienced about the needs of gay, lesbian, and bisexual young people. Crethar, Rivera, & Nash noted that socially justice oriented counselors use the principals of *equity, access, participation,* and *harmony* to ground their work with students. These guiding principles provide a framework for counselors to foster the empowerment of all students with a focus on individuals that have less power and privilege.

Work to create a positive school climate.

Effective school-wide bullying prevention program work to change the school climate so that bullying behavior becomes socially unacceptable (Goodwin, 2011; Jennings 2011; Farrington & Ttofi, 2010). School climate can be defined as the behaviors, attitudes, and feelings of the staff, students, parents, and community members within the school (Hernandez & Seem, 2007). Professional school counselors should play an integral role in creating a positive school climate where, in fact, bullying behavior is not tolerated. Further, school counselors are

uniquely trained and ideally situated to advocate for effective systemic change that may result in a positive school culture (Hernandez & Seem, ASCA, 2012; Ratts, Toporek, & Lewis, 2010).

Utilize data to support school counseling programs and interventions.

Professional school counselors may utilize data to inform effective comprehensive school counseling programs and to ground decisions that impact students' academic, social/emotional, and career well-being (ASCA, 2012; Young et al., 2004). Data collection and analysis that is shared with other stakeholders by the school counselor is critical to the implementation of effective school-wide bullying prevention initiatives (ASCA; Young et al.). For example, student surveys can be utilized as a transformative tool to not only help raise awareness around bullying but also to guide the delivery of bullying prevention services (Cornell & Mehta, 2011; ASCA).

Address bullying comprehensively through education and innovative ideas.

Professional school counselors may advocate for the implementation of school-wide bullying prevention programs that are comprehensive and innovative. The most effective school wide bullying prevention programs and initiatives will have an educational component and be collaborative and comprehensive in nature (Davis & Nixon, 2011; Serwacki & Nickerson, 2012; Young et al., 2009; Farrington & Ttofi, 2010;ASCA, 2012). Moreover, as schools continue to rapidly evolve; professional school counselors must create innovative interventions to address systemic issues such as bullying (Burt, Patel, & Lewis, 2012).

Recommendations and Implications for Professional School Counselors P-12

Bullying may impact young people across gender, age, and ethnicity. While research demonstrates that middle schools appear to be the centralized location where much of the problems related to bullying occur, it important that school counselors address bullying

prevention across the P-12 spectrum (Green, 2007; Pergozzi et al., 2009; Serwacki & Nickerson, 2012). In fact, school counselors may be the staff member who is best equipped to advocate for comprehensive efforts to address bullying prevention and acts as leaders in bullying prevention program delivery, design, and evaluation (Bauman, 2008). In short, school counselors across P-12 can systemically contribute to the academic, career, and personal/social success of all students by taking a central role in their local school and district bullying prevention efforts (ASCA, 2012; Bauman).

In addition to ensuring academic, career, and personal/social growth of all students, professional school counselors have the ethical responsibility to ensure that all students come to school and feel safe (ASCA, 2012; Ratts, Toporek, & Lewis, 2010). In the state of Georgia, there have been several lawsuits against school districts and employees to determine the responsibility in cases of bullying. To take case in point, the family of Tyler Long sued the Murray County School District for negligence as the family argued that the school leaders did not do enough to stop bullying against their child, ultimately resulting in Tyler taking his own life as a perpetual victim of bullying (Jett, 2013). Professional organizations such as The American School Counselor Association and The American Counselor Association can provide theoretical, practical, and ethical guidance for practicing school counselors implementing school-wide bullying prevention initiatives.

The American Counselor Association Advocacy Competencies assert that competencies school counselors target all students within their school and make connections between individual challenges and systemic issues (Ratts, Toporek, & Lewis, 2010). Therefore, an important advocacy role of school counselors P-12 is to conduct school-wide assessments of bullying and violence to measure the levels of bullying and harassment within their school

settings and address comprehensively to ensure that all students have access to a safe school (Ratts, Toporek, & Lewis; Farrington & Ttofi, 2010). Additional work across P-12 to comprehensively address bullying prevention involves actively supporting legislation to address in equalities related to bullying, through leadership roles integrating problem-solving skills as a contributing factor to community building, and inviting all stakeholders to join in the discussion and planning to initiate long-term change through bullying prevention efforts (Ratts, Toporek, & Lewis). Moreover, comprehensive bullying prevention initiatives align with the framework of the Advocacy Competencies and can be used as a framework for bullying prevention (Appendix D).

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA, 2012) maintains that professional school counselors work towards socially just outcomes by acting as leaders, advocates, collaborators, and as systemic change agents. Professional school counselors implementing the ASCA National Model (2012) may advocate for the development and implementation of policies and practices to address bullying prevention that will result in more equitable and harmonious outcomes for all students (Crethar, Rivera & Nash, 2008). Specifically, professional school counselors may utilize ASCA's school counselor competencies as a guide for the implementation of school-wide bullying prevention initiatives (Appendix A).
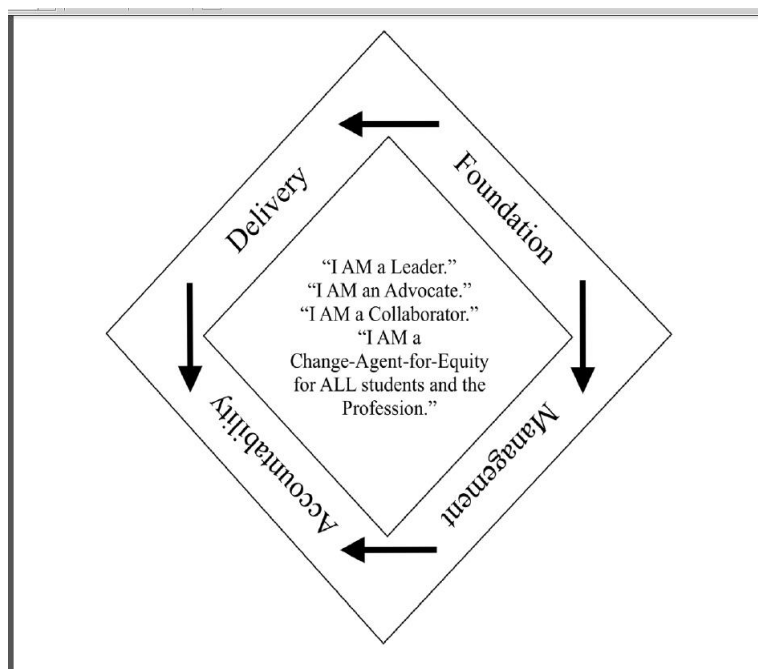
Recommendations and Implications for Counselor Educators

Professional school counselors are in an ideal position to advocate with and on behalf of students on many levels (Ratts, Toporek, & Lewis, 2010). School counselors receive training in in human development, group dynamics, multicultural issues, and assessment, resulting in a unique skill-set (Toporek, Lewis, & Crethar, 2009). However, counseling programs and counselor educators may need to focus more on systems-level issues and interventions such as

bullying prevention (Toporek, Lewis, & Crether; Toporek, Lewis, & Ratts, 2010). Counselor educators may also focus on ethical issues regarding advocacy roles of the professional school counselor (Toporek, Lewis, & Crethar). Such training should be integrated throughout counseling programs and curricula and integrated as part of the school counselor's role and identity (Toporek, Lewis, & Crethar).

Specifically, school counseling programs must provide counselors- in- training with effective and multifaceted leadership opportunities that focus on leadership qualities and skill building (Briggs, Kielty, Gilligan, & Davis 2009). Chen-Hayes, Ockerman, & Mason (2014) maintain that "leadership is an ethical educational imperative for educators if the educational system is to gain traction on issues of access and equity found in the achievement and opportunity gaps that plague K-12 schools" (p. 1). School counselors, as leaders, play an essential role as change agents for equity to ensure that all students reach their full potential academically, personally, and in the area of career/college readiness (ASCA, 2012; Chen-Hayes, Ockerman, & Mason). Chen-Hayes, Ockerman, & Mason utilize the change agent for equity (CAFÉ model) to demonstrate that school counselor's professional identity as leaders and advocates come first, ultimately generating equity based school-counseling programs (Figure 5.3). This model may be helpful to counselor educators in designing counseling programs and curriculums.

Figure 5.3 Change Agent for Equity (CAFÉ) School Counselor Model (Chen-Hayes, Ockerman, & Masonn, 2014).

Further, provisions of opportunities for professional development and continuing education for school counselors and counselor educators may be essential. Professional development in the arenas of advocacy, social justice, leadership, and ethical considerations may be necessary as many counselors and counselor educators have not had formal training in the these areas (Toporek, Lewis, & Crethar, 2010). Currently, counselor educators and school counselors committed to social justice and advocacy often have to seek out their own training. If such trainings became an expectation of counselors and counselor educators this would contribute to the implementation of advocacy and social justice skills in practice.

Social Justice Recommendations and Implications

Social justice researchers argue that truly objective research is often a misguided goal, where socially engaged research, aimed at ending some type of human suffering such as

bullying, is most effective in contributing to knowledge that may advance social justice agendas (Chapman & Schwartz, 2011). Moreover, to initiate and promote social change, it is imperative that research findings be made available to the participant community as they may access this information about themselves and be empowered to implement change (Chapman & Schwartz). Therefore, ethical researchers should strive to make their findings easily accessible to relevant populations. The primary researcher has presented findings in the form of training to middle school counselors at district training in Georgia and has plans to present to other districts in the future. Additionally, the primary researcher and members of the research team will present the findings of the study as part of a workshop at the American School Counselor Association national conference in June 2014.

Social justice research is not complete when the data has been collected and analyzed. The value of social justice research is measured by the extent to which the research contributes towards the liberation of the community involved (Chapman & Schwartz, 2011; Morrow, 2007; Schwartz & Hage, 2009). Therefore, utilizing social justice theory as a guiding framework, the primary researcher will use the results of the study to advocate and lobby for bullying prevention initiatives in middle schools at the local school, state, and federal levels. Additional action steps will include presenting the findings to the counseling supervisor in the county in which she works and possibly to the school board.

Limitations

Although various measures were executed to ensure the dependability and trustworthiness of the findings, there were several limitations that related to this study. First, the primary researcher and research team members attempted to account for their personal biases and assumptions throughout the study. However, the findings of this study are certainly

reflective of the primary researcher and research team member's worldviews and interpretation of the raw data (Hill, 2012). For example, the specific educational backgrounds and work experiences of the primary researcher and research team members may have been salient variables in each of their processes.

A second limitation of this study is based on the demographic location of the participants. All participants were school counselors in a public middle school in a large metropolitan area. School demographics may have an impact on the number of staff, resources available and parental and community involvement. A final limitation of this study is that the study focused solely on professional school counselors in a middle school setting. However, research highlights the prevalence and impact of bullying in middle school and signifies the priority of the issue at hand. The present study aimed to fill gaps in the existing literature by describing the role of the professional middle school counselor in advocating for the implementation of school-wide bullying prevention initiatives.

Recommendations for Future Research

There is a plethora of research on the impact of bullying and bullying prevention programs and scholars continue to investigate the school counselor's role in social change and advocacy (Olweuse, 2007; Goodwin, 2011; Crethera, Rivera & Nash, 2008). However, research is currently lacking in the area of the school counselor's role as a social justice change agent in specifically advocating for the implementation of school-wide efforts to address bullying. Further, school counselors are increasingly involved with bullying; however, their role in implementing school-wide bullying prevention initiatives remains unstudied (Cornell & Mehta, 2011). Future research may continue to explore the specific role of the school counselor in

comprehensive bullying prevention initiatives and how this role may align with the recommendations of the American School Counselor Association's national model.

The themes derived in this current study could be used to develop a survey for counselors at the elementary, middle, and high school levels to assess their current knowledge, skill, and ability level to successfully advocate for the implementation of school-wide bullying prevention efforts. The model developed to summarize the findings of the present study may be used to help counselors identify strengths and growing edges in knowledge, skills, and beliefs that are needed to successfully advocate for the implementation of school-wide bullying prevention efforts. Further, future researchers may also replicate the model for investigation of elementary and high school counselors who successfully advocate for the implementation of school-wide bullying prevention efforts.

Chapter Summary

This chapter summarized the findings of this Consensual Qualitative Research study. The findings were related to existing literature and recommendations were made for future research that may be added to the available pool of literature. This chapter also identified and discussed research limitations of this study. Implications for school counselor, counselor educators, and social justice implications were discussed.

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Appendix A

School Counselor Competencies Aligning with the School Counselor's Role in Advocating for the Implementation of School-Wide Bullying Prevention Initiatives

School Counselor Competencies	Description of Competencies
I-A-3	Knowledge of impediments to student learning and use of advocacy and data-driven school counseling practices.
I-A-6	Collaborations with stakeholders such as parents and guardians, teachers, administrators and community leaders to create learning environments that promote educational equity and success for every student.
I-A-8	Knowledge of developmental theory, learning, theories, social justice theory, multiculturalism, counseling theories and career counseling theories.
I-B-3a	Understands and defines advocacy and its role in comprehensive school counseling programs.
I-B-3b	Identifies and demonstrates benefits of advocacy with school and community stakeholders.
I-B-3e	Understands the process for development of policy and procedures at the building, district, state, and national levels.
I-B-5	Acts as a systems change agent to create an environment promoting and supporting student success.
I-B-5a	Defines and understands system change and its role in comprehensive school counseling programs.
I-B-5b	Develops a plan to deal with personal (emotional and cognitive) and institutional resistance impeding the change process.
I-B-5c	Understand the impact of school, district and state educational policies, procedures and practices support and/or impeding student success.
I-C-6	School counselors can and should be leaders in the school and district.
II-B-4e	Advocates responsibly for school board policy, local, state and federal statutory requirements that are in the best interests of students.
II-C-1	School counseling is an organized program for every student and not a series of services provided only to students in need.
III-B-1e	Encourages staff involvement to ensure the effective implementation of the school guidance curriculum.

IV-B-6	Designs and implements action plans aligning with school and school counseling program goals.
V-B1i	Uses results obtained for program improvement.

Appendix B

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol (Questions and Accompanying Probes)

1. Please describe your work setting.

   - How many students are you in your school?

   - What is the make-up of your student population?

   - How many counselors' work in your department?

   - How does the counseling team divide their case loads?

   - How does your school perform overall on state standardized testing?

   - Is there anything else you would like to share with me about your work setting?

2. Please describe your role as a middle school counselor.

   - How does the counseling team divide up duties?

   - Do you have any duties that would be considered "non-counseling" duties?

   - Is your role within your school what you think that it should be?

3. Please describe the counseling program at your school.

   - Do you align your counseling program with the American School Counselor Association National Model?

   - Do you collect and utilize data to support your programs and interventions?

   - How does your program meet the specific needs of middle school students?

   - Tell me about the ways in which you collaborate with your administrators about your school counseling program.

   - Tell me about your work with teachers and other staff members in the building.

   - How do you build relationships with parents?

   - Do you offer any special programs for parents?

4. Please describe your middle school's school-wide bullying prevention program.

- Tell me how you established a need for a school-wide bullying prevention program.

- Tell me why bullying prevention is important for middle school students.

- How does your school define bullying and/or harassment?

- Do you have a school-wide system in place for reporting bullying?

- Is there a school-wide protocol that is followed to address incidents of bullying?

- How long as your bullying prevention program been in place?

- Has the school climate of your school changed as a result of your school's bullying prevention program? If so, how?

- In what ways are the students in your school impacted by bullying?

- How do you think your school-wide bullying prevention program supports students in relation to bullying?

- What is your role in the implementation of the bullying prevention program?

- What do you feel are the most effective components of your program?

- Do you collect and utilize data as part of your bullying prevention initiative?

- Do you collaborate with your administrators about your bullying prevention program?

- What is the role of teachers and other staff in implementing your school's bullying prevention program?

- In what ways are parents or community members involved with your school's bullying prevention program?
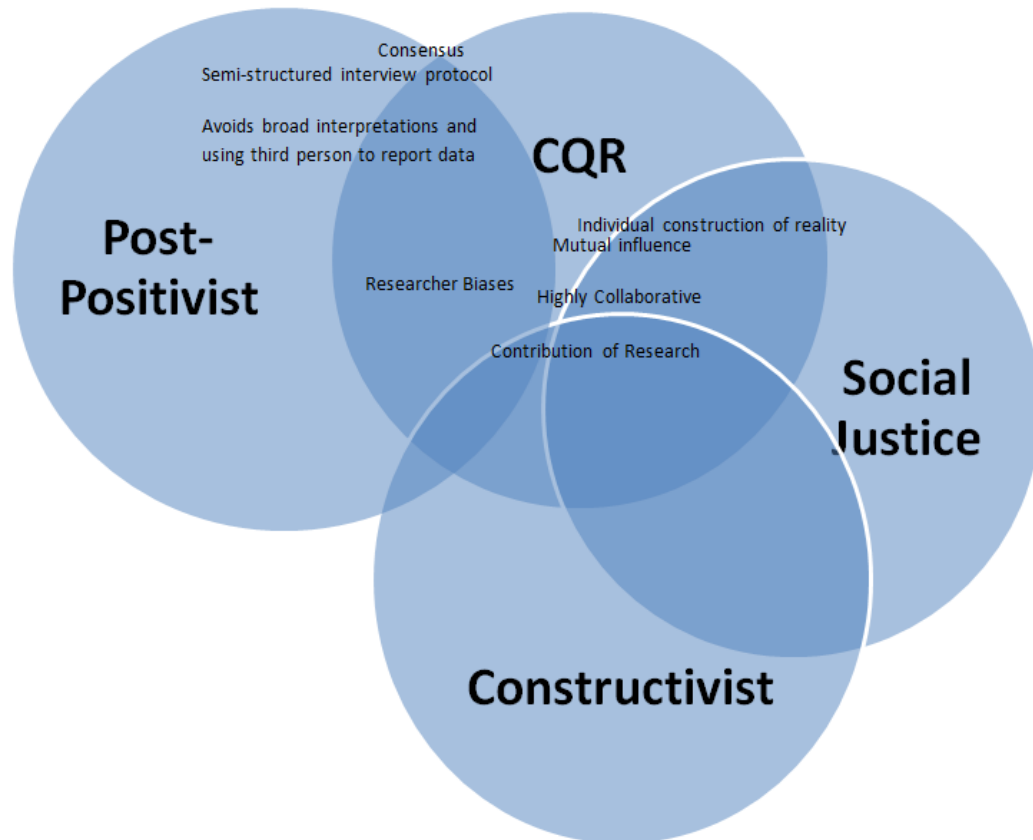
- Overall, is your school community supportive of the bullying prevention program and initiatives?

5. Are you familiar with federal and state legislation that govern bullying policies and prevention?

    - Does your county have a policy about bullying prevention?

    - Tell me about your county's policy on bullying and bullying prevention.

    - Does your local school have a policy about bullying prevention?

    - Tell me about your local school's policy on bullying and bullying prevention.

    - How do you feel about current legislation that governs bullying policies and prevention?

6. Please describe your definition of social justice change agent.

    - Do you consider yourself a social justice change agent?

    - Do you feel that bullying and bullying prevention is an issue of social justice?

    - Do you feel that your bullying prevention program initiates positive social change?

7. Please describe you definition of advocacy and share ways in which you advocate as a school counselor.

    - Do you consider yourself an advocate?

    - Tell me about the last time that you advocated with or on the behalf of students.

8. Please describe your role in advocating for the implementation of an effective school-wide bullying prevention program.

    - Tell me about the ways that you advocate for the implementation of school-wide bullying prevention initiatives?

- How do you advocate to your administrative staff to establish a need for a school-wide bullying prevention program?

- How do you advocate to your teachers and other staff to establish a need for a school-wide bullying prevention programs?

- Have you had administrators who are not supportive of your efforts? If so, how did you handle the situation?

- Have you had teachers or other staff who are not supportive of your efforts? If so, how did you handle the situation?

9. Please describe your role in collaborating with stakeholders for the implementation of a school-wide bullying prevention program.

- How do you collaborate with administrators for the implementation of a school-wide bullying prevention program?

- How do you collaborate with teachers for the implementation of a school-wide bullying prevention program?

- How do you collaborate with parents for the implementation of a school-wide bullying prevention program?

- How do you collaborate with community members for the implementation of a school-wide bullying prevention program?

- Do you seek out student input on your bullying prevention program?

10. Is there anything additional that you would like to share with the researcher in regards to your role as a social justice change agent advocating for the implementation of school-wide bullying prevention program?
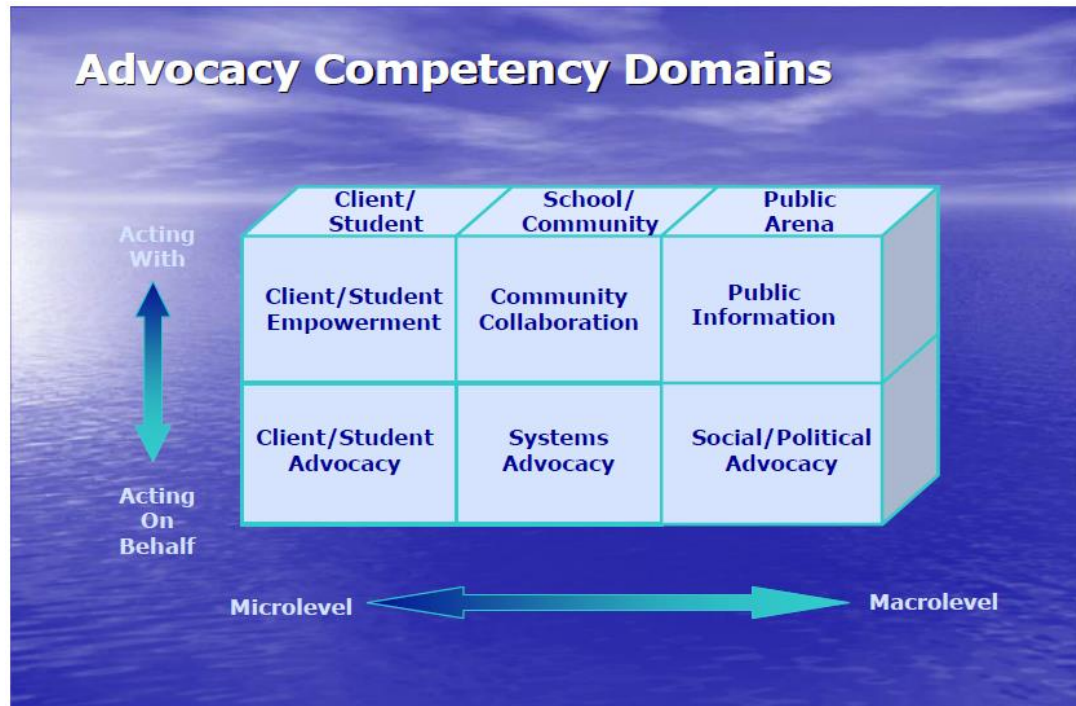
Appendix C

Figure 1. Venn Diagram showcasing the similarities between the research tradition (CQR), paradigm (Constructivist/Post-Positivist), and theoretical framework (Social Justice).

Appendix D

Figure 2 American Counseling Association figure representing various domains of

advocacy (Ratts, Toporek & Lewis, 2010).

Appendix E

P.O.P

Power Over Prejudice

Monthly Calendar of Events

Synergy Week: Feb. 21st-24th, 2012

January 24th	P.O.P. Meeting 9:30
January 26th	P.O.P Meeting 9:30
February 2nd	P.O.P Meeting 9:30
February 3rd	P.O.P students teach advisement to 7th grade
February 21st	Mix It Up Day at lunch
February 22nd	Respect Day & Harmony Award nominations due to counseling dept.
February 23rd	Black Out Stereotypes (wear black day)
February 24th	Show D.I.V.E.R.S.I.T.Y video on morning news/Harmony Award winner announced on morning news P.O.P students teach advisement to 7th grade.

**Quotes will be read daily on morning announcements by P.O.P student

**Candy will be passed out in café during lunch for all students wearing black on 2/23/12.

Appendix F

Bullying Advisement Lesson Part II

Opening

- Every year, 30% of students in schools in the US report that they have bullied someone or been the victim of a bully. At CMS, that would mean about 170 students.
- Last year, 160,000 students missed a day of school in the US due to being bullied.
- Every 7 minutes, a child in a US school is bullied on US school grounds.
- 21% of students in the US have received a mean or threatening e-mail.

- About 75% of middle schoolers admit that they have been to a website or facebook page that was "bashing" or unkind to another student.

Read some of these stats to your class and push the idea that we don't want CMS to be included in stats like these. It is our school and it is our choice--we can choose to make it bully-free. This morning, we put stickers on approximately 170 students. During the day today, see how often you come into contact with someone with a sticker. Remember, 30% of students in US schools say they have been bullied or have bullied, and that would be about 170 CMS students, if that statistic were accurate for the Owls.

Mini-Lesson (This section should be BRIEF)

·   BRIEFLY review the definition of bullying. **Bullying is a repeated behavior that is intentional and designed to inflict harm on the victim.** Please reinterate that just because something does not seem like a big deal to you does not mean that it is not a big deal to others.

·   BRIEFLY explain that instigators are also bullies and contribute to a lot of the bullying situations here at Clarke Middle.

·   Briefly review the different types of bullying. They are Physical (punching, kicking, spitting); Verbal (Name calling, threatening, teasing); Indirect or Psychological (spreading rumors, excluding people from games and groups) and cyber (writing mean things on someone's face book, emailing embarrassing photos of people).

Work Session (*Scenarios are below*):

The students are going to be presented with different scenarios. The point of the scenarios is to get your students to 1) see the many different ways that bullying can happen and to be sure not to engage in bullying of any type 2) how easy it is to be "pulled into" bullying-even if you do not start it. *Even if you don't start it, if you participate, you are just as guilty* 3) develop response strategies (when do you report, when do you reach out, when do you walk away, etc.).

Based on the number of teachers in the classroom/classroom environment, here are some different ways that teachers can facilitate the discussions with the scenarios:

1. You can divide the students into groups and have each group take a different scenario. Once the group discusses it, you can have them share out responses with the whole class.

2. Read and discuss several scenarios together as a whole class and then break into smaller groups and facilitate conversation within each group.
3. If 2 teachers are in the room, split the class in half. Then, each teacher can divide the scenarios up, discuss them with their half of the class, and then once the class comes back together, each half can share out responses

Once you all have discussed the scenarios, have student read over and sign the Anti-bullying pledge (*it will be underneath the scenarios on Thursday morning*). It may be useful for you and/or the students to read all or some of it aloud before signing it. *Anti-bullying pledge is below*

TAKE UP THE PLEDGES!!! PUT THEM IN MY BOX OR BRING THEM BY MY OFFICE.

CLOSING

Watch video: It is about a middle school that wins a contest for its Anti-bullying video:
http://www.abc2news.com/dpp/news/region/baltimore_county/franklin-middle-school-video-on-anti-bullying-wins-contest

Encourage students to submit Wise Owls forms if they have not already THEY ARE DUE BY THE END OF TODAY!!

Ask students to guess the meaning of the phrase: "Silence is consent". (Basic definition: If you don't speak up, then you accept what is happening)

Scenarios

Process Questions: *Teachers can use these questions to help facilitate discussions among groups*

1. Is this bullying or harassment or some other form of misconduct? If it is harassment, what form is it? If you are not sure, what additional information do you need to determine if it might be harassment or bullying?
2. What immediate reactive responses are needed to manage or resolve this situation and who needs to be involved? What would you do and/or say? Consider how you would respond to the target, perpetrator/bully, bystanders, and/or school staff.
3. What follow-up steps need to be taken and by whom?

Scenario #1
Two female sixth graders, Katie and Amber, are exchanging malicious Facebook posts back and forth because of a misunderstanding involving a boy named Jacob. At first, Katie and Amber are only calling one another names and cursing at one another in the posts, but then Amber threatens to have her friends jump Katie at school in the restroom the next day. You see Amber crying in

the hallway and ask her
what's wrong. She tells you what happened on Facebook last night, and tells you that Amber has threatened to have her jumped.

Scenario #2
David is standing in line getting food in the cafeteria. Two of David's friends, Seth and Trevor, walk up to David and start giving him a hard time about the pants he is wearing and start calling David a "faggot" and say that David's pants are "gay." Two cafeteria staff members, Marie and Carol, who handle the food service, overhear Seth and Trevor's comments towards David. You are not too far away from David, and you can tell that he bothered by his friends' comments.

Scenario #3
Sasha has two best friends-Anna and Myra. Sasha wants to tell Anna and Myra a secret, but right before she reveals her secret, she makes both girls promise not to tell ANYONE. Once the girls leave the lunchroom, Myra overhears Anna telling two of her friends Sasha's secret. The next day at school, Sasha is mortified when she finds out that the entire 7th grade knows her secret. Myra is walking down the hallway with Sasha. They both see Sasha coming out of her class, and Anna says to Stacy, "I'm about to confront her right now!"

Scenario #4
Andrew is a star track athlete at Jonestown Middle School. During the summer, he develops a stress fracture in his left leg and returns to school using crutches. While in the hallway, some of Andrew's friends start teasing him and call him a "gimp" and imitate the way he walks with the crutches. Andrew laughs with his friends and does not seem bothered by the comments. Off to the side, Jered, another
student with cerebral palsy who uses crutches all the time, hears the comments and is visibly upset. Jered says nothing to the other boys and keeps walking to class. Mr. Cook, the 8th grade science teacher, and Mr. Peterson, one of the custodial staff, see and overhear the interaction between Andrew and his friends. In addition, Mr. Peterson sees Jered's reaction to the comments.

Scenario #5
Jessie and Makayla are friends. One day, they get into an argument at their lunch table because Jessie accuses Makayla of spreading a rumor about her. Most of the people at the table are telling Jessie what version of the rumor they heard in an effort to keep the argument going. Monique, who is close to both Jesse and Makayla, remains quiet throughout the whole conversation even though she knows that Makayla didn't spread the rumor. As a matter of fact, she knows that another person, one table over, was the one started the rumor. At the conclusion of the argument, Jessie tells Makayla that they are no longer friends and demands that Makayla leave their lunch table. The rest of the table begins to chime in with Jessie, and finally, Makayla leaves the lunch table in tears.

Scenario #6
Asia and Pedro are good friends. They like to joke around a lot with one another, call each other names, and they hit one another repeatedly. One day, they are outside during Incentive time, and

Pedro snatches Asia's phone out of her hand. When he tries to run away with it, Asia hits Pedro very hard in his back, and he falls to the ground. When he gets up, Pedro throws her phone on the ground,
and the screen cracks. He calls her stupid and begins walking towards her. The teachers are not close enough to see what's happening, but other students began to gather around...

Scenario #7
When you enter the restroom, you see two students writing mean messages/statements on the bathroom stalls about another student. The students know that you don't like the student they are writing about, so they give you the marker and tell you to add your "two cents" to it.

Appendix G

*30 minutes

Interviewer: C. Land   Interviewee: H. N.

Contact Date: 9-21-13   Today's Date: 9-21-13

Has staff Buy-IN → B.P. efforts proven effective.

1. What were the main issues or themes that stuck out for you in this contact?

Through Bullying prevention-this participant is working to change the school culture of the school. Counselor is doing a phenomenal job addressing B.P. without A lot of Resources. Has strong awareness of SJ and diversity needs.

2. What discrepancies, if any, did you note in the interviewee's response?

Counselor was critical in setting expectations for the staff As opposed to the administrators. Administrators support counselor and B.P. But put it on her to promote and gain Buy-IN.

3. Anything else that stuck out as salient, interesting, or important in this contact?

Despite lack of resources/funding this counselor was able to implement and address B.P. to meet the needs of her school. As a researcher, I recognize that my own way is not the only way to effectively address and implement interventions. (stay w/ longer ten)

F. General comments about how this interviewee's responses compared with other interviewees:

This participant has the leadership skills to in and implement a school-wide program. She also actively engages and addresses issues of social justice, equity and access. This participants advocacy efforts are very strong → reinforces my beliefs that advocacy is Key to successfully address B.P. I'm not sure you can w/o advocacy efforts →