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New Jersey Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act: Perceptions of High School Administrators on Implementing the Law

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the 2011 New Jersey Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act (NJAB) and its perceived impact on urban school districts. Through a series of interviews with 16 participants from three urban school districts in New Jersey, the researcher sought to examine if those charged with implementing the NJAB have deemed the law and its requirements effective. The interviews were conducted with NJAB-mandated Anti-Bullying Specialists for each of the schools that participated in the study. The Anti-Bullying Specialists are the staff members in each school who are responsible for the implementation of the NJAB, district policies on bullying, and conducting bullying investigations.

Data collected from this qualitative study add to the growing body of literature on the topic of bullying prevention strategies and specifically on the role that state and local policies play in helping to curtail bullying in schools. A review of the responses and data indicated that the Anti-Bullying Specialists interviewed for this study collectively have a firm grasp on the process by which bullying incidents should be investigated. Additionally, the data identified that while the law indicates that bullying prevention initiatives should take place throughout the curriculum in addition to the mandated Week of Respect, there seems to be relatively little infusion of the bullying prevention pedagogy within the schools and districts that were participants in this study. Last, the participants, all of whom work at traditional (Grades 9-12) high schools, indicated that the bulk of bullying incidents occur in their freshman population first and sophomores population second. They also indicated that there is a steep decline in incidents and reporting at the junior and senior grade levels.

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you showed all of us that we could do anything, even when life threw challenges in our way. I am proud to be an Irving and, most importantly, your son. To my siblings, Sheiki, Farrah, and Herman, you three are the best siblings that anyone could ask for in life. Collectively, we are as solid as a family that can never come apart. We roll hard for each other, which is what our mother has always taught us.

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my late father, Herman E. Irving II. Dad, while life did not give us much time together, what you left me has been an endearing legacy and I hope I have lived up to that legacy. I carry the name Irving with pride, knowing how hard it was for you to be a trailblazer in your field when you were growing up in Paterson, New Jersey. I also would like you to know that while you did not finish your doctoral program at Seton Hall before you left us, this degree is for both of us. It is for the name Irving, the pride and legacy that you established when you helped bring all of your children into this world with your wonderful wife. Your legacy truly lives on in all of your children; it lives on in me, your youngest, and I want to express my deepest gratitude to you for laying the foundation. My plan now is to expand it for our next generation.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background

The issue of bullying in American schools has received a great deal of attention after the suicides of students Phoebe Prince and Tyler Clemente (Morgese, 2013; Maguire, 2013). Both Prince and Clemente were young people who took their lives, it seems, after dealing with direct acts of peer-to-peer mistreatment or what has been popularly termed bullying. A universal definition of the phrase comes from Scandinavian researcher Dan Olweus (1993), who defines bullying as a targeted act of repeated aggression from one student to another. In addition to the targeting component, Olweus contends that there must also be a difference of power between the students (Rigby, 2003). Thus, two students who share or have the same power level cannot by definition bully each other. It is with this definition in mind that this qualitative study sought to examine the perceived effects of bullying and the policies enacted to curtail it.

Nearly one-third of the middle school and high school students surveyed by Viadero (1997) reported having bullied, been bullied, or both. The study findings were based on a representative sample of 15,686 students in Grades 6 through 10, who were enrolled in public or private schools throughout the United States. There is growing sentiment amongst researchers that the bullying problem is too pervasive and damaging for educators to ignore. "You are talking about 10, 11, 12 percent of kids saying their lives are miserable in school," says John Hoover, an education professor quoted in Viadero's article. "I do not think that is something that kids need to go through." Some politicians, educators, and scholars tend to agree with the view above of bullying and have recommended policies and programs to curtail bullying in schools.

How young people choose to bully has become an ever more focused area of study within the bullying prevention field. Acts defined as direct bullying include verbal name calling of students, physical aggression, or even physical violence. Indirect acts of bullying which may not be as clear to identify, can be as harmful as the direct acts. These include spreading of rumors, isolation, ignoring students' presence, and exclusion from activities (Peskin, Tortolero, & Markham, 2006). Gender in bullying has also been explored through Rivers and Smith's (1994) study of aggression in youth in the United Kingdom. Their findings reinforce how students bully each other, but specifically, that boys reported to be engaged in more physical or direct acts of bullying while girls reported indirect acts of bullying.

The causation of such trauma to students in school is a valuable area of study because of how much socialization and development occur during these adolescent years. Peguero and Williams (2013) theorize that assessing and examining bullying in schools allows for those institutions to promote health and high performance in children. This is especially important in schools or districts where there are high levels of poverty and low academic performance. Children who attend urban schools in low-income areas consistently show the lowest academic achievement and poorest social skills (Bernstein, 1992). To that end, the need to examine the impact of bullying and its effects on academics is explored in the review of the literature on this topic in the next section of this paper.

As reported in a national survey in 2012, approximately 28% of students in the United States indicated that they were indeed victimized during that year (Robers, Zhang, Truman, & Snyder, 2012). Preceding that study was one in 2005 that found that one in five students had reported that they had experienced bullying in some form over the year as well (Finkelhor, Ormrod, Turner, & Hamby, 2005). These studies are relevant to this body of research because

they help to assert the strength in scholarship around the issue of bullying and most importantly its perceived adverse effects. This runs counter to the notion in the popular culture that bullying is in some respect a rite of passage or condition that all students must endure as adolescents. Research from psychologists and education scholars supports a much different picture, given the long and short-term effects of such behavior (Messias, Kindrick, & Castro, 2014).

Students who are targets of bullying experience immediate sadness, fear, anger, pain, loneliness, and humiliation. They can develop such internal expressions as depression and eating disorders or such external expressions as aggression and violence. Finally, rarely but tragically, bullying and victimization have been associated with suicidal ideation and suicide attempts. As reported very recently by Hinduja and Patchin (2010), youth who experienced traditional bullying or cyberbullying had more suicidal thoughts and were more likely to attempt suicide than those who had not experienced such forms of peer aggression (Irving & Springer, 2011).

The difficult relationship between bullying and school violence was underscored in a review of research on school bullying by Espelage and Swearer (2003). The authors describe the "startling finding" of a Secret Service investigation of 41 school shooters between 1974 and 2000**.** Searching for commonalities among these troubled students to help identify possible future shooters, investigators discovered that 71% of these school shooters had been the targets of bullying (Irving & Springer, 2011). The results of the Secret Service report while staggering are supported by additional bodies of research, specifically Rigspy (2003), who concluded that students who are targets of bullying might be prone to feelings of low psychological well-being, poor social adjustment, psychological distress, and "physical unwellness."

Research also supports that engaging in bullying behavior is just as bad for the bully as it is for the target. Youth who bully others tends to demonstrate higher levels of issues of conduct

problems stemming from anxiety, insecurity, depression, loneliness, and low self-esteem (Nansel et al., 2001). Moreover, a study by Olweus (1991) tracked youth who had displayed bullying behavior. Olweus found that, if this behavior was left unchecked, 40% of the sample population had at least one criminal conviction by the time they were 24. It would seem, given these two studies, that bullying could be described as a gateway to living in the criminal justice system. The relevance of such research highlights the need to examine how students of low-income and in urban areas might be affected by this theoretical framework.

Statement of the Problem

While prevailing scholarship supports the viewpoint that bullying is a problem in American schools, what is lacking in this area of research is the effect of state laws enacted to impact this phenomenon. What is further lacking is an examination of how these policies impact urban low-income communities. The state of Georgia enacted the very first anti-bullying law in the United States. Since that time 49 states have adopted anti-bullying legislation that ranges from very ambiguous laws to laws such as the New Jersey Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights (NJAB), which is considered by many in the field of study as one of the strictest laws in the nation.

One may argue that some state policies that have been enacted to limit acts of bullying in schools tend to be quite reactive at times. As mentioned above, the first of these laws was enacted in 1999 by the Georgia legislature in the aftermath of a 13-year-old boy's death after being punched in the head in an alleged act of bullying (Maguire, 2013). The Georgia bullying law set the trend for a wave of new laws that would be passed throughout the country: New Hampshire in 2000 and five states, including New Jersey, passing laws prohibiting bullying in schools in 2002. To date, the state of Montana is the only state in the union that does not have

an anti-bullying law. The Massachusetts law (MGL c.71, s.37O) not only regulated on-campus behavior but was one of the first laws to hold school districts accountable for acts of bullying that occurred off school grounds.

The New Jersey Anti-Bullying Law was passed on May 30, 2002, to hold schools more accountable for acts of aggression that take place in their buildings. The law called for schools to enact policies that must include a definition of bullying behavior, consequences for engaging in such behavior, a procedure for investigation of reports of such behavior, a statement prohibiting retaliation or reprisal against persons reporting bullying behavior, and consequences for making a false accusation. However, in 2011, the law was updated to account for acts of cyberbullying (bullying through multi-media) and bullying acts that take place off school grounds and sets forth a very rigid reporting structure for how a bullying investigation should be conducted.

The 2011 incarnation of the New Jersey law calls for "comprehensive anti-bullying policies." This would include increased training for all staff members of a school district that interact with children and a very thorough reporting process with very detailed timelines associated with them. The intention of the New Jersey State Legislature was to "strengthen the standards and procedures for preventing, reporting, investigating, and responding to incidents of harassment, intimidation, and bullying of students that occur in school and off campus" (Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act, Ch.122). To that end, it has now become the responsibility of schools in New Jersey, like those in Massachusetts, to monitor the behavior of students both in and out of school. The inherent challenge, of course, is the need for schools to conduct this high level of monitoring while still trying to educate young people.

The New Jersey Anti-Bullying law is hailed by bullying watchdog groups as one of the

most comprehensive laws in the nation. What is lacking from research on this law is its perceived impact on bullying in schools from the perspective of the school administration. Under the law if an incident of bullying is not investigated appropriately, an administrator or teacher could run the risk of losing his or her license. Also, it is the responsibility of the administration to create and monitor the mandatory School Safety Teams, who are charged with the creation of anti-bullying programming and services in a school.

Because this law is still so new and did not take effect until 2012, there is little research on the impact of the policies set forth within it. However, because the law is still so new, it also presents the opportunity for a new slate of research to be examined by scholars. Also, many of the policy studies that have been done on bullying have not included the perspective of the school administrator. This study seeks to examine closely how those in leadership have dealt with and instituted the New Jersey Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the urban high school Anti-Bullying Specialists' perception of the impact of the 2011 New Jersey Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act (NJAB*)* on their ability to respond to acts of bullying and student aggression at their schools. This study attempts to explain whether, and in what ways, the elements of the law are deemed as supporting positive school culture or are a hindrance to focusing on teaching and learning in schools. The focus of the sample group was urban school leaders because the bulk of the comprehensive research on the topic has been done primarily in White suburban communities. This study sought to expand on the limited but necessary field of research on the impact of bullying and policies in urban schools.

Research Questions

1. How do Anti-Bullying Specialists in New Jersey urban high schools describe the implementation of the NJAB law and its influences on the structures and practices in their respective schools?
2. In what way, if any, has the school curriculum been modified to address the requirements of the NJAB law?
3. What support services, if any, have been amended or made available to students who bully or have been bullied since the passing of the NJAB law?
4. What distinguishing characteristics, if any, are utilized by students who bully to target their victims (i.e., gender, race, sexual orientation, or weight)?

Theoretical Framework

There are a variety of theoretical models related to bullying that focus on theory related to bullies, victims, bully-victims, and bystanders. To remain in line with the purpose and research questions of this study, it was necessary to examine bullying through the lens of the social context of students and their schools. To that end, this section explores the notions of resilience and ecological theory. Both theories serve as significant opportunities to examine the NJAB law from these theoretical perspectives. Because both theories are complex in nature, it was important for the researcher to create a framework by which the theories were utilized to conduct the interview protocol and assess the data collected from it.

Resilience Theory

How individuals cope in pressure situations has long been studied in academic disciplines, including sociology, psychology, and anthropology. Nonetheless, when the notion of resilience is applied to young people in urban areas, there arises a new lens through which this

concept of resilience can be examined. Masten (1994) describes resilience as a successful adaptation by a person in the context of significant threats to development and growth. For young people growing up in urban America today, there seems to be very clear threats related to the high levels of crime, violence, drug use, and single parenting that plague our urban cities. With Masten's definition in mind, it is plausible to consider that schools with high numbers of poor children, many of whom are affected by such threats, may be successful or unsuccessful in dealing with bullying.

Resilience theorists seek to uncover the necessary protective factors that help shield students from the negative aspects of life or, as in this study, the adverse effects of bullying. The theory also seeks to explore the risk factors that make young people subject to bullying behavior, which can lead children to retaliate by becoming bullies themselves or even going so far as to hurt others to deal with their pain. At the center of this theory is the understanding of protective and risk factors in youth. The research questions generated for the school administrators in this study sought to identify if these school leaders can cite or have identified resources to account for these protective and risk factors in their school.

The theory of resilience as studied by Masten et al. (1999) asserts that researchers must specify the threat they believe might be responsible for impeding the development of young people. That threat, for this study, is bullying; this study explored the role of the NJAB in how administrators have dealt with bullying since the law was initiated in 2011. Masten et al. also concluded that to reinforce positive behavior and outcomes, psychosocial resources need to be present in the context of an environment for students to feel safe and supported. With that in mind, it would also be beneficial for this research to examine what resources exist within these schools to enhance or support the psychosocial development of a child.

In a recent study of resilience in urban youth, Eisman et al. (2015) theorize that urban environments that contain several violent elements create fertile ground for schools in which there will be major mental health issues. The researchers indirectly indicate that living in violent environments can lead to a youth's "feelings of distress, hopelessness, and ineffectiveness at managing one's social environment" (p. 1307). Given what is discussed in the review of the literature concerning the mental health of students who are bullied on a consistent basis, one can assume that children who are bullied consistently and with little support might suffer from the conditions above. As noted in the research above, Eisman's study also reinforces the need for adolescents to have varying levels of social support to overcome difficult and challenging incidents in their schools like bullying, challenging course work, or puberty.

Through a closer examination of the theory of resilience within the context of bullying, there may indeed be an opportunity to ascertain from administrators what they observe as resilient behaviors of youth in their schools. Additionally, it might also be important to examine the resources that exist in the schools for children who bully or are targets. The data collected from questions related to resilience theory aided the researcher to further understand how schools help to reinforce the necessary protective factors for youth.

Ecological Systems Theory (EST)

The theory of ecological human development was pioneered by Bronfenbrenner (1979) as a model that seeks to understand the impact of a particular phenomenon by examining it in its environment. EST can be used as a theoretical framework that can help explain or even predict behavior beyond just studying an individual. Within the context of school bullying, this theory allows for the researcher to examine a school environment through the perspective of a school administrator. This process allows the researcher to construct carefully and deconstruct how a

school environment responds to incidents of bullying. To examine such a condition, the researcher employed two constructs from Bronfenbrenner's pioneering work.

The first construct was the "setting," which is defined as ". . . a place where people can readily engage in face-to-face interaction" (p. 22). The setting for this study was the high schools and various elements within them that construct the school space. The second construct is called the "microsystem," which is described as a series of structured or unstructured settings which take on their own physical characteristics. In high schools, this can be a cafeteria or even a gym class: two structured settings that, at times, can take on their cultural elements. During the day, these spaces are vulnerable to children bullying others during a school-structured activity. Both of these constructs became important drivers in formulating interview questions that sought to gain further understanding of the administrator's building and resources that exist in a school.

The EST research of Hong and Espelage (2012) shows that through an examination of one's environment, additional theory and conclusions can be inferred. Their study of bullying amongst urban youth found that within the context of this theory, bullying associated with racial and ethnic lines has been linked to increased difficulty with adjusting to school and mental health problems of the youth in their study. They also note that there were subgroups such as students who were gay or lesbian who were also targets of negative bullying behavior. Neal and Neal (2013) and the Guckin and Minton (2014) review of Bronfenbrenner's model also underscore the importance of examining the contextual environment for possible multiple layers of intersection that may not be apparent to the researcher's eye. Misha (2012) concludes that examining bullying within the ecological framework takes the issue beyond just children and allows for a greater understanding of the environment that may be fostering that behavior.

Significance of the Study

This study seeks to advance the scholarship on bullying and its impact on low-income urban communities. Much of the comprehensive research from such scholars as Welsh, Olweus, Whitted, and Schneider et al. support the claim that bullying has been an increasing area of research that demands additional attention. However, it was not until the late 1990s and early first decade of the 21st century that additional research dealing with low-income urban communities began to be performed. This study seeks to add scholarship perspective to this younger field of study of bullying prevention.

In addition to contributing to the area of research, this study aims to identify the role that policies play in an attempt to curtail bullying, especially in New Jersey because the law is so new. With the passing of any law that prohibits negative activity, there are pockets of skepticism amongst educators regarding its efficacy. This study could have implications to help the New Jersey Legislature and State Department of Education as they seek to update and review the law through the task force created to make additional recommendations to the law in the aftermath of its passing.

Summary of Methodology

To address the research questions, I interviewed public high school administrators and collected public bullying reported data in a total of 16 high schools from across New Jersey. In New Jersey, the official determination of what constitutes an urban school district is as follows: those with more than 50% of their total school population on free or reduced lunch. Additionally, I submitted a letter to the superintendents of several districts meeting the 50% criterion for written permission to engage their high schools in the study. Therefore, the districts that were selected in the sample met at a minimum these criteria for possible consideration for study. The

administrators chosen for the study were those at the high school level who investigate and coordinate activities related to issues of bullying as per the NJAB.

Through an exploratory case study design, I intended to uncover the administrators' perceptions of the way the New Jersey Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights has influenced their schools. This research was conducted through open-ended interviews that were used to collect qualitative data from those individuals. After developing the interview protocol, I had a jury of experts—three experienced high school administrators—review the questions for validity. I further refined the interview questions with three other high school administrators, to check for question reliability and research validity. Each participant received a transcript of his or her interview to ensure that the data from the interviews were documented correctly. Once the interview transcripts were validated, I used a hybrid approach of theory-driven, prior-research-driven, and data-driven codes to make meaning of the data and organize them into thematic categories.

Limitations

Limitations of the study include the following:

1. Dealing with just New Jersey urban schools, as opposed to suburban or both, accounted for only the urban educators' perspective in dealing with the law.

2. My sample of only 16 school administrators allowed for a narrow scope of perceptions of the impact of the New Jersey Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act.

3. The generalizations made in this stud only dealt with the New Jersey law. Other states' policies account for different definitions of bullying, target groups, and other variables, which even further limits the potential application of a broader scope of the research.

4. The administrators selected for the interview were only those who have at least two years of experience in the school in which they serve.

Delimitations

The most glaring limitation of this study is the number of participants. Since the researcher interviewed only 16 people, it cannot be concluded that their perceptions are reflective of all urban administrators in New Jersey. Additionally, this study conducted a maximum of one interview with each Anti-Bullying Specialist. Another limitation of this study is that each participant had only one data collection session that was limited to less than 45 minutes total.

To delimit the above-cited limitations, the researcher as noted in the design controlled for allowing only those Anti-Bullying Specialist with 2+ years of experience. Choosing experienced Anti-Bullying Specialists who have been in their schools for two years or more allowed for the researcher to obtain perspective and data from those who have spent considerable time understanding their student population. Another delimitation is in the selection of the schools and districts based on several dimensions of diversity. By selecting districts with African American, Latino, White, and mixed race majorities of students, the researcher was presented with a considerable variance of perspectives on behalf of the administrators who were interviewed.

Definition of Key Terms

Bullying: Targeted act of repeat aggression from one student to another. In addition to the targeting component, there must also be a difference of power between the students (Olweus, 1993).

School Climate: The unwritten rules of beliefs, values, and acceptable behavior in schools (Welsh, 2000).

NJAB: New Jersey Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act of 2011

Culture: Culture refers to the cumulative deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions of time, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the

universe, and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving (http://www.tamu.edu/faculty/choudhury/culture.html).

Urban Schools: An urban area rather than a rural, small town, or suburban area, school has a relatively high rate of poverty (as measured by free and reduced lunch data), has a relatively high proportion of students of color, and has a relatively high proportion of students who are Limited English Proficient (Russo, 2004)

Anti-Bullying Specialist: Those school leaders who are responsible for investigation, implementation, and coordination of bullying activities in the school. This role is mandated under the New Jersey Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Law.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

Prevailing research in the field of bullying prevention does not support one universal definition or explanation for how bullying is defined or described in the context of schools. However, the pioneering work of Scandinavian researcher Dan Olweus (1978, 1983, 1994) is considered by most bullying scholars as the most widely accepted understanding of the term. Olweus defines bullying as an act of aggression in which a child victimizes another child. Olweus posits that the central tendency in bullying is the apparent or perceived imbalance of power that exists between the two parties. In his initial work Olweus documented this imbalance of power in just boys, but compelling research over the last 40 years has confirmed the involvement of girls in bullying as well. His definition is supported by the work of many of the researchers who are cited in the review of bullying prevention scholarship. In a study of the role bullying played in the culture and perceived climate of schools, researchers Klein, Cornell, and Konold (2012) theorize that higher incidents of bullying in school can correlate with lower levels of student performance. Thus, the importance of such research to be conducted in all sectors of education is clear and pressing.

While many bullying scholars use various interpretations of the Olweus definition of bullying, what is universal across bodies of research are the roles which students play in bullying. Children are characterized as bullies, victims, bully-victims, and bystanders. Bullies are the students who display the aggressive and dominant behavior. Victims are those students who are subjected to the harassment and intimidation of those who bully. Bully-victims are those students who display bullying based behavior and also can be targeted as a victim. Those

students who are cited as not being engaged in any form of bullying or victimization are considered to be bystanders. Olweus further delineates the roles into that of passive or active victims. Passive victims are those who are perceived to display behavior that identifies the individual with low self-worth. Active victims are described by Pellegrini (1998) as those who display hostile or violent behavior when provoked by bullies. Both roles as noted by Pellegrini come at considerable cost to the mental and physical well-being of those who are victimized.

Those children, however, who display bullying-based behavior are at times found to display weaker skills in communicating and functioning in neutral peer environments (Haynie et al., 2001). Bullies at times display behavior that is perceived as negative, violent, and controlling to their peers. The behavior displayed by students who bully can be disruptive to the social life of their victims and the educational institutions they attend. This takes the form of what researchers call direct and indirect bullying behavior. Direct bullying refers to the use of force by bullies to intimidate other students. The current scholarship supports the notion that primarily males or boys exert this type of behavior. Indirect or relational bullying (Crick & Grotpeter, 1996) refers to how girls normally behave regarding their bullying behavior.

The final two categories of bystanders and bully-victims are two of the most recently studied categories in bullying research. Bystanders account for the majority of students who are located on the grounds of schools. They normally are those students who are not engaged in the bullying behavior but who are also not targets of bullies themselves. Some bullying prevention programs consider bystanders as the critical group in bullying prevention. It is their potential to either support or denounce the behavior of bullies that can be used as a deterrent to that behavior. Bully-victims, conversely, are those students who display both sets of behaviors. Like those who bully, bully-victims demonstrate high levels of aggression for those they find themselves

violating. However, these students can also assume the role of passive or active victims (Haynie, 2001).

Whitted and Dupper (2005) cite bullying as the most prevalent form of low-level violence in schools today. However, although bullying can be defined as low-level, its perceived impact on those involved has been measured by several researchers. Utilizing the data of a 1998 World Health Organization (WHO) report, Nansel et al. (2001) explore the correlation of children who display bullying behavior and those who have higher levels of conduct problems and are disengaged from their schools. The WHO data revealed that there was a correlation between students who bully and elevated levels of disengagement from school. Whitted and Dupper support this claim by adding that students who display bullying behavior are at a greater risk of truancy and dropping out of school. To make matters worse, Olweus (1991) posits that 60% of boys in his Scandinavian study who were identified as bullies had at least one criminal conviction by the age of 24. Thus, it should be noted by educators that aside from the effects bullying has on victims, bullying behavior can be a potential gateway for those students to very destructive futures. It appears that bullying might be a gateway for students who display this behavior to enter into a potential lifetime of violence or crime.

The effects on those who are victims or targets of bullying are also damaging. Victims of long-term bullying acts can display short- and long-term emotional problems, depression, and low academic performance (Whitted & Dupper, 2005). Scholars Esbensen and Carson (2014) theorize that these short- and long-term effects are connected to feelings of rejection on the part of the victims and their inability to find a trusted resource to use as a protective factor against bullying. The failure to find a trusted resource or adult only further exacerbates the feelings of rejection and isolation. In the most of extreme of cases, some students have decided to end their

lives as a result of the emotional distress of bullying. Through their longitudinal study of the impact on victims, Hubbard and Boyce (2006) support the need to pay close attention to those students who are victims effectively to combat the long- and short-term effects. These effects, if not treated, can have a lasting impact on the psychological and mental welfare of those who are victims.

In a multivariate regression study of staff and student perceptions of bullying, Bradshaw, Sawyer, and O'Brennan (2007) concluded that there appears to be a disconnect in faculty and student perceptions of how severe bullying can be in schools. Their research reported that of the high school sample, 10% of faculty thought bullying was a problem in their school compared to 22.7% of the students surveyed. There seem to be very different perspectives between students and staff in this study. However, the study also reported that faculty was more likely than students to report and intervene in acts of bullying. This is supported by the work of Arora and Thompson (2002), who concluded in their research of secondary school bullying that reporting of incidents in high schools is traditionally low due to the social conditioning associated with students dealing with bullying behavior. The need for faculty and staff to recognize these conditions is imperative given the above-cited research on how common bullying has become in schools. It is the adults in our schools who should serve as the first line of defense to keep children safe. However, these adults must find ways to become more aware of the perceived effects of bullying in their schools.

How students cope with bullying in high school is another area of study in the work of Naylor, Cowie, and Rey (2001). Through a questionnaire of secondary students, they identified coping differences based on gender. More than twice as many boy victims reported that they did not report acts of bullying to school officials. The researchers posit that this may be a result of

boys' social conditioning not to share their feelings with adults. Both genders, however, had in common that the preferred method to combat bullies was simply to ignore the behavior. However, in many cases students' efforts to ignore issues of bullying result in a complete disconnect from the educational process. Cornell et al. (2013) examined the trends of the Virginia School Safety Study, primarily focusing on the high school cohort. They theorized that there would indeed be a correlation between schools with high levels of bullying and similar levels of students dropping out. Their findings concluded that schools with high levels of teasing or bullying also reported having high levels of high school dropouts. This is supported by Cornell et al.'s (2011) earlier assessment of the 2011 Virginia School Safety study in which they concluded that when acts of bullying are prevalent in a school, there are also high levels of student disengagement in the educational process. Students who drop out have the propensity to become those at-risk students described by Olweus.

Bullying prevention research, while only 40 years old, has received lots of interest from scholars advancing the initial studies conducted by Olweus. This review of literature seeks to examine both a chronological account of the evolution of bullying scholarship and to address subgroups within the field of study. One area that the researchers have found deficient in much of the current scholarship in the area of bullying prevention has been the impact of state and federal policies to lower the instances in schools. The most impressive study found on policy analysis of bullying prevention law was conducted by Maguire (2013), who examined some of the most important anti-bullying laws in the nation. This body of work, which is in the context of a law review, does postulate the urgency for further examination of such policies in every state. This dissertation attempts to codify the impact, if any, of the New Jersey Anti-Bullying Bill of

Rights Act (2011), but it should be noted that this Act is supported by over four decades of narratives, research, and analysis on the topic of bullying.

Review of School Climate and Bullying Connection

A comprehensive review of the literature on the subject of bullying in schools must begin with the initial framework that has evolved in the field. Early scholarship which dates back to aggression studies can hardly be aggregated to create one argument or conclusion. The study of school climate, and specifically climate examined through bullying, is what such researchers such as Olweus began to highlight bullying as an important area of study. School climate and bullying researchers such as Welsh (2000), Klein, Cornell, and Konold (2012), Whitted and Duppor (2005), Mitchell, Bradshaw, and Leaf (2010), and Esposito (1999) are just several prevailing scholars who have claimed that school climate can be measured if it is done within the context of bullying. Their joint studies in the field of school climate and bullying helped pave the way for more direct research on the topic of bullying.

The work of Welsh (2000) examines the correlation between school climate and school disorder. Through an examination of five different indicators, the scholar seeks to identify advanced measurements of school disorder and identification of school disorder to better assess interventions for students in his study. Through the study Welsh asserts that schools with the most social disorder are those where rules are unclear, unfair, or inconsistently enforced (Welsh, 93). There is also a glaring connection to socioeconomic status. Welsh found that students who came from higher levels of crime, poverty, and unemployment in the community had higher levels of victimization in school. This assertion connects to the work of Esposito (1999), whose study of low-income and urban K-2 grade schools found that perceived family experiences of school have a correlation with student perceptions of school and their class performance.

Esposito conducted this study by administering an instrument to parents of low-income urban youth, seeking their opinion of the culture and climate of the school. The regression analysis supported the theory that students with lower grades correlated with parents' more negative perceptions of the school climate. In both studies issues of violence in the home or school are concluded as factors that influenced student engagement.

In contrast to the methods above, the work of Mitchell, Bradshaw, and Leaf (2010) and Klein, Cornell, and Konold (2012) represent an analysis of school climate by measuring student perceptions of climate through quantitative analysis. The study by Mitchell et al. surveyed 1881 students and 90 teachers about perceived indicators and impact on school climate. The analysis supported that teachers viewed climate within the confines of their classroom specifically, while the students looked at the whole school while defining how climate impacted their lives. Klein et al. interviewed just students (3, 687) and found that students engaged in at-risk behavior were also disconnected from the entire educational processes. These manifestations primarily in the form of bullying have a profound impact on how students view and evaluate their overall school experience.

While each study presented defines school climate in different ways, a central theme in the research is the correlation between negative school climates, coupled with bullying, and negative student performance. The work of Esposito (1999) is one of the few school climate studies on bullying that specifically deals with urban and poor communities. Esposito theorizes that because urban parents tend to come from lower incomes and poor communities, it is likely that their plight will influence their children's ability to learn. These issues of high crime, poverty, and unemployment create very troubling conditions for school districts to deal with in urban areas.

Review Methods

The methods applied to acquire the literature for this review involved first an examination of the necessary keywords that would generate data and scholarly work on the topic. Keywords such as bullying, school climate, and intimidation in schools were the initial keywords used to conduct research. The Seton Hall and William Paterson Universities' library databases resulted in a plethora of scholarship related to the keywords. What was evident upon the initial review of the literature was that school climate as a keyword search yielded scholarship outside of the scope of this study. The keywords involving bullying generated a robust and more linear stream of scholarship.

The initial results chronologically on bullying were traced back to the study of Olweus (1978), in which he studied the impact of male aggression in Scandinavian schools. This concept of "mobbing," as bullying is described in his country, marks the first time that it had been explored in the context of a school. After further review of the Olweus text, it became apparent that the term *bullying* has various definitions, interpretations, and meanings in other cultures. This point had to be kept in mind when exploring other countries' interpretations of bullying scholarship. Once the initial round of articles were read and assessed, the researcher then examined the cited pages of all the items to research studies that supported or refuted the claims asserted in the first round of scholarly articles.

Once these articles were identified, there was an additional search of scholarship on tools such as JSTOR, SAGE, and Google Scholar to find the cited text. Following a review of that literature, there were clear gaps in studies that were relevant to this dissertation hypothesis. An additional search was conducted using the resources mentioned above with more specific keywords: urban bullying, bullying in high schools, bullying in secondary education,

international intimidation, and ethnic bullying were some of the keywords that were searched. This search yielded the most impactful of all the literature to date.

All of the articles deemed relevant to the study were collected and organized in the format that has shaped this literature review based on sub-topics within the field of bullying prevention. Once the sub-topics were created, the literature in each section was analyzed again and coded to establish patterns of study, similar methodological approaches, and data results. Once coded, the literature was prepared to be written in their respective chapters. The theoretical work of Olweus seems to be the standard bearer for most research on this topic, with no less than 95% of the literature cited in this study citing his work over the years.

Limitations of the Review

The boundaries of this review of literature include a glaring hole in scholarship on the topic of bullying. Except for the policy review article conducted by Maguire (2013), there seems to be little scholarly work related to how policies implemented in states are affecting bullying in those schools. Maguire's work evaluates and chronicles the challenges states face with passing and implementing harsh anti-bullying laws. For the sake of this study, there seems not to be much on the 2011 NJ Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act. This could result from the fact that the law is less than five years old. This adds credence to the need for additional policy study research on the topic of the NJ Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act.

Another limitation identified in this review is the need for stronger research on the impact bullying has on school leaders and administrators. The studies that were reviewed were done either within the context of students' perceptions of bullying behavior or on the impact of teachers or staff. None of the research found spoke to the need for school leaders to understand how bullying policies, either state or district level, inform their work on their campuses. This

study was designed following a realization that voices of those adults who implement the policies that are adopted need to be included in the growing body of research.

Inferences for this Study

Across several of the abovementioned studies, there is a continuous theme that describes bullying in schools as a pervasive and concerning problem. This is supported by the work of Williams and Peguero (2011,2013) who create a compelling case that when dealing with students of color, there are additional variables that many scholars might omit. School climate as described by Mitchell et al. (2004) is a grave concern for schools throughout the United States; their work supports the prevailing thought in the bullying prevention field that if schools are not safe, children will not learn.

The most compelling studies that reinforce the effects bullying has on student achievement are the work of Cornell et al. (2013) and Esposito (1999). Both studies support the claim that Black and Latino youth are targets of bullying behavior in low-income communities, with the most drastic effect occurring when a young person decides to drop out of school. These studies support the need for additional research on the topic of bullying in low-income urban centers. The scholarship on this topic specifically is extremely slim and could benefit from additional contributions. These contributions will allow for better techniques to be created to ensure the safety of children, especially children of color.

What is also glaring in most of the research are the conclusions made about the causes, effects, and impact of bullying. Most of the school climate scholars seek to raise additional awareness about the need to recognize bullying when it is identified. When cited by scholars, the most utilized definition of bullying is that created by Olweus over 40 years ago. The definition and further explanation of the term certainly reinforce the significance of bullying over the

course of the last 40 years since his research, and his bullying prevention program remains the standard in the field of study. Since that time scholars have blazed new trails in the area of bullying and have further advanced the work of Olweus, adapting to modern day issues in schools, as well.

In addition to the reliance on the Olweus model as the research standard, what it also apparent is that all of the research conducted centers on quantitative measures. Each study either borrows from existing data or creates and compares its own to run regression models for further explanation. The intention of this dissertation is to engage in research but use the qualitative method as the mechanism for data collection. If the studies mentioned above had employed a qualitative component, it might further reinforce the data that has been collected. The examination of bullying attitudes can go only so far when synthesizing quantitative data. Based on the research done by Esposito and Williams (1999) and Peguero (2011), the field would benefit greatly from a qualitative or mixed methods approach to data collection. Many of the general studies of school climate or effects of bullying in schools are broadly accepted by those in the scholarly community. Each article provides a very solid foundation for scholarship and examination of how students of color deal with and are affected by bullying differently from their White counterparts.

Pioneering Research of Dan Olweus

Dan Olweus is widely regarded in the bullying prevention community as the single most influential researcher in the history of the field of study. With a background in psychology, Olweus chose to focus his academic area of interest on aggression studies in young men. Through the evaluation of a short-term longitudinal study, Olweus (1977) conducted research examining children's perceptions of aggression in their peers. His work found that there were

indeed correlations in aggression by males who were identified as bullies. Olweus concluded, however, in this initial study that very little could be done to address the issue, in part due to the coming of age of these boys. An additional study several years later would support this claim and attribute it to the lack of involvement of positive male role models such as the impact and role of fathers (Olweus, 1980). In this study, as well, Olweus posits that if young people are privy to violence via corporal punishment, they are also able to inflict violence on their peers.

The initial research on aggression would lead Olweus to examine further this phenomenon in his landmark study entitled, *Aggression in the Schools: Bullies and Whipping Boys* (1978). In this study, Olweus interviewed over 1,000 boys in his sample from three different Scandinavian cities. The studies involved students, parents, and teachers to explore the reasons and impact of bullying, or "mobbing" as Olweus first called it. While a contemporary view of this research may see the work as insensitive by calling targets of bullying "whipping boys," the study raised several pertinent questions and posited landmark theories that are still examined today. Through the peer evaluation system that he created, he found that bullies were identified to be more aggressive than whipping boys or the control group. Additionally, his study also found that whipping boys were more likely to be identified as less popular than the other two groups. Whipping boys were also identified as being much more insecure than bullies and reflected said behavior. This study is the first study to lay on the table bullying prevention theories that could be tested by other researchers, many of which are mentioned in this review of the literature. Scholars such as Bjorkqvist et al. (1982) credit the initial work of Olweus as an important and necessary step in the field of research.

Olweus would continue to conduct studies related to aggression and bullying in the 1980s, and 1990s in one such work called *Bullying at School* (1994). In this study, Olweus has

now morphed the term *whipping boys* to *victims*. In it, he further examines the effects of bullying on victims and makes recommendations for how schools can create and integrate programs to help those students. He asserts that a comprehensive plan must meet the following criteria: (1) increase knowledge of bully/victim problem, (2) achieve active involvement of parents and teachers, (3) develop clear rules against bullying, (4) provide support and protection for victims (Olweus, 1994,1997). These elements have become part of the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP). The first program was initiated in the mid 1980s and allowed for Olweus to assess and further strengthen the program. Today the OBPP is considered the gold standard bullying prevention program in the world. There has also been research conducted that has sought to examine the efficacy of the program and its elements. Studies by Solberg and Olweus (2003) Olweus (2007), Olweus and Limber (2010), and Breivik and Olweus (2014) have concluded that, when implemented with fidelity, the OBPP reduces the occurrences of bullying in schools and promotes peer respect.

Olweus' initial and current studies are testaments to the actual strength of academic research. His work, understanding, and evaluation of issues of bullying have changed over the course of the last 40 years. However, what has remained constant is his encouragement for other researchers to evaluate his work or create their own to add to the now growing field of study. The need for additional research is imperative as indicated above via the impact of bullying on victims. Nonetheless, there is also a need to conduct research to save those students who are bullies or displaying bullying behavior. In a study of the effects of bullying on the bullies, Olweus (2011) found that if the bullying behavior is left unchecked, students who bully are more prone than their counterparts to engage in acts of violence and aggression as adults.

Effects of Bullying/Student Performance

The effects of short- and long-term bullying have been major areas of study since the field began to take shape in Europe over 40 years ago. To that end, scholars such as Mehta et al. (2011), Rigby (2003), Nansel et al. (2001), and Cornell et al. (2012) discuss at length the short- and long-range impact that bullying in schools can have on student experiences and school climate. Mehta et al., through a study of 7,058 ninth graders in Virginia, found that there was a correlation between incidences of bullying and lower student performance. However, while this study asserts that students who identified their schools as having high incidents of bullying and low student performance did not correlate with a decline in the level of involvement in extracurricular activities.

The work of Rigby (2003) and that of Nansel et al. (2001) examine the psychological and mental effects associated with students' responses to bullying. The 2001 study examined data from the World Health Organizations' Health Behavior in School survey. The analysis of that data revealed that 29.9% of students in that sample identified as being involved in bullying behavior as either victim or bully. Through the analysis of the self-reporting of the students, Nansel et al. posits that students who are bullied are exposed to greater risk factors regarding their physical and mental well-being. The Rigby study, which included a review of cross-sectional surveys and retrospective studies, reached the same conclusion as the 2001 study. However, what Rigby did was to delve into the correlations associated with psychological distress, physical illness, and low psychological well-being in students engaged in bullying activity.

The final study hypothesizes that high rates of bullying will predict whether students will drop out of school between their 9^{th}-12^{th} grade year. Cornell at al. (2012) surveyed high school

youth in Virginia from 276 schools. Their intention was to measure students' overall assessment of school safety in their 9th grade year and track whether those students who identified with having negative experiences would finish the 12th grade. Although the researchers state that their study does not support a causal effect, it did, however, correlate that students who had negative experiences with bullying and teasing dropped out of school at greater percentages than students who did not.

International Bullying Literature and Research

Studies in the UK

Over the course of the forty plus years in bullying prevention scholarship, a great deal of the initial research on the topic began in Europe. Since the work of Olweus (1978) and Bjorkqvist (1982) began to explore bullying or mobbing, countless contributions have been made from all over the world. However, there seems to be still a significant amount of bullying prevention work still being done by scholars in Western Europe. These studies range from landmark assessments of bullying to ones attempting to measure the perceived impact of bullying on student performance or behavior.

The predominant contribution to the field of study seems to come from British researchers. One such researcher, Arrora (1994), conducted a review of several of the initial studies used to help craft the field of bullying prevention. It is through that work that early bullying prevention scholars are assessed and measured for common trends. Arrora credits Heinemann (1973), as the initial scholar to label the term of the behavior of students harassing other students in his native Sweden as "mobbing." However, Heinemann's work defined mobbing/bullying as actions by a group of students directed towards a single student. Another element of his research was that the mobbing would eventually subside. This was advanced by

Olweus (1978) as mentioned previously, who first described mobbing as actions by boys who oppress or harass someone else (p. 35).

Arora codified the definition of bullying in the context of the United Kingdom by evaluating the contributions of the early work done on bullying but also by assessing the recommendations that came from the study known as the "Sheffield Project" (Whitney & Smith, 1993). Their study surveyed 6,758 students from 17 middle schools on the perceived effects of bullying in their lives. This sample was the largest single study on bullying conducted in the UK at that time. The scholars noted that students' perceptions of bullying were higher among boys than girls in the study. Additionally, their study found that students who are victims of bullying-based behavior expressed elevated levels of disengagement with the educational process. The Sheffield Project inspired additional research into the field of bullying, most notably the work of Sharp (1995), who uses an analysis of the data reported in a questionnaire created to measure stress in young people (Sharp & Thompson, 1992) with the data of the Sheffield Project. Sharp further examines the results of the Sheffield research by attempting to measure the perceived impact on students who bully and are bullied. Using the statements in her 1992 questionnaire, Sharp identified that 34% of students who identified as being bullied found it stressful, while 11% of her respondents found it extremely stressful. Additionally, those who found the conditions of bullying stressful in any degree also handled their reaction to bullying differently. Some students chose to ignore the behavior while choosing to react directly to those who bully.

Sharp's study points to one of the main reasons why this topic has gained much leverage over the years. The emotional effect that bullying has on the victims but also on the bullies as well continues to be the subject of scholarship that has been conducted in several European countries. One limitation, however, in the study carried out by Sharp is the practical difficulty in

measuring degrees of stress. Sharp's questionnaire was one in which the respondents self-reported based on four options or ranges of stress. It can be argued that how young people define stress can be subjective given the age and academic ability of the student. An additional limitation of the study is the lack of focus on the impact of bullying on students who engage in indirect or direct bullying tactics. This was examined through the work of Woods and Wolke (2003), who adapted the questionnaire created by Olweus to conduct surveys with parents and students to explore if there is a correlation between bullying and student performance. Both the parents and students reported high levels of reported discomfort with students' attitudes towards bullying.

The study of UK primary school children and their parents is one of the first in the country to examine if there is a link between bullying and academic success. Woods and Wolke (2003) sought to expound on the theory of Olweus that implied that children involved in bullying behavior seemed to perform worse than the general population. This, however, could not be supported in their study; in fact, the researchers saw the very little connection between acts of bullying or bullying behavior and success in the classroom. The work of Woods and Wolke is a significant contribution to the field of study by explaining that children who bully at times can be those who are troubled or "at risk, " but they can also be those students who are high performing.

Another UK study conducted by Boulton and Flemington (1996) sought to assess an aspect of the Olweus 1983 intervention program in which videos were shown to students in the class to raise awareness of bullying in Norway. The authors measured student responses after viewing a video on bullying to determine if student self-reported attitudes towards bullying changed. Students were surveyed using a pretest and posttest design to evaluate a change in perception of bullying-based attitudes. The results of the analysis yielded that there seemed to be

no correlation that the videos had any effect on student perspectives on bullying. This leads to a central tendency of the study which has become a widely accepted view of intervention measures that, as Boulton and Flemington point out, "These issues lead us to the point that most successful action against bullying in likely to be multifaceted and ongoing" (p. 341).

Two more recent studies of bullying in the UK were done using comparative methodology. Wolke et al. (2001) and Kanetsuna et al. (2006) examined student responses to the bullying in the United Kingdom to student responses in Germany and Japan. The German and UK study utilized a cross-sectional, cross-national analysis in modifying the Olweus questionnaire. There were 2,377 in the London School District sample and 1,538 from the Munich School District sample. The study concluded that more students in the UK reported more frequent acts of bullying than their German counterparts. Conversely, more German children reported bullying others than did children in the UK. However, despite the variance in reporting, both countries reported high levels of boys engaged in bullying behavior and identified bullies also fall into the category of bully-victims. The authors theorize that one reason why reporting in the UK might be significantly higher is the popularity of addressing bullying in the UK, as opposed to Germany.

In the Japanese study *ijime*, which is equivalent to bullying, was examined using a much smaller sample size. The Japanese sample consisted of 61 students, while the UK sample was 60. This study evaluated both groups of students on how students cope with bullying in their schools. When asked how one should handle an act of bullying, both groups of students reported in would be better to seek help from an adult. However, when asked how they directly would handle acts of bullying, more UK students indicated that they would tell an adult than Japanese students. The reason for such a difference can be explained in the report that more Japanese students were

afraid to tell someone about direct acts of bullying for fear of the bullying getting worse. An additional point in this study was that more UK students than Japanese students (51% to 28%) felt that something can be done about bullying in their schools. Kanetsuna et al. theorize that this is possibly the result of the level of awareness of how pervasive bullying is in their countries. Japanese students reported that there were low levels of awareness of this issue in their school when asked about how faculty view bullying.

Other European and Canadian Studies

While the United Kingdom may have a significant influence on the literature on the issue of bullying, the initial work of Olweus, as mentioned previously, began in Scandinavia. In addition to Olweus, Bjorkqvist et al. (1982) are viewed by many scholars as the second most significant contribution in the field. Bjorkqvist's team interviewed 430 students who identified students within their sample as bullies and victims. Their work determined that there were three times as many bullies as were victims. It was also reported that students identified as victims considered themselves to be more depressed than their peers. There is also an Italian study conducted by Baldry (1998) that argues very similar conclusions. After administering the Olweus bullying questionnaire to 156 students in Rome, Baldry came to the conclusion that due to the frequency with which students are bullied, sometimes more than once a week, victims become targets for internalized depression.

Given the cited work on bullying overseas, one could conclude that bullying is as much of a public health concern in Europe as in the United States. Kristennsen and Smith (2003) argue in their study of 305 Danish children that nearly 31% of respondents identified themselves as bullies. This is similar to numbers reported in the Germany and the UK study (Wolke et al., 2001). As noted in Kanetsuna et al., the majority of the student respondents preferred simply to

ignore the bullying behavior they observed or that was directed towards them. This action, as perceived by the victims, would at least ensure that the bullying would not get worse as it might if it were reported to an adult.

Canada's research on bullying is the closest that mirrors the various paradigms that are experienced in the United States. Marini et al. (2006) conducted an analysis of 7,430 Canadian students using a tool called the Youth Lifestyle Choices Community-Research Alliance. They concluded that bully-victims constituted nearly one-third of the total sample. Their research identified several psychosocial risk factors associated with bully-victims in the study. Larochette et al. (2010) supports the claim of risk factors but do so by examining the ethnic minority class of Canada. The significance of this study lends itself to the understanding that African-Canadian youth are more likely to be targets of racialized bullying and to bully based on race. This is supported by Rigby (2003), who compared several empirical studies to draw implications for how bullying affects young people currently and will in the future. Her study arrived at the conclusion that repeated acts of bullying can adversely influence the psychological well-being and social adjustment of youth who are victims.

The research of bullying from perspectives that are outside of the United States are necessary for studies such as this to identify and monitor. This allows for the researcher of this dissertation to explore trends and risk factors while measuring them to scale with students in the United States. The work of Olweus and Bjorkqvist et al. are certainly two of the most critical historical studies in the field of bullying. Also, any assessment of student risk factors becomes an important area of study to evaluate the impact bullying has on young people, based on regions. However, one of the most important works of scholarship in this study is the work of Larochette et al. and how they were able to identify the effect bullying has expressly on students of color in

Canada. This study speaks directly to the scope and focus of the hypothesis of this dissertation. Missing, however, from this literature are further examples of how bullying affects minority groups in other countries. While it is possible that the research might be available its yield was microscopic in keyword searches related to minorities in the countries mentioned above.

Bullying Effects on Students of Color and Urban Environments

The research cited above speaks to a possible global health issue concerning how students bully within the context of a school setting. However, Fitzpatrick et al. (2010) assert that much of bullying scholarship has been geared to the study of middle-class White areas or, for that matter, White countries. In researching the effects of bullying on students of color or in urban areas, there is microscopic mention of any related study to the topic until the work of Bosworth et al.'s (1999) study of the effects of bullying on urban middle school students. Noguera (2003) speaks to the need to investigate additional strategies further to help limit distractions to urban student achievement. He speaks to the fact that urban children, who usually are Black and Latino, need high expectations and safe and orderly learning environments to be successful. Because a vast majority of minority children grow up in low to medium income communities, it can be argued that these students might be even more at-risk to incidents of bullying than their White counterparts. This chapter is dedicated to the small but growing field of research on bullying and its impact on minority students in urban environments.

As noted above, one of the first studies of this kind was conducted by Bosworth et al. (1999), who conducted multiple regression studies of urban middle school children. Of the 558 students who took part in the study, only 19% reported that they had not been engaged in bullying activity in the previous month. The respondents in this study who were mainly Black

and Latino seem to have had limited ability to interact substantially with other peers without being involved in bullying. A further evaluation of this theory is explored in the studies by Spriggs et al. (2007) and Wang et al. (2009), who through the Health Behaviors in School-Aged Children (HBSC) survey found that African American students were less likely to report incidents of bullying compared to Latino or White students.

The HBSC survey also indicated that African American students reported significantly poorer classmate relationships compared to the other ethnic groups. Latino students declared in this study they found it difficult to communicate with their parents on the effects of bullying in their schools. Wang et al. (2009) also noted in their analysis that African American students were involved in more bullying incidents compared to White students. Each of those studies points to two clear identifications for African American youth, that they are self-reported as bullying others and identified as bullying others compared to both Latino and White students. Goldweber et al.'s (2013) studies of urban youth in Maryland conclude that African American students in their study are disproportionately identified as bullies.

The differences in African American and Latino involvement in bullying is also reflected in the work of Peskin et al. (2006), whose analysis of perceptions of bullying attitudes in those two ethnic groups concluded that a study of 7,017 urban school students found that African American students were more likely to be labeled as bullies as opposed to Latino students. What was universal amongst both Black and Latino students was the frequency of bullying observed by students, who reported up to 9.4% of students they observed engaged in bullying acts more than three times a day. In fact, the African American students were also described as victims and bully-victims compared to Latino students. It could be argued, given the HBSC study and the work of Peskin, that because African American students have poorer relations with other groups,

they are much more likely to become engaged in all three roles of bullying. Graham and Juvonen's (2002) studies also support the disproportionate labeling of African American children. Their study asked peers to nominate who they believed to be bullies and victims in their schools, resulting in the African American students being identified as the majority of bullies.

Peskin (2006) also reports that his study of urban middle and high school youth is comparable with national and international ratios. The authors report, "However, these estimates for minority young people are similar to the range of estimates reported from other U.S. studies. Estimates reported for the present study are also consistent with data reported from studies abroad" (p. 476). Peskin's research is critical to the understanding that although the literature on urban and students of color is less than that on White students, it is equally consistent with findings that alert us all to the issue of trying to identify meaningful strategies to combat bullying. One phenomenon that is not compatible with the majority of bullying scholarship is that Peskin's study concluded that in ethnic groups there is little to no gender separation of bullying behavior, meaning that girls and boys of color bully in similar ratios based on their research. This conclusion is a deviation from the classical European studies of Olweus or Bjorkqvist, who first concluded that boys tend to engage in bullying behavior more than girls. Estell et al. (2007) support this claim in their research of students of color in rural communities. They, too, support the claim based on their research that African American students are reported more than their peers to be bullies, but also that there seems to be no difference in bullying infractions amongst African American and Latino boys and girls.

Three additional studies raise concerns, however, about a different issue affecting minorities and students in urban areas. Williams and Peguero (2011, 2013) posit that minority (African American Asian, or Latino) students who are high achieving or low achieving became

more vulnerable to what they describe as stereotype theory. These students are adversely targeted by other students because they do not fall in with the socialized norm of their respective ethnic group. They argue that because schools have become socialized in these ways, students who belong to this category become targets of victimization for nonconformity to the traditional ethnic stereotypes.

The work of Williams and Peguero (2013) considers the influence of bullying on the academic achievement of students of color. Their 2013 study draws from the data from the Educational Longitudinal Study of 2002 to investigate the impact that bullying has on 12th-grade students' grade point average. The students in the study were baseline in their 9th grade year and continued as such to their 12th grade year. The findings of the study support that of Peskin et al. (2006) that the lowest performing group in the study academically were Latino and Black students. Through a regression of grade point average, the scholars come to the conclusion that students who are bullied in the 9th grade remain at that same grade point average to the 12th grade. This indicates that since Latino and Black students are higher targets for bullying, their grade point averages will reflect lower scores than their White counterparts.

It is evident, based on the data on this subject matter, that minority students (African American and Latino) face very different challenges than White students. It is with this understanding that this study calls for an evaluation of the impact that bullying has on the well-being of minority students. Fitzpatrick et al. (2009) posit that if the research on minority student bullying is to be assumed valid, these students are at severe risk of depressive symptomology. Bullying results in these students not feeling safe in school and thus becoming disconnected from the educational process. This study of 1,614 minority students concludes that these young people who are bullies, victims, or bully-victims require resources to support positive self-esteem.

One way in which this might be accomplished is through the creation of stronger social support systems in schools in which there are high levels of reported bullying amongst minority students. Demaray and Malecki's (2003) survey of minority students in Illinois indicated that minority students in their study reported receiving less support from teachers and other students as opposed to non-minority students. This lack of assistance might explain why Sawyer et al. (2008) theorize why minority students do not report acts of bullying in comparable numbers to White students. Ramirez (2013) supports this claim through a qualitative series of interviews with youth who explained that at times it is easier to ignore bullying that takes place at school because of the feeling that if any action is taken, things may get worse.

Research on the impact of bullying on urban and minority students is becoming a growing and necessary field of study (Fitzpatrick et al., 2010; A.L. Spriggs et al., 2007; Wang et al., 2009). Given the work in this field thus far, several researchers have made substantial claims that minority and urban students require additional support to deal with acts of bullying (Peskin et al., 2006; Graham & Juvonen, 2002; Williams & Peguero, 2011, 2013). However, there is an even more important theme that has arisen from this review. If in fact, students of color are being reported in greater numbers than White students, it also creates a cloud of fear and bias in our school systems. One could also ascertain that in environments where this might be prevailing thought, whether empirically true or not, the policies to then combat bullying will have disproportionate repercussions on the minority students.

An aspect that seems to be missing from this literature is the perspective of school staff and administrators' views on bullying. While children are the perpetrators and targets of bullying behavior, it is up to the adults in the schools to put together effective interventions to help limit acts of intimidation. The research literature provides little to no data on how school

administrators deal with bullying. Another limitation of the research is the lack of analysis of state and federal policies that impact bullying of urban and minority students. This dissertation seeks to add to the current field of study on the effects of bullying on minority and urban students by evaluating the policies put in place to be implemented by administrators to curb them.

Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying has become one of the newer fields of study in bullying research with the United Press International (2008) reporting that 40% of U.S. adolescents report being victims. While there is no universal definition amongst scholars in this field, it is a widely accepted that this level of bullying involves the use of power and harassment but through vehicles such as text messages and online forums (Li, 2005; Schneider, 2012; Kowalski et al., 2014; Mechari et al., 2014). This newest form of bullying differs substantially from the traditional forms of direct/indirect bullying because cyberbullies often perceive themselves as anonymous, and victims can experience harassment 24 hours a day 7, days a week (Kowalski et al., 2014). The work of Mechari et al. (2014) supports the two claims but also adds through their analysis that cyberbullies also have access to a wider pool of victims as well as an unlimited audience. Their research also asserts that cyberbullies also have a decreased level of inhibition because they do not have stand face to face with their victims.

Over the last two decades as technology has progressed, so has the field of cyberbullying. With the advancement of social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, students can now find almost unlimited ways to inflict harm on one another when they are not in school. A meta-analysis method is utilized in the work of Kowalski et al. (2014); their study examined some of the research conducted on this topic over the last decade. Their analysis of over 131

studies on cyberbullying identified several patterns in cyberbullying research. Their research demonstrates that victims of cyberbullying reported also having experienced high levels of traditional bullying. If this is to be purported as valid, then one could assume a situation where young people are being victimized all day if the circumstances allow for it. Couple that assertion with the study of Kiriakidis and Demarques (2013), who in their case study analysis of 74 teachers and administrators conclude that children who are victims may not be getting help from adults. The case study revealed that while their participants are aware that cyberbullying exists, they did not possess enough knowledge on the study to feel comfortable to keep kids safe.

The work of Li (2005) examines the impact of cyberbullying on a Canadian sample of over 170 pre-teens. Li reported that over half the students in the sample cited knowing someone who had been cyberbullied and that over a quarter of the respondents admitted to being cyberbullying victims. In a survey of over 20,000 students, Schneider et al. (2012) also supports the rampant incidence of cyberbullying in that more than half of their respondents reported being victims of traditional and cyberbullying, thus supporting the meta-analysis of Kowalski et al. Their 2012 study also reported that reports of cyberbullying were higher amongst girls than boys.

Li (2007) also asserts in his research that girls seemed to identify more as victims of cyberbullying. This assertion, however, has been challenged and debated in the cyberbullying field. Brown et al. (2014) conducted a survey of 106 Illinois students and found no significant gender differences. His study does support the theory that cyberbully victims also are identified as traditional and bully-victims as well. Olweus (1988, 1993) theorized that girls tend to engage more in indirect bullying, which might lead one to conclude that cyberbullying would fit naturally with his hypothesis. There is research in the field to support both the pro and con of this hypothesis. A study conducted by Fanti et al. (2012) supports that there is little causation of

gender differences in cyberbullying. Their study found that boys were both at risk of higher rates of victimization and perpetration of cyberbullying than girls.

As alluded to in the introduction of this review of literature, studies about the effect of cyberbullying on students of color are reflective of the broader field. One such study that identifies the impact of cyberbullying on a mixed sample of students found that African Americans are purported to be cyberbullied in larger numbers than whites (Low and Espelage, 2013). This is reflective of the research in the chapter on urban students and students of color. Low and Espelage reveal that these students suffer in larger part from higher incidents of family violence and parental monitoring. Thus, one could conclude that in the absence of guidance these young people find themselves practicing behavior that could be preventable if challenged by positive adult presences.

Considering the research, cyberbullying is indeed an important issue in our schools, both domestically and internationally. As technology engineers itself further, so does the opportunity for young people to engage in behavior that hurts their peers. While there are several bullying prevention programs for traditional acts of bullying, what is needed in the field is research on effective practices to deal with cyberbullying. The long-term effects of cyberbullying can be detrimental to young people if their behavior is not challenged and corrected. One has only to look to the catalyst of the NJ Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act, which was the death of Tyler Clementi, a student at Rutgers University. Zafeiriou and Manyande (2012) argue in their study of cyberbullying in higher education that students who committed acts of cyberbullying in college were bullies in some form in high school.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine urban school Anti-Bullying Specialists' responses regarding the impact of the 2011 New Jersey Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act (NJAB) on their ability to respond to acts of bullying and student aggression at their schools. This qualitative study can serve as an opportunity to capture the reality of how high school staff deals with acts of bullying and peer aggression in their schools. Supporting documents such as each high school's climate and culture plan as prescribed within the NJAB, student performance data on NJASK, and student discipline reports were utilized to reinforce the narrative assessment that was conducted by the researcher. This chapter highlights the researcher's interest in the topic and field of study and presents a description of the methods that were used to conduct research on the said topic. Participant selection is explained in this section as well as a profile of each Anti-Bullying Specialist that were interviewed. The final part of this chapter examines the process of data collection and analysis and concludes with the research limitations of the methodological review.

Background

I, the researcher, have worked with school districts on the topic of bullying prevention for over a decade. I began my work in schools as a graduate student for a consulting and training firm that provided instructional support on various school climate-related issues. Subsequently, this led me to found and establish my consulting company called the Ceceilyn Miller Institute for Leadership and Diversity in America (CMI) in 2007. When we began our work at CMI, the bulk of our programs were related to peer mediation and peer leadership training with school systems

all around the country. We slowly began to do more in-services for faculty on several topics like social-emotional learning, diversity and inclusion, and bullying prevention.

In 2010, our organization was asked to join the New Jersey Coalition for Bullying Prevention. This group serves as a consortium of non-profit and for-profit stakeholders who advise the New Jersey State Legislature on policy changes to laws on bullying in the state. Our work as a consortium came to a head when Governor Christopher Christie signed into law the 2011 NJAB. However, the law, as it made its way from the Coalition to the legislature, certainly changed and took several forms, thus resulting in what many have called the most comprehensive and punitive anti-bullying law in the country. While the New Jersey law is indeed comprehensive, it is also very convoluted with mandates that seemed at times to be unrealistic for many educators to enforce. The law places strict requirements on reporting of incidents of bullying, establishing personnel positions to oversee bullying incidents, and holds teachers and school leaders responsible if any aspect of the law is not followed. Thus, while many in the state praised the law, there were just as many who questioned its impact on school functions.

Due to the level of unrest in the state related to the, law my company, CMI, partnered in 2011 with the Center for Applied Psychology at Rutgers University to launch the first statewide conference on bullying prevention. At this event, we invited over 350 educators from around the state to learn from researchers, practitioners, and representatives of the State Department of Education about how to effectively implement the NJAB. This event was so successful that the conference has taken place each year since then, having moved to the Richard Stockton University of New Jersey for the last three years. As one of the organizers of the annual conference, it is my responsibility to stay cognizant of new research in the field of bullying

prevention as well as to connect educators with resources they can use to help make their schools and districts safer places for children.

In addition to my work as a practitioner in the field of bullying prevention, the main reason why I have decided to examine the NJAB perceived impact in urban schools is my work as a board member in Paterson, New Jersey. For the last five years, I had served as an elected member of the Paterson, New Jersey, School Board, a position I was elected to when I was 27 years old. My time on the board has given me an interesting opportunity to see firsthand how bullying can affect schools and student performance. Parents attend our council meetings and testify quite often about how their children are treated by other children in our schools. What has become one of the most frustrating parts of this role for me has been the lack of understanding on the part of my colleagues on the board about how pervasive this issue is in our schools.

My service on the Paterson Board of Education has exposed me to matter in the field that was confirmed as I began my review of literature about bullying prevention; there continues to be a disconnect in the area of scholarship on bullying and its perceived effects on urban school districts. To that end, this study seeks to add to the small field of study to ascertain if policy created by either state departments or politicians is having an impact in the areas that are most ravaged by social and economic plight. As a result of this, I have committed myself to exploring this through the eyes of 16 urban school administrators in the state of New Jersey with the hopes of examining their perceptions of the NJAB and its impact on their high schools.

The research questions that were explored in this study are as follows:

1. How do Anti-Bullying Specialists in New Jersey urban high schools describe the implementation of the NJAB law and its influences on the structure and practices in their respective schools?

2. In what way, if any, has the school curriculum been modified to address the requirements of the NJAB law?
3. What support services, if any, have been amended or made available to students who bully or have been bullied since the passing of the NJAB law?
4. What distinguishing characteristics, if any, are utilized by students who bully to target their victims (i.e., gender, race, sexual orientation, or weight)?

Design

This is an exploratory case study that seeks to investigate and understand the perceived impact of the NJAB on urban high schools through the lens of the Anti-Bullying Specialists who are responsible for implementation of the law. The study lends itself to the exploratory model given the level of uncertainty that can be uncovered through the methodological process. The qualitative case study method of data collection has been chosen as the means to best capture greater understanding of the variables that influence how urban high school staff control for incidents of bullying. There is one unit of analysis: high school Anti-Bullying Specialists and their respective high schools to be studied in their natural habitat. To identify high schools and districts in the sample group of 16, the researcher used the NJAB report card measure to identify 10-20 urban school districts with high schools. The state measures each school district based on the amount of bullying reported, the frequency of investigations, and appeals made to the department of education after a zone has rendered their decision. For this study, the term *urban districts* is defined as school districts that have a population of more than 50% of their students receiving free or reduced school lunch.

Table 1

Sample Targeted Urban School Districts

Sample Targeted Urban School Districts
Paterson
Newark
Passaic
Jersey City
Camden
Garfield
New Brunswick
East Orange
Phillipsburg
Trenton
Orange
Harrison

The criteria for selecting the district was an intentional selection approach based on the district's total student population and number of high schools. The superintendents of the high schools were contacted by the researcher to gain acceptance in conducting this study in their

districts. Urban school districts in New Jersey fall into several different categories based on race and socioeconomic status. For this purpose, the researcher selected districts that have a majority population of African American, Latino, White, and racially mixed populations. Once the districts consented to participate, the high schools in those districts were then eligible to take part in the study. However, it should be noted that those Anti-Bullying Specialists who decided to join the participant group of 16 must have been in that role in their school for a minimum of two years. It can be argued that new Anti-Bullying Specialists in a school are still adjusting to the school policies and culture; therefore, this study focused only on those Anti-Bullying Specialists with at least two years of experience.

Since high school Anti-Bullying Specialists have firsthand knowledge of reported incidents of bullying in their schools, the questions (see Appendix A) that were asked of them sought to explore their experiences in dealing with incidents of harassment, intimidation, and bullying (HIB) and how they control for it. The questions that were posed support the case study research approach for the researcher to garner a greater understanding of how the NJAB impacts the day-to-day operations of the high schools on the subjects under study.

Sampling

This study sought to interview 16 urban high school Anti-Bullying Specialists from districts in New Jersey. The researcher used the New Jersey Department of Education HIB database and school district report card to gauge the frequency and levels of incidents of bullying. As per the NJAB, each school district in New Jersey is required to self-report the total amount of investigations and confirmed incidents of HIB. Lists of the urban school districts were generated with a specific focus on the high schools for the initial target group. A letter was then generated to the district's superintendent of schools for approval. Once the high schools

were identified and the superintendents gave consent, a recruitment tool was created to outline the purpose of the study and the qualifications needed to serve as a participant in the study. The tool and invitation letter were sent to those high school administrators or Anti-Bullying Specialists for permission to conduct the interview at their school.

The interview protocol for this study was semi-structured with at least seven initial interview questions. The responses to the questions were captured in script by the researcher and via voice recorder. Participants before the interview process reviewed and signed a waiver indicating they volunteered to participate in the study and that the researcher had their permission to record the session. The questions used in the survey were field tested with a small group of those participants who were not selected for the study in order to ensure the efficacy of the questions.

Profiles of the Selected Districts

Alpha School District

Alpha is one of the largest comprehensive public school systems in the State of New Jersey. Located in the northern part of the state, it has a full-time enrollment of more than 25,000 students. The ethnic makeup of the district is majority Black and Latino. There are more than a dozen public high schools that are all currently theme-focused schools.

Beta School District

Beta is another large school system in northern New Jersey. Their student enrollment is similar to that of the Alpha School District. However, the ethnic makeup of this district is much more diverse with Black, Latino, White, and Asian students that attend schools within the system. The majority of students who attended school in this district are on reduced lunch.

Gamma School District

Gamma was selected as the final district for this study. It is smaller than the Alpha and Beta districts with a little under 9,000 students. The demographic makeup of this district is largely Latino, Black, and White. This district has a total of 10 schools that range from Pre-Kindergarten to high school.

Bios of the Participants

Following being chosen for the study, all participants received a letter informing them of their participation in the study and requesting them to schedule the interview with the researcher. To protect each subject's confidentiality, the researcher gave each subject a new name and code to protect his or her anonymity.

Mr. A is a guidance counselor at High School A, which has a population of 176 students in the Beta School District. He has just completed two years at this learning institution. His role as an employee at this school is to enhance discipline among students, especially on matters to do with bullying. He is the point person in the school when it comes to reporting such harassment, intimidation, and bullying. As it approaches June, Mr. A will be happily celebrating a total of six years working in the district and two years at High School A. As the Anti-Bullying Specialist who is charged with handling bullying related cases, Mr. A enjoys the role he plays for the entire educational community.

Mr. F is a seasoned guidance counselor in the Beta School District. High School B serves a population of 287 students and is the place where Mr. F has been exercising his skills of counseling for the past five years. High School B is a high performing school in the Beta School District and boasts an 80% graduation rate. Mr. F takes great pride in the work that he does with his students to prepare them for higher education.

Mr. G is an employee of High School C, which is located in the Alpha School District. His position at this learning institution is known as SOS Coordinator or Dean of Discipline in the school that has a capacity of 550 students. Charged with the mandate of making sure that discipline among the students is facilitated effectively at High School C, Mr. G comes across students and kids with different issues related to discipline. It is his job to make sure that coordination exists between the school, parents, and community resources that exist to help all students. It should be noted that High School C is considered by many in the Alpha District as a "turnaround school," having significantly improved the quality of teaching and learning in that school.

High School D employed Mr. H as a vice principal about two years ago. He is an administrator who has been exercising his skills ever since the year 2000 in the Beta School District. He is, therefore, an experienced professional when it comes to matters of administration and the entire process of managing a high school. He has spent his entire educational career in the Beta School District, having worked his way into the position he is in now. He understands what it takes for one to manage a learning environment and the challenges that may arise. On matters of bullying, Mr. H serves as the vice principal and Anti-Bullying Specialist for his school.

Mr. M holds the position of a vice principal at High School E, an institution that has a total of 600 students from Grades 7-12. In his leadership role, Mr. M is concerned with the proper running of the school, making sure that all the operations run smoothly among the students and the faculty. Before joining High School E, Mr. M served as the HIB Coordinator at another high school in the Alpha District for a total of nine years. He just finished his second year at High School E, and this means that he is in his tenth year as an educator.

Mr. T is the current Crisis Intervention Teacher at High School F. His position has changed from being called the Dean of Students but still has the mandate of managing discipline. He has served as a CIT for about four years now and the Anti-Bullying Specialist for a total of three and a half years. Mr. T works with a population of about 800 students, which makes up for one of the smallest schools in the Beta School District. He is in charge of the intervention team, which is a group of faculty and staff who serve the need of onsite assessment and case management for students who are in crisis.

Mr. TD works as the lead of the Stakeholders Engagement Team and holds the title of Dean of Discipline for High School G. His school is a part of the Alpha School District and oversees a population of 700 students. He as the Anti-Bullying Specialist with Ms. C, and together they serve at the Anti-Bullying Team for High School G. Mr. TD advocated for the dual Anti-Bullying Specialist role when the law was created in 2011 to allow for students who are male and female to have the opportunity to speak with someone of the same gender for incidents that may be sexual in nature.

Ms. C is another Anti-Bullying Specialist in High School G. She has been at the school for three years and is well versed in the matter of solving conflicts that result from the cases of bullying in school. Ms. C's role is school social worker. In this role, she has the ability to counsel students in crisis and refers students for additional services that may exist outside of her high school. She is also the partner to Mr. TD on the Anti-Bullying Specialist team for High School G.

Ms. GF is the vice Principal of Culture and Climate at High School H with a population of 699 students and goes from Grades 7-12. She has been an employee of the school for a total of five years. However, this is the second year that Ms. GF is serving in the role of a vice principal.

In her prior role, she served as guidance counselor for High School H and has worked her entire educational career in the Beta School District. She is the organizer and convener of the High School H Anti-Bullying Team. This is a group of several staff and administrators who are trained in the NJAB and can conduct investigations on her behalf.

Ms. R works at High School J in the Gamma School District and serves as the Student Assistance Counselor (SAC). She also plays the role of an Anti-Bullying Specialist when it comes to handling the matters of bullying within the school. Ms. R manages a total of 1,600 students at High School J and is the only staff person trained to conduct harassment, intimidation, and bullying investigations. With five years' experience as an Anti-Bullying Specialist, Ms. R has acquired a lot of knowledge about the NJAB and is committed to the position she holds.

For a total of two years now, Ms. W has been working as a counselor and at the same time as the Anti-Bullying Specialist within the Beta School District. Before coming to Beta, she was employed in another district in central New Jersey. It was at this place where she was able to exercise the anti-bullying skills before joining the current school. As a coordinator for the entire school, Ms. W has a lot of leadership skills, which she performs with diligence. High School J is her current assignment and is one of two high schools in the Gamma School District. This school is a very small learning community of fewer than 200 students with a theme of college preparation.

Mr. TB serves in the role of disciplinarian and Anti-Bullying Specialist at High School K, which is located in the Beta School District. Mr. TB has been a staff member at High School K for 17 years and in the current role of Discipline Coordinator for 16 years. This school was created in 1999 in partnership with the local college and has a student enrollment of less than

200 students. The focus of the school is to encourage the students there to take courses at the local college to earn early credit that they can put forth to the college of their choice when they graduate from K High School.

Ms. FS is the Anti-Bullying Specialist for High School L, which is located in the Alpha Public School District. In addition to her role overseeing incidents of bullying, she is also the advocate counselor and the 504 coordinator for her school. High School L is an alternative 9-12 high school for students who are either truant or may be reentering school due to expulsion or incarceration. The school serves about 105 students who are on a roll but struggle to keep the daily attendance above 60%. The school is considered by Ms. FS as the last opportunity for these students, some of whom are on the verge of aging out, to get their high school diploma.

Mr. CT is vice principal in charge of positive student management, which is discipline; in charge of the Freshman Academy, which observes 20 teachers of different subject areas; and in charge of security. He also works with athletics, the athletic director himself as well as the Culture and Climate Team. This is his sixth year in the role of vice principal at High School M, which is a moderately large school of less than 750 students. Mr. CT facilitates several restorative circle groups with his students as an opportunity to teach them how to engage in positive mechanisms to discussing their feelings.

Ms. HM is the student support specialist and Anti-Bullying Specialist for High School O. In the role of support specialist, Ms. HM serves as a caseworker dealing with students who may have problems at home or in their community that are affecting their learning. She has worked in the Alpha School District for 16 years and has worked as a teacher, social worker, and now support specialist. She is one of two Anti-Bullying Specialists in her building and she handles incidents of bullying specifically in Grades 7-10; her colleagues attend to the incidents of

bullying in Grades 11-12.

Ms. B has been a guidance counselor at High School P for five years and has served as the Anti-Bullying Specialist for the last three years. Ms. B has been employed by the Beta School District for more than a decade and began her career as an elementary school teacher. She also leads the school-based counseling program for students who are having mental health concerns to drop in and receive the support that they need. She is one of the creators of that drop-in program and credits its success to making students feel comfortable to discuss mental health issues.

Data Collection

The researcher conducted the interviews with the participants. The researcher followed the qualitative exploratory model as defined in readings of Patton (2002). The researcher submitted and discussed the questions listed below in Table 2 and his research method with his dissertation adviser to ensure that there was adequate training in the qualitative method. Interviews took place at the participants' place of work unless specified that they would like a change of venue. The following table (Appendix B) outlines the interview procedure that was employed for each Anti-Bullying Specialist that took part in the study.

Table 2

Interview Questions Raised by the Theoretical Framework

Interview Question	***Theoretical Framework***
Please describe the process of how incidents of bullying are handled in your school when a child, parent, or teacher reports an	***Ecological Theory***

allegation?	
What measures/initiatives within the NJAB do you find most/least helpful in dealing with incidents of bullying?	***Ecological Theory***
What programs or services exist within or outside of the school that seek to help remediate children who bully?	***Resilience Theory*** ***Ecological Theory***
Can you please describe what resources, if any, exist for students who are targets of bullying for distinguishing chrematistics (race, gender, sexual orientation, weight)?	***Resilience Theory***
Can you describe how the NJAB has influenced the curriculum of your school?	***Resilience Theory*** ***Ecological Theory***
How have students and faculty responded to the mandates within the NJAB?	***Ecological Theory***
Please describe the nature of bullying at the four grade levels in your school and the effects, if any, on teaching and learning?	***Resilience Theory*** ***Ecological Theory***

Once the interviews were conducted and the text recorded, interviews were merged based on each subject to best capture the totality of the interview. The process of category construction

(Patton, 2002) was employed, which includes the formation of the data into patterns, themes, and content analysis. Through the process of convergence, which is reading over data multiple times to ensure accuracy, data began to take shape in the form of patterns and themes. The subjects were coded S1-S16 in the data analysis sections. Themes were coded as T1-T10 or more, depending on the themes identified. Patterns were be coded as P1-P10 or more depending on the patterns identified.

Once the coding was completed, there were single and cross-case comparisons conducted to draw conclusions about overlapping themes or patterns. At that point, the data were evaluated to make inferences best explaining the collection of the data. Once the inferences were established, the researcher began to develop theoretical models to further elaborate the research question. Upon the completion of the theory section, the researcher compared and evaluated his research with that of the prevailing community of scholarship concerning bullying in urban schools.

Data Analysis

Following the transcription of the data from the interviews of the Anti-Bullying Specialists, the researcher reviewed the narrative responses to ensure that the transcriptions were recorded accurately. The transcript of each interview was sent to the participant for verification of the interview. The transcripts were reviewed for a second time to list topics based on the codes that had been created. Using the hybrid model of coding that was adopted by Boyatzia (1998) via theoretical, prior research, data-driven approaches for formulating conclusions based on the coding were conducted. A coding chart was created to illuminate the codes that were established based on the transcripts of the participants.

Single-Case Analysis

Following the methodology of Miles and Huberman (1994), the single case analysis process was employed to study and assess each interview and establish codes to allow for specific analysis for each high school and Anti-Bullying Specialist. The single-case process allows for the researcher to evaluate and examine each interview without comparing them to one another. The potential from this process is that there might be themes and explanations that might be clouded if the researcher were to immediately engage in a case comparison method.

Cross-Case Analysis

Once the single case themes had been recorded and analyzed, the next step was to conduct a cross-case analysis. This process proved to be most fruitful given the nature of the research design and potential themes from the Anti-Bullying Specialist. Recurrent themes were cited first by the researcher and further explored to identify what causes may be prevalent as a result of the analysis. Additionally, close attention was paid to themes and codes that have no correlation with one another, which might be the most important component of the analysis.

Researcher Bias

The researcher's bias was monitored by approved consent of the questions to the participants by the dissertation advisor of this study. The advisor reviewed the data as transcribed by the researcher to monitor any perceived bias. If, in fact, there were concerns on behalf of the advisor, the researcher needed to nullify the interview and find a new subject for study.

Reliability and Validity

To control for reliability in this study, I engaged a jury of experts of high school Anti-Bullying Specialists who were not selected for this study to control for the questions that were asked of the 16 participants in the study. The jury of experts of three Anti-Bullying Specialists

was polled to give suggestions on the formation and clarity of each question to ensure that when they are asked of the 16 participants, there was clarity. Once the group had vetted the questions, I conducted two sample interviews using the updated versions of the interview protocol to check if the questions would elicit useful data for analysis.

Conclusion

This chapter has shared with the reader the methodological requirements of this dissertation. The background, design, sampling technique, and method of data collection have been outlined for conducting research that is credible and consistent with scholarly studies within the field of bullying prevention. The participants selected for this study offered a significant contribution to the field of urban bullying prevention. Chapter IV reports the findings of the group once the interviews were conducted.

CHAPTER IV

DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

As indicated in the methodology chapter of this dissertation, a series of 16 interviews were conducted in three different school districts coded Alpha, Beta, and Gamma. All participants in the interviews are the Anti-Bullying Specialists of their respective schools as required by the New Jersey Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights (NJAB). Each Specialist was asked the same questions and the responses were recorded with the participant's permission. Following the interviews, each recording was transcribed and reviewed for validity and coded according to the procedures explained in Chapter III. The coding resulted in the establishment of themes and patterns that are reported in this chapter. The themes for each question seek to establish an arrangement of thought about the question that was posed. The patterns that emerged strive to identify circumstantial explanations that may not be explicitly clear based on the statements that were given by the participants. The patterns are based on the researcher's assessment of the behavior of each participant but also the linkage of said behavior within the context of the themes that were generated. This study addressed the following research questions:

1. How do Anti-Bullying Specialists in New Jersey urban high schools describe the implementation of the NJAB law and its influences on the structures and practices in their schools?
2. In what way, if any, has the school curriculum been modified to address the requirements of the NJAB?
3. What support services, if any, have been amended or made available to students who bully or have been bullied since the passing of the NJAB?

4. What distinguishing characteristics, if any, are utilized by students who bully to target their victims (i.e., gender, race, sexual orientation, or weight)?

Themes from Research Question 1

Research Question 1: How do Anti-Bullying Specialists in New Jersey urban high schools describe the implementation of the NJAB law and its influences on the structures and practices in their schools?

The themes coded from the responses of the Anti-Bullying Specialists interviewed for this study illuminate that while the NJAB has received criticism from some education activists as either being too punitive or not going far enough, there seems to be a clear understanding of the legal premise of the law and the regulations that govern it as well. The themes identified below indicate that the participants in the study are indeed prepared and versed in the law. However, it will also be noted in this section that while the majority of participants are fully aware of the requirements of the law, they also have varying opinions as to whether the law has been effective. Some of the participants also cite various impacts on groups in their schools, including students and teachers as well. The NJAB and its mandates, while meant for children, certainly have several expectations that adults must carry out to be in full compliance. To that end, the themes and responses and to this question illustrate the potential successes of the law but also argue that there are pros and cons to the implementation of the NJAB.

Compliance with Legal Mandates

Under section C.18A:17-46 of the NJAB, each district is required to set and establish parameters by which all parties report incidents or allegations of bullying within a school. Any party that is witness to an incident of bullying in a school now has a legal responsibility to report said incident to the Anti-Bullying Specialist of each school or to another administrator. The first

theme that became salient in the analysis of the responses to the first research question revealed that every school and district that participated in this study possesses the means to allow for students, parents, and staff members to report acts of bullying.

In two of the districts that were interviewed, the reporting is done using an online software called HIBSTER. This software allows for anyone with online access to report incidents of bullying from a mobile phone or a desktop computer. All participants in the two districts that utilize this software cited the ability to streamline the reporting procedure for effective investigations. One Anti-Bullying Specialist that was interviewed cited the vast difference in ability to effectively review the incidents of bullying in the school, crediting the software's ability to launch a bullying investigation instantly once it is submitted through the system.

The third district that was used in this study currently does not use HIPSTER or any online data management software. While one can argue that the online resources may seem like the more viable option, the Anti-Bullying Specialist in this district, Alpha, reported manual options for students, staff, and parents to report bullying incidents. Given the responses of the participants from Alpha District, there does not seem to be any lapse in service or reporting using a manual approach to dealing with incidents of bullying. One Anti-Bullying Specialist stated the following:

> We have an anonymous bullying form; all the teachers have one. They are all over here in the school so students could take one and report it; and then we obviously, if it goes to me or the administrator, I as a counselor go to the administrator or principal and we discuss it, and obviously it is investigated. No matter if there is HIB found, it may not be, we still investigate; and we interview the students, not obviously together, separately, the victim and the aggressors or whatever, vice versa.

In this case, the anonymous bullying form that is used within the school is available for all students and staff to utilize throughout the school building. The benefit one can conclude of the manual reporting processes could be that it is more reliable if an online system ever crashed.

An additional area that was uniform when the topic of reporting was investigated was that the majority of Anti-Bullying Specialists who were interviewed cited that in the first two years in which the law was enacted there seemed to be an overabundance of bullying reports. More than half of the participants in this study noted that within the first two years of the rollout of the law parents, students, and even faculty were not clear on the definition of bullying as per the NJAB. However, this phenomenon seemed to taper off after the second year, in which all school stakeholders had a much better grasp on the law, regulations, and district policies on bullying.

Clarity in Reporting Procedures

The second theme that was prevalent in the responses to the first research question was the sense of clarity for the timeline associated with investigating incidents of bullying. As per the NJAB, once an incident is reported districts have two days to initiate a bullying investigation, and within 10 days the investigation must be completed. Within two days of the completion of the investigation, a report of the summary of the inquiry must be forwarded to the superintendent of schools and then a report must be sent to the board of education. The requirements of the law are quite specific with little room for error on the part of those investigating bullying allegations or the administrators who are charged with overseeing the process.

However, of the 16 participants interviewed, 12 were able to reference the reporting timeline and structure as mandated by the NJAB. As a researcher, it was astounding to hear such understanding and compliance of steps that must be taken to have a thorough investigation. Of the 12 who cited the structure mandating reporting dates, eight cited that their district spent or

continues to spend resources to ensure that all staff are familiar with the law and the yearly changes that come from the statewide committee that reviews the law. Two separate Anti-Bullying Specialists described their processes below. Mr. H stated the following:

> We have very strict procedures. Anytime an incident of bullying takes place, a first thing we immediately have to do is investigate the matter within the district administrative regulations; it is very clearly defined there. What happens is we investigate both sides, both parents have to be brought in and the HIB specialist, the harassment, intimidation, bullying specialist has to be notified. Every school in this city has one. At that point, we have a duty to get the information up to the HIB person at the district, which is still [Name not given] if I am not mistaken, within forty-eight hours and five days, and determination has to come back from central office.

Mr. T added the following statement:

> So, these are the procedures that we have here, and they all stem from the state law. If there is a perception that a student is being harassed, intimidated, bullied by a teacher, staff member, volunteer of the building, custodial, security, anyone that we outsourced, someone who comes in to do a one-day session; if they perceive something, they have to say something. Moreover, we've built a team here, the crisis intervention team, that makes it easy to access the principal; so, for example, if there's an issue, they'll tell us, we'll tell the principal, they will tell the principal, they will follow that procedure, but we have more access to the principal, so she'll definitely get it. However, it's 24 hours verbal, they can go to the office; and if she is not there, then we'll take over because we want the principal to know; that is number one. Written, it has to be two days written, and we use

the e-mail system. I can show you some emails, without showing you some names, of how we do it.

The two narratives above indicate that these two Anti-Bullying Specialists certainly have a clear picture for the timeline for investigation and reporting. What is further interesting is the NJAB allows for districts to make their policies and reporting procedures stricter than the state recommends. If a district wants an investigation done within five days of reporting, it has the flexibility to do so. What districts cannot do is go beyond the specified times that are cited within the law.

Various Systems of Reporting

The next theme that became salient to the researcher after interviewing the participants was the notion that the majority (12 Anti-Bullying Specialist) cited that while the law is quite prescriptive regarding reporting, they appreciated having the timeline and interview protocol outlined for their districts. The sentiment from those interviewed noted that if the reporting and time period to conduct bullying interviews were not standardized it would leave each school and district to their own devices to handle incidents of bullying investigations. Mr. A was one of the most vocal supporters of this theme, noting the following:

> Well, I like the timeline because it gives a very specific time when something happens, what is supposed to happen. It's a good guide for me as an anti-bullying specialist. Yeah, that's what I like about it, the procedures and have to do the reporting, it really kind of forces the school to have to deal with these situations . . . Yes, so I follow up on every single incident. My job as the HIB specialist, the anti-bullying specialist, is to follow up whether I think it's true or not, I still have to follow up so that it's reported and then

hopefully it'll be unfounded at the end. But if it is founded, we have the deal with it accordingly.

While the individuality of each incident of bullying is a critical component for all educators to be aware of, what is equally important is that there be a system in place that allows both the children who bully and the victims a process for adjudication of incidents. Participants noted in their responses to research question number one that, in the absence of the NJAB, there was no clear way to investigate and deal with incidents of bullying that was fair for both parties. Participants reflected that in their schools prior to the 2011 iteration of the law there was a large gap of information regarding what constitutes bullying or even what the parameters were for an investigation. The participants noted that the NJAB takes the ambiguity about deciding what is bullying and what is not away from the educator and puts the responsibility on the policies each district has passed and the NJAB itself.

Empowerment of Students

The participants noted that the law seemed to empower the students within their schools to understand how their actions impact others and how to use the law to empower themselves. Seven participants noted that, in one way or another, the law helped young people to view their schools as an educational tool to either protect themselves from bullies or even to protect themselves from being identified as a bully. An obvious example of this empowerment was given by Mr. M, who noted that on several occasions those students who might be identified as displaying bullying behavior would come to their own defense by citing their rights within the law. Students in his school would ask questions like, “How can it be bullying if it is not a protected class?”, referring to the section of the law that requires that if bullying is to occur it should be identified within one of the protected classes listed in the law. It seems Mr. M took

great pride in the ability of his students to challenge him and staff by utilizing the law, indicating, “The kids are aware, and that is what we want. We want them to be aware of it.”

Teacher Reactions

The next theme that resonated from the responses to Research Question 1 was that while most participants argued that faculty certainly were supportive of the law, it also made them quite “trigger happy” to report incidents of bullying. It was described by some of the participants that when the law was first rolled out in 2012, faculty would report almost any incident of student conflict as bullying. Many faculty members took the "it's better to be safe than sorry" stance, resulting in a surge in reporting in the first two years of implementation of the law. However, these overreactions reduced the time that Anti-Bullying Specialists had to utilize for their normal duties within the school. Ms. R gave the most compelling statement:

> Everything. Yeah, everything was bullying. "She looked at me wrong, and that was bullying." The first year was horrendous. The amount of paperwork that we went through over very minor incidents that could've been easily handled in the classroom and that would've never risen to the level of the law. It's funny now, because even when you go on HIBster, you have that first screen that tells you, "If this is this and that, then this is . . . Submit the report." It's sort of like, "I'm not even gonna read that. I'm gonna put it in just in case."

Ms. R is just one of several Anti-Bullying Specialists who indicated that teaching staff seemed to be much more willing than students to report incidents of bullying.

Levels of Ambiguity in the Law

The next theme identified from this research question indicates that while the law is certainly robust, there are still layers of ambiguity. To that end, participants noted that while

there were indeed clear parameters for investigation and reporting, there still seems to be some ambiguity about how to define an incident as bullying in situations that are not abundantly clear. The Anti-Bullying Specialists noted that while some clear incidents are quite obviously bullying, others are not so cut-and-dried. One Anti-Bullying Specialist noted the following:

> How to determine what bullying is. We still have that one somewhat not so singular issue of true bullying as opposed to someone calling bullying to get even, or someone saying that they are being bullied because they are looking for attention. Right now it is all very gray; much investigation has to be done before you can determine that. Even so, most times you still don't get a definitive answer. Sometimes there's much back story that doesn't go into the process because the process has gotten so stringent. This lack of clarity is what many opponents to the NJAB have cited as a reason why the law should either be repealed or amended in some fashion.

To further elaborate on this point, there were also three Anti-Bullying Specialists who cited issues with the processes of reporting and conducting an investigation. Collectively, the three participants, two of whom are from the same district, explained that the law gives little clarity regarding when an investigation must begin. As Mr. T stated:

> So look, there is an issue of time, right? That turnaround time, ten days, we do not have clarity; what are the 10 days? Are we talking about ten school days? Business days? Because bullying is 24 hours a day, seven days a week. So, you know, I get something on a certain day, it is due on a Saturday and Sunday; contractually I am not supposed to work on a Saturday or Sunday, but the law is saying this, so what is my obligation? That is not clear. If bullying is so important, why isn't the ABS (Anti-Bullying Specialist) a position? Things like that.

In a state like New Jersey where the New Jersey Education Association is still one of the most powerful collective bargaining units, Mr. T brings up a very significant point that was also echoed by two of his peers from other districts. There was also the issue of the punishments that should be administered to youth who bully. Anti-Bullying Specialists noted that the law is not clear on how best to determine a penalty when a child violated the district anti-bullying policy. As a result of this lack of clarity, each district interviewed uses various methodologies and practices to attempt to correct the behavior of students who bully.

Lack of Clarity with Sections of NJAB

The next theme, it can be argued, might be an extension of the lack of clarity in the definition of bullying within the law. Five of the participants within the study described situations within their schools in which children and adults would report incidents of bullying for situations that they argue do not rise to the standard within the law. Additionally, there was one of the five who explained that the lack of clarity at times is utilized by some of the students to minimize the impact of incidents of bullying. Mr. A noted in the interviews that while it may be small, some teens in his school lack a general understanding of the impact when they downplay incidents of bullying. He explained as follows:

> This is probably an unintended consequence; it has almost become like a punchline sometimes for students to say, “You are bullying, you are bullying, you are bullying!" I do not think that the intention of the law was to eliminate, or to at least minimize incidences of HIB in the school; but some, a few students, will be a bit lost on what this law was supposed to do, as it has become a punchline. Moreover, sometimes it can be taken as a joke. However, that's very minimum, at least in my experience.

A further examination of his narrative suggests that if there are young people in ~~a~~ school who

feel as though incidents of bullying are not taken seriously, they may not report it. This is critical to the conversation about how the law has been drafted and implemented given the proposed intent of the law.

Misunderstanding of NJAB

This theme noted that parents' lack of understanding of what bullying is within the context of the law and districtwide policy is at times not productive. Mr. M noted in his interview with the researcher that he gets reports from parents who allege that an incident of bullying has occurred when two youth are engaged in a fight. The NJAB defines that mutual conflict cannot be deemed bullying because there is no imbalance of power in many of those situations. However, he noted that the mutual conflict clause in the law does little to soothe a parent who is upset that their child has engaged in a fight. Ms. W's comments echo that of Mr. M, who stated, "I think it's hard when, just because parents or a student says the word *bullying* that it has to go through the process even if we can weed it out before those steps are taken. There are incidents that you know aren't part of the HIB, but however . . . you have to go through the process." It is important to note at this point that while Anti-Bullying Specialists are indeed investigating the incidents of bullying, they also have other roles or positions within their schools. Several participants cited that the necessity of dealing with allegations that they believe are erroneous takes them away at times from their day-to-day duties in their normal role or position in the school.

Labeling of Students

The next theme that was identified in the evaluation of the research question indicated that while some students viewed the law as a deterrent because of early intervention and education, other students seem to have accepted the law out of their fear of being labeled. The

NJAB allows for provisions that if a student is accused and found to have violated the NJAB and their respective school's policy, their record of the incident can follow them to another school or even to post-secondary institutions as well. For those reasons, six participants indicated that student reactions were a result of not wanting to be labeled with the title of bully. One of the participants described his interactions with students regarding the law. He quoted a student's response, ". . . if I bully, my name goes on the state log or it goes to Trenton or if I move from here, they know I bullied by punching in my ID."

While some might look at the label of "bully" as a deterrent, there is also a drawback that can result from it. Labeling, it seems, has had a very strong impact on how these students view the consequences of engaging in this behavior. It is possible to argue that some students may see this label and recognize that engaging in such behavior may not be worth it in the long run. This finding within the study should raise concerns for how students will be labeled after an incident of bullying and what approach should be taken regarding a student's record if the student has atoned for this or her mistakes. If a student does indeed move to a new district with the branding of being a bully, this has the potential to negatively affect the mind and performance of that student. The participants who noted this theme also indicated that in their schools, while students might engage in acts that can certainly be deemed bullying, many of them will go to great lengths to ensure that they are not labeled as such. When asked to describe how students might label themselves, the participants indicated that students often describe their behavior as "just playing," "being kids," or "joking around."

Summary of Research Question 1

The first glaring pattern that is evident in reviewing the responses to bullying Research Question 1 is that Beta School District's Anti-Bullying Specialists seem to have the greatest

grasp on the process and adjudication of bullying incidents in the law. This is reflective in their responses as to how they examine and investigate incidents of bullying. All replies from the staff who work in Beta were very detailed and named a starting point and end point for the process. In comparison, the Alpha and Gamma school districts certainly were able to explain the process but lacked the depth and citing of the mandates of the law with finite detail. Furthermore, staff at the Alpha School District seemed to be less polished on the districtwide investigation and reporting procedure as opposed to those in the Beta Schools. The Anti-Bullying Specialists from Alpha certainly comply with the law, but it seems as though each school is left to develop its own implementation structure.

This disparity in how the Alpha and Beta districts have implemented the mandates of the NJAB could be because, as the Beta District staff members noted, the district has invested a considerable amount of resources in the training of all staff members on the requirements of the law. Also, it can be argued that the acquisition of the HISBTER software provides additional online resources that the Alpha District just does not have at this time. Like Beta, the Gamma District has the HIPSTER software, but because the district is much smaller than Alpha and Beta, the researcher was unable to ascertain a pattern in the schools that were selected for this study.

The next pattern that is evident through the research is that parents across all three districts seem to struggle with understanding the definition of bullying and what constitutes it within the context of the law. The participants in the Alpha District noted that there have been several attempts to educate parents on the NJAB at back-to-school conferences and by sending the drafting and dissemination of the law home with students. In the Beta and Gamma districts, the participants noted that there seemed to be a sense of apathy on the part of the parents to learn

more about the law. It should be noted, though, that the three districts are in communities with more than 80% of student populations on free and reduced lunch. One might infer that parents in districts such as these may have overlapping duties such as child care, work, and immigration issues with which they are dealing and thus cannot find time to educate themselves on the NJAB.

The next pattern that was apparent was that in districts Alpha and Beta specifically, both sets of students seem to understand their roles to some degree within the NJAB. While it was noted above that some students may not take the law seriously, the participants who reported commented that the group of students who engage in that behavior is much smaller than the group of students who are aware. Participants in districts Alpha and Beta explained that between events like the mandated Week of Respect, motivational speakers, and clubs and organizations on school campuses, there seems to be a firm grasp of the impact of bullying in these schools as well as the fact that students who bully could be labeled with this moniker that has become socially unacceptable.

The final pattern that was evident is that participants seemed to provide more examples of how the NJAB is less helpful than more helpful. When the interviews were conducted, in all cases except for four, the participants described the unhelpful aspects first, with some forgetting to name helpful aspects at all. This is important to note because, as previously stated, those who have the role of Anti-Bullying Specialist in schools also handle student discipline, guidance, or social work, just to name a few. From the amount of negative comments, it can be inferred that while many participants support the law's intention, there are still needs within the NJAB that should be addressed by the New Jersey State Department of Education.

Themes from Research Question 2

Research Question 2: In what way, if any, has the school curriculum been modified to address the requirements of the NJAB law?

The Anti-Bullying Specialists interviewed indicate that there are indeed curriculum-based activities that take place within the schools and districts that participated in this study. The initiatives that are cited in the themes below focus on both in-class opportunities for curriculum infusion and ways in which out-of-class programs or services have been utilized to educate young people in their schools on this topic from an academic perspective.

Classroom Infusion

The NJAB requires that each district in the state take measures to educate young people on the impact of bullying and aggressive behavior within the academic curriculum of a school. When asked about how this mandate in the law is addressed in their schools, the majority of the participants (11) cited that at different points in the year there are normally conversations or school activities that focus on bullying prevention. The most prevailing comments were in reference to the state-mandated Week of Respect. The law mandates that every October, districts across the state hold workshops, lessons, and activities around incidents of bullying. An example of how it is implemented was explained by Mr. F, who cited that during the Week of Respect, teachers are encouraged to hold class discussions on the topic of bullying and school culture.

Mr. H identified that in his schools during the Week of Respect, many teachers take time out during their lessons to incorporate the theme of bullying as well. He stated the following:

> I think it's affected the curriculum more so in Language Arts and Social Studies 1 because people are starting to do a lot more activities around HIB and bullying, I don't think it has affected it per se because of all the changes we've had with PARC or anything

like that. And there was a time, I think it started—the dust has started to settle—there was a time when bullying first came out, that was used as a crutch because everyone was crying, “Bullying bullying bullying!” And I think they're starting to understand and we are now starting to see just real bullying cases. So I hope that continues.

Mr. H’s assessment of how bullying infusion education into the classroom can be perceived as a positive nod towards the requirement of the Week of Respect. While the Week of Respect is mandated within the law, this mandate presents for districts a prime opportunity to contextualize on bullying within an educational framework. The potential benefit of the week argued by the 11 participants was that it allows for a different approach to engage students in these conversations outside of what they may experience in a club or at an assembly program.

Co-Curricular Programs

Another theme that was identified in the analysis of this question was the integration of schoolwide approaches to education and infusion of bullying education. In schools that adopted the schoolwide model, the researcher was made aware of the various types of activities that seek to engage students' minds on the topic of bullying prevention across classes and grade levels. Mr. M noted that in the advisories program that is instituted in his school there has been a developmental approach to student learning and engagement. He commented as follows:

> And bullying, so we'll tell them what the law is, we'll tell them the seriousness of it, the history of the law, why it came about. In September, when we first initiated the advisory, I believe it was a third advisory, so it was probably more like October, we gave the history of it so we actually spoke about the case at Rutgers and why it came about. We held debates between the students. The law and district and state protocol regarding HIB guides how we handle the students and the information that we give them and the

staff.

The advisory initiative is a very good example of the way in which districts can implement bullying education across the curriculum and school. This process noted by Mr. M also seeks to have students think critically about the history, pros, and cons of the law as well.

Social Emotional Learning

The next theme identified for this question was the infusion of social emotional learning programs (SEL) throughout elements of the curriculum. In three schools in particular there were mentions of elements of SEL practices to address bullying. In the three interviews that noted the use of SEL pedagogy, it was evident that there are attempts to infuse these elements and more into the academic fabric of the schools that were interviewed. An example of this was cited by Mr. B, who indicated that in his school the students are encouraged yearly to dialogue about bullying-specific issues in class and then sign a contract to not engage in the behavior at the conclusion of the discussion. At face value, this intervention seems a bit convoluted, but Mr. B explains that the purpose of the contract is to hold the students accountable for what they are learning in and out of the classroom. This contract also serves as an affirmation statement on how students feel about bullying in their school.

On the other hand, SEL interventions invite students who engage in bullying behavior to reflect on the relationships they are seeking to build, but also engage their minds in a level of problem solving using an accountability model. The intention is that SEL models will encourage young people to identify negative behaviors they are exhibiting and be willing to recognize them as a tool for prevention. SEL-related services can be instituted as both a prevention and corrective model that districts can utilize to combat bullying. Of the 16 participants who were interviewed in this study, SEL-related services were utilized as mostly corrective measures to

help students who are engaged in bullying. Very little was shared with the researcher regarding the infusion of proactive and preventative measures that are taken to help students assess the decisions they make before they engage in bullying behavior.

Early Intervention

While the majority of Anti-Bullying Specialists interviewed for this study collectively indicated that there is some infusion of anti-bullying practices within their curriculum, a deeper probe into the responses revealed one glaring theme to be examined in this section. Participant after participant echoed similar responses to the second research question, first citing the success of how students have received the law but then quickly pivoting to two reasons. The first one was indicating that students have been able to understand the intention of the law and the reasons as to why it was enacted. Ms. R indicated in her response that the conversation with those students actually begins in their eighth grade year before they come to her high school. She stated the following:

> Students got it immediately, and I think when they saw how serious we were about it, they got it. We do a lot of talking with students about the mandates. With our eighth grade orientation, when our new eighth graders are coming in here. In June, they'll be coming in here, and we'll have an eighth grade orientation. We have a large assembly with our student leaders, and . . . the students got it a lot easier. They understood initially even though their behavior didn't change that much, but they got it. They got what bullying was. They understood in terms of what's considered bullying, what's not, and they'll quickly tell you, "It's not bullying because . . . " Most of the time, they get it right.

Ms. R's assessment of her students is in line with that of the 12 other Anti-Bullying Specialists who indicated that response to the law was positive as a result of early interventions, assemblies,

or lessons before students come to their respective high schools. It can be argued that the early interventions of the law to students who are entering their first year in high school give those students a greater understanding of the expectations that will be placed on them regarding student conduct and bullying.

Summary of Research Question 2

This question of curriculum seems to have identified a pattern in which most of those interviewed indirectly stated that the majority of curriculum infusion of bullying comes from the requirement of the law to conduct the Week of Respect. It should be noted that while the initiatives cited above are indeed in compliance with the law, it seems that outside the Week of Respect there is very little infusion beyond the month of October. This pattern became clear, as most participants were very narrow with their examples of curriculum infusion of bullying issues beyond the week in October. It may be argued that while the Week of Respect encourages programs such as those noted above, the law could have given greater guidance for how districts can and should find ways to implement bullying prevention throughout the curriculum.

Themes from Research Question 3

Research Question 3: What support services, if any, have been amended or made available to students who bully or have been bullied since the passing of the NJAB law?

The responses to this question produced several examples in which schools and districts are engaging in practices to support students. In fact, the participants also noted that there are specific interventions for students who bully and those who are targets of bullying. The themes highlighted below cite a mix of mental health services and school-based resources. In addition, there were also some examples of support services that are provided to the parents of students who may find elements of the law challenging. In all, the responses to the question also

presented some very interesting patterns that are discussed in the conclusion of this section.

School Clubs and Organizations

When question three was posed to the participants, one of the first themes that was uniform across all districts and types of schools was the co-curricular clubs and support groups for the students in their schools. Six participants cited that clubs and organizations in their schools help to support students with activities to engage teens outside of the classroom. These activities also serve as resources to provide peer support for young people who are in need of those support systems. One of the participants pointed out that for students who bully there are even gender-specific organizations that seek to help those children. Mr. A, who is the Anti-Bullying Specialist in his school, commented as follows:

> Well, at this school, we have two different clubs. We have one that is a club for all our male students. Moreover, this club is so we can get together in a room and speak on certain issues. There's another club which is just for the female students, where they get together and talk about mostly female issues, things they may be going through socially; believe it or not, social media is a significant influence.

Another participant cited that in their school, athletes that display aggressive or bullying behavior also have active specific interventions. The national program that the Gamma District uses encourages athletes to engage in positive experiences off the field as well.

Mental Health Services for Bullies

The next set of services identified by participants for students who bully is counseling and mental health services for those students. Six participants across all three districts cited specific mental health support services for youth who engage in bullying. The participants who responded to this theme noted that counseling interventions are conducted when possible with

children who bully, either by the participants themselves or by someone who is clinically licensed to assess the behavior of those students.

In addition to the in-school counseling services, two participants noted that there were also external services that exist to support students who display aggressive behavior. In one school in the Beta District, there is a working relationship with the local hospital in the area to deliver mental health support to children in need in school but also onsite at their facility. Mr. H stated the following:

> But we are also very fortunate here at school; we actually have something called the (Name removed for anonymity); it's an initiative from Beta Medical Center that provides in-house counselling for everything: bullying, teen pregnancy, HIV awareness, these people are all certified social workers and counselors from Beta Medical Center, housed right here . . . So we have an automatic crisis center on hand right here whenever we have any issues. So if a kid has a problem or is identified as displaying negative behavior or aggressive behavior, they can literally at the moment, sit with someone and try to process it, try to figure out what's happening, and where that is coming from.

Resources such as this service in the Beta District help to underscore the need for schools and effective anti-bullying programs to effectively evaluate the mental health of not just targets of bullying but also those students who are the aggressors as well. A similar service is also offered in the Alpha School District, with the only difference being that students are referred to the service as an "outpatient" referral from the school to the local medical center.

Mental Health Intervention for Targets

The next theme that resonated from the interviews of the Anti-Bullying Specialists echoed some of the same support systems noted above for teens who exhibit bullying behavior.

Mental health services were again cited by the majority of participants who were interviewed. However, the approach to mental health was slightly different when the participants spoke about teens who are targets of bullying. Example after example from the participants examined mental health services to help correct either a student's self-image or esteem. One can argue that a greater sense of awareness of one's special qualities may make them less vulnerable to being targeted by bullies. This is a very different approach than that of mental health services for students who bully. The focus in Research Question 3 centered on reframing or correcting students' behavior or attitudes. In this context, mental health is described to help change or boost the victim's self-worth. Mr. M's statement during his interview underscored this difference:

> Well, we have a social worker and our guidance counselors; two of them have their social worker licenses. We try to deal with the affective piece; we try to address issues of image, self-image. Many times we find that the victims of harassment and bullying have issues maybe with self-esteem. We refer them immediately to Emergency Services, where they're given psychological evaluations; they are not admitted back to school and until . . . They have to do that within a twenty-four hour period. Parents are notified, parents have to come pick the child up, take them to . . . Until they come back with something saying that they've been examined, they are released, and then we do a follow-up.

Additional participants commented that they referred students to outpatient services when there were reports of consistent bullying and the internal supports were not deemed sufficient for the student.

Student Support Groups

The next set of support services for students cited for both bullies and targets are the

student support groups within many of the schools. In one of the schools interviewed, students are placed in what are called “advisory” groups in which facility and staff lead small groups of students one day every week to discuss issues that may be affecting the students.

The student support groups that were identified by more than half of the participants were varied but seem to be targeted to constituencies within school that might have challenges. One such example was the need to ensure that young men of color, predominantly the lowest achieving subgroup in all three of the districts as illustrated by student performance data on state standardized tests, are provided with group support to address the social-emotional and academic needs of the students. Services such as these create safe spaces for these students to experience a sense of community and support that they may or may not be receiving from home.

Restorative Practices

The next theme was an unforeseen revelation that surfaced as the researcher explored the schools in the Alpha District. On several occasions, there was the indication that the Alpha Public School District has taken the posture as a *restorative discipline district*. Restorative discipline is a relatively new approach to addressing incidents of bullying and seeks to educate students who display bullying behavior about their choices and the consequences of their actions. It also relies on victims to assert their feelings and community members to engage constructively in activity to help remediate a bullying situation.

Those Anti-Bullying Specialists who were interviewed from the Alpha District all asserted that this model seems to be much more constructive and less punitive. It is important to note that restorative justice does not excuse or exempt negative behavior, but it is a shift in the paradigm of how to intervene when young people display bullying tendencies. Mr. M from the Alpha District explained, “During the professional development of staff, we will go over

restorative practices, restorative circle, restorative conferences, scripts that you use during a conference or a circle, guidelines that you use during the use of restorative practices. We try to separate the doling out of the discipline with trying to remediate." This approach is a major change from the traditional trial and punishment paradigm of school discipline. It can also be argued that because Alpha is an urban community, many of the students are all too familiar with the traditional mantra of punitive discipline approaches in education. Restorative discipline might be a new and fresh perspective to help remediate the problems of young people who are already suffering from the trauma of living in an inner city.

Parental Intervention

The final theme identified within the data was the intervention of parents or trusted adults to help support students and remediate bullying behavior. Each of the districts interviewed has a participant who discussed that at some point in an incident of bullying, parental involvement is a key factor in keeping a teen from potentially repeating negative behavior. In his response to this question of support for students who bully, Mr. T commented, "So one of the major things that we do here is parent meetings, you want to get the parent in here . . . " The role of parents in incidents such as bullying can make the difference in the success of a school's intervention plan for those students who bully. Ms. GF indicated in her response to this research question that parents are critical when a student is being targeted as well. She noted that some parents struggle with accepting that their child is being bullied and, as a result, she counsels parents on how to support the child. She indicated the following in her response:

> . . . And that's pretty much it, and just educate the parents as much as we can. Sometimes the parents don't even know [their child is being bullied], so this is a safe area for them and we don't call the parents and say, "Do you know?" We just try to teach [the parent]

> to learn how to be, appreciate their kids and accept them for who they are and everyone else in society may not, but it doesn't take away from who they are, so that's building self-esteem.

Summary of Research Question 3

A pattern identified by at least five of the Anti-Bullying Specialists interviewed indicated that in comparison to the interventions for students who bully, there is far less support given to victims of bullying. In a review of the transcripts from Research Question 3 and measuring the time, length of responses, and examples of services, this point became more salient. It also became clear that the support given to students who are targets of bullying seems to help remediate aspects of their identity or self even though they are not the perpetrators of negative behavior. Simply put, it seems as though targets of bullying receive the pain of harassment as well as a scarlet letter that deems their reactions to bullying as mentally unstable or wrong. When asked to provide examples of services for targets of bullying one of the five participants, Mr. D responded candidly as follows:

> Honestly, there's not as many. There's more help assistance for the bully, than actually the kid that's getting bullied. I think that's something that's an issue. I think a statewide issue and maybe a national issue, where there's not enough social services in place. I mean because you've been bullied or you've been humiliated, you've been intimidated; there's no way to restore that child.

While it is indeed necessary to ensure that those students who display negative behavior in schools receive support services, Mr. D candidly makes the argument that there should be just as much support given to the targets of bullying. The only other suggestion that was brought up which reinforces this point was that when a target is victimized at a school and it is extreme, the

school can move the child to another school. While this can be viewed as a positive attempt to relocate a child to a better area or learning environment, one might also conclude that it may be easier to ship a child away from a bullying situation rather than invest the time and resources in the social and emotional well-being of that child.

Another pattern that was evident comes from the work being done in the Alpha School District. Several Alpha staff members seemed to be rigidly convinced that restorative practices are a much better way to help students who are bullying. Several of the Alpha staff cited the building of skills and competencies related to restorative practices such as conflict resolution, self-reflection, and self-management just to name a few. One of the schools in the Alpha District has reached a great deal of national acclaim for their work on school climate using restorative practices. The fact that this means of remediation is not just a districtwide initiative but also connected with fiscal and institutional support ensures a level of buy-in from both students and staff.

Another pattern that became quite prevalent in the interviews with participants was a lack of reference for how to remediate behavior about cyberbullying. While the issue of social media was certainly a topic of discussion for some participants, what was glaring was that the interventions mentioned all seemed to impact incidents of direct bullying. There was no mention in any of the districts or schools to policy regarding bullying on social media. One may infer that it seems to be much easier to cite interventions for incidents of bullying that can be felt or measured directly in school. The role of cyberbullying and the use of social media is an important issue that many schools continue to struggle with now that students can utilize their cell phones, laptops, and ipads to engage in bullying incidents.

The final pattern that is evident across the trends and responses from this research question is that there seems to be a tug and pull of philosophy about how best to support targets of bullying. In one corner, there is the work of resilience skills that can be fostered in young people. Some of the resilience skills identified by participants in this study were self-esteem and self-efficacy issues. Resilience theory is predicated on the opportunity to allow individuals to learn supportive skills in order to deflect the negative permutations of bullying. The opposite end of the various services seems to take a solely mental health perspective. While both are supportive to students who are targets of bullying, the comments of the participants indicate that there seems to be very little intersection between the two. Some resiliency theorists argue that the best-case scenario for the protection of children who might be targets of bullying is to promote skill growth but also provide the mental health support services needed to ensure the safety children require.

Themes from Research Question 4

Research Question 4: What distinguishing characteristics, if any, are utilized by students who bully to target their victims (i.e., gender, race, sexual orientation, or weight)?

The themes identified for this question presented the researcher with two very striking revelations as the coding processes for this question came into form. The majority of Anti-Bullying Specialists interviewed argued that while incidents of bullying certainly do occur, the distinguishing characteristics tend to be based on grade level rather than by some form of a student's racial, ethnic, sexual, or physical orientation. The patterns reflected below are a composite of different trends that were identified by the participants that students engage in at their various grade levels. It should also be noted that in district Alpha, some of the high schools have 7^{th}-8^{th} grade classes within the building, which also presented some fascinating data.

Bullying Across 7th-8th Grade Levels

The responses from the participants indicated that there indeed is a connection between grade level and bullying. The first theme highlighted in this question was one that was truly not expected. Three participants in the study cited that incidents of bullying are at their height are at Grades 7-8, or what most described as the middle school level. At first glance at the data, the researcher thought the participants were wrong in their wording, but additional probing into the school population found that in the Alpha School District, three of the high schools interviewed had been converted from traditional Grades 9-12 schools to Grade 7-12 schools. This surprising phenomenon of grade level targeting certainly added an additional element to the question posed above. Participants cited that incidents of bullying took place at higher frequencies in the "middle school" level of the respective high school in which they are working. In the lower nontraditional high school grade levels (Grades7-12), these younger students in Grades 7 and 8 are considered by the Alpha High School as secondary students. As such, the majority of bullying offences in those schools that have Grades 7-12 are done by students in the seventh and eighth grade.

Mr. M supports the assertion made above in his reflection of how the students in his building respond to each other from Grades 6-8. He states the following:

> It's the first time that I've . . . This is my first experience dealing with being an administrator in a building with seventh and eighth graders along with the high school. It's a little different with the seventh and eighth graders; they still have that grammar school mentality, and the teasing is very childish. We had a pseudo fight the other day. The kid was, "Don't touch me, don't touch me, don't touch me." Where it's a little different with the older kids.

One can certainly argue the benefits and drawbacks of putting "middle school" students in a high school context. However, two of the three participants interviewed fully supported the model, indicating that by the time students get into the 9th grade they have worked out what is commonly known as immature child behavior and have fully adjusted to being high school students. The "middle school" concept in a high school may certainly cut down the transition time into secondary school and also allow for teenagers to begin focusing on life and career choices earlier, without having to be saddled with issues of climate and bullying at the onset of their high school careers.

Freshman and Sophomore Bullying

The rest of the participants, all of whom work at traditional (Grades 9-12) high schools, indicated that the bulk of bullying incidents occur in their freshman population first and sophomores second. They also indicated that there is a steep decline in incidents and reporting at the junior and senior levels. There were several various explanations for such a belief. Mr. A noted the following in his school:

> When they are here as ninth graders, they don't really know each other, so there may be a tendency to bully, or people act out of insecurities really. But by the time you are a sophomore, by the time they are sophomores they know each other better and they become friends and they begin building on that relationship. So I think a slightly higher rate for ninth graders; but by the time they are sophomores, it still exists, unfortunately, but it is a lot less.

Mr. A indicated, as do some of the participants in the study, which due to the lack of community for freshman students, there seems to be an adjustment period for freshman into the larger school culture.

Mr. D's response supports that of Mr. A, adding that students in their freshman year are bullied at times to conform and find their place within the social structure of a school. He noted that once those social structures become clear and apparent, then the reduction in incidents occurs. Ms. W explained that she believes that the higher frequency in infractions and reporting is due large in part to the immaturity of 9th graders as a social group. She added during her response that "freshmen are more immature by nature and it's that silly teasing that they don't realize what. They just need a little bit of the growing process." This development process was identified by the participants as to why so much education and pre-intervention takes place in their schools related to school culture and anti-bullying at the early grade levels. The thought is that preemptively educating these young people will allow some of them to think about the negative choices that are made with the hopes of allowing them to adjust to the high school community with little interruption to their experience and to the school as well.

Junior and Senior Reactions to Bullying

The next theme identified in this question was how and why students in their junior and senior years engage in bullying behavior. First, the majority of participants stated that bullying incidents are largely non-existent at the upper grades, indicating that conflicts at those levels tend to be mutual conflicts between two parties that typically do not rise to meet the definition of what bullying is as per the NJAB. What was fascinating about the responses were some of the explanations as to why students at those levels do not participate in bullying. Mr. D argued that as students get older, the pressure associated with graduation and focusing on their life choices changes the mental energy of what is happening for his students. He states the he has seen how students evolve from bullies, targets, and victims into what he describes as "normal" students in their last two years because of the lack of energy to deal with the antics of such behavior.

Mr. T, Ms. C, and Ms. R offer slightly different explanations as to why the incidents of bullying are reduced at upper grade levels. They collectively argue that by the junior and senior year, students are better at communicating with one another relative to how they engage in conflict. It should be noted that the term *better* in this explanation does not mean that students are handling incidents constructively; it means that there is less behind-the-back talk and social media gloating. By the time students are in their last years of school, many have found their voice and reached a definitive point for what behavior they are willing to put up with. The finding of such voice, they indicated, sometimes results in mutual conflicts such as fights at that grade level, but nothing to the degree of bullying.

The final explanation proposed by two of the participants argues a bleaker explanation for the reduction in bullying in the junior and senior year. It was stated by two Anti-Bullying Specialists who attributed the reduction in bullying to the reduction in students who remain in school all four years. Mr. H indicated that his worst and most troubled students in the first two years of school rarely end up making it to their senior year. The dropout rate explanation is a possible situation for many urban districts that struggle to retain students, especially those students who are most troubled. He stated the following:

> It's not even funny, it's almost if I had to throw a number on it, it's almost a 40, 50% dip from freshman year to senior year. The only thing is, the only caveat is, the numbers aren't exactly, the numbers are a little skewed. The only caveat in this city, we also have an incredible drop off and dropout rate.

The rate at which troubled students drop out of school and its impact on incidents and reports of bullying can be its own research study. However, it is possible to see the connection between the reduction in incidents and reduction in a school's most troubled students.

Sexual Orientation

The next theme was quite prevalent throughout this question deals with the sexual orientation of students across all three districts. What became apparent from the interviews was that there were both specific support services for LGBTQ teens and also a greater sense of acceptance for those students in the schools that were part of the study. Ms. R of Gamma District noted that the following:

> Only because we have a very interesting environment here at our High School, and we've always had. I'm talking about specifically our gay and transgender population. We actually have a couple of transgender kids in our building now. One of them is one of mine, and . . . Great kid, though. The homosexuality issue and the transgender issue is not that big of an issue. I'm really happy about that, because when you talk to them, they see this particular school as a safe place.

In this response, she indicates that even students who are considered transgender in their schools do not experiences the high levels of bullying and discrimination that much of the historical literature on this topic has described.

It can be argued that in the wake of such a growing sense of acceptance of the LGBTQ community as a whole in America, this acceptance is also reflected in our school systems. While there still seems to be a slight stigma associated in American society around issues of LGBTQ, the Supreme Court ruling on gay marriage, LGBTQ pride festivals and events across the county, and overall cultural shift might be impressing young teens. Mr. A commented on the additional support given to these youth, indicating the following:

> I told you that the gay and straight alliance club has played a big role in making our students who may be gay, you know LGBTQ, they feel very comfortable here; we have

had a few bullying issues, but we haven't had any to do with any student's sexuality, so I'm very proud of that and we try to build on that.

Both Mr. A and Ms. R also note how proud they are of their students' ability to be accepted for who they are in their schools. The responses to this question pose additional questions that should be investigated regarding LGBTQ youth's perceptions of acceptance in schools.

Summary of Research Question 4

The pattern identified within this question is that whether a school is a traditional 9th-12th or 7th-12th grade model, the consensus seems to be that most bullying occurs in the lower grade levels. The Anti-Bullying Specialists interviewed for this study collectively have established a pattern that is supportive of literature on grade level responses to bullying. It can also be argued that their reasons for this belief, while they may vary from school to school, can be intertwined as well. In other words, students who are dealing with maturity issues in their first year might be students who exhibit bullying or negative behavior. The result of that behavior might be the removal of themselves from their respective schools, resulting in the reduction of incidents by what would have been their senior year. This scenario illustrates, though, that none of the reasons indicated above occur in isolation; and that as complex as young urban youth are, so are the explanations for why some engage in bullying behavior.

Conclusion

The data that were collected for this study illustrate several topics and implications that are discussed in the next chapter of this study. However, it is also important to note that the responses to the questions of this study captured patterns that were salient across the questions that were asked. One such pattern was the sense of pride that many of the participants expressed in reference to their schools and the work that has been done to support both students who bully

and those who are targets. From the development of crisis intervention teams, clubs, peer leadership programs, or even mentorship programs, there seemed to be a great deal of pride in the attempts that were being made by each school to make the educational life of students better.

Another pattern that was noted was the level of expectation that each Anti-Bullying Specialist had that faculty and school staff serve as the front line of defense to protect students who are victims of bullying. Mr. T noted at the end of his interview that teachers are not exempt from serving as catalysts for change in his school. He indicated that many of the interventions that are implemented in his school are geared towards his students, but that those interventions cannot work without the buy-in from faculty and staff. Other examples were the repeated citations of support groups and clubs that are run by faculty on a daily basis to either help remediate students who bully or support those students who are victims of the behavior. The next chapter of this dissertation summarizes and discusses the implications of such interventions and how these responses conform to research relative to bullying and urban school districts.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND SUMMARY

Introduction

This final chapter summarizes the findings of this study, relates these findings to the literature reviewed, and offers suggestions for policy, practice, and future research. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore New Jersey urban high school Anti Bullying Specialists' perceptions of the impact of the 2011 New Jersey Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights law (NJAB) on their ability to respond to acts of bullying and student aggression in their respective schools.

This qualitative study addressed the following research questions:

1. How do Anti-Bullying Specialists in New Jersey urban high schools describe the implementation of the NJAB law and its influences on the structures and practices in their respective schools?
2. In what way, if any, has the school curriculum been modified to address the requirements of the NJAB law?
3. What support services, if any, have been amended or made available to students who bully or have been bullied since the passing of the NJAB law?
4. What distinguishing characteristics, if any, are utilized by students who bully to target their victims (i.e., gender, race, sexual orientation, or weight)?

As indicated in the methodology chapter of this dissertation, a series of 16 interviews were conducted in three different school districts, coded Alpha, Beta, and Gamma. All participants in the interviews were the Anti-Bullying Specialists of their respective schools as required by the New Jersey Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights (NJAB) law. Each Specialist was asked the same questions and the responses were recorded with the participant's permission.

Discussion of Findings

Anti-Bullying Specialists interviewed for this study collectively described their implementation of the NJAB law as an ever-changing process. Participants stated that in the initial rollout of the law in 2012, reporting of incidents for bullying was at its highest. This was attributed to the fact that the law was still new and that students, parents, and faculty collectively were learning what bullying was, as defined through the context of the law.

In a review of the NJAB, Norgard (2014) stated that the emphasis to report, coupled with the potential legal ramifications, created a situation where the posture was taken that it was better to over-report than run the risk of letting something slip through the cracks. Norgard notes that this over-reporting was in large part due to how bullying was described within the law. He argues that the functional definition within the law was vague and would result in what those who were interviewed cited as a tendency to report everything, even if one might not believe an incident was bullying. Since that time, the Anti Bullying Specialists noted that the reporting of bullying incidents has leveled off significantly within their schools. This drop was attributed to the work that the three participating districts engaged in, in order to make students, parents, and staff fully aware of the law and implications of those parties violating the law as well.

The work of Bradshaw, Sawyer, and O'Brennan (2007) notes that bullying issues at the high school level are indeed important areas of concern for staff and faculty. Their study sought to expand the knowledge base of educators regarding bullying in secondary schools and add to the very limited area of scholarship pertaining to the impact of bullying on urban school districts. Scholars such as Fitzpatrick et al. (2010) argue that the evaluation of bullying in the context of urban schools is a much-needed conversation for researchers and practitioners in order to engage in effective dialogue about how best to support students who are bullies, victims, and bystanders.

This study builds on the work of such scholars as Bosworth et al. (1999) and Noguera (2003), whose research respectively argues for a greater conversation within the scholarship community as to why there is not an equal balance of scholarship on the suburban and urban district.

Through the execution of the qualitative design, there are several areas of discussion that are evaluated in this section. The themes from the analysis section have been correlated with the research questions. The results and discussion support the work of Spriggs et al. (2007), who argue that Black and Latino students are at a much greater risk of experiencing the effects of bullying behavior, given the social and economic conditions that many inner-city children face. This study's analysis notes the importance of policy, labeling theory, cyberbullying, and retention as some of the most salient derivatives of this study.

Research Question 1 – Implementation of NJAB

A review of the responses and data of the first research question indicates that the Anti-Bullying Specialists interviewed for this study collectively have a firm grasp on the process by which bullying incidents should be investigated. The Specialists also shed light on the importance of the role of the Anti-Bullying Specialist within each school. While the position of Anti-Bullying Specialist is very prescriptive within the law and leaves microscopic room for interpretation of how best to conduct bullying investigations, it should be noted that having someone on-site in each school that is responsible for looking into these matters is of grave importance. One interesting component of the interviews that were conducted was that not a single participant indicated dissatisfaction with doing the Anti-Bullying Specialist role and the position which they were hired to do by their districts.

This adherence to the policy and regulations of the law can be viewed as a positive impact of its implementation. Before the 2011 version of the law, there was no uniform

procedure for how to conduct an investigation or how a family might appeal a bullying incident. The work of Walsh (2000) supports the notion that clear and thorough policies are critical when a district or state engages in the creation of policy. His research indicates that rules must be clear, fair, and consistent for policies to be deemed effective. It seems as though the participants in this study are clear and consistent about how they implement the NJAB. The issue of fairness is a component some students or parents might argue may be one of the biggest issues in the implementation of the law and the policies within a school district. The NJAB stops short of providing recommendations for remediation of students who engage in bullying behavior. As such, the participants in this study noted that how they remediate students who bully is a case-by-case situation.

The first research question also highlights that while there is clarity from the standpoint of investigation and reporting of the law, there is also a mixed-bag approach to the pros and cons of it as well. Some of those who were interviewed liked the timeline for reporting, while others appreciated the broadness of the definition of bullying, which allows for a catch-all approach to keeping kids safe. However, there were other participants in the study who viewed both of those examples as flaws within the law and its implementation. Lots of perspective on this research question came down to several factors, including financial support for services in one's school, adoption of the policy by parents and students, and the individuals' personal philosophy regarding bullying and discipline.

Research Question 2 - Curriculum

The second sub-question identified through data collected from the interviews uncovered that while the law indicates that bullying prevention initiatives should take place throughout the curriculum in addition to the mandated Week of Respect, there seems to be relatively little

infusion of the bullying prevention pedagogy within the schools and districts that were participants in this study. While schools provide support services, it was observed that most of those services exist in spaces that are not connected to the curriculum and instruction of the school. It is possible, given the strict and rigorous schedule that many schools have, that some of these schools simply lack the time or resources to implement such policies within the curriculum. Another factor that may impact curriculum infusion is the fiscal cost of researching, purchasing, and continuing with ongoing support for those initiatives that are infused into the academic curriculum.

Educators and advocates of the law argue that with all of the mandates in New Jersey around student growth objectives, standardized testing, and the TeachNJ evaluation system, there is microscopic time to implement anti-bullying lessons across a school. There are models that currently exist as best practices, such as the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, social-emotional learning, and other private programs as well. Aside from the cost and maintenance of such programs, there is normally a reliance that the programs will be implemented with fidelity over an extended period and that there will be a conscious effort to ensure that all classes and levels integrate them in a school.

As a school board member in a very large urban district, I know all too well how difficult Anti-Bullying Specialists and administrators find the balance of both teaching and learning. NJ law mandates that all schools provide a thorough and efficient education and still find time to create ways to focus on bullying issues within the context of curriculum integration. Until the New Jersey Department of Education comes up with additional fiscal resources, this initiative to integrate bullying into the curriculum may never fully take shape in the schools in New Jersey.

Research Question 3 – Support Services

The third research question provided this study with a plethora of examples of how the participants in the study support students who display bullying behavior. Haynie et al. (2001) indicate that negative behavior exhibited by students who bully can lead to major distractions in school. If teachers have to continue to take time from their lessons to address students who are disruptive or causing problems, it takes away from the opportunity to maximize teaching and learning time. In urban districts where Black and Latino students are normally the lowest performing and have the highest need for support, interventions are not just necessary but pivotal to changing the urban blight paradigm (Spriggs et al., 2007; Goldweber et al., 2013).

Of all the support services that were cited in the findings chapter of this study as examples, it can be argued that the mental health service offered by these schools might be the most significant in helping to remediate the behavior of students who bully. The review of literature cites several studies and examples of the impact that engaging in bullying has on children (Mitchell, Bradshaw, & Leaf, 2010; Klein, Cornell, & Konold, 2012). These young people deal with modern day trauma in their lives and as a result, they, in turn, inflict trauma on others. Social activities such as sports and clubs are effective measures to engage the mind and body of students from participating in negative activity. However, those who are proponents of social-emotional learning argue that the healing must take place within the heart of the young people as well.

The theme of the limit of services for students who are targets of bullying has already been discussed in Chapter IV. However, an additional angle that has not been explored yet in this study is the view that the participants had about students who were targets. While it should be noted that students who are targets deserve sympathy and support, the tone however from the

participants indicated that children who are targets of bullying in some way invite said experiences to themselves. An example of this tendency to correct the self-esteem of the victims or make them stronger is through elements of resilience. As a practitioner in the field of bullying prevention and as a researcher, I have witnessed firsthand how services for students who are targets seek to change their behavior as opposed to helping them accept and like who they are or how they view themselves. It is important to remember that in incidents of bullying, the problem lies with the student who is exhibiting negative behavior as well as the environment that tolerates such behavior.

The responses to Research Question 3 were quite illuminating—to see that students seemed to grasp the mandates of the law and connect it with their behaviors. Nonetheless, while the work on behalf of their schools to educate these young people has been quite substantial, there is also an argument to the labeling of students as bullies being used as a deterrent as well. The label of "school bully" is no longer a moniker that students care for these days. Bullying, while still prevalent in American schools, is widely deemed as a socially unacceptable form of behavior. It can be argued that the leveling off of bullying reports and investigations in some of the participating schools is due in part to students now understanding that the consequences of their actions will not just be a disciplinary procedure but also could put them at risk for not getting into the college of their choice or losing out on other post-secondary opportunities.

From the faculty standpoint, the responses to Research Question 3 reinforced the fear that many faculty in schools across New Jersey experienced when the law was rolled out. At the 2012 New Jersey Anti-Bullying Conference, which was held at Rutgers University, there were over 300 education officials in attendance, all gathered because educators were concerned with the provisions of the law that indicated that their licenses could be in jeopardy if they failed to report

or investigate acts of bullying. The challenge with reporting everything is that it runs the risk of overwhelming the Anti-Bullying Specialists in schools and could jeapordize the investigation of incidents of bullying that require their attention.

Research Question 4 – Distinguishing Characteristics

The final research question attempted to examine if there are groups who are targeted in schools because of distinguishing characteristics. Research within the review of the literature supports that students can become targets of bullying based on gender, sexual orientation, body size, or weight as some examples. However, the data collected were not able to distinguish any theme or pattern about a distinguishing characteristic. While the question that was posed sought to identify students who are targeted for unique or distinguishing factors, the only group that was identified by the participants were students who are LGBTQ. These students, however, were identified as some of the most protected students across all three school districts and 15 schools. Services for LGBTQ youth reflect services that were indicated for students who are targets and bullies, but there was a strong emphasis in several interviews that stated sexual orientation seems to be a less prevailing issue at the high school level.

The data in this question, however, uncovered that the most distinguishing characteristic for the participants was grade level. The work of Seals and Young (2003) assesses multiple levels of bullying and victimization across grade levels and other platforms. They concluded that bullying is more prevalent in the middle school years, specifically Grades 6-8. There were examples to support such research and the predominant studies on the subject, which theorize that bullying behavior is most prevalent in 4^{th}-8^{th} grade levels. However, there is research that does challenge that notion as well. The research of Langdon and Preble (2008) conducted a similar assessment of grade level responses to bullying in high schools and found that the peak

levels for reporting and victimization tend to occur within the first and second year of high school. Since the majority of the high schools are traditional high schools (Grades 9-12), the work of Seal and Young can be applied to support that even at the high school level, there seems to more emphasis on bullying in the younger grades.

Recommendations for Future Research

One implication for research based on this study should be an analysis of bullying prevention programs used in urban districts. There are dozens of bullying prevention programs that are currently offered to schools for implementation. Those programs are utilized to complement prevention and intervention programs in schools. There are social-emotional, privatized programs like those through Pierson Education and the Olweus training program, which is considered the oldest and most efficient program that exists. The evaluation of districts or schools that have incorporated one or a mix of these programs is fertile ground for comparative research on the effect and efficacy of anti-bullying programs.

Another implication of research would be an evaluation of student perceptions of bullying incidents in schools that are Grades 7-12 compared to schools that are Grades 9-12. The introduction of this model that has been applied by the Alpha School District raises several questions about how students at the lower grade levels interact with those students who are in the upper grades. There is also the opportunity to explore the perceptions of the prevalence of bullying at the lower grade levels compared with that of the higher grades. Also, the ability to assess students creates the opportunity to obtain narratives about student conditions from the sources themselves. Student responses can have a profound impact on intervention and education strategies associated with incidents of bullying.

The final implication for future research should be an examination of student attitudes of other students who identify as LGBTQ. The data collected for this study indicated that the staff members interviewed observed that sexual orientation seems to be a less prevalent issue in their respective high schools. There is substantial literature on the targeting of LGBTQ youth regarding bullying; but given the cultural and legal shift of acceptance of individuals who are LBGTQ, it is possible to argue that this issue might not be as prevalent as it once was. A study of LBGTQ issues should also examine attitudes towards students who identify as transgender. Those who are transgender, or born with a particular gender but identifying with another, presents new and intriguing questions. Should students who are transgender be allowed to play on the sports team of the gender with which they identify? Should there be transgender or all-gender bathrooms? These are issues that the next generation will have to explore, and it is possible that if this generation has more acceptances about sexual orientation, the same may prove true for transgender.

Recommendations for Policy

The policy implications for this study can be implemented to support school-based staff further on investigations when they are triggered. One implication is that the New Jersey Legislature should further clarify gray areas in the law that were identified within the study. An example of the reporting structure is that after a report of bullying is initiated, a district has ten days to conduct an investigation. The Anti-Bullying Specialists in this study argued that the law is not clear on whether this time limit refers to working, school, or business days. While this issue may seem trivial, local unions in districts have begun to push back on time requirements and when an Anti-Bullying Specialists can investigate, citing that many of these individuals are part of collective bargaining units with clear hours within their contracts. Further clarity about

incidents of bullying that take place off school grounds or that may occur virtually over social media is needed. The law is still quite vague as to a school's responsibility for interjection of their authority.

The next implication for policy would involve leaving to the discretion of principals whether to investigate a bullying incident once it has been reported. The current law mandates that any allegation of bullying must be investigated once it is reported to a school. The clear challenge with this mandate is that some Anti-Bullying Specialists could spend their whole working day conducting investigations and are therefore unable to complete their other contractual work functions. The New Jersey Anti-Bullying Task Force is currently working on a recommendation that would leave to the discretion of the building principal to decide if and when to investigate a bullying allegation. The recommendation of the task force also holds the principal solely responsible if incidents of bullying are reported but not vetted thoroughly. Given the amount of training that has taken place within the districts that participated in this study, one could argue there is a strong understanding of how to define and frame an incident of bullying in a school. Principals are named in the legislation as the front line of defense for ensuring that the law is implemented. With that in mind, it might be time, now that the law has been in existence for more than five years, to give those building leaders the professional courtesy to control the investigation process.

A final policy implication is that the legislature should provide a larger pool of funding to support the many mandates of the NJAB. At this point, the NJAB requires that there is designated staff to investigate bullying, districts must conduct programs for the Week of Respect, there must be a mechanism for reporting of bullying, and infusion of anti-bullying programs into the curriculum. Just the implementations of one of these mandates requires fiscal

appropriations during a time where state aid in New Jersey is at its lowest point for urban districts. A policy should be adopted to expand the currently small pool of funding for further implementation of educational and prevention services. The State Department of Education allocates about a million dollars in its budget to cover the cost of NJAB mandates. My home district was reimbursed less than $100, which does not even scratch the surface for covering these expenses. Effective policies are critical to the educational success of children, but those policies must also be connected to appropriate resources to ensure their success.

Recommendations for Practice

This study explored the NJAB law and its various elements from the purview of the school based Anti-Bullying Specialist. As a result of this study, there are three recommendations for practice that should be noted for educators and researchers to examine. The first is that curriculum infusion of Anti-Bullying strategies should be ongoing. The data collected from this study indicate that there is very little being done to address issues of bullying within the classroom. Examples cited by the participants surrounded the annual required Week of Respect, which is held in October of every year. While the Week of Respect was seen positively by the participants, the messages of peers treating one another fairly should be an ongoing and consistent message.

There are examples of schools and districts that have managed to find the time and opportunities to make infusion in the day-to-day classroom a possibility. There are opportunities for students to learn anti-bullying strategies in all subjects within their classes. However, for this to happen, school leaders must be open to the possibility that an investment into the culture or climate of a school via the classroom is vital to students' overall success. As noted in the review of literature, there is scholarship that supports the claim that in schools with fewer incidents of

bullying, there are positive correlations with student success and performance (Mehta et al., 2011; Rigby, 2003; Nansel et al., 2001). The Week of Respect is a positive start for the NJAB, but school leaders should be willing to move well beyond that mandate, in an effort to maintain consistency in expectations for how students should be treating one another.

The second implication for practice was noted throughout Chapter 4 of this study. Restorative practices and the research around it seem to be a valuable tool that educators could adopt to help combat bullying in their school. In addition, restorative practices allow for students to engage in meaningful conflict resolution that seeks to understand the needs of all parties involved. In the Alpha School District, this study noted that the district has invested the time and resources to ensure that every school adopts restorative practices. As the researcher of this study, I found that the districtwide approach for implementation was one that was not just well received but also empowered faculty and staff as well.

There is a communal element to the restorative approach to discipline that is refreshing and very different from what happens in many urban schools. With the stress of educational remediation, testing, and student disruptions, urban educators deal with a significant amount of challenges. The use of restorative practices seems to remind all parties involved that simply punishing a child who engages in negative behavior does not solve the problem all the time. There may be in many cases "back stories" or situations that may cause a child to act out, and the restorative practice process allows for educators to get to the heart of the behavior. One final note is that these restorative practices allow for students who live in communities where violence is sometimes a normal way of living, to understand there is another way to mitigate conflict as well.

The final recommendation for practice is that schools and leaders should place greater emphasis on community building in schools as ongoing prevention measures. As a practitioner in the field of bullying prevention and as a researcher, I have had the opportunity to work in dozens of schools and districts on this topic. What is clear from the work of Olweus (1999), Nixon and Davis (2011), and other bullying theorists is that the cornerstone of bullying prevention is the ability to create opportunities for students and faculty alike to build community and establish positive relationships. The work of Durlak et al. (2011) in a study for more than 250,000 students found significantly improved social and emotional skills, attitudes, behavior, and academic performance that reflected an 11-percentile-point gain in achievement. Community building programs, if utilized effectively, not only help students and adults within a school feel better but also create safe places for students to learn.

Community building activities in schools can take the shape of experiences such as trips, school field days, or a schoolwide service project just to name a few. They can also take the shape of in-class sessions that focus on social-emotional learning as well. Community building experiences create spaces in our schools for students to know one another and lessen the chance that individuals are targeted for being different in any way. Examples of this are seen in our schools in athletic teams. Athletes are groups of students who have spent time together creating and building relationships that result in a kinship of sorts. The problem is that many times these populations of athletes are much smaller than that of the general student population. Schools can however look at the model of community building that is utilized on athletic teams to replicate more opportunities to create such spaces schoolwide.

Summary

This study was designed to engage participants who are on the ground in schools doing anti-bullying work to capture examples, best practices, and opportunities for policy change in the NJAB. The data analysis of this study supports that the NJAB has been effective in its mandate to help curtail bullying in schools. Through the interviews that were conducted for this study, each participant noted that the law has put students, staff, and parents on notice that incidents of bullying will not be tolerated in their district. The data also show that there are still some concerns on behalf of the Anti-Bullying Specialists, pertaining to some of the ambiguity that is within the law as well. This study also captured that services are being provided to students who are bullies or targets as well. While there seem to be some discrepancies regarding how the services are rendered and who has access to them, they exist to help students and to reduce bullying in schools.

The interviews with the participants were fascinating, especially the opportunity to see the frustration, pride, and confidence of the educators that were interviewed. While the Alpha, Beta, and Gamma districts were indeed similar in socioeconomic status and ethnic makeup, they all had very different approaches to how the district viewed both bullying and the NJAB. This became evident through the various approaches to the interventions that are offered in their respective districts. One final observation about the participants in this study was their belief in the intention of the law and the role they played in it. Each participant noted that while the law had added more to their respective workloads, it has not diminished their commitment to keeping students safe and promoting a school that has a positive climate that is bullying free.

Last, this study has been personally fulfilling as a graduate student and a bullying prevention practitioner. My work as a trainer and consultant has certainly been enriched by this

study, which has provided additional theory and practices to incorporate into my bullying prevention programs. Through the review of the literature and conducting the interviews with the Anti-Bully Specialists, I have a greater appreciation for this field. I am proud to be a scholar offering my research to the existing bodies of research. The analysis and recommendations provided in this study have the potential to inform those at the New Jersey Department of Education about additional practices that could be employed to help educators continue to be in compliance with the law but, most importantly, to ensure the safety of all students in the state of New Jersey.

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Appendix

OFFICE OF INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
SETON HALL UNIVERSITY

March 15, 2016

Christopher Irving

Dear Mr. Irving,

The Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board has reviewed the information you have submitted addressing the concerns for your proposal entitled "New Jersey Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights: Perceptions of High School Administrators on Implementing the Law." Your research protocol is hereby approved as revised through expedited review. The IRB reserves the right to recall the proposal at any time for full review.

Enclosed for your records are the signed Request for Approval form and the stamped original Consent Form. Make copies only of this stamped document.

The Institutional Review Board approval of your research is valid for a one-year period from the date of this letter. During this time, any changes to the research protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to their implementation.

According to federal regulations, continuing review of already approved research is mandated to take place at least 12 months after this initial approval. You will receive communication from the IRB Office for this several months before the anniversary date of your initial approval.

Thank you for your cooperation.

In harmony with federal regulations, none of the investigators or research staff involved in the study took part in the final decision.

Sincerely,

Mary F. Ruzicka, Ph.D.

Mary F. Ruzicka, Ph.D.
Professor
Director, Institutional Review Board

cc: Dr. Barbara Strobert

Presidents Hall • 400 South Orange Avenue • South Orange, New Jersey 07079-2641 • Tel: 973.313.6314 • Fax: 973.275.2361

REQUEST FOR APPROVAL OF RESEARCH, DEMONSTRATION OR RELATED ACTIVITIES INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

All material must be typed.

PROJECT TITLE: **New Jersey Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights: Perceptions of high school administrators on implementing the law**

CERTIFICATION STATEMENT:

In making **this application,** I(we) certify that I(we) have read and understand the University's policies and procedures governing research, development, and related activities involving human subjects. I (we) shall comply with the letter and spirit of those policies. I(we) further acknowledge my(our) obligation to (1) obtain written approval of significant deviations from the originally-approved protocol BEFORE making those deviations, and (2) report immediately all adverse effects of the study on the subjects to the Director of the Institutional Review Board, Seton Hall University, South Orange, NJ 07079.

RESEARCHER(S) Christopher C. Irving — DATE 11/30/15

Please print or type out names of **all researchers below signature.
Use separate sheet of paper, if necessary.**

My signature indicates that I have reviewed the attached materials of my student advisee and consider them to meet IRB standards.

RESEARCHER'S FACULTY ADVISOR Dr. Barbara Strobert — DATE 11/30/15

Please print or type out name below signature

The request for approval submitted by the above researcher(s) was considered by the IRB for Research Involving Human Subjects Research at the Feb 2016 meeting.

The application was approved ✓ not approved ___ by the Committee. Special conditions were ___ were not ✓ set by the IRB. (Any special conditions are described on the reverse side.)

Nancy J. Ruzicka, Ph.D. — DATE 3/15/16

DIRECTOR,
SETON HALL UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL
REVIEW BOARD FOR HUMAN SUBJECTS RESEARCH