

Elementary Students' and Parents' Perceptions of Bullying Behaviors at School

by

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this study was to gain knowledge of elementary students' and parents' perceptions of bullying behaviors in a midwestern school. The student participant sample included 130 elementary students in Grades 3, 4, and 5. The parent portion of the sample consisted of 80 of the parents that had one or more students in Grades 3, 4, or 5. Participants completed a survey, which addressed the topics of bullying dynamics as well as the responses and support system efforts in regards to bullying behaviors as perceived by the participants. Two surveys were designed and created specifically for this study, using information and ideas from previous research surveys done on bullying. Data were collected and descriptive statistics were used to make connections to the research objectives of the study.

One general finding of this study is that most students have experienced or seen bullying at least once in a while at this school. The majority, however, do not believe that bullying is a frequent, severe problem. In addition, students and parents believe that the school supports them in addressing bullying at the school. Additional themes are presented and discussed as they relate to the perceptions of bullying behaviors seen or experienced by students, or reported to parents.

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Hugs and kisses to you all.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
List of Figures.....	vii
Chapter I: Introduction.....	8
<i>Statement of the Problem</i>	10
<i>Purpose of the Study</i>	10
<i>Research Questions</i>	11
<i>Definition of Terms</i>	12
<i>Assumptions</i>	12
<i>Limitations</i>	12
Chapter II: Literature Review.....	14
<i>Effects of Bullying</i>	15
<i>Dynamics of Bullying</i>	17
<i>Responses to Bullying</i>	19
Chapter III: Methodology.....	24
<i>Selection and Description of Sample</i>	24
<i>Instrumentation</i>	25
<i>Data Collection</i>	27
<i>Data Analysis</i>	27
<i>Limitations</i>	27
Chapter IV: Results.....	29
<i>Demographic Information</i>	29
<i>Item Analysis</i>	29

<i>Student survey</i>	29
<i>Parent survey</i>	38
<i>Research Objectives</i>	40
<i>Objective one</i>	40
<i>Objective two</i>	44
<i>Objective three</i>	46
<i>Objective four</i>	47
Chapter V: Discussion.....	48
<i>Summary</i>	48
<i>Limitations</i>	48
<i>Conclusions</i>	49
<i>Recommendations</i>	51
References.....	54
Appendix A: Student Consent Form.....	60
Appendix B: Parent Consent Form.....	61
Appendix C: Student Survey.....	62
Appendix D: Parent Survey.....	65
Appendix E: Student Responses to Open-ended Survey Questions.....	66
Appendix F: Parent Responses to Open-ended Survey Question.....	70

List of Figures

Figure 1: Types of Bullying Experienced by Students.....	30
Figure 2: Student Responses to Bullying Experienced.....	31
Figure 3: Types of Bullying Observed by Students.....	32
Figure 4: Locations of Bullying.....	35
Figure 5: People Students Tell About Bullying.....	37
Figure 6: Parent Responses to Bullying Reports.....	40
Figure 7: Gender Comparison of Bullying Locations.....	44
Figure 8: Gender Comparison of Bully Reports.....	45

Chapter I: Introduction

Many children encounter peers at school who torment, ridicule, or isolate them. In recognition of the problems that these behaviors cause for all students, there has been a recent surge in research done in order to understand the complexities that surround peer victimization, or bullying, in schools. The United States [U.S.] Department of Justice estimated that a peer at school bullies one out of every four children each month (Liepe-Levinson & Levinson, 2005). In addition, researchers around the world have done studies linking bullying behaviors to both short and long-term effects on all children involved. Some of those effects include lower levels of psychological well-being, difficulty with social adjustment, health problems later in life, and future violent behavior (Rigby, 2003). These reasons lead to the research that has been recently flourishing in the domain of bullying behaviors and the prevention and intervention of these behaviors in the school environment.

Schools are responsible for providing a safe environment for children to grow and develop into unique individuals with the skills to succeed in the future. Part of the job of an educator is to enable the positive growth of students by encouraging a supportive environment in which they are able to learn (Glasser, as cited in Lawson, McClain, Matlock-Hetzel, Duffy, & Urbanovski, 1997). Educators are to implement intervention and prevention programs to promote positive skill development that will benefit students throughout their lives (Casey-Cannon, Hayward, & Gowen, 2001). Despite this responsibility, the American Association of School Psychologists reported that more than 160,000 children do not come to school due to the fear of being bullied (Liepe-Levinson

& Levinson, 2005). The prevalence of these statistics creates the desire to learn how to solve the problem. However to solve the problem, we must first learn more about it.

The problems that encompass bullying behaviors in the school are not simple. To begin with, bullying behaviors come in many different forms, with some being more visible to outsiders than others. Considered by many researchers to be the most knowledgeable on the topic of peer victimization, Olweus (2003) has generally defined bullying as including a negative action that a student endures repeatedly over a period of time. Furthermore, Olweus and other researchers have distinguished between direct and indirect forms of bullying behaviors. Direct bullying is usually considered to take the form of physical and verbal aggression such as shoving, pushing, or kicking, as well as teasing, name-calling, or giving others a dirty look (Waterhouse, Sippel, Pedrini, & Cawley, 1998). Indirect aggression, on the other hand, usually includes behaviors such as gossiping, spreading rumors, or excluding others. Given these definitions of bullying behaviors, it can be said that indirect aggression is easily overlooked because of its discreet nature. Even when others notice bullying behaviors, the decision of whether or not to intervene is dependent on the personal judgment of the witness.

For various reasons, students may underreport bullying. This makes it even more difficult for educators and concerned others to assess the amount of bullying that occurs so that something can be done to intervene and prevent more bullying from taking place. Recognition of bullying then becomes dependent upon the few students that report the behaviors, and the incidents which teachers are able to notice and report bullying behaviors.

While these difficulties stand in the way, it is clear that something must be done to deter students from causing lifelong damage to their peers and others by allowing for bullying to take place. In conquering these challenges, Olweus (2003) recommends that school-wide programs be put into place that focus on consistency and the ability for everyone affected by bullying to voice their opinions and perceptions of behaviors that take place at the school. The views of students and parents or guardians might be overlooked in the school's progress toward creating a bully-free school environment. One way to get their input is by conducting a survey in which they can voice their opinions anonymously.

Only through the collaboration of everyone involved can the most full and accurate picture of bullying be achieved. By engaging as many people as possible, educators are able to more efficiently find ways to reduce the fear in students from coming to school, and take one step closer to providing the safe learning environment that every student deserves.

Statement of the Problem

Bullying behaviors among school peers are a widespread problem. Often underreported by students, bullying behaviors are difficult to fully understand and address appropriately. Therefore, it is important for schools to seek out reports about bullying from others so that it can be recognized and dealt with effectively.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of students in third through fifth grade, as well as the perceptions of their parents, in regard to bullying behaviors that occur at a midwestern elementary school that the students attend. The

study examined the types and frequency of bullying behaviors that occur, as perceived by the students and their parents. In addition, it sought to discover the perception of responses to bullying behaviors at the school. Data were collected in April 2005 through two surveys. One survey was created for the students involved in the study, and the other was for the parent of the students. For the student portion of the study, the researcher administered the survey to interested, participating students during the school day. For the parent/guardian portion of the study, surveys were sent home with all third, fourth, and fifth graders. They could then be completed and returned to the school by parents that chose to volunteer in the study.

Research Questions

Data were gathered from participants. The data gathered as a result of this study hoped to address the following inquiries about perceptions of bullying behaviors at this midwestern elementary school:

1. What are the students' perceptions of bullying dynamics that they have experienced or observed in the last year at school?
2. What are the students' perceptions of responses and support system efforts in addressing bullying behaviors that they have experienced or observed in the last year at school?
3. What are the parents' perceptions of bullying characteristics they have heard about in the last year at their child's school?
4. What are the parents' perceptions of responses and support efforts in addressing bullying behaviors they have heard about in the last year at their child's school?

Definition of Terms

Many terms are used to refer to the phenomenon of bullying. These may overlap with one another. To clearly understand the research that is currently in existence on this topic, it is necessary to clarify the definitions of some of the terms used.

Bully – Someone who “...intentionally inflicts, or attempts to inflict, injury or discomfort on someone else” (Olweus, 2003, p.9).

Bullying – “...expos [ure] repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other students” (Olweus, 1993, p.9).

Direct Bullying – “consists of open assault on another student, slapping, hitting, punching, kicking...” (Waterhouse et al., 1998, p. 6).

Indirect Bullying – “usually hidden behavior, and takes the form of teasing, criticism, gossiping, spreading malicious rumors, threatening to withdraw friendship, social isolation, or exclusion from a group” (Waterhouse et al., 1998, p. 6).

Assumptions

The nature of this research study brought assumptions made by the researcher. It was assumed that the participants understood the nature and content of the questions asked in the survey. It was also assumed that the participants were honest in answering the survey questions.

Limitations

Limitations of this research study stemmed mostly from the survey format in which the study will be presented. This form of gathering data left the possibility that the participants did not answer truthfully, or that the survey questions were not fully understood by the participants, making the data less informative and subject to inaccurate

outcomes in its analysis. In addition, sending the parent portion of the survey and the student consent forms home as opposed to conducting immediate interviews or direct observations of bullying behaviors, created the possibility that there would be a poor representative sample of third through fifth grade students and parents completing the surveys. Finally, collecting data using a survey can lead to potential experimenter bias if any of the questions are perceived by the participants to be open for interpretation.

Chapter II: Literature Review

The dynamics of bullying behaviors have recently been getting more attention from researchers. Even though bullying has not been proven as the cause of violence in schools, it may be true that recent school violence incidents depicted in the media have impacted the interest in bullying among researchers and school personnel.

Recent studies have indicated that bullying in schools is a prevalent problem. In a study done for the U.S. Departments of Education and Justice (DeVoe et al., 2004), an estimated 7% of students, ages 12 to 18 reported being bullied in 2003. Children Now, the Kaiser Family Foundation, and Nickelodeon (n.d.) conducted a national survey in 2000-2001. Over eight hundred children ages 8 to 15 participated in the survey. Bullying and teasing were reported as a problem for children their age more often than racism, pressure to have sex, drinking alcohol, or doing other drugs were reported as problems. In addition, researcher Shaw and the U.S. Department of Justice (2001) estimated that one million students between the ages of 12 and 18 reported fear of being attacked or harmed at school within the six months previous to the study. Moreover, Bulach, Fulbright, and Williams (2003) did a study and estimated that 75% of all adolescents in the United States have had the experience of being bullied. Although statistics vary slightly, there is a lot of evidence demonstrating that bullying is a problem that needs to be addressed with further research in order to be conclusive.

The British Columbia Safe School Centre was part of a project that distributed a manual called *Focus On Bullying*, (Waterhouse et al., 1998) to all of the elementary school in the province. The manual asserted that bullying behaviors have a negative impact on school climate. According to Shaw (2001), bullying has a long-lasting impact

on the sense of security within schools. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2005) also noted that bullying negatively impacts the ability of students to learn, in addition to having other individual effects on the lives of children. The department stated that every student deserves to learn in an environment that is safe, and that the responsibility to provide that security belongs to everyone.

Schools are in a unique position to address social problems because of the amount of time that children are in schools. As bullying penetrates schools worldwide, it is essential that schools consider the possible impact it may have. Lahelma (2004) asserted that education has been a means for educating our children and promoting their abilities to become successful citizens in the future. For this reason, it seems appropriate that schools honor a student's right to learn in a safe environment.

One way in which schools can aid children in positive growth and development includes the establishment of an uplifting school climate. Developmental researchers Kaplan and Geoffroy (1990, as cited in Lawson et al., 1997) asserted that by creating a climate that exudes a sense of trust and respect within the school, educators would be in a better position to encourage personal, academic, and social learning among children. Glasser (1997) concurred when he stated that a supportive atmosphere is conducive to the ability of students to develop skills and identify personal needs. In order to make changes in the school environment, more needs to be known about bullying behaviors.

Effects of Bullying

Many studies have examined the effects of bullying on both victims and bullies. The impact reported reaches across all aspects of development, including academic, emotional, social, and physical areas. For example, Smith, J., Schneider, Smith, P., and

Ananiadou (2004) suggested that victims and bullies are both more likely than their peers to experience difficulty with emotional distress, and researcher Shaw with the U.S. Department of Justice (2001) reported that both bullies and victims seem to have a more difficult time making friends. Studies have also suggested that victims and bullies more often contemplated suicide (Rigby, 2003; Shaw, 2005), showed a decrease in school success (Shaw, 2001), and were more likely to be involved with problematic or violent behaviors in the future (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2003; U.S. Department of Justice, 2001).

Differences between victim and bully effects have been reported as well. It has been suggested that both victims and bullies have a negative attitude toward school (Juvonen, Graham, & Schuster, 2003; Waterhouse et al., 1998). Crothers and Levinson (2004) proposed that victims of bullying missed school because they were afraid to be there. Eisenberg, Neumark-Sztainer, and Perry (2003) proposed that missing school may have a negative impact on students' connection to others and their academic success. Even when victims of bullying attended school, researchers have proposed that victims lack the concentration they need to learn (Crothers & Levinson, 2004; Shaw, 2005).

Those that engaged in bullying behaviors, on the other hand, had an increased likelihood of having externalizing problem behaviors in the future. Those behaviors have included legal or criminal trouble (Lajoie, McLellan, & Seddon, 1997; Rigby, 1993; U. S. Department of Justice, 2001), family violence (Waterhouse et al., 1998), gang membership (Lajoie et al., 1997), and substance abuse (Crothers & Levinson, 2004; Smith et al., 2004).

Dynamics of Bullying

Most definitions of bullying are similar to or are variations of the definition used by Dr. Dan Olweus. Crothers and Levinson (2004) noted that Olweus is often considered by researchers to be one of the leading experts on bullying. Olweus and Limber (1999) gave the following definition of bullying:

A student is being bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other students. Such negative actions include intentionally inflicting, or attempting to inflict, injury or discomfort upon another. (p. 7-8)

One component in Olweus's definition of bullying is the bully's intent to harm the person being bullied (Olweus & Limber, 1999). To be considered bullying, a behavior must be done for the purpose of hurting someone else. Tattum and Tattum (1992) used a similar component in their definition, stating that bullying is a conscious desire to harm someone else.

A power difference between the bully and victim is often another characteristic used to categorize behavior as bullying (Olweus, 2003; Juvonen, Graham, & Schuster, 2003; Rigby, 2003; Mishna, 2004; Smith, J., Schneider, Smith, P., & Ananiadou, 2004; Crother & Levinson, 2004; Hurst, 2005; Lyznicki, McCaffree, & Robinowitz, 2004). The power imbalance may come in many forms; it does not necessarily mean that the bully is more powerful due to physical size or strength.

Crothers and Levinson (2004) stated that Olweus was the first to define two different types of bullying; direct and indirect. Direct bullying is most often described as physical and verbal aggressive acts. These behaviors could include kicking, hitting,

yelling, threatening, etc. (Waterhouse et al., 1998). Direct bullying has been suggested as a more common form of bullying among boys (Olweus & Limber, 1999; Schafer et al., 2004; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2005). Indirect bullying (Crothers & Levinson, 2004; Schafer et al., 2004), or relational bullying (Crick & Nelson, 2002), may be more common among girls. It includes behaviors such as spreading rumors, excluding or isolating, or setting someone up to look foolish (Waterhouse et al., 1998). The results of a survey done by researchers Craig and Pepler (2003), suggested that bullying may occur at the same rate for both girls and boys, or at least, boys and girls tended to report a similar rate of being bullied. Although indirect bullying is usually a more hidden form, it is considered to be just as troubling, if not more troubling for the victim than direct bullying.

Lyznicki, McCaffree, and Robinowitz (2004) suggested that schools attempt to understand the extent of the bullying problem at their school. Many studies have considered the severity of bullying in terms of its prevalence or frequency of occurrences. For example, an excerpt from book written by Olweus and Limber (1999) reported that 23% of over 6,000 participants said that they were recently bullied several times or more, and 20% of the fourth through sixth grade participants were bullying others at the same rate. In a study done by Limber et al. (1997) 25% of students in Grades 4 through 6 admitted that they had recently bullied other kids on a regular basis. Other researchers look at severity in terms of the types of behaviors that occur, and the frequency of those behaviors. However, very few studies have addressed student perceptions on the severity of bullying incidents they have experienced or observed in the school setting.

A study done by Sampson (2002) found that bullying was most likely to occur in locations where there was the least amount of supervision at the participating schools, such as the playground, cafeteria, bathrooms, hallways, and stairwells. Olweus and Limber (1999) proposed that bullying occurs most often on the playground or in the classroom. In terms of gender, Smith and Sharp (1994) reported that boys appeared to suffer more often from bullying on the playground, while girls reported more bullying behaviors occurring in the hallways. Overall, they found that bullying activity to be prevalent anywhere students were together, including the classroom.

Responses to Bullying

Beyond defining bullying, whether or not students report incidents will impact what adults are able to do about it. The manual, *Focus On Bullying*, (Waterhouse et al., 1998) suggested that bullying is underreported and most of it is hidden to adults.

Hunter, Boyle, and Warden (2004) stated that when reporting does occur, girls are more likely to report bullying than boys, and reporting is most likely to occur when students feel something will be done about it, or an intervention will take place. However, the reasons students report bullying may vary, and have been found to include often overlooked areas, such as the victim's need to deal with feelings just as much as he or she wants to deal with the actual bullying behaviors (Lyznicki, McCaffree, and Robinowitz, 2004).

Who students report bullying to is often a question asked by researchers, perhaps to find out more about how we can effectively respond to bullying. Studies have found varying results concerning to whom students do and do not report. One common recipient of bullying reports may be a parent. Houndoumadi and Pateraki (2001) found that victims

most often reported bullying to their parents. This finding further supported results from a study done by Genta and colleagues (1996, as cited in Houndoumadi & Pateraki, 2001) that also purported that students preferred to report to parents about bullying.

Friends may be the recipients of bully reports as well, according to other researchers. Glover, Gough, Johnson, and Cartwright (2000) did a study and suggested that, at a rate of 61%, best friends were the source of support students were most likely to turn to. Mishna (2004) also found that victims are most likely to tell their friends about being bullied. Still another study done by Hunter, Boyle, and Warden (2004) included friends and family members on the list of people most likely to hear about bullying. Demaray and Malecki (2003) also found that victims in their study tended to value peer support more than other students. If victims value peer support more, victims may be more likely to report bullying to their peers. In a study done by Rigby and Barnes (2002), student participants indicated that if they reported bullying to a friend, it was least likely to generate negative outcomes.

Some research studies report that teachers are the third most likely source of reporting bullying next to parents and friends (Glover et al., 2000; Smith, Schneider, et al., 2004). The results of a study done by Hunter, Boyle, and Warden (2004) did not find that teachers were among the people victims report bullying to. Children in the study explained that they thought bullying would get worse if they told a teacher about it. Genta and his colleagues (1996, as cited in Houndoumadi & Pateraki, 2001) also suggested that teachers were not the favored recipients of bullying reports. In contrast, Pepler, Craig, Ziegler, and Charach (1993) found that 47% of victims in a primary school had reported bullying to a teacher. In relation to gender differences in reports of bullying, Borg (1998)

suggested that boys were more likely to report bullying to a teacher or friend than girls were. Girls, on the other hand, were more likely to report bullying to a friend or parent in that study. Still, more research needs to be conducted in this area to support or disconfirm this supposition.

An additional problem in addressing the complex topic of bullying seems to be the probability that adults will react to the behaviors. Hunter, Boyle, and Warden (2004) suggested that even though students are encouraged to tell adults when they have seen or been a part of bullying, adults have been unsure of how to proceed. This could have a negative impact on the frequency of reporting bully behaviors, and impact student belief that something can be done to end it. Another reason given for the lack of student reporting is that students feel nothing will be done about the issue, even if it is brought to an adult's attention (Mishna, 2004; Rigby, 1993). Hunter, Boyle, and Warden (2004) suggested that students' beliefs about the helpfulness of reporting are more important in deciding whether or not to tell someone, than the student's perception of the amount of control or threat is involved in the bullying. Moreover, students may fear that bullying will worsen if something is said to an adult about it (Mishna, 2004; Rigby, 1993). Hunter, Boyle, and Warden (2004) also found that students may feel shameful about being bullied, further deterring them from reporting its occurrence.

Researchers have suggested that adult perception of whether or not an incident was considered bullying influenced how they responded and also influenced whether the student would report it (Craig, Henderson, & Murphy, 2000; Landau, Milich, Harris, & Larson, 2001; Limper, 2000). Unfortunately, adult and student views on intervening do not always match. For example, Pepler, Craig, Ziegler, and Charach (1993) found that

85% of teachers reported intervening always or often, and only 35% of students reported that teachers always or often intervened in bullying situations. Yoon (2004) reported that victims were influenced by whether they felt that they had support and whether it was helpful. This perception impacted their willingness to report the incidences, thereby influencing awareness and ability to do something to stop bullying behaviors. In addition, research studies found that victims perceived less social support (Rigby, 2000), or peer support (Demaray & Malecki, 2003) to be available to them.

Yoon (2004) suggested that permissive attitudes by teachers perpetuated the feelings of helplessness among victims as well. Furthermore, Leff, Kupersmidt, Patterson, and Power (1999) found that teachers identified less than half of the victims and bullies that peers had reported in a survey. According to a study by Yoon and Kerber (2003), teachers were more likely to intervene in verbal and direct bullying occurrences. Teachers were also found to be less sympathetic to victims of social exclusion, and were less likely to get involved with indirect bullying. The researchers maintained that teacher interventions set a tone for communication about bullying from both bullies and victims. It was suggested that students learn which behaviors are considered unacceptable, and which behaviors need not be talked about with the teacher by observing whether a teacher intervenes.

If students are underreporting incidents of bullying, it is interesting to consider how they do deal with bullying behaviors when they occur. A couple of studies have been done on the reactions of victims of bullying. In a study done by Glover, Gough, Johnson, and Cartwright (2000), 54% of victim respondents reported standing up to the bully, and 37% of them then told someone. This study also reported that in terms of gender, boys

were more likely to fight back, and girls were more likely to tell school staff. Of the victims in the study, 16% reported suffering in silence, and 24% said that they simply avoided the place where bullying occurred. In a study done by Borg (1998), very few of those who did something in response to bullying reported going to a school staff member for help, and almost one third of the victims reported not doing anything when they were bullied.

To increase our understanding of reporting patterns, in addition to learning more essential information about bullying behaviors, it is important to further consider the viewpoints of children as well as adults. Therefore, this study focused on finding perceptions from students and parents about bullying at school. The following chapters will describe the method used to collect data from those sources in order to address the research questions as described in the introduction chapter.

Chapter III: Methodology

The following chapter includes information concerning how the sample was selected for the study and the demographics of the sample used for the study. A description of the instruments used, including what they were intended to find, is also incorporated into this chapter. Details concerning the data collection and analysis can also be found in this chapter. Finally, the chapter concludes with a brief discussion pertaining to the limitations the study presented.

Selection and Description of Sample

Permission to conduct a survey with students and parents was sought and granted in an elementary school within a midwestern school district. The city in which the school is located is a mid-sized city. The elementary school is comprised of three hundred forty students and thirty-two teachers. During the 2003-2004 school year, 60.5% of the students attending this school were eligible for subsidized lunches. The ethnic background of the students in 2003-2004 included .3% Native American students, 23.8% Asian American students, 2.5% African American students, 1.2% Hispanic students, and 72.2% Caucasian students.

All parents of students in grades three through five, attending the small midwestern public school, were sent a letter describing the nature of the study to be conducted. The letter explained the benefits, risks, and confidentiality associated with participating. The letter requested that interested parents give permission for students to take the survey at school. The bottom portion of the letter included a statement of consent and a place for them to sign and return it to the school. Returning the signature of consent

verified the student's ability to participate. Of 177 students invited to participate in the study, 130 returned the parental consent form.

Also attached to the parent letter and consent form was a note which informed parents that a survey would be sent home for them to complete at their will, on the same day that the students took a survey. The note invited parents to contribute to the study by filling out the survey when it arrived home with their student, and then returning it with the student to school.

Elementary school students in grades three through five were also invited to participate in the study if they were interested in doing so. These three grades were selected because of their more advanced reading and comprehension skills that were necessary to obtain the most accurate results from the study. Both boys and girls were participated in this study because bullying behaviors impacts them both, and it has been suggested that the types of bullying behaviors may depend on the gender involved.

The letters of consent used in this study were written to communicate with both the students and parents receiving them. The researcher created the instruments in this study using suggestions and ideas from staff at the participating elementary school where the study was carried out, in addition to applying ideas from other researchers of bullying.

Instrumentation

Two instruments were used in this study, both of which were designed to discover the perceptions of bullying behaviors that occur at school. They are both similar in content and structure to other surveys that have been used to address the topic of bullying. Waterhouse, et al. (1998) created surveys about bullying for all elementary

grade levels as part of a manual distributed to each area school. They addressed some common topics in bullying research, such as the frequency, types, locations, and responses to bullying behaviors. However, these surveys focus on students' personal experiences of being bullied, as opposed to bullying that students have observed. Surveys created by Dahlheimer (2004), Olweus (1993), Sturz (2000), and Swearer (2001), also provided this researcher with ideas for generating the surveys used.

The first instrument used in this study was the student survey, which included nineteen questions to answer. The questions were designed to assess the dynamics of bullying seen or experienced at school from a student perspective. The dynamics include frequency, type, severity, and location of bullying. In addition, the student survey included questions regarding student perceptions of social support that was available and helpful to them.

With only eight questions to answer, the parent survey was created with the intent to collect a much more limited amount of data. This instrument focused more heavily on perceptions of support and helpful responses available when bullying behaviors are known to be occurring at school. It also asked about the frequency in which their child has reported bullying to them.

Demographic information that was included on both the parent and student surveys asked for the grade and gender of the student. The instruments used were unique to this study, and therefore no measures of validity or reliability have been done. However, the face validity of the instruments was assumed to be consistent with the surveys from which similar questions were asked (Dahlheimer, 2004; Sturz, 2000; Olweus, 1993; Swearer, 2001).

Data Collection

Permission from the Institutional Review Board was sought by and granted to this researcher prior to distributing surveys to the potential participants or collecting data. The Executive Director of Student Services for the Eau Claire Area School District was also consulted in order to receive approval to conduct this study. After permission for the study was granted, the researcher administered the survey to student participants orally during the school day. After all students completed the surveys, the researcher distributed parent surveys to all students along with a letter inviting parents to complete the survey if they were interested, and return it by the end of the week.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data. Frequencies were calculated for the responses to both the student and parent surveys by both grade level and gender of all participating students, in addition to students reported by parents in the parent survey portion of the study.

Limitations

One of the limitations of the study was that the instrument did not have established reliability and validity because it is unique and was created for the needs of this particular study. However, the content of the instrument used is similar to the content of other surveys that have attempted to ask similar research questions in the area of bullying behaviors (Dahlheimer, 2004; Olweus, 2003; Sturz, 2000; Swearer, 2001). Therefore, the face validity of the instrument used in the study was assumed to be adequate in measuring what it was intended to measure. There is a possibility that participants did not answer truthfully to the items, that the answers were not recorded

accurately, or that the items may have been misunderstood. This would make the data less informative and subject to inappropriate analysis of the data. Sending the parent portion of the survey home created the possibility that a poor representative sample would complete the survey. Other extraneous variables that may have impacted the results of the study include anything that may have happened before or during the course of the study.

Using methods described in this chapter, data were collected and analyzed. The next chapter will describe the results of this study.

Chapter IV: Results

In this chapter, the results of the two surveys monitoring student and teacher perceptions of bullying behavior in a midwestern school district are reported. The demographic profile of the participants in the study will be disclosed first, followed by a section presenting the data gathered from each item of the two surveys used. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of how the study relates to the original research objectives that were presented in chapter one.

Demographic Information

The participants of this study included students and parents of students in grades three, four, and five. The survey took place at a mid-sized school in a midwestern school district. The student sample for this study included 130 participants. This sample was comprised of 46% ($n = 60$) males and 54% ($n = 70$) females. Third graders made up 40% ($n = 52$) of the student participant sample, fourth graders made up 29% ($n = 38$) of the sample, and fifth graders made up 31% ($n = 40$) of this sample.

The parent portion of the study had a smaller sample size than the student sample, with a total of 85 parent participants. Parent participants of the study reported having a third grade child (37%, $n = 31$), having a fourth grade child (28%, $n = 24$), or having a fifth grade child (33%, $n = 28$) in the school. The participants' children were 45% ($n = 38$) males, and 53% ($n = 45$) females.

Item Analysis

Student survey. Of the 18 questions in the student survey, the first 2 questions addressed the frequency and types of bullying participants had encountered within the last year. Question 1 addressed how often students had been bullied in the last year. The

participants reported being bullied at the following frequencies: once in a while (35%, $n = 45$), sometimes (24%, $n = 31$), a lot of times (11%, $n = 14$), most of the time (3%, $n = 4$), or never (28%, $n = 36$). Question 2 asked participants to circle one or more answers to illustrate the type of bullying they had experienced in the last year: 42% ($n = 54$) were called names, 38% ($n = 49$) were teased, 15% ($n = 19$) were kicked, 24% ($n = 31$) were ignored/left out of a group, 17% ($n = 22$) were hit, 17% ($n = 22$) were embarrassed, 23% ($n = 30$) experienced gossip/rumors, 15% ($n = 19$) were threatened, 22% ($n = 28$) were pushed/shoved, 12% ($n = 16$) indicated being bullied in a way other than the answers provided, and 28% ($n = 36$) were not bullied in the last year (see Figure 1).

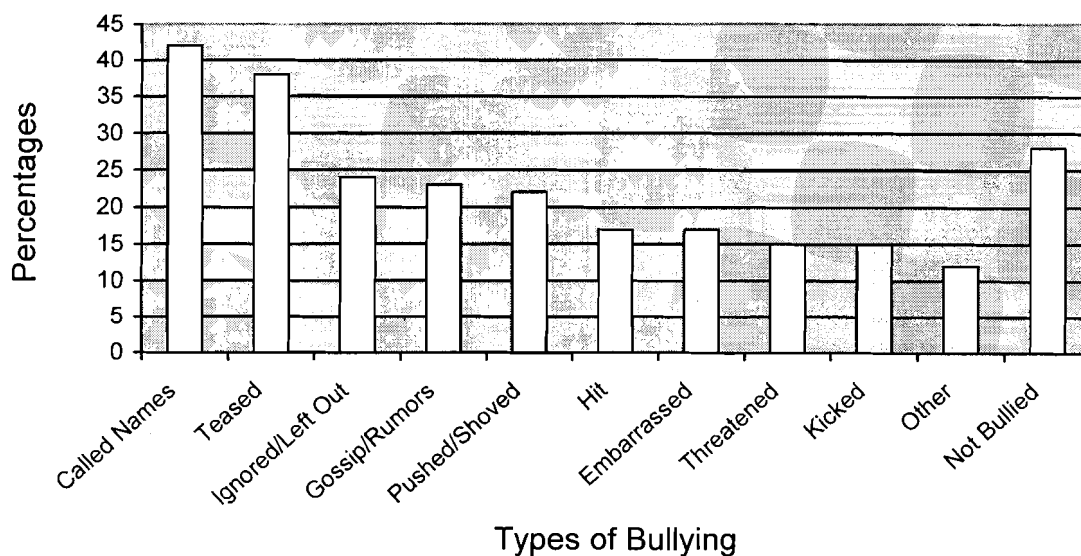


Figure 1. Types of bullying experienced by students in the last year.

The next question was related to the perceived severity of bullying that participants had experienced within the last year. In response to Question 3, they reported how severe the bullying was: 19% ($n = 25$) said it was not very mean, 31% ($n = 40$) said

it was sort of mean, 23% ($n = 30$) said it was very mean, and 27% ($n = 35$) said they had not been bullied.

Question 4 asked participants how they responded to bullying if it happened to them. They responded to the question by circling one or more of the answers provided: 10% ($n = 13$) did nothing when bullied, 30% ($n = 39$) told an adult, 29% ($n = 37$) told the bully to stop, 25% ($n = 33$) ignored the bully, 30% ($n = 39$) told a friend, 4% ($n = 5$) said something mean to the bully, 9% ($n = 11$) cried when they were bullied, 8.5% ($n = 11$) got in a fight, 9.2% ($n = 12$) yelled at the bully, 5% ($n = 7$) did something other than the choices provided, and 27% ($n = 35$) had not been bullied in the last year (see Figure 2).

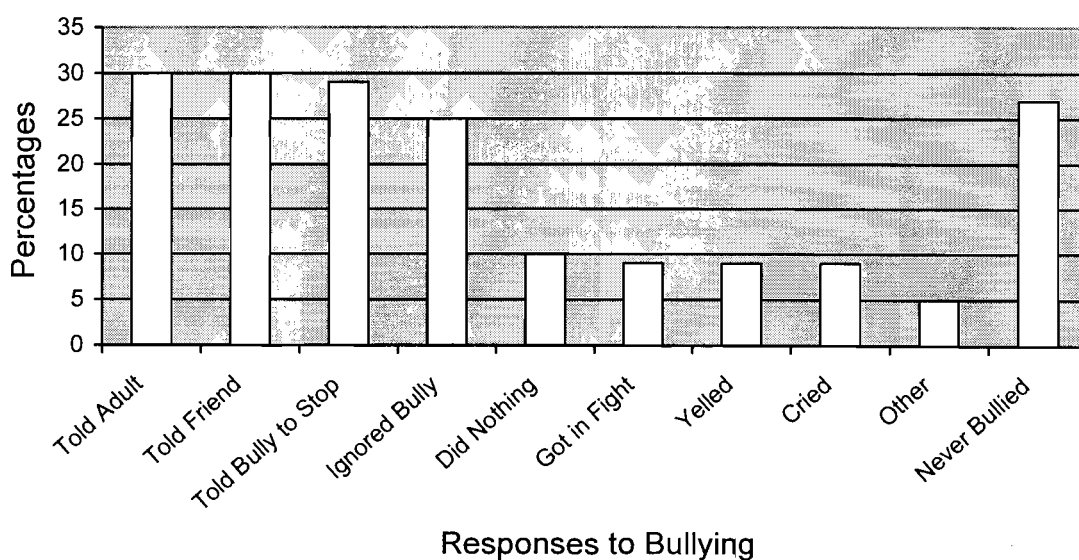


Figure 2. Frequency of student responses to bullying experienced.

Switching from bullying the participants had experienced, to bullying they had seen, the survey next addressed the frequency and types of bullying participants had observed. Question 5 addressed the frequency of bullying. The participants were asked

how often they had observed bullying in the last year: 37% ($n = 48$) saw bullying once in a while, 25% ($n = 33$) saw bullying sometimes, 13% ($n = 17$) saw bullying a lot of times, 4% ($n = 5$) saw bullying most of the time, and 21% ($n = 27$) had not seen bullying in the last year. In response to Question 6, participants indicated the types of bullying they had observed: 52% saw name-calling, 43% saw teasing, 21% saw others kicked, 25% saw others ignored/left out of a group, 22% saw others hit, 16% saw others embarrassed, 25% saw others gossiped/spread rumors about, 12% saw others threatened, 36% saw others pushed/shoved, 3% saw others bullied in a different way than the choices provided, and 21% of the participants did not see bullying in the last year (see Figure 3).

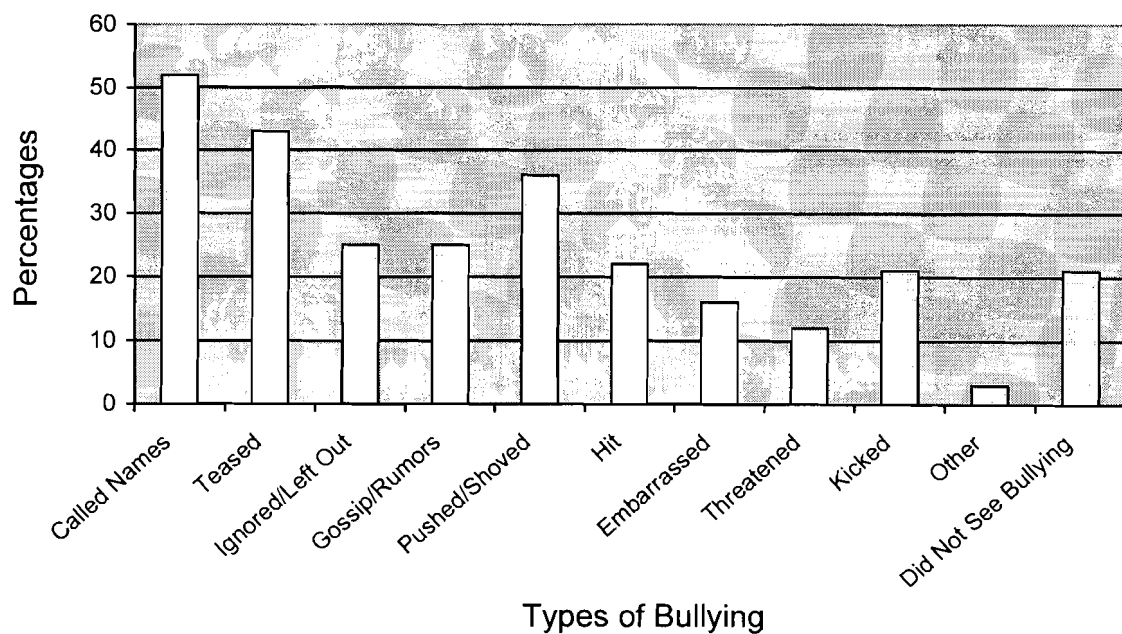


Figure 3. Types of bullying observed by students in the last year.

Students were asked again about severity of bullying in Question 7. Participants were invited to report the severity of bullying they had observed in the last year: 5% ($n = 7$) reported that bullying they observed was not very mean, 39% ($n = 51$) reported that it

was sort of mean, 33% ($n = 43$) reported that it was very mean, and 22% ($n = 29$) reported that they had not observed any bullying in the last year.

Question 8 approached the perception of bullying frequency a little differently as well. Without reference to bullying that they have experienced or observed, participants were asked to describe the frequency of bullying they believed to be going on at the school. The students reported their perception of observed bullying at different frequencies: 22% ($n = 28$) believe bullying happens at the school once in a while, 43% ($n = 56$) believe it happens sometimes, 22% ($n = 28$) believe it happens a lot of times, 5% ($n = 7$) believe it happens most of the time, and 9% ($n = 11$) do not believe that bullying ever occurs at the school.

The next two questions on the student survey asked how often bullying behaviors lead to an intervention. The results are associated with student perceptions of support and response systems they perceived available to them. When asked in Question 9 how often adults tried to stop bullying if it happened, 7% ($n = 9$) reported that adults try to stop the bullying once in a while, 16% ($n = 21$) reported that adults try to stop it sometimes, 62% ($n = 81$) reported adults try to stop it most of the time, 6% ($n = 8$) reported that adults never try to stop bullying, and 9% ($n = 11$) had not seen bullying in the last year. Participants chose from the same answers for Question 10, which asked how often other students tried to stop bullying if bullying happened. Of all student participants, 21% ($n = 27$) reported that other students tried to stop bullying once in a while, 37% ($n = 48$) reported that students try to stop it sometimes, 25% ($n = 32$) reported that students try to stop it most of the time, 7% ($n = 9$) reported that students never tried to stop bullying, and

10% ($n = 13$) had not seen bullying in the last year. One participant did not respond to this question of the survey.

The location of bullying was addressed in Questions 11 and 12. This question asked where bullying happens, and allowed participants to choose more than one location. Students reported that bullying occurs in the lunchroom (29%, $n = 37$), in the library (1%, $n = 1$), in the hallway (28%, $n = 36$), in the gym (15%, $n = 20$), in the bathroom (24%, $n = 31$), on the playground (81%, $n = 105$), in the classroom (18%, $n = 23$), and in locations other than those provided (9%, $n = 12$). Of the participants surveyed, 13% ($n = 17$) reported that they have not seen bullying in the last year. Question 12 asked where bullying happens most often. The students were to choose one location. The lunchroom was chosen as the location of most bullying by 2% ($n = 2$) of the participants, the hallway was chosen by 4% ($n = 5$), the gym was chosen by 1% ($n = 1$), the playground was chosen by 79% ($n = 102$), the classroom was chosen by 3% ($n = 4$), and a location other than the locations provided on the survey was chosen by 5% ($n = 7$) of participants as the place where bullying occurs most often. The remaining 11% ($n = 14$) of participants reported not seeing bullying in the last year. Six participants chose more than one response to this question (see Figure 4).

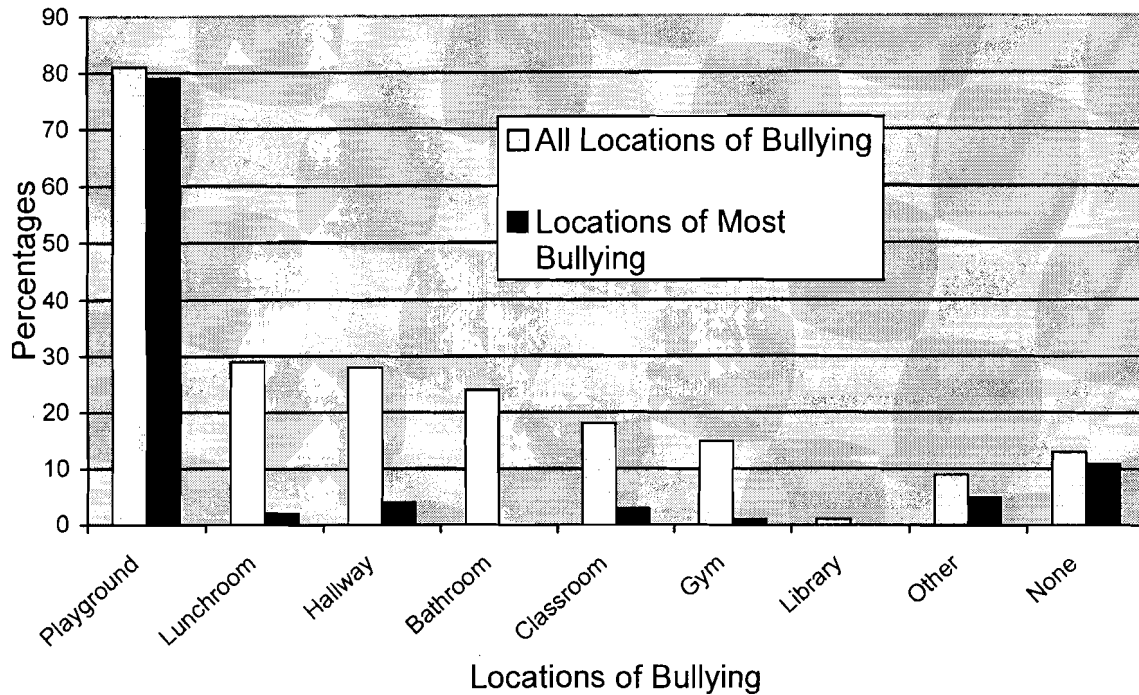


Figure 4. Locations of any bullying behavior compared to the location of most bullying behavior.

Question 13 enabled participants to indicate whether or not they perceived bullying to be a problem. This question can be used in comparison to frequencies of bullying in order to judge the validity, or to begin considering the extent to which bullying is viewed as acceptable. Student participants responded to whether or not bullying is a problem at the school with the following response frequencies: 26% ($n = 34$) said bullying was a problem once in a while, 38% ($n = 49$) said it was a problem sometimes, 15% ($n = 19$) said it was a problem a lot of times, 11% ($n = 14$) said it was a problem most of the time, and 9% ($n = 12$) of participants said bullying was never a problem at the school. Two participants did not respond to the question.

Student participants were asked about their perceptions concerning bully prevalence in Question 14. The question asked participants how many bullies they

thought were in their grade. No bullies were reported to exist in the grade of 15% ($n = 19$) of the participants. One or two bullies were reported to exist in the grade of 35% ($n = 46$), three to four bullies were reported to exist in the grade of 23% ($n = 30$), and five or more bullies were reported to exist in the grade of 26% ($n = 34$) of the participants.

The replies to Questions 15 through 17 addressed response and support system efforts to bullying. In reference to prevention efforts, Question 15 asked students whether or not their teacher or school counselor had taught them what to do if they were bullied. Most participants, with 81% ($n = 105$) of responses, agreed that teachers or the school counselor had taught them what to do if they were bullied. Another 19% ($n = 24$) of participants responded that teachers or the school counselor had not taught them what to do if they were bullied. One participant did not respond to the question. Question 16 asked student participants who they could tell if they were bullied. Participants could choose more than one answer for who they could tell if they were bullied. Teachers were specified by 74% ($n = 96$) of participants as someone they could tell about bullying. Participants signified that they could tell a parent (72%, $n = 93$), a friend (52%, $n = 67$), a counselor (52%, $n = 68$), a principal (49%, $n = 63$), a supervisor (39%, $n = 50$), or someone else (14%, $n = 18$) about bullying. Responses also included data showing that 6% ($n = 8$) of student participants felt that they could tell no one if they were bullied (see Figure 5).

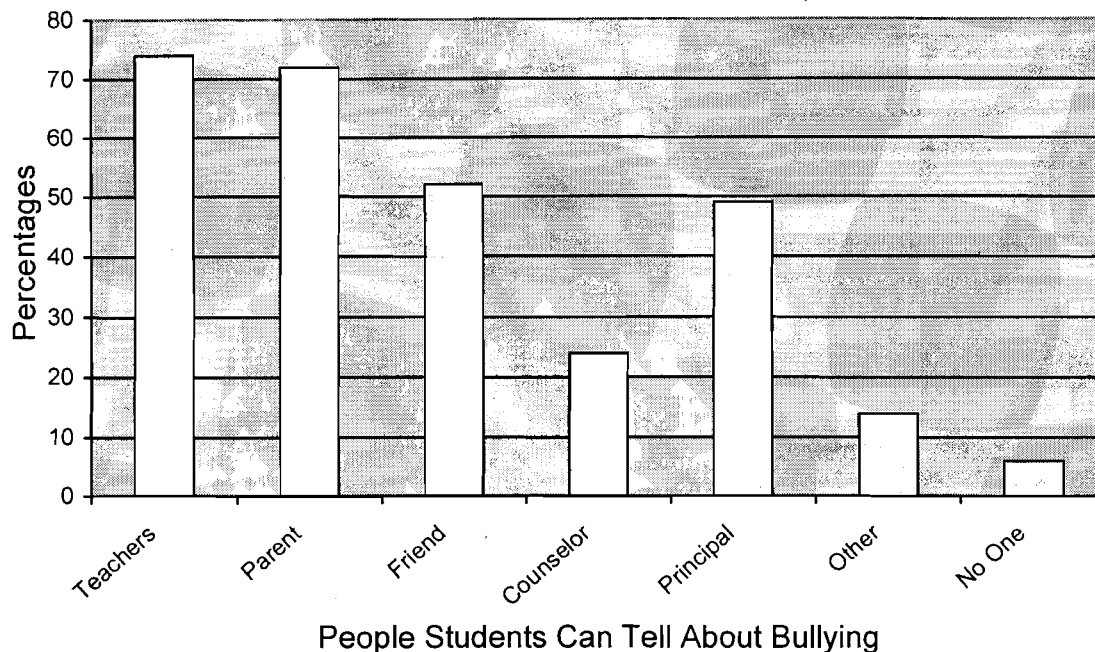


Figure 5. People student participants feel they could seek out in order to report bullying as indicated by frequency of responses.

Question 17 asked participants to indicate how often it would help to tell an adult at school about bullying. The responses indicated that 16% ($n = 21$) felt telling adult would help once in a while, 26% ($n = 34$) felt it would help sometimes, 27% ($n = 35$) felt it would help a lot of the time, 20% ($n = 26$) felt that it would help most of the time, and 10% ($n = 13$) felt it would never help.

Question 18 invited student participants to indicate whether or not they had been a bully, and how often they were a bully to other kids. Of all student participants, 27% ($n = 35$) admitted to being a bully once in a while, 11% ($n = 14$) admitted to bullying sometimes, 2% ($n = 2$) admitted they were a bully a lot of times, 2% ($n = 2$) admitted they were a bully most of the time, and 59% ($n = 76$) reported never having been a bully to other kids.

Finally, Question 19 of the student survey was included to give participants the opportunity to include any further information about bullying at the school that they wanted adults to know. The responses to this question are included in Appendix E.

Parent survey. In the parent portion of this study, the survey consisted of eight questions. The first two questions inquired about the gender and grade of the child that brought the survey home. These demographics were already reported earlier in the chapter. Questions 3 and 4 of the parent survey were related to parent perceptions of the school as a support system. Question 3 asked whether or not the parent felt that the school supported his or her child, specifically when having problems with others at school. Of the eighty-five participants, 88% ($n = 75$) said they believed the school supported their children, and only 8% ($n = 7$) said they did not believe the school supported their children when the children had problems with others at school. Of the remaining three responses, one parent wrote in an answer explaining that the question was not relevant for the child in question. The subsequent questions of the survey were not answered either, and therefore not included in the response frequencies. This survey was still included in the total number of surveys received, so each question is missing at least one percentage point within the response. Two participants did not answer Question 3. The next question asked the willing parent participants whether they had talked to someone at school about children bullying, not necessarily referring to their own children. The participants who reported having talked to someone at the school included 22% ($n = 19$) of the parent sample, leaving 77% ($n = 65$) that reported not having talked to someone at the school about bullying.

The next three questions of the parent survey addressed the dynamics of reporting and responding to bully behaviors as perceived by the parents in the study. Specifically, Question 5 asked parents if their children had told them within the last year that they had been bullied. About 37% ($n = 31$) of the entire sample said their children had reported bullying to them in the last year. At a much higher frequency, 62% ($n = 53$) of participants that said their children had not reported bullying to them.

Staying within the realm of reporting, the survey directions asked only parents with children who reported bullying to them, to answer Questions 6 and 7. These parents included 31 out of 85 participants. The sixth question of the parent survey asked how often children reported being bullied in the last year. Of the 31 parents who answered the question, 48% ($n = 15$) indicated that their child reported being bullied one or two times in the last year. This frequency represents 18% ($n = 15$) of all parents involved in the study. Approximately 7% ($n = 6$) of all the parent participants, or 19% ($n = 6$) of parents that answered Question 6, indicated that their child had reported being bullied three or four times in the last year. In addition, 11% ($n = 9$) of all parents in the study, or 29% ($n = 9$) of parents that answered, indicated that their child had reported being bullied five or six times in the last year. Only one participant that answered Question 6 indicated that his or her child reported being bullied seven or more times within the last year.

Question 7 concluded the portion of the survey concerned with reporting and responding to bullying. Parents were asked how they responded when their child reported being bullied. The following list indicates participant responses, along with the percentages and frequencies for each response as it was chosen by a participant (respectively): talked to my child (35%, $n = 31$), talked to the school counselor (8%, $n =$

7), called the police (1%, $n = 1$), talked to the bully's parent (2%, $n = 2$), and did something other than the responses provided (3.5%, $n = 3$). None of the parent participants indicated they did nothing when their child reported being bullied (see Figure 6).

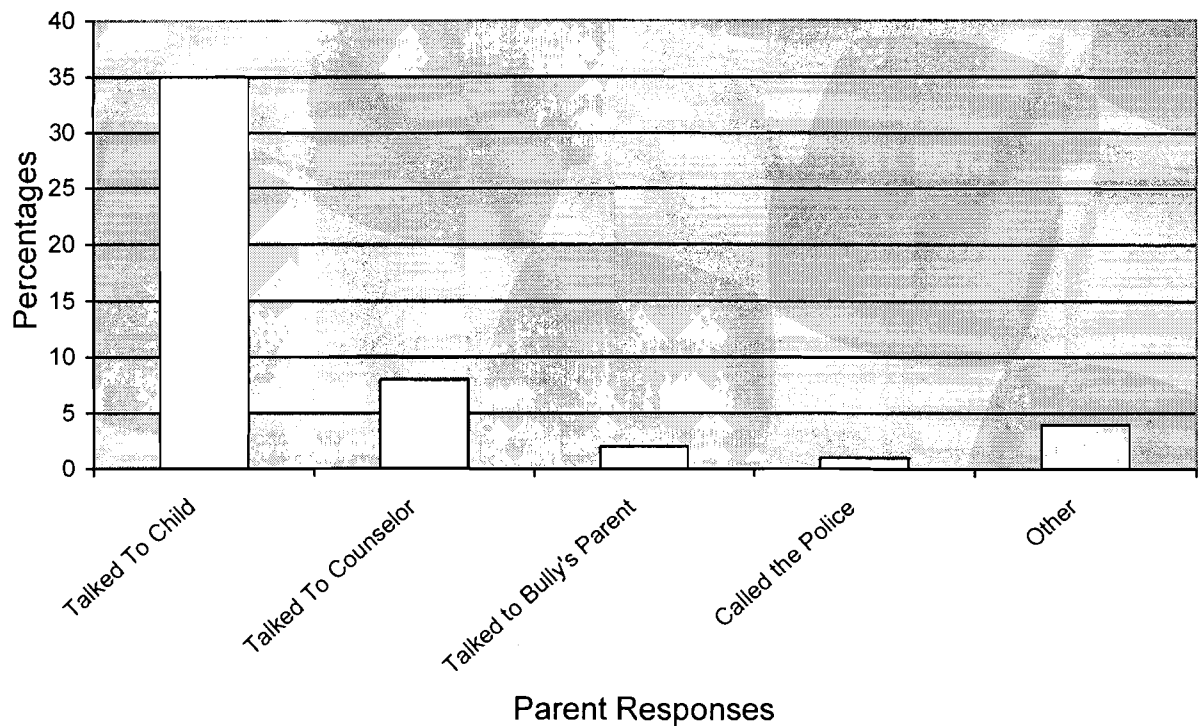


Figure 6. Parent responses to their child's bullying report.

Question 8 concluded the parent survey. For this final question, participants were invited to build on the statement, "Something else I would like to tell you about bullying behaviors at [school name] is..." The results of this question can be found in Appendix F. Details of responses that could be used to identify participants were omitted.

Research Objectives

Objective one. The first objective of this study was to recognize student perceptions in regard to bullying dynamics they had experienced or observed at school within the last year. The dynamics of bullying encompassed the following areas:

frequency, types, severity, and location of bullying at school. Students answered questions regarding the frequency of bullying in Items 1, 5, 8, 13, 14, and 18. The results from Question 1 of the survey indicated that slightly less than two-thirds of students are bullied never or only once in a while. On the other hand, 14% ($n = 18$) of students are bullied a lot or most of the time. Answers to Questions 1 and 5 showed a similarity between the students who said they have been bullied and those who have seen bullying. The frequency for both experiencing and seeing bullying once in a while were very close to one-third of the students.

Question 8 allowed participants to indicate how often they believe bullying occurs at the school. While 30% ($n = 38$) students felt that bullying never happens or happens once in a while at the school, 43.1% ($n = 56$) felt that it happens sometimes, and about 27% ($n = 35$) felt that bullying happens a lot or most of the time at this school.

Similarly, responses to Question 13 indicated whether or not student participants felt that bullying was a problem at this school. Of 130 student participants, 35% ($n = 46$) reported that bullying is a never or once in a while a problem at the school. A similar percentage of students (38%, $n = 49$) reported bullying is sometimes a problem, and 26% ($n = 33$) reported that it is a problem a lot of times or most of the time at this school. There is consistency between the number of students that reported higher frequencies of bullying and the number of students that considered bullying to be a problem at this school. This could mean that the students who believe bullying occurs at a higher frequency also believe that bullying is a problem.

Responses to Question 14 showed that only 19 (15%) students out of 130 students surveyed believe there are no bullies in their grade, even though 27 students reported

never seeing bullying. This could mean that 8 students believe bullies are around them even though they do not know who the bullies are. Another explanation is that the students have seen bullying, but the bully was in a different grade.

Of the students participating, 41% ($n = 53$) admitted to having bullied someone in Question 18; most of those students (66% of those that have bullied, $n = 35$) reported they bullied others only once in a while. However, a discrepancy between the number of students that admit bullying and the number that have been bullied could suggest that some bullies did not admit or do not know that their behavior constitutes bullying. Another reason for the difference could be that bullies among these participants bully more than one other student.

The types of bullying behaviors that students experienced and had seen in the last year were addressed in Questions 2 and 6 of the student survey. Question 2 asked students what types of bullying they had experienced in the last year. The types of bullying experienced most often were, being called names (42%, $n = 54$), and being teased (38%, $n = 49$). This indicates that direct, verbal bullying is most common among bullying types. Indirect types of bullying were also more prominent, with 47% ($n = 61$) of students having been left out of a group or ignore, or experiencing gossip or rumors. Least experienced by the participants were direct, physical forms of bullying, with reports of being kicked involving only 15% ($n = 19$) of the student participants.

Question 6 asked what types of bullying students had seen in the last year. Consistent with bullying experienced by students, they reported that being called names (52%, $n = 67$), and being teased (43%, $n = 56$), were the types of bullying they had seen most often as well. However, the students reported least often seeing other students

threatened (12%, $n = 16$) or embarrassed (16%, $n = 21$). This could be because whether a victim feels threatened or embarrassed tends to be more of a personal perception than something that can always be confirmed by onlookers.

An additional dynamic studied was the severity of bullying experienced and seen by students. This was addressed in Questions 3 and 7. Out of 130 students, 60 (46%) had either not experienced bullying, or thought that the bullying they experienced was not very mean. The remaining 70 (54%) students reported that the bullying they experienced was sort of mean or very mean. When reporting the severity of bullying they had seen, 36 (28%) out of 130 students had never seen bullying or thought that it was not very mean, but 94 (72%) students had seen bullying that was either sort of mean or very mean. It is interesting to note that students report seeing more severe bullying than they experience themselves.

Finally, Questions 11 and 12 considered the location as a dynamic of bullying behaviors. Question 11 invited students to report all of the places bullying takes place, and Question 12 invited them to choose the location where it occurs most frequently. When they were allowed to choose more than one response, students reported that bullying happens on the playground (81%, $n = 105$), followed by the lunchroom (29%, $n = 37$), and the hallway (28%, $n = 39$). Only choosing the location where bullying occurs most often, an overwhelming 78.5% ($n = 102$) reported that it occurs most frequently on the playground. This was followed most frequently by the 10.8% ($n = 14$) of students that reported they had never seen bullying. This study also found that there was very little differentiation in the locations that boys and girls believe bullying occurs. More girls than

boys reported the classroom was a place where bullying took place. This was the biggest difference found in responses between genders (see Figure 7).

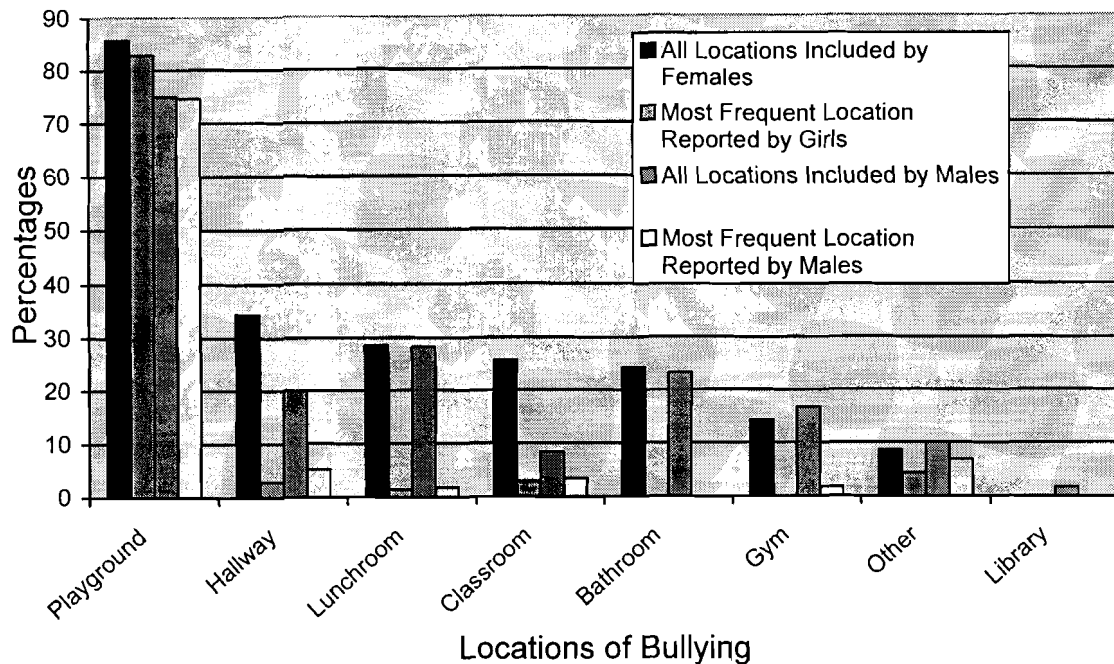


Figure 7. Comparison of gender in student reports of all locations and most frequent locations where they perceive bullying to occur.

Objective two. The second objective was to find out student perceptions about responses to bullying and support systems available for bullying they have experienced or observed at school. In terms of responses to being bullied, most of the students reported that they had been taught what to do if they were bullied. Students most often reported that they had told an adult or a friend if they were bullied (30% responded to each), followed by the response of telling the bully to stop (29%). In terms of gender, students had very similar responses as to whom they felt they could tell about bullying (see Figure 8).

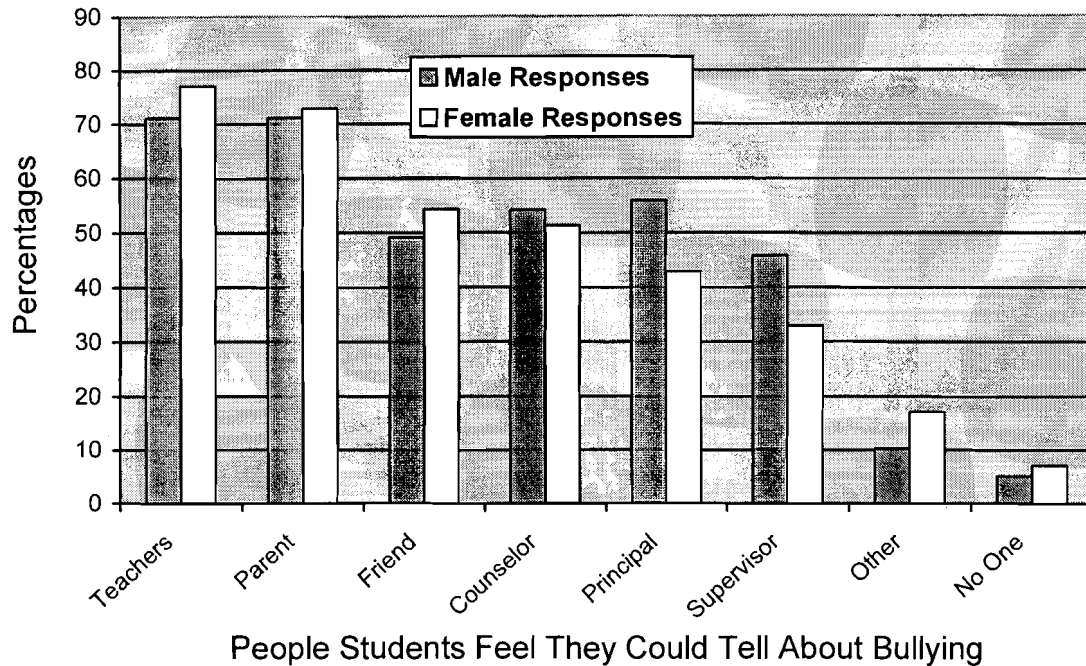


Figure 8. Comparison of gender responses concerning who students feel they can tell about bullying behaviors.

It is interesting to note that males more often than females reported that telling an adult at school would help a lot or most of the time (62%). Less than half of the female participants reported that telling an adult at school would help a lot or most of the time (45%). This finding would lead us to believe that boys at this school are more likely to report bullying behaviors than girls are, if it holds true that students report bullying when they believe it will help the situation. However, in Question 4 of the student survey more males reported that they had told an adult when they were bullied (23%) than females that reported they had told an adult when bullied (36%). The results were very similar between genders in the number of students that reported that they feel they could tell an adult or a parent about bullying.

In regard to students' own personal responses to bullying, the fewest student participants said they have responded to bullying by saying something mean or yelling at the bully. Students were positive about adults attempting to stop bullying, with the most frequent response (62%) reporting that adults try to stop bullying most of the time. Students were less likely to try to stop bullying according to participants. Most frequently, student participants reported that other students only try to stop bullying sometimes (37%).

Students seem to think that telling someone at school about bullying is worthwhile, because 46.9% of participants said telling an adult at school would be helpful a lot or most of the time. In terms of general support, more students believe that they can tell a teacher (73.8%) about bullying than anyone else, closely followed by ability to tell a parent (71.5%), or a friend (51.5%).

Objective three. This objective was to find information about parent perceptions of bullying dynamics. As opposed to the student survey, the parent survey only focused on the frequency dynamic of bullying. Question 5 asked whether or not children had reported being bullied to their parents. Roughly a third of parents said that their child had told them he or she had been bullied, whereas more than two-thirds of students reported being bullied. Of all student participants, 71.5% felt they could tell a parent. The difference may be in the students that reported that they could tell a parent if they were bullied, but had not been bullied in the last year. Question 6 invited parents with a child who reported bullying, to identify how often the child reported being bullied. Nearly half indicated that one or two reports of being bullied occurred (48.4% of those responding), but 9 participants said their child reported being bullied five or six times (29% of those

responding) in the last year. This is half the number of student participants that reported being bullied a lot or most of the time ($n = 18$).

Objective four. The final objective this study attempted to address the perceptions of parents about response and support efforts related to bullying behaviors. Most parents (88.2%) believe that the school supports their child at school. While 31 parents said that their child had reported being bullied, 19 parents had talked to the school about bullying.

Parts of the survey showed great consistency between the responses. Less than 30% of students believe that bullying happens a lot or most of the time, and think that it is a problem a lot or most of the time at the school. More than 60% of students believe that bullying happens sometimes or less, and is a problem sometimes or less. Most parents believe that the school is a good support for their children, and most students feel that there are multiple people that they could tell if they were bullied.

Descriptive statistics were used to indicate the results of the data and relate them to the research objectives. This study found indirect forms of bullying to be the most prevalent, and found most bullying occurs on the playground. It also showed that most parents and students feel supported by others and are able to report bullying that occurs at school. These findings can be used to guide future actions of educators and researchers. Implications and recommendations from the study are discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter V: Discussion

This chapter will include a discussion of the results of the study and research that has already been done on bullying behaviors. A review of the purpose of the study will be followed by the limitations of the study. Then, conclusions of the study will be discussed in relation to the previous research will be discussed. A discussion about general recommendations for practitioners and for future research will conclude the chapter.

Summary

The purpose of the study was to discover information regarding student and parent perceptions of bullying behaviors in an elementary school setting. Two surveys were designed and created specifically for this study, using information and ideas from previous research surveys done on bullying. Data were collected and descriptive statistics were used to make connections to the research objectives of the study.

Recent awareness of both the prevalence and negative impact of bullying has led to flourishing number of studies concerning the intricacies of bullying behavior. One general finding of this study was that most students have experienced or seen bullying at least once in a while. The majority, however, does not believe that it is a frequent, severe problem. In addition, students and parents believe that the school supports them.

Limitations

One limitation to this study is that the definition of bullying does not include the stipulation that bullying behaviors are repeated over time, while other research definitions do specify that bullying behaviors as repeated over time. Even though Olweus (1993) stated that one instance of a serious negative action can be considered bullying in some situations, it is important to remember that this study did not differentiate between

bullying behaviors that have occurred once or more than once, or once in a while. This may have a big impact on how the results of the study are viewed in comparison to other similar studies.

The limitations also include the assumption that the survey items were understood and answered honestly by the participants. Accuracy of the study results were slightly altered by three parent surveys; one was incomplete, two surveys indicated two grade levels and two genders, even though the demographics were to be kept separate for each survey and child. These mistakes only slightly altered the results of the study considering the large sample size of 130 students and 85 parents.

Conclusions

Within the school surveyed, it is evident that most of the students have either witnessed or experienced bullying. Generally, this supports the research indicating that bullying is prevalent in the school environment (Bulach et al., 2003; Children Now, n.d.; DeVoe, et al., 2004; Liepe-Levinson, & Levinson, 2005).

The types of bullying students experienced or observed most often are being called names or being teased. This is congruent with a study done by Atlas and Pepler (1998) that suggested bullying was more common in the verbal form than the physical. In contrast to previous studies that have suggested that boys engage in more physical bullying, this study found that boys and girls were both more likely to see or experience direct, verbal bullying.

The information gained in this study regarding the severity of bullying as perceived by students is new information, as past research on bullying has not covered this topic. Questions regarding the severity of bullying in this study found that students

perceive bullying that they observe to be more severe than bullying that they experience. The disparity in numbers could be caused by a number of things. One possibility is that students younger than third graders are bullied more severely than the students that participated. Another explanation takes into account the problem of perception that has been identified by researchers; the victim may see the bullying as less severe than the observer sees it.

An overwhelming majority of students indicated that the playground is the location where bullying takes place most often. This finding partly supports the study done by Sampson (2002), which suggested that bullying takes place where there is less supervision, and included the playground as one of those locations. The present study does not support the study done by Smith and Sharp (1994) which purported that bullying is prevalent anywhere students are together. Although it may occur in classrooms, the students in the current study did not report the classroom as a frequent location for bullying to occur.

Most students indicated that they feel they can tell a teacher about bullying behaviors at school. Research has reported the contrary, suggesting that teachers were less likely to be told about bullying. It should be noted, however, that the current study did not ask students to indicate an order of preference for individuals to whom they would report bullying. In congruence with Yoon (2004), the students in the current study most often feel that telling an adult about bullying would help the situation. In addition, students seem to feel supported, considering the number of various people they indicated they could tell about bullying. Yoon had suggested that if students feel reporting will help, and students feel supported, they are more likely to report bullying behaviors. The

current study found that students are likely to report bullying behaviors when they occur. This is congruent to the results of a study done by Glover, Gough, Johnson, and Cartwright (2000), which indicated that victims were likely to tell someone about bullying behaviors. The previous researchers had found that victims were first most likely to stand up to the bully, while the present study indicated telling someone about the bullying was the most common response. Again, this could be the case for many of the participants in the current study, however, the order of responses to bullying was not considered.

Recommendations

The results of this study led to recommendations for educators of this school. Considering the extent of the focused response to the location of bullying on the playground, the school may want to gather more information concerning why this response occurred so frequently and what could be done to change it. With most students indicating they could report bullying to teachers, it may be wise for the school to consider the perceptions of school staff in finding out more about the dynamics of bullying at the school. Researchers have noted the importance of collaborating with many sources of information in order to prevent and intervene on bullying most effectively. The results of this study support that assertion by showing unexpected results in student responses and when they were compared to parent responses.

The most frequent types of bullying behaviors reported in the current study were verbal name-calling and teasing. If the school chooses one type of bullying behavior to focus more attention on, verbal types of bullying may be an appropriate area to focus.

Prevention efforts could, for example, emphasize the effects that verbal bullying can have on other students.

This study demonstrates the difficulty in predicting the dynamics of bullying that occur among school students. Deciphering the perceptions and prevalence of bullying can be complex in many ways. Not only is bullying difficult to define, there are many aspects and perspectives involved in bullying behaviors. This study has shown the importance for educators to gain more than one perspective in determining bullying dynamics that exist in a school. Collaboration of many viewpoints will create a more complete picture of the behaviors and perceptions that exist about bullying.

It may be beneficial for future researchers to look more closely at responses to bullying behaviors. Further research is needed on the severity of bullying behaviors as perceived by multiple sources: students, teachers, and parents. This would allow for a clearer view of when intervention is most likely to occur and why. Another aspect that would be beneficial to consider more thoroughly is the immediate response students have to observations of bullying. Additional information is also needed in regard to why students report bullying to some people and not to others, and what response students feel would be most helpful in dealing with bullying when it occurs.

As previous researchers have noted, a more clear definition of bullying is needed. Creating operational definitions for terms such as “intent to harm,” or “over time,” would allow for a more efficient way to compare results from different studies. Further clarification and definition of bullying frequencies would also be helpful when comparing two surveys within the same study.

The importance of understanding the dynamics of bullying behaviors in the schools cannot be denied, especially when taking into consideration the detrimental impact bullying has on the development of students as well as on their ability to learn in a positive school climate. To address bullying by first learning more about the various perspectives involved (parents, students, teachers, etc.), educators will be in a much better position to reduce its prevalence and negative effects. Each study will bring the research one step closer to eliminating bullying behaviors that torment students in our schools.

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Appendix B: Parent Consent Letter

Dear Parent/Guardian:

As you may know, a study will be conducted in the near future at [School Name]. I am a graduate student at UW-Stout, and am doing research on student behaviors to learn more about bullying.

Although many 3rd-5th grade students will be participating in a survey taking place at school, I am also asking for your help as well. I have attached a brief survey about your perceptions of bullying experiences in the elementary school. If you choose to participate, complete the survey without including your name on it, and mail it in the provided envelope to the Investigator.

By completing and returning the survey, you have the opportunity to voice your opinion about bullying while your identity will remain confidential. By participating, you may be helping your child's school to better understand and evaluate the behaviors that students engage in. This could guide future lessons to improve the school environment for them.

Participation in the study is voluntary. You may withdraw from the study until the point at which they are submitted. There is minimal risk in filling out the survey. If at any point you feel discomfort as a result of the survey's questions, please call one of the numbers listed below. In addition, a teacher or school counselor will be available to talk with you should you become uncomfortable before, during, or after filling out the survey. Results of the study will be available to anyone interested in seeing them.

By returning this survey with your child in a sealed envelope within one week of today's date, you are giving your informed consent as a participating volunteer in the study. You understand the possible benefits from participating and agree that the potential risks are small.

This study has been reviewed and approved by The University of Wisconsin-Stout's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB has determined that this study meets the ethical obligations required by federal law and University policies. If you have questions or concerns regarding this study please contact the Investigator or Advisor. For questions, concerns, or reports regarding your rights as a research subject, please contact the IRB Administrator. Thank you.

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Appendix C: Student Survey

This research has been approved by the UW-Stout IRB as required by the Code of Federal Regulations Title 45 Part 46.
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School Climate Survey Please Do Not Write Your Name

Bullying: When someone intends to be mean by hurting someone else's feelings or body.

Please circle your answers for each question. You may circle more than one.

I am a: Boy Girl

I am in grade: 3 4 5

1. This year, I have been bullied:

Once in a while Sometimes A lot of times Most of the time Never

2. This year, I have been bullied in the following way(s):

Called Names	Teased	Kicked
Ignored/Left Out of a Group	Hit	Embarrassed
Gossip/Spread Rumors	Threatened	Pushed/Shoved
Other: _____	I haven't been bullied	

3. If I have been bullied this year, it has been:

Not very mean Sort of mean Very mean I haven't been bullied

4. If I have been bullied this year, I:

Did Nothing	Told an adult	Told the bully to stop
Ignored the bully	Told a friend	Said something mean to the bully
Cried	Fight	Yelled at the bully
Other: _____	I haven't been bullied	

5. This year, I have seen someone being bullied:

Once in a while Sometimes A lot of times Most of the time Never

6. This year, I have seen bullying in the following way(s):

Called names	Teased	Kicked
Ignored/Left Out of a Group	Hit	Embarrassed
Gossip/Spread Rumors	Threatened	Pushed/Shoved
Other: _____	I haven't seen bullying	

7. If I have seen bullying this year, it has been:

Not very mean Sort of mean Very mean I haven't seen bullying

8. I think bullying at [school name] happens:

Once in a while Sometimes A lot of times Most of the time Never

9. If bullying happens, adults try to stop it:

Once in a while Sometimes Most of the time Never I haven't seen bullying

10. If bullying happens, other students try to stop it:

Once in a while Sometimes Most of the time Never I haven't seen bullying

11. Bullying happens in the:

Lunchroom	Library	Hallway	Gym	Bathroom
Playground Area	Classroom	Other: _____	I haven't seen bullying	

12. Bullying happens *mostly* in the: (pick one)

Lunchroom Library Hallway Gym Bathroom
 Playground Area Classroom Other: _____ I haven't seen bullying

13. Bullying is a problem at this school:

Once in a while Sometimes A lot of times Most of the Time Never

14. I think there are _____ bullies in my grade:

0 bullies 1-2 bullies 3-4 bullies 5 or more bullies

15. Teachers and/or the school counselor taught me what to do if I am bullied.

Yes No

16. If I am bullied, I can tell a:

Teacher Parent Friend Counselor Principal
 No one Supervisor Other: _____

17. If I told an adult at school about bullying, I feel that it would help:

Once in a while Sometimes A lot of times Most of the time Never

18. I have been a bully to other kids:

Once in a while Sometimes A lot of times Most of the Time Never

19. I would like to tell you something else about bullying at this school:

Appendix D: Parent Survey

Please respond to the survey *before* talking about it with your child. If you have more than one child in grades 3 through 5, please complete a survey for each child. Thank you.

This research has been approved by the UW-Stout IRB as required by the Code of Federal Regulations Title 45 Part 46.
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School Climate Survey

Bullying: When someone intends to be mean by hurting someone else's feelings or body.

Please circle the answers that best fit your experiences this year.

1. I have a child in grade:

3 4 5

2. My child from question #1 is a:

Male Female

3. I believe [school name] supports my child when he/she has problems with others at school.

Yes No

4. I have talked to someone at the school about children bullying others.

Yes No

5. This year, my child has told me that he/she has been bullied at school.

Yes No

If no, please skip to question #8.

If yes, please continue with question #6.

6. This year, my child has reported being bullied:

1-2 times 3-4 times 5-6 times 7 or more times

7. When my child has been bullied at school, I have:

Talked to my child

Talked to bully's parents

Talked to school counselor/staff

Done Nothing

Called the police

Other: _____

8. Something else I would like to tell you about bullying behaviors at [school name] is...
(Please use the back of this survey to respond)

Appendix E: Student Responses to Open-Ended Survey Questions

Topic and Question	Responses
<p>Other Types of Bullying Experienced Question 2</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Taking hat and throwing it - Shot rubberbands at me - A group gets together and teases me - Thrown at by a football - Choked - Got in trouble - Songs - Sand thrown in hair - Talked behind my back - Try to stop the fight - Saying something I'm not - Glasis and teeth - Yelled at
<p>Other Responses to Bullying Experienced Question 4</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - First I tried to ignore them - Said something like what he said - Talked to the bully - Run away - Stand up for myself - Called cops - Walked away
<p>Other Types of Bullying Seen Question 6</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Black eye - Through against fence

<p>Other Locations of Bullying Occurrences</p> <p>Question 11</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - On snow hills - Outside - End of the day - Outside of school - Sidewalk - Art room - After school - School bus - Home - On the bus - Outside
<p>Other Locations of Most Bullying Occurrences</p> <p>Question 12</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Outside - Snow hills - Sidewalk - School bus - Home - Outside - In line
<p>Other People That Can Be Told About Bullying</p> <p>Question 16</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Grandma - Grandpa - Grandma - Cousin - Sister and brother - Family - Bus driver - Brother - Cousin - Brother - Brother - Sister - God

Something Else About Bullying At This School

Question 19

- It happens to kids in K-3
- Lots of kids fight in different places around here
- That the kids push, kick, and make others cry
- There's a lot of rumors going on
- That it is very mean to do at school it is mean
- There has also been bullying of taking other peoples stuff and destroying the schools stuff
- When girls spread rumors and leave people out I tell teachers and I feel like they can't do anything about it
- The teachers don't do anything at all
- A lot of times if we tell the teacher, they don't do anything except they make the bully apologize. That doesn't mean the bully's going to stop!
- Sometimes some boys call names and trip them
- I'll say stop bullying please
- Some teachers hardly do anything about it
- To much! Horrible!
- People bully a lot on the bus
- Poking
- Older kids are normally the bullies
- Well there are some people I think might bother them cause they might have head lice and I call people names when they call me names usually
- A lot of the bullies are more 5th graders and it's like after school on Wednesdays
- Once somebody talked behind my back. My feelings were hurt
- Usually people only call people names

Something Else About Bullying At This School

Question 19

- Most of the bullies are older and picks on the littler kids
- Our counselor has taught us about bullying and pear presher
- I do not like bullying at this school because some people will not like bullys too
- When I see a kid being bullied, mostly little kids, I always help. You should too
- Bullying is very bad at this school
- When people bully they always say mean things
- I don't want people to bully people at school
- I've been bullied a lot last year
- ...is a big bully
- I think it is mean
- You should tell someone
- It is very mean and it can hurt other people's feelings
- Swaring at people
- Bullying happens a lot at home too

Appendix F: Parent Responses to Open-Ended Survey Question

Survey Question	Parent Responses
<p>Something else I would like to tell you about bullying behavior is...</p> <p>Question 8</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I think the adults who are supervising the playground should pay more attention to the children then talking to each other. Maybe then there wouldn't be quite as much bullying if the children know they are being watched more by the adults. - It is not good if they are bullying to others and it is not fair... - It hurts the kids badly if it's their own friend. - I think that a child should be listened to more when they tell a teacher that another child is hitting, etc. - I have not experienced any bullying problems at this school. - I have not heard of any bullying incidents. - I haven't experienced any problems with bullying. - It shouldn't be allowed backed by punishment. - The staff handles such situations great. They address the problems great. - This school is very prompt about taking care of bullying problems. - Find out why this is happening...I think that it could be a problem in the future with gangs and I don't like that at all! - It only happens occasionally and usually they are isolated incidents. A lot of kids harass kids who are heavier – fat names, jokes, etc.

Something else I would like to tell you about bullying behavior is...

Question 8

- Girls can be as much of a bully as boys can. Girls can be manipulative. They aren't just physical but it's the hurtful things they may say that can be just as bad if not worse than something physical. If there is an incident between a boy and a girl I feel that the boy takes the brunt of the blame. This is wrong. Just because society tends to see women/females as the victims, this is not always the case. People need to be held accountable for their actions whether they be male or female.
- I don't have any suggestions at this time. I have been very satisfied with this school and it's staff.
- Staff should continue with a no tolerance policy.
- Not wanting to label, it seems that a vast majority are in "troubled" families where maybe it's learned behavior from parents.
- There are a lot of kids at this school who do bully. Uniforms would change a lot of behaviors of kids who don't have name brand clothes, and who feel jealous then act out. Teach kids better ways to deal with what may be going on at home and why they bring the bullying to school...