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Supporting Anti-bullying in Church Environments- A Program Evaluation Study

Trisha Wetzelberger
Concordia University - Portland, wetzie@comcast.net

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Trisha Wetzelberger

Concordia University - Portland

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Concordia University (Portland)

College of Education

Doctorate of Education Program

WE, THE UNDERSIGNED MEMBERS OF THE DISSERTATION COMMITTEE
CERTIFY THAT WE HAVE READ AND APPROVE THE DISSERTATION OF

Trisha Ann Wetzelberger

CANDIDATE FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Marty A. Bullis, Ph.D., Faculty Chair Dissertation Committee

Jerry McGuire, Ph.D., Content Specialist

Sheryl Reinisch, Ed.D., Content Reader

ACCEPTED BY

Joe Mannion, Ed.D.
Provost, Concordia University, Portland

Sheryl Reinisch, Ed.D.
Dean, College of Education, Concordia University, Portland

Jerry McGuire, Ph.D.
Director of Doctoral Studies, Concordia University, Portland

Trisha Wetzelberger, Ed.D.
Concordia University – Portland
College of Education

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the College of Education
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

Marty A. Bullis, Ph.D., Faculty Chair Dissertation Committee
Jerry McGuire, Ph.D., Content Specialist
Sheryl Reinisch, Ed.D., Content Reader

Concordia University – Portland

ABSTRACT

Existing literature demonstrates the need for anti-bullying programs in the traditional school setting, however, only a limited number of studies have included the need or benefits to having anti-bullying programs in the church community. The theories of Kohlberg, Erikson, and Fowler served as the basis for building an understanding of the development of bullying behaviors among children. Dan Olweus, the man known as the pioneer of bullying prevention research, addressed the importance of including the total community in a successful bullying prevention program. He was referring to including everyone associated with children in the school community: teachers, parents, administration, and students. Since the 1970s, researchers have continued to explore the need of anti-bullying programs to equip children and adults with strategies to aid in the intervention and understanding of bullying but only in the school environment. In a study of three churches, participants interviewed answered questions pertaining to bullying within their church and total community. The study's findings support the need for an anti-bullying program in the church environment as well as the total community such as including local community centers. This study takes previous research a step further by expanding the anti-bullying education to the broader community.

Keywords: bullying, bully, anti-bullying programs, church environment

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to all of the children and adults who have experienced bullying sometime in their life. May this research serve as a starting point in educating people around you to create anti-bullying steps, policies, and procedures in the church environment so that there is one safe place to go where bullying will not happen.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the many people that have helped me to reach my 30-year goal of a doctorate degree, a reality. At times it seemed like a mountain that I would never be able to climb, let alone make it to the top.

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This study could never have been completed without the consent from the three churches to participate and the Church Leaders, Parents, and Children and to that I say thank you! The time spent with each one of you will always be cherished. Thank you for sharing your personal “life stories.”

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My daughter Samantha, provided my motivation throughout the process and was always there telling me to continue on. I want to remind her, like she did me, that whatever you want to accomplish can be done. Thank you to my sons Alex and Ryan for being the realistic point of view and editors. May all three of you remember to reach for your dreams and make them a reality, no matter how long it may take.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Freshly sharpened pencils, shiny books, and the excitement of a new school year starting should be the only things children need to think about when September is on the horizon.

However, more than one million children are thinking about something else: being bullied. For some children, the first day of school is filled with the fear of being teased, feelings of loneliness, and the desire to avoid bullies (Bullock, 2002). Imagine yourself as a student, being constantly teased for your weight, your clothes, or even because you wear glasses. You would want to change your clothes, lose weight, or stop wearing glasses. All of this would be an attempt to be accepted; you would try anything—perhaps only to be harassed further. Or imagine a situation in which all of the girls in your class except for you are invited to a birthday party and the limousine arrives to pick them up from school. Everyone leaves school but you.

Research has shown that since Olweus's (2003) foundational study on bullying was conducted in the 1970s the numbers of children who are bullied in school settings continues to rise (Fast, 2016). "Twenty-five to 50% of children report being bullied" (Bullock, 2002, p. 131). Bullock (2002) concluded that there is evidence of bullying incidences increasing among school age children in the United States. Current researchers, Espelage, Polanin, and Low (2014) noted "bully perpetration and victimization rates are higher and willingness to intervene is lower" (p. 288). Aggressive behavior among children is an ever-present and real problem for our children, and schools worldwide have joined the initiative to include anti-bullying programs.

In recent years numerous anti-bullying programs have been developed. Within school settings there are varying anti-bullying programs: (a) zero tolerance programs; (b) student education; and (c) counseling for bullies and victims (Battey & Ebbeck, 2013). Zero-tolerance programs are similar to other bullying programs; however, in this type of program the children

are immediately suspended from school without any discussion or any effort given to determining the roles of the children involved the activity. Zero-tolerance programs incorporate an “environment characterized by warmth; adult demonstrations of positive interest and involvement; firm limits on unacceptable behavior; consistent application of non-punitive, non-physical sanctions for unacceptable behavior or violation of rules; and acting as authorities and positive role models” (McNamee & Mercurio, 2008, p. 374). The school community, parents, adults, and students are a part of the zero-tolerance commitment. The adults serve as positive role models for the students by demonstrating how to communicate verbally to others as well as showing how to be considerate of others.

At the other end of the spectrum from the zero-tolerance program is the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP). Components that contribute to the success of the OBPP include student education, counseling, and a focus on including everyone in the child’s life whose work, actions, and relationships intersect with the school setting (Olweus, 2003). The OBPP model incorporates the following “best practices”: (a) the students help in creating the classroom rules and are typically an integral part of reporting situations of bullying; (b) parents are typically presented an anti-bullying workshop with details of the program and the expectations of every person in the school community; (c) teachers are the first line of contact that the students are encouraged to talk to in the event of a bullying situation; and, (d) the parents are brought into the situation when their own child has been involved (Olweus, 2003).

Most bullying prevention programs are focused on school settings, but this is only a segment of the places in which bullying takes place and in which our children live (Beane, 2015; Carlisle, 2015; & Roberts, 2015). Bullying happens in the classroom, in the school yard, in the neighborhood, and in the community (Bullock, 2002). In my role serving as the Children and

Family Ministry Director, I am particularly interested in understanding bullying and its impact upon the church environment. My experience as a Christian educator has shown me that bullying affects the church in a number of ways, including church participation and the church growth. Yet the church has not participated in the anti-bullying initiatives, nor been widely involved in existing initiatives by secular organizations. The literature review supports this in that an exhaustive literature search did not reveal widespread use of anti-bullying prevention programs in churches or significant research on how the church could contribute to anti-bullying efforts. Olweus (2003) suggested that it is important for the broader community to be involved in an anti-bullying program, because the total involvement creates a positive appearance in the application of dealing with a bullying altercation. Since churches are a critical part of the life of some children, families and communities, it is important for churches to have broader community involvement. This study was designed to investigate how the church could participate in broader anti-bullying initiatives needed to support all children. The study included an examination of the literature and past research about bullying, the consequences of bullying, the role of the church could play in bullying prevention, and the key elements needed for an effective anti-bullying program in church environments, which could support broader community efforts.

Introduction to the Problem

This section introduces the reader to the problem many children face on a daily basis. Bullying is not a new topic of study. Researchers have been exploring the effects of bullying for more than four decades, and this has resulted in an extensive body of educational research literature. There are numerous studies on bullying within educational research literature. In the 1970s, Dan Olweus analyzed the data of more than 150,000 Scandinavian students to develop a

scientific understanding about bullying. Through his research and many years of experience, Olweus created a bullying prevention program that has been adopted in numerous school systems throughout the world. The OBPP incorporates everyone in the school, from the classroom teachers and students to the school administrators and the parents. Based on his research, Olweus concluded that in order to have a successful bullying prevention program, everyone in the school would need to be a part of the solution (2003).

In today's schools bullying is still a problem that most children have encountered directly (Bazelon, 2014). "The connectivity of the Web makes bullying harder to escape. It used to be at the end of the school day brought relief, that home was the one place where you knew you could be safe" (Bazelon, p. 40). These same social factors affect Christian homes and church environments. A central motivation for this study was understanding whether adults and children within Christian communities could be equipped with strategic anti-bullying interventions that were not part of existing anti-bullying programs available within other types of institutions. As a professional, I wondered whether the development of anti-bullying supports for the church could better prepare Christian children and parents to handle and respond to bullying situations. Since a key emphasis of OBPP is to include the "entire school community," it was reasonable to consider how faith communities could become a part of the community effort to address this critical problem; however, understanding how to expand anti-bullying instruction and training into church settings was not well understood.

Background, Context, History, and Conceptual Framework for the Problem

Since this research study focused on understanding the contributions that the church could offer to anti-bullying efforts, it was important to review how this problem had been viewed through the church's history. This section provides brief snapshots from church history that

highlighted the problem of bullying for the Christian church. Four historical periods are noted in the discussion: the early church; the patristic period; the medieval period; and the Reformation period. This discussion sets the stage for a transition to the contemporary period and an introduction of James W. Fowler's (1981) work, *Stages of Faith, The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning*. Fowler was a Methodist minister and an American theologian, who incorporated Piaget's theory of cognitive development along with Kohlberg's stages of moral development in his most notable accomplishment, the "Six Stages of Faith" (Fowler, 1981, p. 117). Fowler's work on the developmental stages of faith is used in the current study to understand how children learn and understand. Fowler's theory is an important component of the present study's conceptual framework. Before I introduce Fowler's work, I will introduce the reader briefly to four historical periods of the church, highlighting the problem of violence and forms of bullying in its history.

The early church period. Looking back to original descriptions of bullying in the early church documents, violence and human aggression can be found in the Gospel of Matthew, a passage written between 80–90 C.E. One passage in Matthew 11:12 states, "From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been subjected to violence, and violent people have been raiding it." Matthew's reference to violence and violent people indicates an unfriendly environment. Acts 21:35-36, a passage written between 80–90 C.E., describes Paul in the temple when the crowd became violent and wanted Paul arrested. "When Paul reached the steps, the violence of the mob was so great he had to be carried by the soldiers. The crowd that followed kept shouting, 'Get rid of him!'" Such passages can be found throughout the New Testament and demonstrate that violent and aggressive behavior has been a problem for the church since its formation.

The patristic period. Following the early church period, the church was subjected to periods of persecution—some of which were state sponsored—until the emperor Constantine (272–337 C.E.) established religious toleration for Christianity with the Edict of Milan in 313 C.E. Saint Augustine of Hippo is perhaps the most prominent theologian in the patristic period following the reign of Constantine. Augustine played an important role in the development of Western Christianity and philosophy. Voreter (2015) notes that

Augustine saw in history evidence that the human being must be God-centered in order to display true virtue; this is also true with regard to society. For a society to be sustainable and preserved from descending into chaos, a sense of virtue and justice is needed that can only emanate from a love of God. (p. 56)

Voreter's comments highlight the close connection between personal morality and social justice that can be found in Augustine's work. Personal morality is for Augustine rooted in a person's relationship with God. Paul van Geest (2014) has noted Augustine's complex attitudes towards violence and how his views of punishment and violence against heretics changed during his lifetime. And van Geest notes that Augustine came to believe that "violence on behalf of the state may be legitimized . . ." (p. 151).

The medieval period. Eight centuries after Augustine, Saint Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) is recognized as the leading theologian and natural philosopher of the medieval period. According to Voreter (2015), "Aquinas distinguishes four cardinal virtues, namely *prudence* that applies reason to practical situations, *justice* that directs the will to good acts, and *courage* that helps us to act in situations of danger and *temperateness* that controls our sensual desires" (p. 60). Aquinas preached that the love people have for God is the love people should share with one another. He believed "that in creation God bestowed humans with reason and moral

capacities that allow humans to advance in moral discoveries and knowledge without special or supernatural grace from God” (Glanzer & Ream, 2009, p. 34). In *The Summa Theologica*, Aquinas (1914) discussed violence in the following way:

Violence is directly opposed to the voluntary, as likewise to natural. For the voluntary and the natural have this in common, that are both from an intrinsic principal; whereas violence is from an extrinsic principle. And for this reason, just as in things devoid of knowledge, violence effects something against nature; so in things endowed with knowledge, it effects something against will. (p. 96)

Aquinas is highlighting differences between an outside force being applied to a human being and interior causes of action. Violence is something which interferes with human volition.

Therefore, violence is something that goes against what a person deserves. Saint Thomas was influenced by Saint Augustine’s beliefs on violence (Bainton, 1984).

The Reformation period. Moving forward another two hundred years Martin Luther (1483–1546) was a central theologian of the Reformation. Luther was a professor of biblical exegesis at the University of Wittenberg (Althaus, 1996). During Luther’s time at Wittenberg his separation from the Catholic Church began. Luther experienced firsthand what could be described as a form of bullying, when the Catholic Church excommunicated him for speaking out against his religion. In 1521, Luther’s writings were banned by the Church and he was declared a convicted heretic. Roland Bainton (1984) produced an influential biography of Luther entitled, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther*. In his narrative of Luther’s life, Bainton notes the following admonition against violence from Luther.

Remember, that Antichrist, as Daniel said, is to be broken without the hand of man.

Violence will only make him stronger. Preach, pray, but do not fight. Not that all

constraint is ruled out, but must be exercised by the constituted authorities. (Bainton, 1984, p. 228)

This comment was made when Luther return from exile. Pope Leo X had exiled Luther in 1521 because of his Protestant views, which were condemned as heretical to the positions of the Catholic Church. Violence in the form of riots in the streets at Wittenberg. It was during this time that Luther was speeding up the reformation. Luther used his passion to create one of the early branches of Protestantism, basing much of his work on the ideas of love and harmony.

Augustine and Aquinas affirmed that love should be the primary Christian belief, and people should ultimately share love with each other and not treat one another with aggression and hostility. This ongoing emphasis on reducing violence and aggression through the promotion of love and personal virtue has continued to be a part of the church's message into the contemporary period.

The contemporary period. Moving into the latter part of the 20th century, psychologist, James Fowler, whose work is reviewed in greater detail in Chapter 2, defined the stages of faith for human beings from 2 years of age through adulthood. Fowler also described love as being the primary Christian belief. Fowler (1995) indicated that in the first stage of faith—a period of infancy and lack of differentiated—“the seeds of trust, courage, hope, and love are fused in an undifferentiated way” (p. 121). Fowler's six stages of faith start with love and progress through: (1) Intuitive-Productive Faith, (2) Mythic-Literal Faith, (3) Synthetic-Conventional Faith, (4) Individual-Reflective Faith, (5) Conjunctive Faith, (6) Universalizing Faith. When addressing questions of bullying and faith, Fowler's stages of faith is a useful theory understanding the level of faith a child can comprehend. For example, when a child is in the second year of life, Fowler's theory places that child in the intuitive-productive stage. A child at this stage cannot

relate to cause and effect therefore teaching about bullying and the causes and effects of bullying would not be prudent. Chapter 2 will provide a close examination of Fowler's work and discuss each of the developmental stages. With this brief glimpse into the historical background of Christian responses to violence and bullying in place, I will shift the reader's attention to a brief review of the recent history of research on bullying.

History of bullying research. In 1972 a Swedish physician, Peter-Paul Heinemann, completed a study on aggressive behavior. He studied aggressive behavior with children and instead of calling it *bullying*, called it "mobbing." Venter and du Plessis (2011) wrote about Dr. Heinemann's research and concluded, "His work marked the early beginning of research into what is currently referred to as 'bullying.' Dan Olweus, a fellow-countryman of Heinemann's, was the first person to systematically investigate the nature, frequency, and long-term effects of bullying in Scandinavian schools" (pp. 1–2). Heinemann and Olweus are widely acknowledged as the founding researchers in the field of bullying.

Following these foundational studies in the field, research continued to expand. In a descriptive study conducted with 211 students in Toronto, researchers Zeigler and Rosenstein-Manner (1991) compiled the following data

- 35 % of the children were directly involved in bullying incidents.
- Bullying peaked in the eleven- to twelve-year old group.
- 38 % of the students identified as special education students were bullied, compared with 18 % of other students.
- 24 % reported that race-related bullying occurred often or now and then.
- 23 % of the students bullied and 71 % of the teachers reported that teachers intervened often or almost always. (p. 12)

Further studies that were pursued in the early 2000s report similar results (Brown, Birch, & Kancherla, 2005; Olweus, 2003; Venter & du Plessis, 2012). For example, Cram (2003) found that, “the national estimate of bullying, based on the data collected from research, is staggering. It is estimated that some 1,681,030 children from grades six through ten bully other children once a week or more” (p. 49). The numbers of affected children are a motivation for the present study.

From the 1970s to present, the perspectives on bullying within the educational research literature have continued to evolve. More and more researchers have begun to explore the many different facets of the topic from its moral and social aspects to investigations of the scope and severity of the problem for youth across the United States and internationally. Rigby (2000) states in the summary of his research that

where students are known to be frequently bullied by other students, and more especially where they have little or no social support, they are at increased risk of mental illness. It seems likely that the mental health of students can be enhanced through an overall reduction in bullying in a school. (p. 66)

Bullying produces many negative effects on children that can take years to address, and for some children, even with proper support and treatment, the negative effects can have lasting impact. Negative effects such as low self-esteem, loneliness, and difficulties developing and maintaining positive relationships (Bullock, 2002) are some of the negative effects documented with bullied children. Venter and du Plessis (2011) noted that

Bullying behavior cannot be ignored, because the victims often report physical and mental health problems caused by the abuse they suffered. The future of the bully is also at stake, because such a person can turn into an abuser in his or her adult years. (p. 1)

The following chapter examines the literature on bullying. The literature review discusses and analyzes the ways that Christianity, with its moral framework, may contribute to understanding and addressing bullying. The Christian moral framework that is part of the dissertation's conceptual framework explores how moral theory and Christian traditions might contribute to the solutions available for addressing bullying. There is support in the research literature for seeing moral frameworks as an important aspect of addressing the problem of bullying. For example, Menesini, Sanchez, Fonzi, Ortega, Costabile, & Feudo (2003) state that, "research into school bullying that focuses on the area of moral reasoning could have important implications for interventions that reduce and prevent such conduct" (p. 516). The Christian traditions guide a person based on their Christian beliefs from their upbringing in a faithful home environment. Morality and Christianity are linked through the beliefs and customs a person shares within their family. Christian moral values derive from the tradition a person acquires while being a part of a faith community. The moral foundation that a Christian develops through participation in their faith community may influence how Christians act within bullying situations. This study seeks to investigate and understand this relationship between moral formation and dispositions to bullying.

Bullying Research

The Christian tradition emphasizes the development of moral dispositions within church communities, and places a special importance on the moral training within families as evidenced in biblical scripture, "Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4 New International Version). The current study assumed that since Christians develop their moral foundation through participation in their faith community and family, that supporting anti-bullying efforts in these communities would

help address the problem of bullying in a new way. It was hoped that the church, with its unique perspectives on moral development, would have something new to offer, which current anti-bullying programs and research was not offering. The Chapter 2: Literature Review on bullying conveys that the problem of bullying continues to grow. The research conducted by Olweus in the 1970s and 2000s supports this because the research demonstrated that the aggressive behavior has not been perceived as a problem that was in need of a solution. Comparing more recent research from 2014 to 2015, Thornberg, Pozzoli, Gini, & Jungert. (2015) found

12% of the students in grades 4–6 reported that they are peer victimized at school on a weekly basis. To assume that students more than once have witnessed at least one example of physical aggression (beating, kicking, harshly shoving, or holding another student to make the person upset) and at least one example of verbal aggression (teasing, threatening, or calling another student mean names) mentioned in the scale is therefore reasonable. (p. 332)

Alessi (2011), and Eriksen, Nielsen, & Simonsen (2014) found that increasing percentages of the population of children have become victims to bullying. Alessi (2011) stated, “30 percent of all students are in some way involved in bullying: 13 percent as bullies, 11 percent as targets of bullying and six percent as both a bully and a victim.” He continued, “70 percent of all student’s report having been bullied at some point in their education, with many cases being repeated and prolonged” (p. 20). Eriksen et al. (2014) conducted a study of 4,255 children in Denmark. From their research, they were able to conclude that 1,151 Danish students were “identified as victims of bullying” (p. 844). The researchers noted in their conclusion, “Denmark is a very homogenous society, which may limit the potential for conflict, and it is therefore possible that the nature of bullying is less severe than in other places” (p. 862). Their data showed, “20

percent of the victimization is reported to be severe while 80 percent is reported as minor victimization” (p. 844). The purpose of this study in brief is to further explore the topic and how it relates to the church environment.

Purpose of the Proposed Study

The purpose of this study was to understand what contributions Christian communities might make that would support and expand the anti-bullying efforts provided by schools and other organizations in the local community. A secondary purpose goal was to understand the impact that Christian values and perspectives might have on anti-bullying programs, which is a topic that has not been researched sufficiently in the research literature.

Research Question

The central research questions for this study were:

- What does an effective anti-bullying program within the church look like, how does it work?
- What are the perceptions and understanding of bullying among the people in the church community?
- What do children and families in the church have and not have to enable them to prevent and handle a bullying situation? and;
- What are the effects of implementing a focus group presentation designed to explain the best practices for a church on anti-bullying programs?

Rationale, Relevance, and Significance of the Proposed Study

Bullying is a topic that has been researched from numerous theoretical and practical perspectives over the years. Researchers Olweus (2003), Sherer, and Nickerson (2010), and Rock and Baird (2012) have conducted research to answer various questions about bullying.

This body of research has shown the importance of having an all-encompassing anti-bullying program in the school setting that includes the entire school community. Their work on anti-bullying programs for school settings has led me to develop the rationale of my study. Since researchers were emphasizing that including everyone in the school community—from administrators to teachers and parent—was important, it seemed reasonable to think that an extension of these efforts beyond the school’s environment and into the broader community could be important. This led me to investigate whether and how the church could contribute effectively to anti-bullying efforts that impact and support Christian families. As a church leader with many years of experience, I know that Christian parents look to the church to provide the extra resources for them to raise their children. It was anticipated, that Church leaders and members could, if presented with information about church member attitudes and perspectives on bullying and information about current anti-bullying programs, develop strategic interventions to help children, families, and congregation members when they are confronted with a bullying situation.

This research is relevant, timely, and important. Research has shown that bullying has effects on the schoolroom (Bullock, 2002). Children find that it is hard to concentrate on schoolwork, and bullying creates an environment where students are not able to produce high quality work in a timely fashion because they cannot concentrate on classwork; this is due to the fact that they go to school fearing what could happen to them while they there (Bullock, 2002). Children are required to go to school. Although their attendance in a school setting may decrease and excuses may increase, legally they have to attend school. In the church setting, if children do not feel safe and comfortable coming to church, then they can stop attending. Benson and King (2005) note that religious participation declines during adolescence and young

adulthood and then increases later in adulthood as individuals marry and have children.

Churches have a small window of time between adolescence and young adulthood to reach children and help them feel welcome and secure in the church community. Bullying within the church or the inability of congregations to acknowledge the influence of bullying on church members and their children could contribute to feelings that the environment is not safe.

In addition to the consequences for bullying experienced by the victim, there are other consequences experienced by the bully. “Children who bully often suffer from low school bonding and adjustment, which can be associated with low school competence and increased truancy” (Brown et al., 2005, p. 384). Difficulty developing and maintaining positive relationships is another problem identified in bullies. Venter and duPlessis (2012) stated

Bullies, on the other hand, learn to use violence and aggression to solve problems. They learn to gain emotional, social and often monetary benefits from their aggressive behavior. They gain or maintain dominance in an abusive way and often lack a sense of empathy. Poor development of empathy can lead to depersonalization and alienation from healthy human relationships. The use of social aggression may lead to abuse or a career in crime in adulthood. Many bullies experience mental health problems. They present conditions such as attention deficit or oppositional- conduct disorder. They often turn to substance abuse and in adulthood present antisocial behavior. (p. 3)

The aggression demonstrated by the bully does not go away as the child moves from elementary school to middle school or even into adulthood and the child in the church setting. Venter and du Plessis (2012) explored the role educators can play in bullying situations. They were able to determine that if teachers were proactive in preventing bullying situations this helped the children in their future, because if the child did not have a negative bullying experience in the

younger school age years, then they were less prone to become bullies as a result of their victimization. They found “the consequences of bullying can become a vicious circle influencing unhealthy development in adulthood as well. Seen from the point of view of social identity theory both the victim and the bully eventually experience unhealthy social development” (Venter & du Plessis, 2012, p. 3). Venter and du Plessis’ work is an example of seminal research in the area of social identity theory. Social identity theory has a central role in the conceptual framework for this study. This is a theory that a person’s social identity is linked to his or her conception of himself or herself as being included in or belonging to a particular social group. Everyone wants to belong to a group and not be considered outsiders. These and other consequences of bullying are the significant for this study on bullying. Equipping church leaders with an anti-bullying program with which they can support children and adults is important to providing the resources families need today.

Proposed Study

The research protocol of this study on bullying was divided into six stages.

- **Stage I: Interview protocol.** During this stage I conducted interviews of parents, fifth grade children, and church leaders, which yielded information on church participants’ understanding and needs of bullying and anti-bullying programs.
- **Stage II: Analysis.** I used the interview data that was collected and analyzed in order to identify bullying themes and needs within churches.
- **Stage III: Anti-bullying programs evaluation and analysis.** During this stage I used the literature review materials and publicly available data to evaluate anti-bullying programs. Analysis of themes and gaps within existing anti-bullying programs was used to identify successful components of these programs.

- **Stage IV: Synthesis of data from stage II and III.** I synthesized the data from Stage II and Stage III to discover what components are needed and what must be added to current anti-bullying programs to support extension of the best practices found in current anti-bullying programs to church contexts. There was a comparison of the synthesized data from the Stage III analysis with the results of the analysis of Stage I. The findings from this synthetic review were distilled into a report of findings from Stages I–IV, which was presented during the Stage V focus group.
- **Stage V: Focus group presentation of themes from stage IV synthesis to selected members from stage I.** During this stage, all of the adult participants from Stage I were invited to participate in the focus group session. The fifth graders were not invited to attend the focus group because the information presented was for the church leaders and parents to collaborate on an action plan using the data presented from the interviews and the investigator’s research on bullying. At the conclusion of the focus group presentation, church leaders had a better understanding of the term *bullying*, the explanations of other words associated with bullying such as *victims*, *physical bullying*, *social bullying*, *verbal bullying*, and *bystander*. The participants were able to develop an action plan to lead a church-wide program in their own church.
- **Stage VI: Analysis of data from focus group.** During this stage the data was analyzed for common themes, three action plans were reviewed, compared, and contrasted, the action plans were then compared with existing anti-bullying programs, and the general findings were reported back to the churches.

Definition of Terms

The present study identified a set of specialized terms from the literature whose definitions are important for the current research project.

Bullying: Jacobson (2014), supported by other researchers, defines bullying as “a specific form of aggression and one that is used deliberately secure resources” (p. 13). He also said, “In this regard it is a dimension of proactive aggression and distinct from aggression which is used relatively, or aggression which is used in response to social provocation” (p. 13). Coloroso (2008) described *bullying* as “a conscious, willful, and deliberate hostile activity intended to harm, induce fear through the threat of further aggression, and create terror” (p. 13). Venter and du Plessis (2012) defined *bullying* as “repeatedly attacking a person psychologically, physically and/or emotionally in order to inflict harm” (p. 1).

Coloroso (2008) defined *four markers of bullying*: imbalance of power, intent to harm, threat of further aggression, and terror.

Imbalance of power: “The bully can be older, bigger, stronger, more verbal adept, higher up on the social ladder, of a different race, or of the opposite sex” (p. 13).

Threat of further aggression: “Both the bullying and the bullied know that the bullying can and probably will occur again. This is not meant to be a onetime event” (p. 14).

Terror: Bullying is a systematic violence used to intimidate and maintain dominance.

Terror struck in the heart of the child targeted is not only a means to an end, it is an end in itself. This is not a onetime incident of aggression elicited by anger about a specific issue, nor is it an impulsive response to a rebuke. (p. 14)

Types of bullying: verbal bullying, physical bullying, and relational bullying.

Verbal bullying: Verbal bullying can take the form of name-calling, taunting, belittling, cruel criticism, personal defamation, racist slurs, and sexually suggestive or sexually abusive remarks. (Coloroso, 2008)

Physical bullying: Physical bullying is a bullying action that includes a physical action such as but not limited to hitting, punching, or scratching. It is causing pain on another person. (Coloroso, 2008)

Relational bullying: Relational bullying is the form of bullying when a person does something to another person that effects a person's relationship with others through isolating or excluding a person from something. (Coloroso, 2008).

Roles in bullying episodes: Bullies, victims, and bystanders.

Bullied: Olweus (1978) stated "a student is being bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time to negative actions on the part of one or more other students" (p. 9). It is important to note that the act of being bullied is a form of harassment and it is not simply *children being children*.

Victim: The victim is someone who the bully involves in the action without his or her consent. Merriam Webster defined *victim* as "one that is injured, destroyed, or sacrificed under any of various conditions" (Merriam Webster, 2015). "Victims can also be people whom a bully merely perceives have some form of weakness, which can include anything from physical or emotional weakness to being fashionably or culturally out of step" (Gerali, 2009, p. 66). In a current study, Fast (2016) noted that

Children, when asked why some students are bullied, replied that it was because they were different; they were obese, red-headed, spoke with a funny accent, or wore thick glasses. Many adults were of the same belief. In fact, "difference" has little to do with it.

Children become bullying victims because they are smaller and weaker than other children their age. They give off subtle signals that they will internalize shame rather than fight back. (p. 39)

A victim can be a child who does not seem to take up for themselves.

Bully: The bully is a person who chooses to perform either a physical, verbal, or social attack on another person who has demonstrated in some way that they are unable to defend themselves against the attacker (Olweus, 2003). The Merriam Webster definition of bully is a “blustering browbeating person; especially one who habitually cruel to others who are weaker is the bully” (Merriam Webster, 2015). This definition is also supported by general consensus in scientific literature. Venter and du Plessis (2012) defined bully as a person who has “learn to use violence and aggression to solve problems. They learn to gain emotional, social and often monetary benefits from their aggressive behavior” (p. 3).

Bystander: The bystander is the person who is a witness to the attack and usually is not someone who has been a victim in the past (Coloroso, 2008). The bystander is placed in a situation where a decision is required: to help, to join in, or to do nothing. Research shows that the bystander’s action is pivotal to the final reactions of the victim (Bazelon, 2014). If the bystander does nothing, the victim finds himself or herself in a situation of feeling that they are an outsider. When the bystander steps up and helps either by getting help or confronting the bully, it creates a feeling of belonging. On the other hand, Coloroso (2008) states that bystanders “are the supporting cast who aid and abet the bully through acts of omission and commission. They stand idly by or look away, or they can actively encourage the bully or join in” (p. 62). Based on this definition the bystander is a person who does not step up to help.

Target: The target is someone who is watched and later becomes the victim of a bullying attack. This person “stands out to the bully as different in some way that the bully perceives as a weakness, and that the bully appears to despise” (McNamee & Mercurio, 2008, p. 372).

Assumptions and Limitations

This research study included interviews with church leaders, parents, and children. Children and their parents were interviewed about the issue of bullying. Limitations related to the place, time, procedures, finances, and facilities, as well as worries about children speaking freely in the presence of their parent and the church leader. The church leaders received a letter of invitation to the interview and to be about of the focus group presentation, and their participation in the study required each participant to attend a one-day focus group presentation and required 3 hours of commitment in order to participate in the study. One limitation with the study was that not all participants were able to attend the focus group presentation on the day it was scheduled, although the presentation was scheduled on a day that was convenient for most of the participants. With the study focus being three local churches, the study’s findings are not generalizable. Additionally, each church in the area had a limited number of church leaders who could participate in the study and the size of the group of people who were eligible to participate was small. The scope of the study was limited to the churches in my geographic area that had a large group of young families in attendance. Other churches within the proximity of the research sites draw their memberships from the same geographical area, which includes urban, suburban, and rural neighborhoods. The churches that are in a rural setting are competing with other churches to include young families into their congregations. However, there are not enough young families interested in attending church to support the existence of a sustainable youth program in all churches. Therefore, some churches are having to eliminate children and youth

ministries. With churches not having children and youth ministries on their campus the churches' knowledge and ability to support anti-bullying efforts may be limited. These issues could limit transferability of the study to smaller, rural congregations. Based on informal conversations in the church setting, my assumption was that most of the church leaders have limited knowledge on the topic of bullying.

The next chapter reviews key literature about the topic of bullying. The chapter explores various anti-bullying programs such as OBPP (1993) and Coughlin's *The Protectors* (2015). The literature review revealed that most anti-bullying research does not include a focus on churches or other institutions, though Olweus indicated that broad community involvement was something that was needed to address the problem. The review included an investigation of what Christian moral theory and psychology have to say about child development and the issue of bullying, in order to understand how one might investigate contributions the church could make. The next chapter reviews the multiple stages of self-development defined by Erikson (1993) and explores Fowler's (1976) stages of faith to illustrate how developmental levels play an important role when addressing bullying. According to the current literature, most anti-bullying programs are implemented within school settings. The literature review, by expanding the conceptual framework to include Christian moral theory, emphasizes the importance of cultivating faith as a means for supporting anti-bullying efforts. The overarching aim of the Chapter 2: Literature review was to review how other researchers have approached the topic of bullying and identify how the current study could expand the research, specifically within the context of the church.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The chapter presents a review of past and current literature on the topic of bullying using a three-part conceptual framework as a means to gather knowledge about the current state of bullying research and programs that exist to address the problem. This review begins with an examination of the research of Dan Olweus and the development of the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP). From there the chapter reviews Bullock's (2002) work on social development and how it relates to bullying. The chapter also reviews the empirical research on the problem of bullying that has been conducted since 1970s. Bullying can be multi-faceted and come in the following forms: physical, verbal, and relational. Each of these forms of bullying are defined and examined in relation to the literature.

The conceptual framework is divided into three lenses: moral, social, and programmatic, which will be used to understand the problem of bullying. The moral lens of the conceptual framework focuses on the work of Kohlberg (1984), research on moral reasoning, Erikson's (1993) work on human development, empirical research on the cultivation of faith and spiritual development, and Fowler's (1981) seminal work on faith development.

Social development is the second lens of the conceptual framework and is focused on "life stories" as central to personal growth. Two life story approaches were selected to undergird this framework. Dan McAdams (2001) research emphasized the idea of "life stories" for personal development, while Allen Kurzweil's (2015) own "life story" about bullying emphasizes how experiences can shape a person's social development. After exploring their research, the chapter provides a review of research on the development of social competencies in children.

The final lens of the conceptual framework concentrates on programmatic and system approaches to addressing bullying. Anti-bullying research and specific bullying preventions programs are reviewed. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the methodological approaches in the literature, the limitations, and how the present study develops an under-researched area of the literature on bullying.

Facts about Bullying

While instances of aggression have been documented throughout human history, contemporary educational research on the problem of bullying began in the 1970s, with the publication of Dan Olweus's (1978) seminal book, *Aggression in the Schools: Bullies and Whipping Boys* (Olweus, 1978). At that time, Olweus (1978) found that approximately 15% of students had experienced bullying in one-way or another. Olweus researched both bullies and victims. The study included "questionnaire surveys of more than 150,000 Scandinavian students" (p. 12). The students varied in ages from 8 to 16. With a repeat survey in 2001 the numbers had increased by 50% from the previous findings. Research suggests that boys physically bully more often than girls and "girls engage in the more psychological and indirect bullying, such as exclusion" (Bullock, 2002, p. 131). According to Olweus, "Several common assumptions about the causes of bullying receive little or no support when confronted with empirical data." (2003, p. 14). The common assumptions that were not supported by the data were that the size of the class and type of school were contributing factors in bullying. Olweus's hypothesis was that the larger the class or school the more bullying would occur. The hypothesis was that the students would experience "competition for grades and failure in school, or poor self-esteem and insecurity" (p. 14). I will be discussing the issue of self-esteem later in this

review. The literature search conducted for the present study did not reveal subsequent studies that have confirmed or disconfirmed Olweus's hypothesis.

Instead of being a factor for causes of bullying, there is data to support that bullying actually can cause failure in school, poor self-esteem and insecurity. The assumption regarding class size, is that the larger the class size, the more bullying, causing failure in school. This validation is addressed in greater detail when I discuss the moral and social issues of bullying.

Turning to the topic of the community effects of bullying, a number of studies show that the persons directly involved in such encounters, ripple outward and create larger problems for the entire community and society (Bullock, 2002; Gasser, 2009; Horton 2011). They have explored social development of children in relation to bullying. Bullock (2002) conducted research on children and found, "To succeed in school, children must perceive their environment as being safe, secure, and comfortable. Yet, for many children, bullying and teasing begins as soon as children first form peer groups" (p. 131). A first peer group is where some children have their first experience bullying. As the children start to make the first connections to other children they can either be accepted into the group or become the victims of abuse. It is at this stage when children form friendships or school becomes a lonely unsafe place. Horton (2011) wrote

Bullying is not simply a series of negative actions undertaken by particularly aggressive individuals, but rather is imbued with power relations. Taking the power relations involved in school bullying seriously involves investigating how social processes of bullying relate to social and moral orders; not only at the group level but also at the institutional and societal levels. (p. 277)

The results from the research show that the social power of needing to be accepted in a peer

setting can create an environment of anxiety and hostility.

Gasser, a teacher from Switzerland, tested the hypothesis that a bully is a person who is morally insensitive but social competent. Gasser found that “Socially competent bullies may be well aware of the moral rules that should guide their actions without feeling any commitment to them” (p. 800). These findings suggest that the bully knows the difference between right and wrong. “A surprising, but well-supported research finding is that some bullies show well-developed social competencies, and therefore do not match the traditional view of the aggressive child as socially incompetent” (Sutton, Smith, & Swettenham, 1999a, cited by Erickson, Serita, & Mattaini, 2009, p. 798). Like most researchers on social competencies, Horton (2011) found bullying is a social and moral issue affecting the larger community. Gasser (2009) noted, “bullies are sociable, assertive, good leaders, popular, and well integrated into peer groups” (p. 798). In my work with children, I have found that children who bully become the popular children because the rest of the children do not want to be bullied. Children treat the bully as the popular child in order to head off any aggressive actions. These experiences are supported by researchers Estell, Farmer, and Cairns, (2007), Pellegrini, Bartini, and Brooks, (1999), and Perren and Alsaker (2006). Erikson et al., (2009) found that “bullies, among other things, are sociable, assertive, good leaders, popular, and well integrated into the peer group” (p. 798). This research shows why victims may think it reasonable to befriend a bully in order to keep from being bully. These actions provide a rationale to befriend the bully in order to keep from being attacked. Bullies have friends because of their social abilities and because victims understand that by being a friend to the bully would create a reason to not get bullied because the bully is a friend. Being a friend to a bully may establish for the victim, or potential victim, that they are in an environment of being a member of a popular group of children. From the literature review

search, research has demonstrated that the bully is typically a popular child.

Research conducted on bullying and social similarities had found that children who bully have similar social characteristics. According to Bullock (2002), “Children who bully are impulsive, dominate others, and show little empathy” (p. 130). The children who bully have shown dominance over other children and in some situations their teachers (Bullock, 2002). “Without intervention the frequency and severity of the bullying behaviors may increase. Even more disturbing, it appears that the patterns of bullying learned in the early years can set children on a course of violence later in life” (Bullock, 2002, p. 130). The research conducted by Bullock describes the importance of intervention. Children who have been bullied will continue to experience bullying and as time progresses the frequency of bullying will increase. Creating interventions will help elevate the frequency and severity of the bullying. The research found that the bully will continue bullying if no interventions are in place. It is important to understand the underlying causes and patterns associated with bullying (Bullock, 2002).

Perspectives on Bullying

From the 1970s until the present, perspectives on bullying within the educational research literature have continued to evolve. More and more researchers have begun to explore of the topic from its moral and social associations to investigations of scope and severity of the problem for youth across the United States and internationally. Rigby (2000) found that where students are known to be frequently bullied by other students, and more especially where they have little or no social support, they are at increased risk of mental illness. It seems likely that the mental health of students can be enhanced through an overall reduction in bullying in a school” (p. 66).

Bullying produces many negative effects on children that can take years to address, if such negative effects can be addressed at all. Olweus (2003) found that “coping with bully/victim problems has become an official school priority in many countries” (p. 16). Research discovered through the literature review search of the present study demonstrates that the problem of bullying has continued to grow. For example, Olweus’s (2003) research demonstrates that the problem has continued to grow and aggressive behavior has not been perceived as a problem that was in need of a solution. In another study by Brown et al. (2005), the researchers found that, “About one in five elementary school and one in ten middle school students in the United States is bullied” (2005, p. 384). This research was completed in 2005 and data from more current studies from McNamee and Mercurio (2008), and Bradshaw, Waasdorp, and O’Brennan (2013) indicates the rates of bullying have increased. Brown et al., also found that, “One third of the 9- to 13-year-olds reported being bullied once in a while, and another 15% said they were bullied at least weekly” (p. 385). The percentages found in this study came from the number of all children in the United States who stated that they were bullied, and from those one in seven who commented of not attending school because of being afraid of being bullied. Brown et al. stated, “Finally, we must not forget that bullies are often also victims of their environments” (2005, p. 392). Based on what the article states, Brown et al. are making a point that is supported by other studies, namely, that many bullies were once victims. This situation leads to there being a constant stream of new bullies and new victims. I will be discussing this more when I talk about the consequences of bullying under the section “Consequences of Bullying” later in this literature review.

Types of Bullying

In a study, *Forms of Bullying and Victimization*, conducted by Yang and Salmivalli (2013), the researchers found

The univariate gender effects were consistent for verbal, physical and cyber victimization regardless of the information source, that is, boys scored higher than girls on verbal and physical, but lower on cyber victimization. Concerning indirect victimization, boys scored higher than girls in the models utilizing self-reports in the identification of victims and bully-victims, but lower than girls in the models using peer-identified groups. (pp. 732–733)

Yang and Salmivalli reported the differences between bullying and genders. Boys scored higher with indirect victimization such as physical attacks towards another person. Girls had higher results in peer-identified groups.

Physical. To physically bully someone a person is literally touching another person or someone else's property through force, harm, violence, risk, and so on, by means of a form of physical contact. The bully could physically hit, slap, kick, push, shove, poke, or trip the victim. Physically stealing, hiding, or ruining someone's personal items is another form of physical abuse. Researchers agree with Jacobsen's (2007) definition that "physical bullying tends to receive more attention from school personnel, and this includes behaviors such as hitting, kicking, or any form of overt violence toward another student" (p. 1).

In discussing the problems of youth bullying, Gerali (2009) found that, "younger teenage bullies begin by shoving, tripping, throwing things, hitting, and making obscene gestures at a victim" . . . then "as the teenager grows older, he learns to make these physical actions more intimidating, humiliating, and aggressive" (p. 25).

Verbal. Verbally bullying can sometimes seem less offensive to the bully, however when a person verbally attacks a person through the use of name calling or teasing the end result is just as damaging. When the bully resorts to insulting, making deriding remarks or racist comments, these acts fall under the term: *verbal bullying*. Research has proven that verbal bullying is popular among the girls, while physical bullying is typically used more with boys. McNamee and Mercurio (2008) state, “Boys most often are physical bullies; girls more frequently bully through rumor, body language, email, and sexual harassment” (p. 371).

Relational/Social. Bullying that involves relational and social concerns seems to affect both boys and girls. Scheithauer, Hayer, Petermann, and Jugert (2006) suggested, “indirect or relational forms of bullying have also been explicitly taken into account. These forms of aggression have in common that a person tries to harm another by damaging his/her social relationships” (p. 262). The bullying technique of refusing to talk to someone or spreading lies or rumors about someone does not appear to be gender-specific. However, girls have a tendency to be more worried about social issues that are related to having a sense of belonging and being accepted (Scheithauer et al., 2006). In this type of bullying, the bully could also persuade others to exclude or reject someone or make someone do actions they did not want to do. Social bullying can be harmful in a school setting when children are attempting to create peer social groups and acceptance. Understanding the different types of bullying is important in order to grasp the broad scope of the topic of bullying.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this dissertation provides an explanation of how I am viewing the research problem through three conceptual frames. The three conceptual frame discussions provide the reader with insight into various theories and approaches to moral

development, social development, and anti-bullying programs.

The first conceptual framework discussion will show the reader how contemporary moral theory overlaps with Christian traditions and how moral theory and Christian traditions could impact bullying prevention. Moral theory was important for the present study because “research into school bullying that focuses on the area of moral reasoning could have important implications for interventions that reduce and prevent such conduct” (Menesini et al., 2003, p. 516), while understanding Christian traditions was important because faith traditions can influence the ways that individuals treat others based their religious beliefs, which are often developed through upbringing in home environments where faith has been taught.

Moral Theory and Christian Tradition

The problem of bullying includes actions by children and adults that are seen as having significant moral implications. Contemporary moral theorists have studied these types of actions and the theories they have developed have similar ways of view these actions as the Christian traditions.

The word moral comes from the Latin word *mos* meaning habit or custom and Christianity is a practice of belief or practice (Hare, 2014). A practice could be a custom that is handed down through a family. Researchers Kollerova et al. (2014) offer the distinction that, “Moral evaluation may refer not only to the cognitive area of moral judgment, but also to moral motivation” (p. 19). Individuals display their moral motivations and employ capacities for moral judgment when they make decisions to complete various tasks. These motivations and capacities for moral action guide human lives, especially with respect to how individuals interact with other individuals. From the literature review it is reasonable to infer that there are habits and customs guiding a bully. Or does the bully justify the action by rationalizing the various harmful actions

based on his or her morals? Kollerova et al.'s study would indicate that bullies do have morals, meaning that they know the differences between what actions are acceptable and what actions are not. The bully's habits and customs are in fact not guiding their actions. The study had 357 participants, a mixture of boys and girls who attended sixth grade in an urban area of Prague. The students were shown a set of hypothetical bullying and defending protagonist sketches then asked open-ended questions about the sketches. Based on the responses Kollerova et al. concluded that bullies do know the differences between acceptable behavior and unacceptable behavior. The Kollerova et al. study was examining the role morals have in a bullying situation but what about the bully's Christian beliefs, assuming an individual is Christian? (Kollerova et al., 2014).

From Kollerova et al.'s study we can conclude that morality and Christianity are linked through the beliefs and customs a person shares within their family. A Christian may not engage in inappropriate behavior because his or her beliefs are that it is wrong to act this way, according to his love for God. Christian values derive from the tradition a person acquires while being a part of a faith community. The next section provides an overview of Kohlberg's theory of moral reasoning. In 1984, Kohlberg created a theory of moral reasoning however there was no mention of Christianity.

Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Reasoning

Kohlberg's work on moral reasoning is accepted in the academic community by many researchers. He identified the three levels of moral reasoning: pre-conventional, conventional, post-conventional. Kohlberg also identified six stages for moral reasoning: heteronomous morality, instrumental morality, good-child morality, law and order morality, social-contract

reasoning, and universal ethical principles (Kohlberg, 1984). Within the three different levels there are one or two different stages that occur in the development of the child.

In the first stage, children view the world in terms of punishment and obedience. In a child's perspective, when a child perceives that something being done is *good*, then the action requires a reward; but when something being done is perceived as *bad* then a punishment should be given. In the second stage, the self-centered person has instrumental morality. "According to Kohlberg, at the start of middle childhood moral reasoning is at the pre-conventional level ...with children judging the rightness or wrongness of actions purely in light of their own wants and fears" (Lightfoot, 2009, p. 533).

Level two is the Conventional Level or stage 3. At this level there is only one stage and this stage is called the Good Boy/ Good Girl stage. At this stage the child seeks approval of others, understands the difference between right and wrong, and has no critical judgment of group or authority.

Level three is where there is the biggest change in the person's morals. The law and order step, stage four, is where the focus is on fixed ruled and making certain there is order. When the child is moving into stage four there is a shift in moral judgment, which creates a critical examination of rights, standards, and personal values are key. In the fifth stage, all of the members have an understanding of social reasoning. The culminating stage finds the child forming "moral judgments with ethical principles for the equality of human rights and respect for others" (Lightfoot, 2009, p. 534). At this final level a child is able to have moral reasoning.

Moral Reasoning

Researchers have been exploring the impact that aggressive behavior such as bullying has on children. The central question with regard to this area of research is: Does the number of

times a child is bullied have any bearing on morality? Perren, Gutzwiller-Helfenfinger, Malti, and Hymel (2012) quoted data from a study conducted by Hymel, Rocke,-Henderson, and Bonnano (2005) when they found “morally disengaged reasoning patterns did vary as a function of how often students had been victimized, but only among 12- to 16-year-olds who reported that they sometimes bullied others” (p. 514). When students are victimized more often, they have fewer strategies to morally become disengaged from the bullying situation.

Researchers “have argued that victimized children and adolescents may lack the social-cognitive preconditions for displaying empathy towards needy peers or related moral emotions, as they have been shown to have problems with understanding the mind of other children” (Gini, 2006, p. 529). Kohlberg’s moral development theory indicates that a child would be unable to be successful in understanding the mind of another child until they are in or approaching stage five which is usually not reached until adulthood and few stay in this stage. Perren et al., concluded in their study of children and moral reasoning, “it is likely that early experiences of unfair treatment by being victimized may increase sensitivity towards norms of fairness and care and enhance moral responsibility” (p. 514). Research has shown that when children are victims of bullying they have higher moral responsibility. Erikson created a theory to help with the understanding of a child by looking at the development of self.

Erikson’s Development of Self

Peter Feldmeier, an ordained priest and expert in Christian spirituality, has written about the spirituality of children and how they develop their Christianity. Feldmeier (2007) refers to the first of the eight stages of Erikson’s development of self as beginning with the “neonate” or “trust verses fear toward hope” (p. 56). In this first stage which is identified as the “child’s prehistoric era” (Feldmeier, 2007, p. 57), the child is testing the water to figure out who he or she

can trust while having his or her needs met. “Control verses chaos” is the toddler in stage two. “Will is the unbroken determination to exercise free choice as well as self-restraint” (Feldmeier, 2007, p. 58). During early childhood or stage three, the child is concerned with purpose and shame towards initiative or the will of a person. Here the child learns about reality and fantasy through play. The early school age child, stage four, is dealing with industry verses inferiority towards competence. Children learn the satisfaction of completing task and following directions. They are filled with hope, will and purpose as they tackle the completion of the instruction while working towards competence.

On the ends on a spectrum of psychological wellness, Erikson identified stage five as adolescences who are developing identity verses role-confusion towards fidelity. Children learn during this stage to accept themselves for who they are during a transitional phase of sexual and intellectual maturity. As the child is moving towards maturity, Feldmeier (2007) stated, “Here we enter into the domain of ethical values. Erikson points out that, while identity and fidelity are necessary for ethical strength, they do not provide it themselves. That comes next” (p. 59). In stage six, adulthood, the foundation for adult virtues is ready to be acquired. This means that the intimacy verses isolation towards love needs to be determined. The adolescent has what it takes to be in an intimate relationship however the person is still in the selfish, immature phase, which could hinder the move towards love. Therefore, the adolescent has the ability to be in a relationship with another person and to love that person however at this stage the child’s immaturity acts as a burden thus creating an inability to have a committed love relationship with another person.

The seventh stage, generativity verses stagnation towards care, occurs during middle ages when “what one has produced and fostered will be continued after one’s life” (Feldmeier, 2007,

p. 60). The final stage, that is, old age is integrity versus despair toward wisdom. When the adult returns to childhood while having “concern and love in the face of death” (p. 60) is stage eight. In this stage the adult should not regress back to their childhood ways except in play. These are the playful experiences that elder people have when they are grandparents playing with their grandchildren. Erikson believed, “at this stage one ought to have learned, especially through midlife, to let go of narcissistic forms of grasping and control, and to attend to life with more interior freedom. Strength emerging from completing this task is a sense of wisdom” (p. 60). The mature elder has gained a perspective on life through his or her experiences.

Erikson’s developmental stages are important for understanding the impact of bullying on human beings in early years, which can influence psychosocial wellness at later stages of life. Subsequent sections of the review of literature will demonstrate that knowing what a person is experiencing within their self-development is crucial in understanding the feelings a person has even 40 years after the event. Knowing about self-development is important to understanding how bullying is perceived by the child which moves us into the next topic of cultivating one’s faith.

Cultivating Faith

Cultivating faith requires a person to take the first step of sharing one’s faith with others. Scripture passages such as 2 Timothy 1:5, “I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also” and Ephesians 6:1-4

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother—which is the first commandment with a promise—so that it may go well with

you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth. Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

These passages clearly show how God has entrusted to parents the vital role of passing on a legacy of faith to their children. When parents take seriously their responsibility and the great privilege they have been given to train and teach their children, they create a setting that is ideal for their children to grow, to understand, to believe, and to live God's Word. While it is true that the church has an important and much-needed role in coming alongside and building on what parents have done and are doing to train their children, the church cannot be the primary or sole trainer or teacher of children. Biblical scripture is clear that this is a responsibility, privilege, and joy given to parents. Parents are in the position to train their children day in and day out throughout life (Freeman, 2011).

One way that a parent trains their child is in the Christian faith. Some parents bring their babies to be baptized. Although this practice is not universal, when the child comes to be baptized in front of the church, the parents make a commitment first to God to raise their child in the Christian faith and second, they promise to teach their child about God. The promises parents make are a way of building the faith in their children and in themselves. "In Christianity the moral virtues are grounded in the character of Christ and embodied in Biblical ethics." (Venter and du Plessis, 2012, p. 2). Families are creating the moral virtues needed to balance the faith the children need to participate in school later on in their life.

Virtues and faith are counterbalancing parts of the Christian's life. Faith needs to be cultivated as a community effort, through the family, the church, and the schools. Venter and du Plessis (2012) stated, "It is to be hoped that when they teach Christian values, teachers will also educate their class as a group in accepting each other and caring for each other, which is also in

line with the positive application of the social identity theoretical framework” (p. 2). By teaching Christian values of caring for others, everyone benefits. It is important from a Christian framework that children understand they need to love one another in order to help prevent bullying.

Bullying, which is an act that does not demonstrate love for other individuals, is contrary to the Christian virtue of love, which Jesus commanded when he said, “My command is this: Love each other as I loved you” (John 15:12) or “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Mark 12:31 New International Version).

When people gather on Sundays in a church setting they are stating that they are committed to the beliefs of Christianity. Christianity is about treating others in a humane way, because Jesus came into this world, not as an imposter of humanity, nor as a dim reflection of humanity- but as a living, fully functional and holistic representative of humanity. The hope is that children who are building and creating a Christian lifestyle are committed to living that life outside in other environments. The practices and support the children receive from their faith of family (i.e., their church community) fosters their ability to love others as they have been loved and to carry with them the virtues needed to make good decisions when faced with the temptations to bully other children.

Mercado-Crespo (2013) found that, “Subjective components of religiosity refer to those attitudes, beliefs, experiences, self- perceptions and attributions involving religious or spiritual content” (p. 49). On the other hand, Mercado-Crespo explains, “behavioral components of religiosity consist of public and private religiosity factors” (p. 49). This theory covers the public realm of church attendance while the private realm would be considered prayer and the importance of religion to the individual person. As explained by the *Stop Bullying Now* (HRSA,

2010) initiative, “as children grow in faith, they often develop an understanding of how best to relate to others” therefore “children's participation in spiritual communities of faith often has a profound influence on how they react when confronted with bullying and other forms of aggression or violence” (HRSA, 2010).

Spiritual Development

Just like faith development, the church is supportive of spiritual development. Children grow and learn from their parents by the example parents set in their commitment to regular attendance in church services, to prayer, and to reading the Bible. Allen and Coy (2004) stated that, “Spirituality is a part of the predominant faith traditions in America and encompasses the values that are desirable for young people to acquire during their early developmental years” (p. 351). This quote is important for understanding why families should introduce their children to church when they are young because it aids in the formation of a person’s values. Today’s churches offer programs to assist children and to support families in developing and maintaining Christian spirituality. Allen and Coy (2004) suggested, “Spiritual development usually takes place within one's family, culture, and religious affiliation. Younger students are influenced by the religion of their parents, grandparents, and other relatives-a child's intellectual and spiritual inheritance” (p. 352). Even though the Church acts as an aid in the commitment to the spiritual development of children, ultimately it is the family’s responsibility to take the lead in providing spiritual guidance to their children.

From my personal experiences as a professional church-worker, I have found that today’s churches see an influx of children in the younger years being enrolled in Sunday School but as the children get older the commitment to sports tends to draw the families from the pews to the ballfield sidelines. This statement is from personal experience of working in a church. Allen

and Coy (2004) wrote, “As the child grows older, the child seeks to connect the self with others and objects in the environment” (p. 352). The authors continue saying, “Spirituality unites the adolescent's inner meaning and beliefs with outside relationships such as a specific set of religious doctrines, group membership, a special mentor, nature, or a supreme entity” (p. 352). Churches are seeing the importance of keeping the children in the pews. As the children get older they remember the importance of church and the commitment to their faith, their spirituality, and their church. In my experience as a Children’s Ministry Director, being a part of a faith family instills and reinforces a solid Christian base of morals to help the children with the many situations facing them today.

Feldmeier (2007) examined children between the ages of 2 and 12 and found that, “Morally, all children of this age operate according to the dynamics of power, reward, and punishment. They are just as impulsively oriented regardless of whether or not overt religious upbringing was part of their lives” (Feldmeier, 2007, p. 93). Children see their parents as the priority in their lives. It is the parents who reward and provide punishment in the child’s life. Feldmeier (2007) concluded, “Intentional religious activity is also important for early childhood spiritual formation. Children are guided by adult expectations and they seek affirmation from these adults” (p. 96). It is important that churches provide a solid children and youth program that all want to attend, because the children and youth will encourage their parents to bring them to church so that they can be a part of the program. This will increase the attendance in Sunday School as well as in the church services. Feldmeier (2007) shared that a child’s morality is impulsive and therefore the importance of providing a strong spiritual presence will aid in a child’s overall growth. Children have to rely on their parents to drive them to places but if the activities are something the children are excited about and interested in they will persuade their

parents to take them to church on a regular basis.

Feldmeier (2007) asked the question, “Can preschool children have a spiritual life in any meaningful way?” (p. 93). Through research he was able to conclude a preschooler is egocentric in any type of home environment. Part of the research Feldmeier used was taken from *Fowler’s Stages of Faith*. In these stages of faith, “Fowler describes preschool faith as highly important for lasting images of God and notions of what makes for a healthy spiritual life. Usually at this stage images of God are aligned to images of their parents” (p. 93). After working with children in a church setting for more than 20 years, I can affirm Fowler’s findings that younger children emulate the spiritual life and practices their parents have in place. Children will learn and recite prayers and songs about God through the repetition within their home life and Sunday School. For example, in my place of worship, every Sunday all the children recite the Lord’s Prayer starting in September and going through to May. By May all of the children, including the younger children know the words and are able to participate in reciting the prayer. As children participate in worship and prayer, they grow in their spiritual faith. The next section further explores the work of Fowler and the stages of faith development that he identified.

Fowler’s Stages of Faith

Dr. James Fowler was a pioneer in the study of Faith and Moral Development. This developmental psychologist studied nearly 600 people from the ages 4 to 88 to understand the purpose and meaning of faith in a person’s life. From the research, Fowler found six stages of faith: *intuitive-projective faith*, *mythic-literal faith*, *synthetic-conventional faith*, *individuative-reflective faith*, *conjective faith*, and *universalizing faith*. In each of these stages Fowler described how the faith of a child is growing through the Christian perspective and family input. Stage one: intuitive projective faith starts in preschool. Fowler (1981) found that at this stage in

a child's life "is the fantasy-filled, imitative phase in which the child can be powerfully and permanently influenced by examples, moods, actions, and stories of the visible truth of primarily related adults" (p. 133). This describes the child as using the information obtained to form their understanding throughout their life. "Faith is a complex term, denoting many different things, such as one's belief system, religious zeal, entrusting oneself to God's providence" (Feldmeier, 2007, p. 64). Fowler found that comprehension of faith begins between the ages three and seven meaning that preschoolers have a basic faith and are able to share their image of God.

Most church school programs begin at the preschool level. Churches and educators have read and researched the best times to reach children in supporting their faith development. Although the average beginner student has a great deal of understanding and growth in their future, children with a Christian background can at this young age grasp the meaning of a higher being and accept the idea that they should believe.

As the preschool child progresses into the middle grades of elementary school, her faith development moves into what Fowler describes as the Mythic-literal faith stage ages 7–11 years old. "*Mythic-literal faith* occurs in stage two around the middle of grade school. The linear literal ten year olds are seeing images of God as anthropomorphic" (Feldmeier, 2007, p. 66). At this tender age, children hear a story and they take the information as facts while they are unable to see how the story relates to them personally. Bible stories are accepted as historical events that are inspiring. Fowler (1995) found that during stage two

conflicts between authoritative stories must be faced. The emergence of mutual interpersonal perspective taking (I see me as you see me; I see me as you see me; I see you seeing me seeing you. Creates the need for a more personal relationship with the unifying power of the ultimate environment. (p. 150)

Stage three, *synthetic conventional faith* is the “emergence of formal operational thinking [that] allows persons of faith to step outside their own narrative and see the story as a whole. That is, they can now start trying to put the pieces of their faith lives together” (Feldmeier, 2007, p.66). Adolescents ages 11–13 year olds are included in this category. This stage is the stage when the child thinks logically and everything that they learn or believe has to be logical because they develop a diverse self-image.

Fowler (1995) stated that in stage four, an adolescent believes, “God remains or becomes salient in a person’s faith at this stage-must also be re-imagined as having inexhaustible depths of self and others we know that we ourselves will never know” (p. 153). Stage four: *individuating reflective faith* is the “recognition of one’s own religious identity” (Feldmeier, 2007, p. 68). Children have a tendency to create their faith based on their parent’s beliefs. Fowler says that the liability of this faith perspective is that meaning tends to be flattened. By being *flattened*, Fowler is referring to a person’s faith not having the opportunity to grow and flourish. Not only sacraments, but also the practices and beliefs of others, are reduced to propositions. In *conjunctive faith* a person “suspects that things are organically related to each other; it attends to the pattern of interrelatedness in things, trying to avoid force-fitting to its own prior mind set” (Fowler, 1981, p. 185). At this stage the believer no longer needs to force-fit the experiences because their faith is now accepted as a part of their practices. “Universalizing faith the self emerges in pursuing the transformation of the world on the basis of the Transcendent Ultimacy, which obviously, a Christian would know as God” (Feldmeier, 2007, p. 69).

In conclusion, Fowler’s Development of Faith is an important element to understand how children are able to understand and accept God. A person’s faith can only be helpful as a supporting element in handling bullying if a person is at the development stage to fully

understand and have a faithful life. As defined by Fowler, I can conclude that children starting in stage three are able to understand the difference between right and wrong according to the way that God wants Christians to live their lives. The spiritual development of a child is only one consideration to understand how a child can understand and handle bullying.

Through my years of working with children, Kohlberg, Erikson, and Fowler have been the theorists at the forefront of the literatures I have investigated in order to understand the spiritual, social, and developmental growth of a child. To better understand how a child is capable of handling a bullying situation through a mental, social, and spiritual framework it was important to explore the works of these three researchers. The next conceptual frame that will be explored is the social development of children.

Social Development

The social development of students refers to students' interactions and relationships with other people (Goleman, 2007). Speaking about students, Goleman (2007) stated, "The more strongly connected we are with someone emotionally, the greater the mutual force. Our most potent exchanges occur with those people with whom we spend the greatest amount of time day in and day out..." (p. 5). According to Goleman, neuroscientists have discovered that the brain's design makes it sociable. There is a brain-to-brain connection whenever we relate to someone and that our brain's social circuits direct all we faced. Goleman defines *social development* as the ability to cooperate with someone, empathize with another, have guided playtime, and learn to lead and to follow (Goleman, 2007). Barrier-Ferreira (2008) advised that research focused on education through standardized testing has forced a concentration on intellect, and the social and emotional aspects of students have been depreciated. Teachers can affect social development, positively or negatively. Barrier-Ferreira concluded that educators create a bond with their

students similar to that of a parent; therefore the teacher will be looking out for the best for each and every child in the classroom to develop well-rounded students.

The social development of a child plays a part in the way a child perceives bullying. In my experience, the younger child starts to develop social skills as they are starting school. Until a child begins preschool, assuming the child is not in a child care program, their social interaction tends to be limited to a smaller circle of people such as parents, family members, and individuals in a babysitting environment. When a child begins preschool, they learn to join into playgroups. Wilt, Cox, and McAdams (2010) stated, “Recent research suggests that life stories may contain developmental scripts that sometimes follow a trajectory similar to Erikson’s (1993) theory of psychosocial development” (p. 156). The authors continue, “Erikson’s theory conceives of development as proceeding in eight stages revolving successively around conflicts of trust, autonomy, initiative, industry, identity, intimacy, generativity, and ego integrity” (Wilt et al., 2010, p. 156). It is important to understand the social development theory of Erikson when exploring bully. Erikson’s theory of psychosocial development has been a staple in the social development arena however Dan McAdams’s (2001) theory of the Life’s Story Approach is an approach in psychology that can contribute to understanding social development. The “Life Story Approach” is a theory that enables people to share events that happened in their life that has molded them into the person they have become. In the next section, the reader will be introduced to McAdams and his “life story approach,” explore an example of a true “life story” of Allen Kurzweil. The section will conclude with a brief discussion of the researchers Rock and Baird’s work on social cognitive abilities.

McAdams's "Life Story Approach"

Dan P. McAdams developed a way to describe a person's narrative because of the events that have happened in their lives. Through the Life Story Model of Identity, McAdams (2001) found people's identity is created through narratives and the internalized development and personality of their lives. Each person has a *life story* that identifies the person they will be. "As personality psychologists began to turn their attention to people's lives, they found notions such as *story* and *narrative* to be especially useful in conveying the coherence and the meaning of lives" (McAdams, 2001, p. 100). This type of thinking was a new approach in the psychological world and McAdams developed a psychological lexicon containing words that had never been include such as "life scripts, self-schemas, story grammars, personal myths, personal event memories, self-defining memories, nuclear scenes, gendered narratives, narrative coherence, and narrative complexity" (McAdams, 2001, p. 101). McAdams was instrumental in using a person's narrative to understand the individual's complex nature of the person's identity.

The change in the academic community accepting McAdams's approach did not happen overnight. Psychotherapist, McCabe and Peterson (1991), and Murray and Holmes (1995) were skeptical about the life story approach but McAdams (1985, 1993, 1996) argued

identity itself takes the form of a story, complete with setting, scenes, character, plot, and theme. In late adolescence and young adulthood, people living in modern societies begin to reconstruct the personal past, perceive the present, and anticipate the future in terms of an internalized and evolving self-story, an integrative narrative of self that provides modern life with some modicum of psychosocial unity and purpose. (p. 101)

I would describe *life stories* as a way to share one's past experiences with another person while successfully creating an image for the person listening to feel and see the total event. The *life*

story shared by the interviewee enables the story to include personal effect of details throughout the story encapsulating a vivid adventure. Life stories can be one way for bullying victims to share past experiences. The McAdams “life story approach” is an important technique and one that is seen in the next section when the author shared his narrative of a bullying experience.

Whipping Boy: A True Life Story

An example of McAdams’s “life story approach” can be seen in the book *Whipping Boy: A True Life Story* by Allen Kurzweil. As has been shown, research indicates that bullying is a form of aggressive behavior that is learned as a child and continues to grow and produce aggressive tendencies and moral lapses in adult. Kurzweil’s monograph details his experiences of being a victimized child in a Switzerland boarding school. In his book, *Whipping Boy* (2015), Kurzweil recalls the narrative of his life, which includes the traumatic experience of being a victim of bullying. Within the first 19 pages, Kurzweil’s narrative of his “life story” demonstrates the ways he was a victim of ongoing abuse and how these life events were pivotal in shaping his personality, character, and overall the person he had become.

Allen Kurzweil was a son of a Vienna-born father and American mother. The sudden diagnosis of his father’s cancer and then the death of his father when he was four necessitated the family’s move from Italy to New York. At the age of eight, his mother knew she needed to do something to pay the bills meant going back to school for her PhD and sent 10-year-old Allen to a boarding school in Villars. Being one of the two youngest housed in the tower, Kurzweil quickly became the victim of bullying. The attacks started shortly after he arrived and were perpetrated by a larger 12-year-old child named Cesar. The abuse continued the entire school year.

The bullying described in the book happened when Kurzweil was a sixth grader. As

many researchers have found (Olweus, 2003); McNamee & Mercurio, 2008; Bradshaw, Waasdorp, & O'Brennan, 2013), "Bullying behavior cannot be ignored, because the victims often report physical and mental health problems caused by the abuse they suffered" (Venter & duPlessis, 2012, p. 1). The bullying suffered by Kurzweil caused mental health problems that remained into his adult life. The problems he faced led him to feel the need to confront his childhood attacker when they were adults.

Kurzweil's (2015) childhood experiences had a profound impact on the course of his later life and interests. McAdams stated that in, "...young adulthood, people living in modern societies begin to reconstruct the personal past, perceive the present, and anticipate the future" (p. 101). It was Kurzweil's past bullying experiences that reconstructed his past and created a present of searching for his attacker, and led to the anticipation of his future of being able to accept and understand the events in his life in a clearer picture. Kurzweil's life is a clear example of McAdams Life Story Model. For years his attack played on him as he reconstructed his past for the events of his life, while his future became his search for his attacker 40 years later. Kurzweil used intervention strategies to survive the torture he had to endure as a child. The complex social cognitive abilities of a child are important to utilize with the intervention of bullying. The next element to explore is complex social cognitive abilities.

Complex Social Cognitive Abilities

The problem of bullying involves complex social interactions that are influenced by the social cognitive abilities of bullies and victims. Researchers Rock and Baird (2012) found, "Children as young as age of six but particularly at older ages, are capable of generating intervention strategies. Children's actions as bystanders to bullying may therefore have important parallels in the adult literature where appropriate intervention strategies are obvious"

(p. 423). Researchers have demonstrated that children as young as 10 could have the skills to enable them to choose the right thing to do when they are a bystander near a bullying situation (Coloroso, 2003). Camodeca and Goossens (2005) found that “bystanders who intervene and those who remain silent appear similar along a variety of socio-emotional and social-cognitive dimensions, including emotional regulation, social information processing, ability to avoid personal harassment, and reactive and proactive aggression” (p. 197).

Social competence in children has been a topic of interest when discussing bullying. Researchers have studied the relevance of the effects on bullying and how a child’s social skills can help in the strategic intervention for children (Camodeca & Goossens, 2005). What is meant by *social competence*? Having social competence is demonstrating the ability to judge others within a person’s social circle and those outside. Some research has questioned whether bullies actually have a greater ability to evaluate other children that the bully is able to manipulate around them. In my experience, it depends on the child. Some children appear to be very gifted in manipulating the system, children, and adults. Children have tendencies to want to follow the bully because he or she is popular with other children, thus ignoring the bad actions of bullying. Parents and teachers, may even be manipulated into thinking the bully child is a well-behaved and a moral person. Arsenio and Lemerise (2011) found

Proactive aggressors/bullies suffer less from inaccurate social reasoning than from a comfort with using aggression to obtain desirable material and psychological outcomes, even when it requires victimizing and harming others. Children’s accurate understanding of others’ emotions, as well as their emotional responsiveness are likely to be essential protective factors against both bullying and reactive forms of aggression. (p. 71)

Over 25 years of professional experience with children provides me with a basis for affirming Aresnio and Lemerise's findings. Children who bully are usually not the children who have issues with their social skills. The bully is usually the center of attention and the child who others follow and they are the center of attention. The bully usually is not the short, skinny, child-wearing glasses. This can be a description of a victim within the situation. In this type of hypothetical situation, the child who is a victim of bullying, later might become the bully because of the years of abuse. Were this individual given the opportunity to be part of an anti-bullying program then he/she would not have been drawn to bullying themselves. The social development lens provides an understanding for how children develop certain capacities for social interactions. This provides a foundation for understanding the interactions between bullies and victims. The next section will deliver an overview of programs and approaches to bullying prevention. The goal of this section is to equip the reader with information about the anti-bullying programs that are currently being used in schools.

Programs and Approaches

Bullying programs and approaches have been developed over the past 45 years for use in schools. This section will introduce nine bullying prevention programs that were prominent in the literature. Dan Olweus was the pioneer in the field of bullying. Olweus was born in Sweden and it is where he first starting conducting research in bullying. For over 40 years, he has studied the effects of bullying among children and youth in different areas such as Japan, England, the Netherlands, the USA, and Norway. It is from his numerous studies he created the most notable anti-bullying program in the world, which is known as the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program. Due to his foundational work, Dan Olweus has been called the founding father of research 'on bullying problems and his work has been translated into 25 different languages.

Olweus believed systematic research on bullying requires rigorous criteria for classifying students as bullies or as victims. A student is being bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more fellow students. Through his 1980s research of Scandinavian students between the ages of 8–16, Olweus found that approximately 15% of students in this age group were involved in bully/victim problems with some regularity. The Olweus (2003) “Bullying Prevention Program has been found to create an environment of warmth, firm limits, consistent application of nonpunitive, nonphysical sanctions for unacceptable behavior, and adults who act as authorities and positive role models can help the children” (p. 13).

The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program

The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP) has been a foundational model for creating other anti-bullying programs around the world. The program’s success can be attributed to its emphasis on

creating a school and ideally, also a home environment characterized by: (1) warmth, positive interest, and involvement from adults; (2) firm limits on unacceptable behavior; (3) consistent application of non-punitive, nonphysical sanctions for unacceptable behavior or violations of rules; (4) adults who acts as authorities and positive role models. (Olweus, 2003, p. 15)

The OBPP has been used all over the world because of its comprehensive approach to all aspects of helping, preventing, and controlling the problem of bullying and it is inter-culturally applicable. The review of literature reveals that other programs have taken bits and pieces from the OBPP and attempted to create something new by leaving out different aspects of the bullying program. No one has added to the program because Olweus’s research has proven to be

complete in the elements needed for a successful program. Ultimately the other programs are missing a piece of the program that was important and the programs results display data indicating more needs to be done.

Sherer and Nickerson (2010) have explored anti-bullying programs. Through their study on anti-bullying programs they stated

Bullying is a multifaceted problem that necessitates anti-bullying activities that address all factors surrounding the problem of bullying. To place this study in context, bullying prevention/intervention strategies are reviewed under five categories: (a) systems-level interventions, (b) school staff and parent involvement, (c) educational approaches with students, (d) student involvement, and (e) interventions with bullies and victims. (p. 217)

The five steps they outlined were used in evaluating the methods used in their study to answer the following questions:

(a) What anti-bullying strategies are most/least frequently implemented in American schools? (b) What anti-bullying strategies do school psychologists perceive as most effective/ineffective? (c) What areas do school psychologists perceive as most in need of improvement? and (d) What barriers make the improvement difficult? (p. 220)

The participants in this study were school psychologists who worked in the school system. They found

Educational approaches with students refers to adult-led prevention activities targeting the entire school population that are designed to provide information and knowledge, raise awareness and concerns, and change attitudes and behaviors related to bullying problems. Establishing classroom rules against bullying, having consequences for violations of rules, and holding regular classroom meetings to facilitate the discussion of

bullying problems and peer relations are all part of Olweus's (1993) Bullying Prevention Program. (p. 13)

Sherer and Nickerson (2010) stated, "The program's implementation relies mainly on the existing social environment. Teachers, administrators, students, and parents all play major roles in carrying out the program and in restricting the social environment" (p. 13). Through my experience in working with children I can conclude the success of this or any program will rely on the total involvement of everyone helping the solution. Parents, educators, students, and administrators are working together to create a safe environment for all to learn. This total commitment emphasizes the importance of the program instilling in the students the need to refrain from bullying another person. The approach of including everyone in the process is indicative of Olweus's (2003) anti-bullying approach.

Community Prevention Approach

The *Wakanheza Project*, a community prevention approach was created in 1990 in St. Paul, Minnesota because of the need to establish a positive learning environment free from negative social behaviors. The *Wakanheza Project* was written around six principles: judgment, culture, powerlessness, empathy, environment, and the moment (p. 49). This approach looked at the fact that children do not respond positively to negative experiences. When they defended the program Erickson et al., (2009) described *ecobehavioral theory* as a "lens through which to view these changes that moves from an exclusive focus on individual behavior to incorporating an analysis of the school climate" (p. 45). This information is important because it involves the school climate which incorporates a larger package into the entire process. As noted by National School Climate Center (2016), "The school climate takes into account the students', parents', and school personnel's experience of school life and reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal

relationships, teaching, and learning practices, and organizational structures” (p. 1). According to Erickson et al., The *Wakanheza Project* relies on

(1) Reliance on positive, simple rules that are related to how to act rather than how not to act; (2) strong support for staff and efforts to minimize student academic failure; social skills training and active teaching of positive social behavior; (3) reliance on validated behavior-change procedures with a consistent response to rule violation; (4) support from student involvement and respect for student differences with emphasis on increasing positive reinforcement for appropriate social behavior; and (5) ongoing monitoring of data to provide feedback for program development. (p. 46)

The Wakanheza Project has as an aim the removal of all violence from the schools where the project is implemented. Bullying was mentioned as a form of violence but this program was not implemented as an anti-bullying program, the project is broader than an anti-bullying program. It was implemented as a method for stopping violence in order to create a safe place for learning. This information is important for understanding what needs to be implemented to create a safe place for children in a church setting as well as in the school setting.

Zero Tolerance Policy

Some institutions implement a zero tolerance policy where all children who are involved in an act of bullying would have the same consequences of expulsion or suspension. Sherer and Nickerson (2010) found, “School-wide positive behavior support, modifying space and schedule, and immediate responses to bullying incidents were perceived as most effective, whereas avoiding contact between bullies and victims, a zero-tolerance policy with bullies, and a written anti-bullying policy were least effective” (p. 217). The zero tolerance policy categorizes all acts of bullying the same from the physical acts of bullying to the verbal acts of name-calling. Rigby

(2012) found in the United States “over 70% of teachers and counselors opt to apply punishment” (p. 340). Unfortunately, in the same study the results showed just over half found the policy did not work in preventing bullying.

Participant Role Approach

Salmivalli, Kaukiainen, and Voeten (2005) took a different approach from the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program* (2003). In their program classroom teachers would be encouraged to participate in a 1-year training course. These trained educators would utilize the information on a daily basis to create interventions to affect the behavior of the bystanders. Children who were witnesses to the bullying and did nothing to intervene in any way are categorized as bystanders. Through the implemented interventions the bystanders would be coached to make a change, thus creating the participant role approach. Although this approach is a great resource for the bystanders, it does not target the problem directly, that is, it does not target the bully. Salmivalli et al., identified a specific problem with the program stating that “some teachers did a lot of work tailoring the intervention components to their needs, planning, and carrying out curriculum-based work or role play exercises together with their teams of three participating in the program, however other teachers were more passive” (2005, p. 484). Since most good instruction requires the teacher to be creative in figuring out a plan to implement techniques in their curriculum, the success of this type of anti-bullying programs ultimately depends on a teacher’s personal touches that he or she puts into the lesson plan. Each teacher has a unique way of presenting the information to be taught in any lesson; therefore, each personality will influence the effectiveness of this bullying program. The participant role approach would not be effective in a church setting because the instructors are untrained classroom volunteers and expecting them to have to tailor the intervention components into a lesson would not be feasible.

In the church Sunday School setting, the Director of Children Ministries would need to be responsible for this addition to the program.

School-Wide Anti-Bullying Policy

A school-wide approach is also a part of the OBPP. This is important to note because this policy is not a new idea but one that was created by Olweus. Educators know that positive reinforcement is better than negative reinforcement. The effect is similar to children responding better when given a green light smiley face on their work rather than a red light frowny face, which represents negative work. “There are various anti-bullying strategies that aim to alter the broader school environment. A school-wide anti-bullying policy provides a framework that guides the school’s actions to address the problem of bullying” (Meraviglia, Becker, Rosenbluth, Sanchez, & Robertson, 2003, as cited by Sherer & Nickerson, 2010, p. 218). This approach offers training and support to classroom teachers in order to emphasize intervention skills to use in bullying situation. The school-wide program incorporates the need for more people to be involved during outside play when statistics have proven more situations occur during the less structured times of the day, that is, recess (Noll & Carter, 1997). Like OBPP, this program utilizes the parents in the program using a school-wide anti-bullying day and keeping the parents informed by way of school newsletters. The information about the school policies are published and the schools teach anti-bullying concepts through special activities. Parents are also instrumental in creating the school bullying policy and advising concerning their child in discussions between the victim and the bully.

Review of Research Literature and Methodological Literature

Many researchers have provided a multitude of knowledge and general information about the topic of bullying. Olweus (2003), Cowie (2011), Boulton (2008), Brown et al. (2005), and

Venter and du Plessis (2012) are just a few of the many scientists who have researched and offered important findings. All of the researchers suggest that something needs to be done to prevent children from bullying situations and to provide children with the necessary tools and strategies to handle the situation with bullied.

The review of research and methodological literature section will explore research pertaining to the consequences of bullying among children, which will provide insight into the problem of bullying looks like today. The next section reviews the longitudinal study of Cowie (2011) on why children are bullied.

The Consequences of Bullying

Michael Boulton (2008) conducted research to determine the consequences bullying has on children. “In total, 485 pupils from 11 junior schools in the UK provided data. There were 103 girls and 149 boys from Year 5 (mean age 10.5) and 114 girls and 119 boys from Year 6 (mean age 11.5)” (2008, p. 84). During his study, Boulton was interested in finding out if bullying affected the classroom-learning environment and if it did, in what ways bullying affects students. Olweus (2003) and Rigby (2012), agreed, noting that “bullying disrupts class work” (2008, p. 84). Boulton went further with his research on bullying because he wanted to see what other consequences were associated with bullying.

The results from the Boulton (2008) case study revealed that the consequences of bullying impacted the classroom in numerous ways. Students expressed a concern about not being able to concentrate on their classwork and in cases they found it hard to remember the work that the teacher had assigned. Bullying created an environment where students were not able to produce high quality work in a timely fashion because of the ability to think clearly on classwork. Children reported that their passion for schoolwork diminished and also reported a

greatly increased loss of interest in classwork. Overall, more bullying occurred and less classwork was successfully completed.

Besides the dynamics of the classroom, there are direct consequences of bullying. “Children who bully often suffer from low school bonding and adjustment, which can be associated with low school competence and increased truancy” (Brown et al., 2005, p. 384). Venter and du Plessis (2012) explored the educator’s role in bullying. Teachers can help by setting a positive example for their students to follow concerning how to treat other people, and they can stand as the support system for the children after an occurrence of bullying. Psychologists Venter and du Plessis have determined the consequences of bullying and have been able to show how teachers can alleviate some of the situations in the younger years thus helping into the future. These researchers found that “the consequences of bullying can become a vicious circle influencing healthy development in adulthood as well. Seen from the point of view of social identity theory both the victim and the bully eventually experience unhealthy social development” (Venter & du Plessis, 2012, p. 3). The researchers noted the following unhealthy social development issues related to bullying: “loneliness, anxiety, depression, low self-esteem and even thoughts of suicide” (p. 3). The research reveals that these issues can grow with the frequency of the bullying act. Bullying also causes physical problems. Venter and du Plessis (2012) determined that children become sick with headaches, loss of appetite and stomach problems. Typically, the victim finds reasons to stay home or visit the school nurse more frequently. Participation in school, ranging from sporting activities to raising their hand to answering questions, diminishes. These victimized children become unable to focus and concentrate in the school setting for fear of what can or could happen to them. starts to monopolize their thoughts. Venter and du Plessis (2012) stated, “More long-term consequences

that may affect victims' lives as adults include poor self-esteem, eating disorders, relationship problems and a lack of conflict resolution skills" (p. 3). Creating safe learning environments during the younger grades for all children is necessary for reducing the negative effects of bullying that can spread into adulthood.

Bullying Today

The United States Department of Social Service (2001) reports that, 1 in 5 elementary school and 1 in 10 middle school students are being bullied. These statistics are in line with research from Brown et al., (2005). They conducted a study of 9- to 13-year-olds focusing on the magnitude of, causes of, and remedies for bullying. The study included 1229 students visiting 11 health education centers in 7 states. "Half the respondents said they have been bullied at least once in a while. When bullied, almost half said they fight back, about a fourth tell an adult, and 20% do nothing; only 8% try to talk to the bully" (p. 384). Research demonstrates the importance of anti-bullying programs in the schools.

The more effective programs have included the entire school, that is, teachers, administration, and students, parents, and the community at large. Students who were a part of the study conducted by Brown et al. (2005) thought anti-bullying programs were the least effective way to stop bullying. Brown et al., found that "understanding student perspectives is crucial to prevention" (p. 384). Through the literature of researcher Olweus (2003) and through my own experiences, policies regarding bullying or expectations regarding the manner in which children treat one another are necessary. "From previous research, we know that children from families with low socioeconomic status, divorce or separation, harsh home environments, child abuse, or authoritarian parenting styles may be at higher risk for both bullying and victimization" (Brown et al., 2005, p. 384). These conditions affect children's lives negatively. As an educator,

I agree that when children come to school with different background situations that create bias or personal problems, these can play a large role in their social interactions and attitudes toward school, themselves, and others. Researchers have shown that more boys are involved in bullying than girls (McNamee & Mercurio, 2008). I have seen this to be true at the multiple research sites, especially in reference to physical bullying, that the use of verbal attacks tends to be equal between boys and girls.

Taking into consideration the children's backgrounds and overall environment is an important element that anti-bullying programs must take into account. Brown et al., stated, "Effective program planning should include careful study of the experiences and opinions of the children to be taught" (p. 392). Children who are victims at home are going to have different opinions than children who have never been around or in a bullying situation. These factors must be taken into account when structuring the classroom experience of students.

Understanding the audience is an important step in all presentations and classroom lessons. When making a presentation to a class about the subject of bullying, the teacher should not assume everyone understands what the word *bully* means unless they know the audience does in fact know the word. Brown et al., found the "burden of change often rests with elementary school and middle school teachers and principals." They continued, "It is unclear that these primary agents have been properly trained pre- or post-professionally to effect the needed changes or that they have the resources, time, and local support to carry them out if trained" (p. 392). This application is important to the argument of having an anti-bullying program in the church setting because the church leaders need to be trained to support strategic intervention techniques in a bullying situation to support all of the members of the church community.

Cowie's Longitudinal Study

A longitudinal study is a research method of observation of the same study group spanning a long period of time. This method is time consuming and most researchers gathering data on bullying usually stay away from this method because of the amount of time needed to gather the necessary data. However, Cowie (2011) conducted a two-year longitudinal study in 35 schools in the United Kingdom. The purpose of the study was to determine why children get bullied and what some children who are bullied do to escape being bullied. The results of the study indicated

escaped victims (those who were no longer being bullied after a period of two years) did not differ substantially in terms of their profiles from non-victims. However, the pupils who had escaped from being bullied reported a number of effective strategies, such as telling someone, actively trying to make new friends and even befriending the bully—strategies which the ‘continuing victims’ (those who had been bullied for more than 2 years) were less likely to possess. (p. 287–288)

Educators need to teach these lessons to all children, especially the strategy of telling someone in a position of authority about bullying. I have found children hold the misconception that *telling* is analogous to *tattling*. Perhaps in the child's view telling an authority figure about a bullying situation is identical to tattling to an authority figure about a bullying situation. Most children do not want to face the consequences of tattling, and thus it is probable that they would not want to tell an adult about, thinking that this would subject them to the same consequences that would be meted out for tattling. Cowie (2011) stated, “there is reveal awareness of the discomfort experienced by many bystanders when they observe other students being mistreated by their peers and also show that some bullies feel guilty about their abusive behavior and may welcome

the opportunity to change their ways” (p. 291). The conclusion from the study was to create a school-wide atmosphere promoting bystanders to be proactive. As an educator, I have found most children who are victims have a limited or nonexistent friend base, and therefore have no one to confide in if they were to consider sharing information about being bullied.

Children need to be well-adjusted socially in order to possess skills to handle an adverse action. Cowie’s (2011) longitudinal study focused on the victim in a bullying situation. In the study, she found children who were victims had “low self-esteem and poor social skills may pre-date victimization and may well affect how successful the individual is in taking steps to escape . . . being victimized may further reduce their self-esteem, thereby perpetuating a vicious cycle” (p. 288). Researchers Rigby and Slee (1991) and Escobar (2008) related the findings of victims having poor social skills to the reason of lacking the strategies of escaping the bullying. The victim, who is not well-adjusted, will become dysfunctional in an adverse event. Cowie (2011) found, “the adoption of peer support within a whole-school policy can create opportunities for bystanders to be proactive in challenging bullying when they observe it” (p. 291). Through anti-bullying programs, children learn the skills necessary to be successful in any role, that is, bystander, peer supporter, or victim, they are involved with in a bullying situation. Learning these necessary skills through different venues can aid the child to have a strategic bullying intervention plan in place.

This section reviewed research and methodological literature from a number of important researchers. The review of Olweus (2003), Cowie (2011), Boulton (2008), Brown et al. (2005), and Venter and du Plessis (2012) provided information pertaining to the consequences of bullying, the current state of bullying within the school environment, and the reasons why children are bullied. From this literature it can be concluded that bullying is a current issue for

children and there are consequences related to bullying. The next section will review the methodological issues of bullying and how it effects children.

Review of Methodological Issues

Methodological Issues

There are many methodological issues in the research literature on bullying. In the research that has been analyzed for this review, studies have addresses the issues of the morality of children who are bullies, the consequences bullying has on children and the classroom, and the many programs in school settings that are available to help children acquire the skills to be able to stand up to a bully. Creswell (2013) stated, “The procedures of qualitative research, or its methodology, are characterized as inductive, emerging, and shaped by the researcher’s experience in collecting and analyzing data.” He concluded, “the logic that the qualitative researcher follows is inductive, from the ground up, rather than handed down entirely from a theory or from the perspectives of the inquirer” (p. 22). As I reviewed Creswell, I found the methodology of the studies reviewed is similar to the role of the church. People who work for a church do not follow a particular handbook on how to deal with different situations, rather their technique is shaped by their experiences.

The present review of literature has found minimal information on the ways a church can support the families in helping to prevent bullying or the role the church can or has played to support families in this problem. The Catholic Church has a program titled *Virtus*. This is an online program designed for the National Catholic Risk Retention Group and is where the Catholic Church directs its church members for information on bullying. The program focuses on child abuse rather than bullying. The Church states that *No Bullying* is their practice, however they do not have a program for anti-bullying in place throughout their churches.

The Methodist Church and other protestant churches have suggested using, *The Protectors: Freedom from Bullying*, program. Paul Coughlin, founder and president of *The Protectors* and author of *Raising Bullying Proof Kids* has taken information from his research on bullying to create a book churches can use to understand faith, respect, and prevention. Coughlin's (2012) seven lessons are designed to "create a safer campus, and improve learning and character development, among many other benefits, such as increased faith and spiritual maturity, greater courage, reduces juvenile delinquency, suicide prevention, dropout prevention, and the promotion of Safe and Drug Free Schools" (p. 2). This program has been used in several churches but from my research I have not found that any churches as a whole have completely supported the program. The churches equip families to be the first teachers of their children's faith and they need to provide the necessary information on bullying as well. Schools have taken the lead in trying to equip children with resources to handle bullying however the parents are not receiving the same information so they can support the effort.

The next two sections will answer two questions. The first section will answer a question about how studies have employed a qualitative, quantitative, or mix methods approaches to their research problem. The second section will answer how methodology influences the choice of methods in bullying research. This section will conclude with descriptions of the various types of limitations that studies can encounter.

How are the Studies Investigating the Problems: Qualitatively or Quantitatively?

This section reviews the methodological approaches being used in anti-bullying research and examines the various methods that were used to gather data on bullying in the research studies that were reviewed. When thinking about the question of how bullying has been investigated one must first understand the differences between qualitative and quantitative

research. Creswell (2013) noted, “Quantitative research approaches are applied to describe current conditions, investigate relations, and study cause-effect phenomena. Survey research is often designed to describe current conditions. Studies that investigate the relations between two or more variables are correlational research” (p. 9). Through this review, research on bullying tends to be pursued through a qualitative approach of obtaining the information through an “in-depth understanding about the way things are, why they are that way, and how the participants in the context perceive them . . . to uncover subtle, less overt, personal understandings” (Creswell, 2013, p. 12). I have concluded from the research it is important to gather information qualitatively on bullying because it requires a personal understanding of everyone involved in the action, that is, the victim, the bystander, and the bully.

Boulton’s research (2008) on bullying utilized a qualitative method of gathering data. Boulton (2008) conducted research on children to understand the consequences of bullying. He stated, “The first source of information came from people directly involved in bullying situations that I had interviewed over the course of my research into the psychosocial consequences of bullying that goes back more than a decade” (2008, p. 84). Through an interview process the team was able to determine that bullying does cause consequences for those involved and for the rest in the environment by disrupting the concentration and attention to school work. The study included students from the United Kingdom. A questionnaire was used in the study to obtain the necessary information about the disruption bullying caused in the classrooms. The results were statistically analyzed to document the data of the questionnaires.

Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2012) describes qualitative research as “the collection, analysis, and interpretation of comprehensive narrative and visual data to gain insights into a particular phenomenon of interest” (p. 630). Problems with this approach could be the validity of the

responses. In the study the children answered questions on bullying and disruptions in the classroom. Gay and others realized, what one child considers a problem may not have been perceived as a problem to another child. As a conclusion to their study they felt the data demonstrated a need for further studies on the topic.

Kollerova, Janosova, and Rican (2014) used the method of convenience sampling indicating the study was conducted on students who were in attendance the day the study took place. “A quantitative exploratory study on moral evaluations of the hypothetical bullies and the hypothetical defender” (p. 22) was conducted to explore student’s moral feelings to bullying. In this study students were given different situations and were to answer how they would feel if they were involved. This technique uses the interview approach where the researcher uses hypothetical situations that are presented to the interviewee and to which they are asked to respond. Some examples that were used were pictures of a child hitting another child. Another picture was of a group of children standing together in front of a single child. In these examples, the interviewee was asked how that made him feel and what he would do given that situation.

Venter and du Plessis (2012) were interested in a Christian response to bullying in the Christian school setting. In this study, Venter and du Plessis gathered the data through qualitative methods. “Data for this study were collected by means of a literature study and questionnaires with closed questions as well as open-ended questions about teachers’ experiences regarding bullying. The main emphasis was on the feedback on the open-ended questions” (p. 1). The researchers, Venter and du Plessis, used mixed methods research design to study the issue of the teacher’s role in curbing bullying in this specific instance. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001)

qualitative research extends the understanding of a phenomenon and contributes to educational practice, policymaking and social consciousness. Part of the research involved collecting statistical information and their quantitative research methods were used, but the emphasis of this study was on the responses to the open-ended questions posed to the participants. (p. 393)

In this study, the participants were chosen because the subjects met the criteria for the study. This practice is purposive sampling, which is different than conducting a study for convenience. Convenience sampling is used when a study does not require a particular sampling to get the results the researcher is looking for such as a comparison of boys to girls where the sampling would need to be purposive sampling. A questionnaire of staff members was used as a qualitative method for collecting data.

How Does Methodology Drive the Choice of Methods?

Each methodological approach is used in different ways for different techniques. Some use a mixed method approach of using more than one based on the best method for the study being conducted to gather data. Some of the methods in the literature review are narrative research and case study. These qualitative methods will be described in the next paragraphs.

Narrative research involves gathering stories through conversations, observations, documents, or pictures (Creswell, 2012). This method is used by McAdams (2001) in his life story approach mentioned earlier in this chapter. In narrative research the researcher's main task is to gather as much information that they can in order to compile data for their study. Gay et al. (2012) defined narrative research as "the study of how different humans experience the world around them; it involves a methodology that allows people to tell the stories of their "stories lives" (p. 13). This approach enables the researcher to gather information about a person's

identity through a personal approach. In this type of research, the researcher is able to talk with the participant to gather the data first hand.

The two most widely employed methodological approaches in the literature being used in gathering information on bullying are ethnographic research and case study. In his writings, Harris (1968) stated “ethnography is a qualitative design in which the researcher describes and interprets the shared and learned patterns of values, behaviors, beliefs, and language of a culture-sharing group” (as cited by Creswell, 2012, p. 90). With the task of researching bullying, I researcher is gathered information to describe the behaviors of children who are victims or of the bully, in order to gather more data to aid in preventing a re-occurrence. An example of research in bullying that used this technique was a study quoted by Cowie (2011) concerning conflict resolution. “The power of peer support is confirmed by ethological studies of conflict resolution proposing that the solution may arise naturally out of peer interactions rather than as a result of intervention by adults” (Killen & de Waal, 2000; Killen & Smetana, 2006, as cited by Cowie, 2011, p. 290). Killen and de Waal noted children can take care of the bullying situation by themselves without adult intervention. If these results really were the norm, then the action of bullying would be decreasing among our children today instead of increasing as research has demonstrated by the United States Department of Social Services.

The research in a case study is a “qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real life, contemporary bounded system over time, through detailed, in depth data collection involving multiple sources of information” (Creswell, 2012, p. 97). With the case study approach, methods such as observations, interviews, audiovisual materials, documents, and reports can be used to collect data. When thinking about the information needed to be gathered it is important for the researcher to think about the subject and the information one is trying to

obtain. Most research on bullying, including studies conducted by Olweus, (2003), McNamee and Mercurio (2008), and Boulton (2008) has focused on children. When taking the subject into consideration a researcher will need to employ a method that is appropriate for children plus they will need to choose a technique that enables them to collect the data needed to answer the questions they are trying to answer. Program evaluation will be discussed in detailed in Chapter 3 Methodology.

Limitations Addressed

Gay et al., (2012) state, “a limitation is some aspect of the study that the researcher cannot control but believes may negatively affect the results of the study” (p. 115). Less-than-ideal sample size and length of the study are two limitations they suggested. There are many limitations associated with bullying research studies. Most studies that answer questions on bullying require the subjects to be children. Having children as participants can create a number of limitations: obtaining parental consent; establishing a safe research environment; establishing gender equality; and issues related to the age of participants.

Parental consent. The researcher needs to have parental consent to perform a survey or questionnaire. This could be a limitation because having to gather the parent’s consent in a timely matter could be difficult if the child does not have parents present at the time of the study.

Safe environment. The researcher working with children has to make sure the children feel safe with the person gathering the information because the child could feel intimidated and not answer truthfully on the study. Most research that has been conducted on bullying has been completed over a short time span without their parents present. For the younger child it is important to have parents in attendance in order to create the safe environment atmosphere. Having research conducted in a longitudinal design would capture information on children and

how they grow and change through the years and the need for parental environment could change in order to create a comfortable atmosphere.

Age. Insights from younger children are important in most studies because younger children are victims of bullying as well as the older child; however, the researcher needs to evaluate the validity of the responses when working with the younger child because younger children have a different perspective and skill cognitive level than older children.

Gender equality. Researchers, Gay et al., (2012) have noted in their studies on bullying the need to keep the study gender equal. In some of the studies I evaluated, the questionnaire was more slanted towards girls than the boys, yet the boys were included in the study. When a study on bullying includes both genders, the researcher needs to take into consideration the differences between the two genders: boys and girls are different in their social skills and cognitive development.

Less-than-ideal sample size. The researcher could have a situation where only one group of students is able to participate in the study. This could be a result of uncompleted parental consent forms, amount of children in a particular school, or not enough children in the age group. The researcher is requiring that all participants meet all of the specifics for the study.

Synthesis of Research Findings Significant Increase in Behavior Problems

Research data has substantiated the claim that bullying increases behavior problems. Researchers Smokowski and Kopasz (2005) indicate

popular aggressive bullies socialize with other popular children and do not appear to encounter significant social stigma stemming from their aggression. Unpopular aggressive bullies are typically rejected or neglected by other children and may use aggression as a way to get attention. (p. 102)

In my experience, children who are the popular bullies become more popular because of their bullying. Some children gather around the bully to become popular themselves by association and also as a means to avoid being bullied. Olweus (1993) found bullies have a relationship “with their teachers and other adults, both types of bullies tend to act aggressively and may actually frighten some of these adults because of their physical strength and defiant attitude” (Olweus, 1993, p. 102). In this situation the victim can be identified as the nearby adult. Being bullied is not just a problem for the students in the school but can also affect the educators in the building as well.

Bullying is a contributing factor to significant behavior problems, which some researchers have attributed to the “positive attitude toward violence, particularly as a means to solve problems or get what they want” (Carney & Merrell, 2001; Glew et al., 2000, as cited by Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005, p. 102). As an educator, observing and analyzing the differences in student’s behavior in a classroom setting can be imperative in identifying victims and aggressors. Wolke (2000) conducted a case study and found “all children involved in direct bullying had significantly increased total behavior problems, hyper- activity, conduct problems, and peer problem scores, and lower pro-social behavior scores compared to those not involved in bullying” (p. 989). In my experience these problems affect all children involved in the action. Findings were similar for relational bullying involvement and behavior problems for both groups: the bully and the victims although less pronounced. Wolke (2000) studied the outcomes of children behavior problems and found

Relational bullies had the lowest behavior problem scores while being rated the least pro-socially inclined children, consistent with the concept of a cool manipulator. Overall, direct bully-victims and children who were involved in both direct and relational bullying

behavior had the highest rates of behavior problems (p. 989)

Over the years, many studies have provided evidence on the behavior problems caused by bullying. In a Finnish study of children 8-9 year olds, Kumpulainen, Rasanen, and Puura (2001) found

those involved in any form of bullying had more behavioral problems i.e., being disrupted in the classroom, not listening, and not completing classwork, than children not involved in bullying. The bully-victims had the highest rates of behavior disturbance, in particular externalizing and hyperactivity problems for both genders, and the girls also had more internalizing problems according to parent reports. (p. 990)

Behavior problems in hyperactivity and externalizing problems were a common problem for both girls and boys. Parents of bullies have reported their children experience psychological disturbances (Wolke, 2000). “Many bullies experience mental health difficulties. One study found that, among bullies, nearly one third had attention deficit disorder, 12.5 percent had depression, and 12.5 percent had oppositional conduct disorder” (Kumpulainen et al., 2001, as cited by Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005, p. 103). Victims and bullies can experience problems because of bullying. Research has proven that both categories of people, that is, the victim and the bully, can be left with mental health difficulties following bullying encounters.

The significant increase in behavior problems has been seen also in Christian educational environments. Lee (2003) researched safe school environments and the role schools have in a child’s life. This research was important to the present study because Lee’s research focused on Christian schools, which helps to provide useful information for understanding the Christian education climate of the research sites in the present study.

Schools from the Christian Educational Perspective

Schools offering a Christian perspective have a unique opportunity to reach more children who have a religious background. Children often learn from church that everyone is created equal and we were made in God's image. Researcher, Lee (2003) found, "Schools have to do much to improve the school climate, student discipline policies, teaching relevant subject matter in courses to reduce school violence and disruption." She further found that, "In fact, schools may be the only effective avenue for change for some children where their parents feel helpless and unskilled in dealing with their situation" (p. 79). Lee's findings that schools are responsible for creating a safe school environment for all children are reasonable and based on the Olweus model that it is important to involve the entire community. The old adage "it takes a community to raise a child" can be profitably applied to the problem of bullying. Parents, grandparents, community leaders, school teachers, church leaders, and faith families need to work together to educate and partner in their children's safety. If we were using this as an analogy, there are many roads leading into a community thus aiding in raising our children therefore we need many roads coming out as well. The church community needs to be a contributing resource in the fight on bullying.

Critique of Previous Research

This section will provide the reader with a critique of the research on scripture and moral behavior, bullying and the Christian perspective, and the link of spirituality and bullying. The underlying complaint on all three topics is the limited amount of research available to date. All three topics will be evaluated.

Scripture and Moral Behavior

To date, only a limited number of studies have analyzed how training in scripture and

moral frameworks can influence the problem of bullying. According to church attendance data across the country, regular church attendance is down and Sunday School attendance for children is also down. Ovwigho and Cole (2010) found “Religious service attendance has been historically the most commonly studied aspect of religiosity . . . other measures such as how important the individual’s faith in God is to him or her and how often he or she prays or meditates” (p.102). When talking about Christianity we are including all Christian beliefs, including Lutheran, Catholic, and Methodist. In a study to determine the impact of faith on children’s lives, Kendler Liu, Gardner, McCullough, Larson, and Prescott (2003) found

children report reading the Bible less with their families than on their own. Even among children who identify as born-again Christians, only one-fourth engage the Bible at least four days a week, a level of engagement shown in previous studies to produce the most behavioral impact. Less than one-fifth reads or listens to the Bible with their family at least four days a week. (p. 111)

I agree with Kendler et al., that this commitment to reading the Bible does not have a bearing on regular church attendance. Family commitment to attending regular church services is interfered with by the sports children play and anything else that happens on a given Sunday. The priority of attending church on Sundays seems to be a thing of the past, much like when stores were closed on Sundays because of the blue laws. Blue laws defined, “a state or local law that prohibits certain activities, particularly entertainment, sports or drinking on Sunday, to honor the Christian sabbath” (Blue laws, n.d., p. 1). Most blue laws were lifted in the 1960s however, within recent years, recreational sports for children have been added on Sundays because of the lack of field space during the week and the ever growing desire by children to participate in the activities. Families now have to pick and choose between taking their children to the sporting

practice or game, or attending church on Sundays. This impacts the claims above that the family commitment to attending church regularly has decreased due to other activities being sponsored outside of the church.

Looking at bullying from the moral standpoint, researchers have investigated the correlation between morals and bullying (Ellis & Shute, 2012). A researcher may question: Does someone who bullies another child have morals? Is bullying a problem because of the deficiency in morals in an individual? Does having good morals and a solid Christian foundation preclude the actions of bullying? Ellis and Shute (2007) stated

we need to look at this issue from a fundamental level. The problem of bullying and violence in schools may be seen as a moral issue (Astor, 1998; Meyer, Astor, & Behre, 2002). Ortega and Lera (2000) assert that bullying is a ‘moral disease’ (p. 122); while Rigby et al. (2004) assert that there is a ‘clear moral imperative on teachers and schools to act to reduce bullying in schools’ Kohlberg (1984; Kohlberg & Kramer, 1969) argued that moral reasoning develops in stages, and that at higher stages a person is concerned with notions of fairness and rules, with an emphasis on fulfillment of duties and reciprocal obligations. This type of moral reasoning is said to be a justice orientation. (p. 650)

The information supports the claim from different studies that the act of bullying differs from the different age and stage of development of the bully and victim. As noted earlier, Kohlberg’s research on the moral stages of children provides a theoretical model for understanding where the child is morally in relation to his/her age and stage of development.

Other research provides different opinions after reviewing the various approaches on the topic of morals and aggression. “Gilligan (1982) argued for an alternative, equally valid, moral

orientation, namely a care orientation. People who are more care oriented tend to focus on understanding” (cited by Ellis & Shute, p. 650). The bully does not care about hurting another child. Looking back to the definition of bullying that the act of bullying is determined by repeated acts of aggression we can safely say the bully is lacking the ability to care for another human. Rigby (2002), and Vernberg and Gamm (2003) stated, “Research has also highlighted the fact that individual differences in teacher moral orientation can predict a preference for a style of responding to bullying incidents” (as cited by Ellis & Shute, p. 661). Educators have an important role in bullying and how they react to the situation sets the tone in the classroom. “If policies were closely aligned with teachers’ personal preferences, in terms of moral orientation, then teachers may be more inclined to support them, which researchers suggest, is an important factor in their effectiveness” (p. 661). As an educator I personally have an easier time relating to material that is in line with my own beliefs. Teachers have to use the information given to them to create an interesting presentation that will educate the class of students to understand the material. When the information is presented in a dull fashion that children are less likely to retain the material therefore if teachers are trying to teach information that they have not or cannot support, the lesson will be less inviting and interesting to the audience.

Bullying and the Christian Perspective

A Christian is raised to believe in the Triune God and accept Jesus as their Savior. Does that mean that all bullies are not Christians? How could someone who is living a life of God believe it is appropriate behavior to bully another human being? Lee (2003) found it important to look at bullying from the “viewpoint of a Christian educational philosophy.” When taking this viewpoint, she found “Christian educational philosophy is fundamentally based on human dignity, which is greatly emphasized in the systems approach” (p. 80). Christian education is

based on the Biblical principles. We are all created in the image of God therefore we can find in the Bible the way to living a Godlike existence. “God created Man in the image of himself, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them” (Genesis 1:27). Called by name and precious in His sight, each person is loved by God with an unconditional love and called to be His son or daughter. Jesus revealed the dignity of persons in the eyes of God and gave them His commandment of love: That is my commandment. Love one another as I have loved you. (John 15:12). With the lessons we learn from the Bible, Christian education is directed to “love your neighbor as yourself.”

Research supports that anti-bullying programs need to be embraced by all educational organizations from the public schools to the Christian schools (Mercado-Crespo, 2013). Lee (2003) stated Christian school’s need to be committed to

embrace the example of Jesus and the teaching of the Gospel, especially in relation to faith, hope, love, forgiveness, justice and freedom; their care for those within the school community, especially those experiencing disadvantage; promote the dignity of the human person and the value of human life; encourage students to contribute to the sacredness of the human story by promoting justice, peace, harmony with creation, and service to the community. (p. 81)

Christian education is often promoted as offering a whole person and well-rounded education. In years past, children who choose to attend a small private Christian school would know that they may not have the advantages of an expanded curriculum that included foreign language and music education as offered in the public school. This type of sacrifice is not as necessary today when choosing between many contemporary Christian schools and their public school competitors. “Christian education also aims at developing the whole person: the physical,

intellectual, social, emotional, aesthetic, vocational, moral and religious nature of students” (Lee, p. 81). It is important for all schools to provide the best education to all children and that includes a safe environment as written as a national standard for public schools.

Some families send their children to a Christian-based school to enhance the educational experience for their children. In most cases, families are foregoing the free public education to pay to send their children to a Christian school. In addition, they must often provide transportation to and from the school site. Unfortunately, bullying can create “an intimidating and hostile school environment, which adversely affects the work performance of individuals and diminishes the effectiveness of schools in their mission of Christian education” (p. 81). However, churches and Christian schools are able to offer an important element to any anti bullying program with pastoral care. Pastors have been trained in the seminary to deal with counseling and violence (Younce, 2012). While not all pastors are gifted in relating to children most will attempt to help when a situation warrants (Burnett, 2004). Creating opportunities for more training for pastors on how to relate to and care for those involved in a bullying situation is something research and program planning might motivate in the future.

The Link of Spirituality and Bullying

Researchers have been exploring and examining multiple ways to train and educate children to be equipped to handle the effects of bullying. Working for various churches over the past twenty years, I find there is a piece missing in how we are educating our future. Researcher Paloutzian (1996) states, “Children imitate and accept beliefs that are part of the religious practice of their culture” (as cited by Allen & Coy, 2004, p. 352). As an educator, I know that children imitate everything, which is how they learn. In the early years children imitate their parents. That is why it is important for parents to demonstrate the actions and traditions they

want their children to retain. Parents cannot expect their teenage children to feel a connection to the church if they have never been taken to church as a young child. The older child, “seeks to connect with others and objects in the environment. Spirituality unites the adolescent’s inner meaning and beliefs with outside relationships such as a specific set of religious doctrines, group membership, a special mentor, nature, or a supreme entity” (Allen & Coy, 2004, p. 352). It is important to keep in mind that as children get older the commitment to church attendance needs to be set. It is my belief that attending church is a habit that children need to have in their weekly schedule. As children approach the adolescence years they are looking to latch on to something and establish a relationship with a group of friends or place. When adolescence have a relationship with, or friendships within a group of people at their church community then they will turn to the church. Without having set the relationship children will steer towards different avenues.

Researchers have studied the importance of church community commitment. Allen and Coy (2004) found “peer environment, sometimes including cults and gangs, may be very influential. A second critical social influence is school” (p. 352). People tell me that churches and schools each have their own place; churches to teach about God and schools to teach the other subjects. Just as churches need to embrace more in the education of our children, schools do as well. “Schools in their role of educating students for responsible citizenship emphasize values or respect for others, cooperation, and learning to live in a diverse society” (p. 352). The link between bullying and spirituality can be seen when children are able to feel secure in the church environment and they learn to live their lives the way God does. Children need to have faith in their spiritual beliefs to help them to choose between right and wrong. In the school programs I have analyzed they are providing the children with a base program detailing what is

right and what is wrong when someone is being bullied. A church program can provide a faith-based approach with God being at the center of the program. Families who are Christian-centered will be able to identify with a program that equips the parents to be the teachers of faith and how to handle a bullying situation.

Chapter Summary

In the preceding review of literature, the following has been demonstrated: First, bullying is a problem that children need to be equipped to handle; second, bullying has been identified as a problem that causes consequences later in life; third, research has demonstrated parents need to be a part of the solution by being equipped to help children be prepared to handle bullying (Olweus, 1983). This section includes a summary of what this review has discovered and there will be a synthesis of the findings in order to make a case to church leaders for developing an anti-bullying program for church Sunday School programs. At the end of this section the reader will be provided with a statement of one area in the literature that needs further research. This gap in the literature will be the focus of the present study.

The studies that have been conducted on bullying, the effects of bullying, and the anti-bullying programs have followed the methodology of ethnographic research and case studies. Although some researchers expressed a desire of having data from a longitudinal research study, most studies have chosen to conduct a shorter study. Cowie (2011) conducted a two-year study to determine how some children escape when others cannot from a bullying situation. In this situation a long-term study was necessary to gather data to support the final claim. No studies have been found during the literature search conducted for this study on church sponsored anti-bullying programs. The research I found has taken place in a school setting from either the public school or Christian school environment.

Adding a Christian perspective to the school setting has created a new dimension on handling the bullying problem. With this approach, it is perceived that children will learn the difference of right and wrong behavior through references from the Bible. “God created man in the image of himself, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them” (Genesis 1:27). “Jesus revealed the dignity of persons in the eyes of God and gave them his commandment of love: That is my commandment. Love one another as I have loved you” (John 15:12). The Bible directs us to love one another and not hurt another person. In a Christian school that uses the Bible to guide their practices, the teachings that God has given are the foundation of the program.

Unfortunately, research has revealed children do not read their Bible on a regular basis by themselves or with their family. This practice along with the commitment of attending church on a regular basis comes from the parents. Research has shown, “Children imitate and accept beliefs that are part of the religious practice of their culture”(Paloutzian, 1996, as cited by Allen & Coy, 2004, p. 352). Parents set the example for their children at a young age. When spiritual growth is important to the parents it then becomes important to the child. Parents expect when they do attend church that the church will teach their children about God and faith. This is however a concept the parents need to work on daily. If the Church is expected to train and equip parents to teach their children about faith and God then should the church also embrace the opportunity to provide resources and information about bullying?

Research has shown bullying to be a real life situation with the data indicating 1 in 5 elementary school students and 1 in 10 middle school students have experienced bullying in the United States (Brown et al., 2004). Children are experiencing bullying on a regular basis in our schools, the places where children should feel safe and protected. Brown et al., stated,

“Effective program planning should include careful study of the experiences and opinions of the children to be taught” (p. 392). This practice is used by teachers in other subjects taught throughout the day and should be used in the case in educating children about bullying. An educator needs to know the audience they are teaching to in order to determine how to proceed in teaching a lesson. Children who have a background of abuse in their home setting do not need to hear that bullying can be found anywhere because they are already experiencing that fact. Teaching children to talk to someone about their problem would be the answer in this situation to get the students to talk about their situation with an adult could be a step in getting the child help.

Allen Kurzweil (2015) was an example of a real-life situation. Kurzweil, a victim of bullying as a child, carried with him the haunting memories of the attacks for 40 years. McAdams (2001) would describe this as a ‘life story’. Life stories are psychosocial constructions, coauthored by the person himself or herself and the cultural context within which that person's life is embedded and given meaning. McAdam’s Life Story Model is the idea that a person’s history makes them who they are through the stories they share. Kurzweil was impacted by the experiences he had in the Switzerland boarding school as a young child. His experiences of being bullied was not forgotten through the years as he grew older but rather helped to create him into the person he was as an adult. Educators, parents and churches need to be aware of McAdam’s Life Story Model. The influences of a person’s past needs to be enough to inspire those working with children to want to help in any way to equip children and their parents with the necessary tools to handle bullying situations. Churches need to become more active in anti-bullying education. In the research I have found, schools have been providing resources for children and the churches have not been supporting the community effort.

Children at the age of 10 have the complex social cognitive abilities to choose the right thing of helping the victim in a bullying situation. Researchers Rock and Baird (2012) found, “Children as young as age of six but particularly at older ages, are capable of generating intervention strategies. Children’s actions as bystanders to bullying may therefore have important parallels in the adult literature where appropriate intervention strategies are obvious” (p. 423). Unfortunately, children want to be accepted by their peers and standing up for and helping the victim is not always the popular decision. For this reason, children need to be educated with the skills to understand that helping another person and treating them in the way they want to be treated is an appropriate response to a bullying situation. Churches have the ability to support this initiative by providing children with the Christian reasons for doing the right thing. Families bring their children to the church to teach them how to live a good and God like life. God has taught us to love your neighbors as yourself. I have found that churches are looking for new curriculum and opportunities for outreach into the community. Educating families from a Christian perspective is an element that appears to be missing in the programs.

Research has shown provides different variations of the *Olweus (2003)-Bullying Prevention Program*. Olweus found the environment is an important part of a successful program. “An environment of warmth, firm limits, consistent application of nonpunitive, nonphysical sanctions for unacceptable behavior, and adults who act as authorities and positive role models can help the children (p. 13). A variation of this program can be used in the church environment. Children look at the leaders of the church to be positive role models as well as leaders who do not accept inappropriate behavior.

Based on this review of literature which develops a unique conceptual framework using religious and non-religious moral development theories, psychosocial development theories, and

practical foundations for anti-bullying programs to understand what can assist young people in facing and addressing bullying, there is sufficient reason for thinking that an investigation examining the impact of a Christian anti-bullying program would yield socially significant findings. I can therefore claim that the literature review has provided strong support for pursuing a research project to answer the following multi-part research question: What does an effective anti-bullying program within the church look like and how does it work; what are the perceptions and understanding of bullying among the people in the church community, what do children and families have and not have to enable them to prevent them to handle a bullying situation; and what are the effects of implementing a focus group presentation designed to explain the best practices for a church on anti-bullying programs?

Chapter 3: Methodology

The Bible states the family is the first educator of their children's faith. Deuteronomy 11:19, Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up." The Chapter 2: Literature review presented me with the information that parents need the church to support and equip these lessons of moral virtues. It is important that children understand as Christians it is wrong to bully others because Christians should be living their lives as Jesus has taught His children to love one another as ourselves. Venter and du Plessis (2012), stated. "In Christianity the moral virtues are grounded in the character of Christ and embodies in Biblical ethics." (p. 2). The more children hear that bullying is wrong the better the chances are that they will stop bullying.

A proverb from the Nigerian Igbo culture states, "Ora na azu nwa" which translated means "it takes the community or village to raise a child." This proverb could be used as an example, within the cultures of the research sites that the church community needs to be instrumental in the battle against bullying. This information was motivation for implementing the study, which was gleaned prior to the study and during the Literature review search. The church community; parents, children, and youth (i.e., older children) need information on how to better equip children to handle bullying situations. Researcher Kwan- Chun Lee (2003) found, "Christian education also aims at developing the whole person: the physical, intellectual, social, emotional, aesthetic, vocational, moral and religious nature of students" (p. 81).

The object of this research was to examine the role a church can have in addressing the problem of bullying. The study was undertaken using a program evaluation research design to investigate the subject of bullying in the church environment.

This research led to a report that contained data about the knowledge and understanding of the issue of bullying in churches. A comparative analysis was performed between the analyzed interview data, anti-bullying program data, and the state of current programs. This information can be used to aid churches to develop programs that could provide a solid foundation to support families in church environment to handle and respond effectively to bullying.

Research Questions

This study sought to answer the following research questions:

- What does an effective anti-bullying program within the church look like; and how does it work?
- What are the perceptions and understanding of bullying among the people in the church community?
- What do children and families in the church have and not have to enable them to prevent them to handle a bullying situation? and;
- What are the effects of implementing a focus group presentation designed to explain the best practices for a church on anti-bullying programs?

Purpose and Design of the Proposed Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the key components in an effective anti-bullying program and to use that knowledge to gather information from church leaders, parents, and children on the current practices in the various churches as well as information needed to support having an anti-bullying program implemented in the church setting. After a review of the area programs none of the churches in the research area had developed or implemented any anti-bullying programs in the research area previous to my research project. These churches did

not have anti-bullying programs within their Sunday School programs to address strategic interventions for avoiding a bullying situation, to instruct regarding what bullying looks like, nor instruction on what to do if a congregant were ever to find him- or herself involved in a bullying situation.

Bullying is a problem one out of five children face regularly (Bullock, 2002). Brown et al., (2004) stated, “Effective program planning should include careful study of the experiences and opinions of the children to be taught” (p. 392). Careful planning needs to be used when creating an anti-bullying program that educates children about bullying. Children at the age of 10 have the complex social cognitive abilities to make the correct decision of helping the victim in a bullying situation (Brown et al., 2004). Research has shown that children as young as six are capable of creating anti-bullying strategies and steps (Rock & Baird, 2012). Understanding the capabilities of children will help in the churches’ development of writing an anti-bullying program and the strategic interventions to provide the children.

The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP) incorporates everyone: teachers, administrators, students, and parents. It is a full program, rather than a training program. Based on the strategies of the OBPP, it is reasonable to conclude that an effective anti-bullying approach in a church setting must also include multiple stakeholders, including pastors, teachers, administrators, students, and parents which also creates a multi-generational approach to a commitment to eliminating bullying. Including everyone in a church community to be a part of the anti-bullying program an essential part of a church wide anti-bullying program. Through its literature review, this study determined that there is a need for an anti-bullying program in the church setting and effective components from existing anti-bullying programs should be included. This idea is one that has not been explored before at the research sites and would help

to create a total church community involvement (Olweus, 1983) in helping to educate and equip families to understand and deal with bullying.

Program Evaluation

I evaluated action research, narrative, phenomenology, and program evaluation as possible research designs before determining that program evaluation had the elements needed to answer the research questions and that would be valid in terms of the anti-bullying studies reviewed. Program evaluation allowed me to assess needs, perform in-depth study of several vested groups, and analyze other programs in order to produce an accurate assessment of the state of current anti-bullying programs so that I could make suggestions to create church-related anti-bullying programs. Posavac (2010) provided the following definition:

program evaluation is a methodology to learn the depth and extent of need for a human service and whether the service is likely to be used, whether the service is sufficiently intensive to meet the unmet needs identified, and the degree to which the service is offered as planned and actually does help people in need at a reasonable cost without unacceptable side effects. (pp. 2–3)

The program evaluation methodology was useful in evaluating the current anti-bullying programs that are on the market, those that are a part of the curriculum in the school settings, and the lack of curriculum in the church settings in the research site areas. Knowing how to evaluate effective programs and the different elements of the anti-bullying programs turned out to be important because it enabled me to share detailed information with selected research churches, enabling them to create their own anti-bullying programs.

McNeil (2011) stated that, “Program evaluations are conducted to assess the quality of a program and serve two main functions: to evaluate process efficiencies and to evaluate program

outcomes” (p. 24). In any program evaluation it is essential to review the entire program to be able to evaluate the importance of each step in an anti-bullying program. In the beginning stages of planning, the evaluator needs to look at the entire environment. Posavac (2010) related, “Once it is decided to conduct an evaluation, planning begins in earnest. Examining published research and evaluations of similar program, determining the best methodology, and preparing a written proposal complete the preparation phase” (p. 33). Bamberger et al. (2006) emphasized the inclusion of

the priorities and perspectives of the client and the other key stakeholders, the dynamics of power and relationships between them and key players in the project being evaluated, and even the philosophical or methodological biases or preferences of those conducting the evaluation. (p. 374)

A needs assessment is one of the first steps in a program evaluation. McNeil, Bamberger, Rugh, and Mabry (2006) state that the first step in preparing for a program evaluation “is to obtain a clear understanding of the priorities and information needs of the client (the agency or agencies commissioning the evaluation) and the key stakeholders (persons interested in or affected by the project)” (p. 374). It is the client who will determine the timing, focus, and the details of the information that is needed from the program evaluation. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001) “needs assessment compares the current status and values of an educational system with the desired outcomes. The evaluation identifies the context, provides base-line data on accomplishments of the site, and identifies unmet needs” (p. 537). Students, the community, other groups, or society as a whole in relation to the system can trigger a needs assessment that will lead to the selection of a program to accomplish goals.

This program evaluation in this study employed qualitative methods in the form of interview, observation, and focus groups. This method is described as

Qualitative evaluators would supplement the numerical summaries from a relational database with direct observations of activities associated with the program; discussions with participants, those who chose not to participate, and staff; and examinations of program documents, other materials, and artifacts. (Posavac, 2010, p. 147)

This study used qualitative interviews to assess needs of the participants that related to their knowledge of bullying. I conducted a total of 20 interviews to gather data on churches anti-bullying practices, procedures, and congregants' understanding of the term *bullying*. These interviews involved fifth grade children, their parents, and church leaders from three different church sites.

The needs assessment for this study also identified the key components in an effective anti-bullying training program and how such a program would work, using information obtained from the literature review. Getting these pieces in place enabled me to make an analysis of the impact of a good anti-bullying program at the Christian organization research sites. Posavac (2010) states “One of the major advantages of qualitative methods (or the naturalistic model) is its flexibility and appropriate use in innovative and novel settings” (p. 146). In a program evaluation, the “program evaluators gather information to help people improve their effectiveness, to assist administrators to make program-level decisions, and to enable interested parties to examine program effectiveness” (Posavac, 2011, p. 9).

Research Stages

The research design involved six stages.

Stage I: Interview protocol. I used observation and interview to obtain relevant

documentation to support how a church program can support anti-bullying efforts.

Stage II: Analysis. I used open coding to determine categories of needs. These codes were manually entered into ATLAS.ti qualitative software.

Stage III: Anti-bullying programs evaluation and analysis. I evaluated the current anti-bullying programs using effective anti-bullying program information from my literature review to compare key elements. I analyzed the information I gleaned from the literature on the effects bullying has on the bully, the bullied, and the bystanders. I also used the characteristics of effective anti-bullying programs.

Stage IV: Synthesis of data from stage II and III. I synthesized the data from the interviews to develop a comprehensive focus group presentation that churches could use to create an anti-bullying program model.

Stage V: Focus group. I conducted a focus group presentation to demonstrate and equip church leaders with the information about bullying that has been gathered from the church leaders, parents, and children.

Stage VI: Analysis of data from focus group. I provided information from the data gathered so churches could use this information as a building block in their faith communities. The information was based on the important elements defined by existing anti-bullying programs. This program evaluation enabled me to look at the big picture, identify anti-bullying needs in the church communities involved in this study, and prepare the research site churches to devise their own anti-bullying programs.

Research Population and Sampling Method

I used convenience and purposeful sampling to select administration, clergy, and congregations from three church research sites. The churches varied in terms of size, culture, and denomination: two Lutheran and one Methodist. There was a total of 20 participants.

I identified and selected the most feasible sites and participants that would permit me to answer the research questions. Considering the topic, the sites needed to be churches that were convenient to study and that would grant permission to do the research. I chose my church as the primary research site and two others that are nearby.

Patton (2015) provides the following description of purposeful sampling.

The logic and power of purposeful sampling lie in selecting information-rich cases for in-depth study. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry...Studying information-rich cases yields insights and in-depth understanding (p. 264).

Maxwell (2013) concurs and adds “In this strategy, particular settings, persons, or activities are selected deliberately to provide information that is particularly relevant to your questions and goals, and that can’t be gotten as well from other choices” (p. 97)

Participants selected from the research sites represented the church and surrounding communities and were considered the most knowledgeable about church activities and the church environment. The participants in this study were church leaders, parents, and children from the congregation of my church, and church leaders, parents, and children from the two neighboring churches. The anti-bullying training was a one-day training session of church leaders and was hosted at my church.

Church research sites. My church is the first research site. It is a large Lutheran Church in a rural area of the northeast. The review of library source material and other collected information took place at my church which has a congregation of approximately 500 people. About half of the members are families with children. The children come from a variety of schools, counties, and backgrounds. The ages of the children spanned birth to college. The church research site is situated in an area surrounded by individual family homes and home communities. The closest shopping area is approximately five miles away from the church. There is no reason for a person to travel to this area unless they are going to their home or are coming to the church. The children attending the church live in a divided school boundary community. One third of the children attend one set of schools, another third attend another set of schools located in the same county, and the last third attend schools in another county because of the location of their homes.

Two of the church research sites, my church and the Methodist church, are large churches located in affluent, well-educated communities. The second Lutheran church is about half the size of my church and is located in a less affluent community.

Table 1

Church Statistics

	Membership	Community Population	Average Income	Ethnicity	Paid Employees
My Church	650	7,838	\$101,266	95% White	10
Methodist	800	14,378	\$122,793	79% White	10
Lutheran B	400	30,734	\$ 52,194	61% White	5

Note. The table below shows a comparison of the three churches included in the study.

I am the Director of Children and Family Ministry in my church and I oversee everything that involves children and families from the birth of the child until the child has finished sixth grade. There are 485 volunteer positions and 30 current programs that fall under the leadership of Children's Ministry in my church. The Sunday school program is one of the largest in the surrounding area with 125 children from 80 families attending. The funding for activities and events that occur at the research site comes directly from weekly donations.

My church is located in a reasonably stable community. Most of the families in the area surrounding my church live in owner occupied homes and over half of the residents have a college degree and are professionals. The median age is 43, most are married, and the divorce rate is in the bottom 10% for the surrounding areas.

The second church to be included in the anti-bullying training was a large Methodist Church located in an area that is predominantly a Roman Catholic community. Older members predominate the church fellowship. In a desire to increase young families' participation in the church, this church recently hired a person to fill the position of Director of Children, Youth, and Family Ministry. The Sunday School program has 50-75 children from September to May.

Most of the families in the area of the Methodist church are owner occupied homes and over half of the residents have a college degree and are professionals. The median age is 29.7 and most have at least a Bachelor's degree. Almost half the population is single and married couples rarely divorce. There are only four public elementary and middle schools in the area. Most families in this community send their children to one of the nine private schools. This statistic does not surprise me because the family income is on the higher end and the families are living in the area due to the close proximity of the private schools. The church leader at the

church noted that the majority of the congregation held jobs such as doctors, lawyers, and accountants (personal communication, January 12, 2016).

The third church included in the training session was another, smaller Lutheran Church. The congregation is comprised mainly of younger families with children. There are two services every Sunday. After the first service the congregation is invited to participate in various activities. Usually the activities include presentations, speakers, and/or programs to educate, support, and inform the community. This church is interested in adding programs and support to their existing programs for parents and children.

The average salary of community members is nearly half of the other two church populations. The population for the area is 30,734 people. The median age is 37 years. Only 24% of the population holds a Bachelor's degree. Forty percent of the population is married and 13% of the families are divorced. There are nine public elementary and middle schools (US Census, 2010). The majority of the congregation have jobs such as firefighters, teachers, police, and most homes have two income families according to the Senior Pastor (Personal Communication, 2016).

Participants. Twenty individuals participated in the study. There were three different groups from each church: church leaders, parents, and children. Each of the three churches have at least a Senior and an Associate Pastor, a Christian Education Director, and another person who has contact with the children as a staff or volunteer member. Six fifth grade children were chosen to participate based on parents who agreed to be a part of the interviewing process. Three males and three females, and one parent/guardian for each child were selected to interview for a total of six parents/guardians and six children

Data Collection. Data were collected using multiple methods associated with each stage of the design. I used observation and interview to obtain relevant documentation to support how the church program can support anti-bullying efforts. I developed questions that were used to conduct interviews with church leaders, parents, and children at three different churches for a total of 20 different interviewees (Appendix A). I analyzed various anti-bullying programs to compare the key elements of the programs (Appendix B). I conducted a focus group presentation to demonstrate to, and equip, church leaders to construct their own anti-bullying programs. I used current information from the three different churches regarding effects bullying was having on the children and the church community. I planned to determine what the interviewees felt the churches should be doing to alleviate bullying in their church communities.

Table 2

Data Collection

Evidence to be Collected	Sources of the Evidence	Helping Sources
What does an effective anti-bullying program look like?	The data collected through interviews.	Interviews through, Facetime or Skype (if families scheduling is difficult) will be recorded.
How does an effective anti-bullying program work?	Comparing anti-bullying program that have good track records to the information requested by children in parents	Authors Olweus (2003), Rigby (2012) explored the various elements of an effective anti-bullying program.

What are the effects of implementation at the Christian organization research site?	Families will be better equipped to handle a bullying situation as demonstrated by their answers to questions from an interview.	A database of information will be used to organize data collected throughout the interviews.
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Data Analysis Procedures

Collected data were analyzed in the stages they were collected. Each stage was reviewed and analyzed to find key components embedded in the data. The literature review identified these key elements as bullying descriptors: aggression, meanness, and dominance. These descriptors were key components that guided the analysis.

Stage II: Interview data analysis. I used a priori and emergent coding strategies to determine categories. Bullying descriptors, action items, needs and desires, and the presence of current anti-bullying programs, policies, and procedures were key components used in analyzing the data. The key components for action items included going to tell an adult, prayer, self-taught strategies, volunteer, training, support, and sermons. The transcribed notes were manually highlighted after key components were identified. The needs and desires key components included what the families and church leaders wanted to receive from their churches, that is, loving, caring, safety, and healthy church communities. The transcribed notes were uploaded to the ATLAS.ti software. Using this software, I analyzed the transcribed notes and identified all of the key components. These components were then grouped in the software to create tables displaying the data. The notes from the interviews were inserted onto the software and then the common themes were highlighted throughout the document. The software presented the data in

a comprehensive display of organized data which enabled me to analyze all the data from the tables and look for common themes. Four tables were created using the software to display key components under the following themes: bullying descriptors, needs and desires, action items, and programs, policies, and procedures. The four tables are presented in Chapter 4.

Stage III: Anti-bullying program evaluation and analysis. Program evaluation data was analyzed by location using different anti-bullying efforts, or lack of effort, that are currently being used in the school setting. The key components used included study surveys, whole school/church awareness, curriculum teaching tolerance, immediate consequences, parent involvement, training, planning, discussion with bullies, discussion with victims, and/or a Christian perspective. A matrix was then created identifying the programs across the top and the key components down the side. A mark was inserted in the corresponding box for every component that was included in the anti-bullying program. The matrix analysis showed the key components included in each program.

Stage VI: Analysis of data from focus group. All of information from the focus group was recorded by the research assistant using digital recorders on the day of the focus group presentation. All groups shared the information that their groups had discussed and the information was written on a white board. I used the digital recordings to transcribe notes from the focus group presentation. The key component data were then summarized into a plan, who would be involved, and when the action would take place. These key components were manually transcribed and then entered into the ATLAS.ti qualitative software. All key components were identified and charts were created by using the information from grouping the key components together.

Validation

Validation of this research involves an examination of the creditability and transferability of data is from the study.

Credibility. The data proved credible because participants provided personal documentation of their knowledge of the subject that enabled the research questions to be answered. Interview questions were purposefully crafted to elicit corroborating evidence. Five questions were written based on the information needed from the research questions for the church leaders and the parents. Nine questions were written to ask the children participants. (Appendix A).

Data credibility was demonstrated in this study by the commonality of the responses from the two of the three groups. For example, Pastor 1 commented

Bullying was, um, much more monitored by awareness in children and youth then by adults and that is partly due to the fact that bullying happens to children in the news and in the home perhaps the adults think it's a child thing but bullying really does happen and has to be addressed among adult.

This Pastor was aware that bullying was a problem that is multi-generational. Another example was Parent 3 who had a comment about an incident at church, “Adults bullying . . . I can think of one adult that is a bully at the church.” Church leaders and parents recalled in their interview events of bullying that happened in their church community with adults. The data analysis from the interview protocol revealed that the interviewees had little knowledge of bullying inventions and until this study never thought of the incidences that occurred in their church as a bullying situation. This is just like the lack of research found in the literature of studies on bullying in the church environment. Currently all three churches do not have anything in place pertaining to

anti-bullying prevention and education. The triangulated sampling for this study was conducted at three different demographic research areas and all three sites had the same the same response from the participants of limited knowledge prior to this study.

The data collected from the interview protocol was obtained by the primary researcher for this study and no one had access to the data. Interviews were conducted by one individual researcher and the same person performed the data analysis syntheses. This procedure created an unbiased environment that strengthens the credibility of the data collected.

Transferability. The data gathered in this study provided information for helping particular churches create individualized action plans for creating anti-bullying programs and strategic interventions in their specific church environments. Since participants were from three different churches and their responses were coming from their own personal experiences, it is difficult to transfer results to other populations or churches. However, the need for anti-bullying interventions, identification of key components of effective anti-bullying programs, and the methods utilized in this study are surely transferable.

Expected Findings

I anticipated that creating an anti-bullying program supported by a unified front of the school, home, and church community would establish an environment in which children can feel safe, accepted, and loved because no matter who they are because every person is unique and special. I anticipated that participants in this study would gain greater understanding of the issue of bullying, its effects, and influences upon people in church settings. Dr. Dan Olweus (2003) stated that his bullying prevention program “has been found to create an environment of warmth, firm limits, consistent application of non-punitive, nonphysical sanctions for unacceptable behavior, and adults who act as authorities and positive role models can help the children” (p.

13). After conducting interviews and gathering information about bullying in the church environment from church leaders, parents, and children, I created a presentation that was presented to the church leaders and parents in a focus group setting. During the focus group, I hoped that the three churches selected for research would be equipped to brainstorm an action plan that each church would be able to use at their own churches. I expected that students, parents, and church school staff would be better equipped to respond to bullying situations and create a supportive environment as described by Olweus (2003). After attending the focus group presentation, I believed that church leaders would have a better understanding of the consequences, effects, and overall knowledge of bullying and that they would feel comfortable in relaying the information to others in their own churches by providing classes for parents, incorporating the anti-bullying ideas from the action plan into their Sunday School program, and involving the entire church community in an informative approach so that the congregation has a better understanding of bullying.

Further, I expected that anti-bullying programs would be developed that included strategies for children to use to avoid a bullying situation, including the influence of God's love. The programs would be developed from information that was presented to the churches at the focus group presentation. The focus group presentation presented findings of the data analyzed to church leaders, and parents on the ins and outs of bullying, the effects bullying has on children today and into the future, and the key elements of incorporating the entire church on an anti-bullying campaign.

Ethical Issues

All information obtained through the interviews must be kept confidential. The children were interviewed with the presence of their parents. Informed consent forms were signed by

both the parent and the child and were kept confidential along with all information gathered in the interview. Church leaders were directed that the comments made during any interview were to be kept confidential and that all information obtained throughout should remain in the confidence of the church leaders. Everyone interviewed was given a number to keep their name confidential.

In an attempt to minimize the risk of this study, three tables set up on the day of the focus group. People sat at tables from different churches to help minimize sharing of church specific information. At the start of the focus group, I advised the participants not to identify their specific churches and that they should keep stories non-specific to the greatest degree they could. I gave directions at the start of the focus group about the dynamics of the setting and the issue of confidentiality. I instructed the focus group that all data received has been collected in aggregated form to aid in confidentiality.

There is some risk involved with sensitive questions. Personal information was protected using coding so it could not be linked directly to the participant. Any name or identifying information given was kept secure via electronic encryption and will be locked inside a locked box for three years after which all documents will be destroyed. I was the primary investigator and no one else had access to the data with names or identifying information. I did not identify any participant in any publication or report. A certified family counselor was available for all participants should they had experience negative emotions during the study. If needed, participants would have been referred to the counselor for support. The counselor offered this support as a service to the churches, without compensation. If at any time during the interview the interviewee felt uncomfortable and request that the interview end, the investigator would have immediately ended the interview.

Researcher's position. Many children are away from their families more waking hours of the day than they are at home. Due to this fact the community needs to play an active role in equipping the children and families with the information to understand and adequately respond to a bullying situation. Today's children have more opportunities than in years past to be confronted with a bullying altercation (Bullock, 2002). Research has shown one in five children will be involved or knows someone who has experienced bullying. Since Vlachou, Andreou, Botsoglou, and Didaskalou (2011) conducted research on preschool children that were bullied and Dentith, Wright, and Coryell, (2015) reported bullying incidences that occurred when they were adults it appears that bullying occurs in people of all ages. I believe children should be educated when they are young so that they have the tools to deal bullying situations in the future. I believe fewer children will experience the act of bullying in their lifetime if the church provides education and resources for families on anti-bullying at an early age.

As a Director of Children's Ministries for many years, I have worked with many different families and churches. I have experienced the lack of anti-bullying education in the church environments and how the lack of education can affect the way that children and their families are able to handle a bullying situation. Through my experiences and relations with families I believe that there is a need to have the church community play an important role in equipping the community through support, resources, and programs. The church needs to be a safe place for people therefore bullying within the church setting needs to be eliminated through education.

Chapter 3 Summary

There were no existing anti-bullying programs at the research sites when this research was proposed. I evaluated anti-bullying programs to determine the qualities of an effective anti-bullying program. I analyzed interviews I conducted to determine the attitudes and perceptions

on bullying among church leaders, parents, and children. This enabled me to organize a focus group presentation where the churches were able to develop an action plan that could be used in their church setting. I used a program evaluation research design to answer the question: What does an effective anti-bullying training program look like, how does it work, and what are the attitudes and perceptions of bullying among Church leaders, parents, and children?

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results

Introduction

This chapter begins with a brief overview introduction that reviews the study of problem and the research questions guiding the investigation. The research was pursued through a six-stage research protocol that included the following: Stage I: Interview Protocol; Stage II: Analysis; Stage III: Anti-bullying Programs Evaluation and Analysis; Stage IV: Synthesis of Data from Stage II and III; Stage V: Focus Group; and Stage VI: Analysis of Data from Focus Group. Each stage will be introduced separately in this chapter and the following components will be discussed in relation to each stage: purpose of the stage; data collection methods used for the stage; and the results and findings from the stage. Following this, the chapter will provide an in-depth discussion of the results and presentation of the findings that highlight the categories of inquiry and overarching questions of this study.

In the Stage I: Interview Protocol, members from three different churches participated in one-on-one interviews.

Purpose. The purpose of Stage I was to recruit, enroll, and interview participants from local churches. Three church sites provided permission to recruit parents, fifth graders, and church leaders, and to conduct data collection.

Data collection. All participants were involved in the first stage of the study, including parents, fifth graders, and church leaders. Each participant answered questions about bullying, ranging from questions that asked about their thoughts concerning the ways their church community could assist with enhancing their knowledge of bullying to questions that asked about ways their church community could offer support.

Results and findings. The action items gleaned from the interview protocol included common ideas that the participants had about what needed to be done by their churches. The participants mentioned the following items: training, support, training through sermon, and that children should go and tell a parent or an adult. When discussing *training*, the participants were referring to instruction that could be provided for Sunday School volunteers to educate them about the issue of bullying and bully prevention. Multiple participants mentioned during the interview protocol that they wanted their church to provide support in the form of counseling, training, and equipping that could provide them with knowledge about bullying. Interview data suggested that types of training and support could include lessons taught from the pulpit during Sunday worship when people are in attendance and their attention is focused on the pastor. The needs and desires that the participants expressed that they possessed for their church communities included love, Christian environment, caring, a healthy and safe place, and a children's program.

Confidentiality. The informed consent that was obtained from participants during this stage included the following promise to the participants, which guided the protection of participants. This protection included best practices in managing data that the participants provided.

We will be careful to safeguard your personal identifying information. We will not use your name or any piece of information that could allow a person other than the study investigation team to link your identity (your name) with the information you provide. This will include us safekeeping your data in password protected computers. The lead investigator Trisha Wetzelberger will have a record of your name or other identity, but your name will not be needed for us to study or learn things from this study. We are

studying several churches and are pooling the data in an aggregate in a way that does not identify the particular church. We will not report your identity or the identity of your church in any publication. We promise to do all possible to keep you and your information confidential. We plan to keep your information confidential. At the end of this study, your name will be deleted so that there will be no record of your volunteering for this study and no record of how you answered questions or gave data for this study. This information will not be distributed to any other agency and will be kept private and confidential. The only exception to this is if you tell me abuse or neglect information that makes me seriously concerned for your immediate health and safety. (Adult Consent Form, 2015)

All participants entered the study with the understanding of confidentiality for the data collected through the interviews.

In the Stage II: Analysis, I analyzed interview data from the 21 separate interviews. All of the digital audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed and subsequently coded.

Purpose. Analyzing the data from the interview protocol was essential for interpreting the bullying information that was provided through the interviews. The interpretation of data yielded information about current church practices, participants' perception of bullying, and the needs and desires participants identified that they had with the respect to bullying, and which the church could fulfill.

Data collection. Stage II included multiple procedures. First, the interviews were transcribed verbatim from the digital recordings. Next, the interview data was coded manually and then the interview data was entered into a qualitative software program that was used to accomplish a second stage coding to look for common threads within the data pertaining to

bullying.

Data analysis. Program evaluation qualitative coding procedures were used to find common themes and apply a priori categories that had been determined during the review of literature. This procedure was applied to the data in order to reveal if the participants expressed ideas found in prior literature and research.

Results and findings. The emergent categories identified in the interviews were descriptors for bullying, actions items, needs and desires, as well as programs, policies, and steps. These coding categories were determined by the information that was obtained throughout the interviews and were themes derived from the literature review. The following codes were identified which are descriptors of bullying characteristics: mean, aggressive, dominance, and nasty. These codes were identified in multiple interviews and were associated with participant's descriptions of the actions of bullies.

The next section introduces the results of the third stage of the research study. During this stage information from nine current anti-bullying programs was analyzed. The nine programs were evaluated based on the key attributes that were identified in the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP), which is a widely recognized anti-bullying program.

In Stage III: Anti-bullying Program Evaluation and Analysis, I developed and executed a process for evaluation and analysis of current anti-bullying programs. Using the information obtained during the literature review regarding current anti-bullying programs, I evaluated each program using a matrix chart of effective program elements.

Purpose. Nine anti-bullying programs were analyzed: Bullying Prevention Program (Beane, 2015); Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (Olweus, 2015); Reconciling Works (Reconciling Works, 2015); Safe Teen (Roberts, 2015); Steps to Respect (Committee for

Children, 2015); The Gentle Warrior (Twemlow, 2015); The No Bullying System (Carlisle, 2015); The Protectors (Coughlin, 2007); and, There's No Excuse for Peer Abuse (Utterly Global, 2015). Each of the nine programs were carefully evaluated through an in-depth study of the program components. The analysis was conducted using a matrix chart evaluation process to determine the similarities and differences of each of the different programs. The analysis revealed eight main attributes that anti-bullying programs contain.

Data collection. Eight attributes were identified that were used to evaluate existing anti-bullying programs. These attributes were determined prior to data collection. Seven attributes were derived from the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP), while an eighth attribute associated with the conceptual framework's moral theory was included to determine whether any programs touched on religious moral development, specifically Christian moral perspectives. The attributes were: study surveys, whole school/church awareness, curriculum teaching tolerance, immediate consequences, parent involvement, training/planning, discussion with bully and victim, and the Christian moral perspective. The Christian moral perspective is not a component of the OBPP but it is a component that would be needed in a church setting. Nine different anti-bullying programs were evaluated.

Data analysis. All data pertaining to the key elements of each anti-bullying programs were reviewed in an evaluation matrix. The evaluation included an analytical reading of each program's literature, which included the identification of key themes contained in each program. The themes from each program were then compared to the eight defined attributes to determine whether or not the programs included each attribute. The evaluation matrix is contained in Appendix B.

Results and findings. The data analysis identified that each program contained some

aspect of the OBPP approach, however, only two programs offered a Christian moral component. Having a Christian moral component to an anti-bullying program was an important point that was derived from Stage I interview data. Of the two programs that did include a Christian moral component, it was determined that neither program included all seven attributes found in the OBPP. The next section will describe in detail the steps made to create a handout for the participants in the focus group.

In the Stage IV: Synthesis of Data from Stage II and III, data gathered in stages II and III were compared in order to process and create handouts for the focus group presentation for Stage V. Handouts were created with the information from the analyzed data to inform and educate the adult participants.

Purpose. The purpose of this stage was to develop materials to provide adult participants with analyzed data from the interviews. All of the information that was developed to share with participants was de-identified data, without any personally identifying information in the printed materials. The materials that were created included the eight attributes from the evaluation matrix and a summary of the analysis of the data from stage I–III.

Data collection. The interview data and evaluation of program data was reviewed and compared during this stage. The commonalities and similarities of what interviewees desired in an anti-bullying program and what had been identified as being contained in current anti-bullying programs were recorded and analyzed.

Data analysis. The data demonstrated the needs and desire of the interviewees, the expectations of the church when it pertains to bullying, and what the interviewees' hopes and dreams were for the future in their church community. The data from the program analysis was analyzed and compared to the other data from the interview and literature reviews. Next, the

information that was gathered and analyzed in this stage was presented to the focus group in stage V.

In the Stage V I presented the participants with synthesized results from the previous stages in the focus group presentation. Sharing the data with the participants set the stage for focus group discussions that had the goal of developing preliminary anti-bullying action plan for the study

Process. The focus group presentation started with the participants introducing themselves. Following introductions, I shared with the participants the purpose of the focus group session, the data that were analyzed from the interviews, a detailed understanding of key vocabulary associated with bullying, and questions to steer the small groups during their brainstorming discussions. Next was the sharing of the data and the focus group received a report that contained the data analysis obtained through the interviews. Information from the interviews was shared with the large group through a PowerPoint presentation. The information that was provided was paraphrased from Stage I interviews conducted with the interviewees and the analyzed data.

The synthesized interview data was presented to the large focus group to provide participants with a better understanding of the meaning of *bullying* and other key words used in a bullying occurrence, common links among the interviews that were analyzed and reviewed using ATLAS.ti software (Atlas.ti, 2016). This allowed the groups to determine the best action plan that was needed based on the information provided from the interviews. Information that was gained through the interview protocol, including information about participants' knowledge of bullying, church involvement with bullying, personal involvement with bullying, and their familiarity with church programs that address anti-bullying provided data for the focus groups to

better understand bullying.

Information on current anti-bullying programs was discussed, and the day culminated with the large group being divided into three small groups with the task of creating an action plan for the churches, which could equip their members to have strategic interventions in place regarding bullying. The synthesized data was provided in order to allow the small groups sufficient information from which to develop a preliminary action plan for their church, to support understanding of bullying, to elicit church involvement, and to offer preliminary ways churches could provide support with bullying education.

Next I presented analyzed data from the program evaluation stage. The anti-bullying programs that are currently being used were discussed along with the important elements to consider in having an effective program. The information was shared through a PowerPoint presentation and participants received a hardcopy of the presentation in a handout. The day culminated with the large group being divided into three small groups and the groups being given the task of creating an action plan for the churches, which could equip their members to have strategic interventions in place regarding bullying. Small groups brainstormed ideas of what to do for their church. This brainstorming session was written on a white board so that everyone could see each other's responses. A research assistant wrote the information on the white board as individuals were calling out the responses. The full focus group concluded with goal setting.

Data collection. The full group was divided into three smaller groups, each composed of participants who were members of the same church. I instructed the groups that the purpose of the breakout groups was to generate new ideas for new ways the churches could address the problem of bullying or could support those involved in a bullying occurrence. Each group was

provided with: (a) definitions from the literature to provide more information about the problem of bullying, (b) detailed charts summarizing the analyzed interview data, and (c) questions that the group could use to guide their discussions. It was expected that this information would be sufficient to allow the group to complete the action plan development portion of the research protocol. No background information was provided on the nature of goal setting to ensure that open communication characterized the discussions. The information was written on a handout that was instrumental in helping the groups walk through the goal setting. The groups were provided with the following prompting questions to facilitate their discussion and goal setting work: What would you like to see change at your church when it comes to anti-bullying support and programs?; How can you make the change?; and, When will the change take place? The three groups came back together after 30 minutes of discussion time to share their ideas with the group at-large.

Data analysis. The comments from each group were written on a white board to compare and contrast the group results. I listed the comments from each group under different group numbered columns. All three of the groups shared the answers from their group discussions on the three different questions.

Results and findings. After reviewing the information presented by the groups, the full group shared their action plans. The three churches decided on a point person to take the lead to initiate talks about bullying at their church starting with conversations with the lead pastor and working through to the church council and the congregation. The participants wanted to have an anti-bullying program in place at their church within the subsequent six months. In the next stage, the information from the small group brainstorm session was analyzed.

In the final Stage VI: Analysis of Data from Focus Group, the data that were gathered

from the focus group session were analyzed and manually coded in order to identify common themes. Next, the coded data were uploaded into a qualitative software program that enabled me to analyze and derive structured meaning from the focus group data.

Purpose. In this final stage, the data collected in Stage V: focus group were analyzed in order to present the focus group participants with the written findings from the brainstorming event so that the group at large would be able to create an action plan before returning to their home churches.

Data collection. This stage was subsequent to the focus group day. The day of the focus group presentation, the data had been gathered by one participant from each small group who served as a recording secretary; in addition the conversations had been digitally recorded. The gathered data were then analyzed using the following procedures.

Data analysis. Interview and focus group presentation were manually analyzed and uploaded into the ATLAS.ti. software. The transcribed interview data were entered to the software and then the key themes and commonalities were identified. The results of the data analyses from the interviews answered the research question that pertained to the perceptions and understanding of bullying among the people in the church community as well as to what do the children and families in the church have and do not have to support them in handling a bullying situation. The focus group presentation that the adult participants attended provided data that allowed me to answer the final research question concerning the effects of implementing a focus group presentation that was designed to share information about current church perspectives on the problem of bullying and information about current anti-bullying approaches.

Results and findings. The action plans from the focus groups were cross-analyzed to find similarities and differences in recommended actions between groups. These recommended

actions were compared to current anti-bullying programs. The analysis was performed in order to develop a report that could be provided to the research sites. This process enabled me to answer the questions:

- What does an effective anti-bullying program within the church look like, how does it work?
- What are the perceptions and understanding of bullying among the people in the church community?
- What do children and families in the church have and not have to enable them to prevent them to handle a bullying situation? and;
- What are the effects of implementing a focus group presentation designed to explain the best practices for a church on anti-bullying programs?

The methodological approach to this study was program evaluation that supported an analysis of current anti-bullying programs and a programmatic analysis of the situations at the research sites. The next section will identify the description of the sampling of participants included in the study.

Description of the Sample

Three churches were selected to participate in the study. These were community churches with which the primary researcher had the following connections: site B was a place of previous employment; site C was a location where the Senior Pastor and I possessed a professional relationship; and, site A was my place of employment at the time the study was conducted. All three churches received a letter explaining the study as well as a site permission letter, which requested the church's permission to conduct the interviews at the site and with the church community. Upon receiving the signed site permissions, letters explaining the study and

a consent form were sent to the church leaders, parents, and fifth grade children from each church. There were approximately 10 fifth graders from each of the three churches who received the letters to participate. The children, parents, and church leaders were interested in participating in the study because of the research topic as well as their desire to help address the problem of bullying within the church sites and to change the support systems that are available in the environments in their church community. There were people wanting to participate in the study who did not meet the selection criteria for the study.

Expected enrollment verses final enrollment. The group was instructed to return the signed consent letters within two weeks of receipt of the invitation to participate. After signed consent forms were returned, all of the forms were then divided into three groups, one group for each church. Once the forms were successfully separated into different church categories the forms were then divided into three other groups: church leaders, parents, and fifth graders. The children's forms were matched with parent's forms for each church and divided in groups according to gender. I randomly selected one fifth grade male and one fifth grade female participant form from each document group.

This processed yielded the following participants for each of the three churches: one pastor, two other church leaders, one fifth grade male, one fifth grade female, and two parents. The participant enrollment for all three churches totaled: 21 boys, 18 girls, 36 parents, 7 church leaders, and 3 pastors. Each of the selected participants were contacted by phone to set up a convenient time to conduct the interviews.

Three churches were chosen to participate. One of the sites is a large rural church with a congregation of approximately 500 people. On average the weekly Sunday attendance is approximately 334 members with 70 children attending Sunday School. Having a congregation

of nearly the same size as the first church, the second church has a slightly more diverse church community with approximately 275 members attending on a weekly basis and 50 children in Sunday School. The third church is the smallest of the three. The membership is ethnically diverse, with approximately 250 members attending each Sunday, 30 of whom are children. For more information on the participating churches, the reader may refer to the Chapter 3 section entitled “Context.”

All of the children interviewed in the study were fifth graders who came from a stable family home environment. Three of the children were the oldest child in the family, while three were the youngest family member. The participating parents were all the mothers of the children and range between 37–43 years of age. The church leadership participants included two males older than 65 and six women ranging from the age of 40 to 55 years old. In the next section, the study’s methodology and research protocol of the study will be discussed and then the data analysis processes will be explained in greater detail.

Research Methodology and Analysis

The program evaluation methodology provided the framework for evaluating the current anti-bullying programs and those that were a part of the curriculum in the school settings. An evaluation of characteristics of effective programs that are being used in school and church settings resulted in a report of eight common key elements used in these anti-bullying programs. This information was presented at the focus group stage of the project. Evaluating effective programs and the different elements of the anti-bullying programs is important information that was distributed at the focus group presentation.

The research protocol involved six stages as noted above: (1) Stage I: Interview; (2) Stage II: Analysis; (3) Stage III: Anti-Bullying Program Evaluation and Analysis; (4) Stage IV:

Synthesis of Data from Stage II and III; (5) Stage V: Focus Group; and (6) Stage VI: Analysis of Data from Focus Group.

Participants in the current study were interviewed in one-on-one sessions, with the exception of the children who were accompanied by their parent. The interview questions used in the interview of church leaders, parents, and children can be found in Appendix 1. The interviews were digitally recorded. At the completion of the interviews, I transcribed the interviews verbatim and then manually coded my research notes. All of the notes and codes were uploaded into the ATLAS.ti software (Atlas.ti, 2016) and the data was used to create a PowerPoint presentation that was shared with the participating church leaders and parents on another day for a focus group presentation.

All 12 participants arrived at the church at 9:00 a.m. and the research assistant led the group to the focus group presentation location. As the group arrived they were invited to partake of the snacks that were ready for them, and then each participant found a seat at a table that would then constitute a “group.” Group 1 contained four participants: Church Leader 1, Church Leader 3, Church Leader 7, and Parent 4. Group 2 was made up with four participants: Pastor 1, Church Leader 6, Parent 1, and Parent 2. Group 3 had four participants that included Parent 6, Parent 5, Parent 3, and Pastor 3. Since two participants were unable to attend the focus group due to last minute circumstances, the number of participants for the focus group was 12 rather than the planned 14. This resulted in only three groups of four people for the breakout sessions. This size group was appropriate for the discussions because the small size allowed everyone the opportunity to more easily talk and share. The research assistant passed out the handouts of the interview data analysis, the anti-bullying program evaluation matrix, and pens to each

participant. The presentation of data to the focus group started 10 minutes after the designated arrival time.

At the end of the presentation, the groups were asked to choose a recording secretary to take notes for their group. There was one person in each group who seemed excited to take on the task. I walked around the room and listened to the conversations and tried to keep the groups on task by directing the groups' attentions back to the questions that I had provided to guide the groups' discussions.

At the conclusion of the brainstorming the small groups were brought back together as a whole group and the secretary from each group shared key points to their answers for the questions. Answers were written on the white board by the research assistant. Comparisons such as similar wording, themes, and actions among the data from separate groups were identified during the group discussion. All the participants agreed that a contact person was a good idea and that something in the form of a plan, policy, and program needed to be in place within six months. The contact person would set up times to meet with the church council and staff to share the information from the focus group presentation.

All of the notes were typed verbatim from the focus group presentation. Each group had a person who was taking notes for the group and I had a digital recorder with a sensitive microphone that was recording the session. The information from the data was then coded and put into the ATLAS.ti software. Reports were generated. The reports were shared, which contained general data from the interviews and no personal identifying information.

Summary of the Findings

In this section, the summary finding findings from the interviews will be arranged under the research questions that guided this study:

- What does an effective anti-bullying program within the church look like?
- How does it work?
- What are the perceptions and understanding of bullying among the people in the church community?
- What do children and families in the church have and not have to enable them in handling a bullying situation?

Data from all three participant groups contributed to answering all the questions analyzed.

What does an effective anti-bullying program within the church look like and how does it work? Nine anti-bullying programs: Bullying Prevention Program, Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, Reconciling Works, Safe Teen, Steps to Respect, The Gentle Warrior Program, The No Bullying Program, The Protectors, and There's No Excuse for Peer Abuse, were evaluated and compared to identify comparative components. Key elements were examined from the programs that were noted as popular programs. There were eight key components, as mentioned by Olweus (2015), which were used as criteria for analysis: study surveys, whole school/church awareness, curriculum teaching tolerance, immediate consequences, parent involvement, training and/or planning, discussion with bully and /or victim, and with an additional component of a Christian perspective that is not mentioned by Olweus. Of the nine programs, no program had all eight components in the anti-bullying program however five programs contained seven components: Bullying Prevention Program (Bean, 2015), Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (Olweus, 2015), Reconciling Works (Reconciling Works, 2013), The Gentle Warrior Program (Twemlow, 2015), and There's No Excuse for Peer Abuse (Utterly Global, 2015).

The following programs: Bullying Prevention Program, Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (Olweus, 2015), The Gentle Warrior Program (Twemlow, 2015), and There's No Excuse for Peer Abuse (Utterly Global, 2015) contained study surveys, whole school/church awareness, curriculum teaching tolerance, immediate consequences, parent involvement, training and/or planning, and discussion with bully and /or victim components. The only component missing was the Christian moral component in these programs. Reconciling Works (Reconciling Works, 2013), program includes study surveys, whole school/church awareness, curriculum teaching tolerance, immediate consequences, parent involvement, training and/or planning, and Christian perspective but did not incorporate discussion with bully and/or victim. The components of anti-bullying program according to the participants in the study were slightly different from the list above. The participants wanted love, support, and caring from a church program and these comments were not addressed in the current anti-bullying programs being offered today. Next the church leaders, parents, and children answered the questions about bullying.

Church Leaders. An effective anti-bullying program in a church environment, according to Church Leaders needs to include elements related to the following key words: self-taught, sermon training, training, caring, and tell an adult. Church leaders mentioned that the volunteers were self-taught, that is, there was no official volunteer training to prepare the volunteers at their churches. The knowledge that volunteers shared during the interviews was acquired from life experiences. Sermon training was described as a lesson taught from the pulpit whereas

“training” would indicate classes designed to educate parents or volunteers. The five key words were found throughout the interview transcripts and some examples are shared below.

After analyzing the data, it was apparent the key components were noted in more than one interview. In an interview Pastor 1 expressed belief in

encouraging people to seek help, um usually it would be the victim person to let them know that there is full access as to um, leadership that understanding in getting facts of what happened to try to understand and once that takes place then there is a pursuit of the bully. That needs to take place one on one side ways with direct communication with the people who are involved. Fewer people can be entangled and there is a definite need to be engaged. Even to take side and to reserve judgment on the behavior not the people involved and usually that also includes time for follow up to make certain that there is no festering and to show caring of the damage that has been done.

Pastor 1 outlined *a plan* in his discussion. The “one-on-one sideways” was his way of describing how the communication needs to happen—with a one-on-one discussion with both parties, not just talking to the person who was the victim or just the person who was the bully.

One-on-one conversation was highlighted by Church Leader 1, when the leader said, “one on one or even the pastor speaking to the person that is causing that type of behavior or presenting that type of behavior.” The two common points in these two interviews indicate a need to have interactive communication with the people who are involved in the situation. The link between this point and the literatures will be addressed in Chapter 5.

On the other hand, church leaders also thought that the volunteers were already equipped to handle a bullying situation. This is seen in an interview with Pastor 2 where suggested

I would think we rely on skills and abilities of our teachers to make sure that there is not any bullying. A parent or the teacher would talk to the staff person that is involved or pastor. Documentation is done in a helpful timely way and all of the parties are brought in not necessarily all together in conversation and the aid of it is to truly talk about and investigate and addressed in the aid of the well-being of children together.

Pastor 2's suggestions to rely on the teachers knowing what to do identifies the need for education among the volunteers so that they are able to address a bullying situation in the future. Pastor 2 also agreed that communication is imperative. The only thing different is that Pastor 2 made reference to staff person and not just the pastor. This is an indication that the broader church leadership could be included into the solution to address bullying situation. Church Leader 5 commented that, "We have talked about it as a group, especially in elementary school when I worked with them for a long period of time but we never did anything." The remarks made by Church Leader 5 were referring to bullying. She mentioned that bullying or the way to treat others would be something that was "dropped" into a lesson during Sunday School. When she stated that they never did anything she was referring to an organized bullying program but that the children were taught when there was a teachable moment provided that the leader in the Sunday School classroom was able to respond quickly enough when a comment or chance came around.

Training program. Incorporating a bullying program with the lesson plan that is already in place was a common idea in the interviews. Church Leader 6 stated

I would think that . . . that going to church each week and listening to the Word of God.

Live like Jesus and love one another . . . the WWJD kind of thing. What would Jesus do?

And going forth like that. It comes out in every service how Jesus loved everyone Help the lowly and took care of them, did away with the rich but I don't consider that bullying. The quotation demonstrates the participant's perception of what is needed. A person needs to love and care for another person. The comments also demonstrate the idea that people are learning how to act from the examples shared from God and that are taught in church. Pastor 3 described exactly what he did to already start to teach about bullying.

I've actually talked about this with kids at a children's sermon. And we all agreed that the first person you talk to about this is your mom and dad. If that is possible . . . if they are close enough to do that. You can also talk with a teacher or another adult that you feel comfortable with.

The steps that Pastor 3 outlined are an example of something that could be shared as part of a program.

Parents. The parents were concerned with sermon training, volunteers taking control, parent support, and with the theme of being self-taught. This section will present these themes in order, using direct quotations from the parents interviewed to show how the themes were evident in the data. Parent 1 stated "but I would assume that if I felt really bullied by someone that I could go to the Pastor or you and talk to you about it and something would get done." This parent felt that she had a place to turn when she needed help or was involved in a bullying situation. The next parent addressed the process that she would take if something happened. Parent 2 commented

if it involves children at some point we would work together with our leader, our children's ministry leader and the parent of the child, both parties to kind of hash it out per say. Is this just what you think should happen? Um . . . well I guess if we have to

have something in place for bullying at church then there should be steps. So that if parents know what to do.

The parent wants to have steps in place so that everyone knows what to do in the event of a situation. This parent went through the steps that she as a parent and a member of the church would follow by talking to the leader of children's ministry. She noted that at the present time there is nothing that is written in place at the church.

The parents had different ideas about what should or could be put into place. Parent 3 suggested

My idea with this . . . the welcoming is that we would go around to all different groups of the church and sort of describe ways that we can involve more people and make them feel welcomed to join and gather in different groups and not let people feel uncomfortable because they are being put down. So that there is something that people can say to these people. I think we could do more of that to let people know that it is not okay to treat people poorly. People walk with their feet and if people feel like they are being someone is being obnoxious to them they will find another church.

The idea outlined by Parent 3 combines love and a supportive and caring environment. This is currently not a program that is active at her church but one that she had thought about prior to the study.

Another parent made comments about what happens at their church. She discussed the youth group and the leader and the ways their support has strengthened their family through offering support, love, and caring. Parent 5 stated

If it were to happen to my child it depends on the situation. I will say that the teen administration, I do feel that comfortable with my teens in that group and that the youth

director and spouse are very involved and have counseled my kids not in an event that happened at church but outside situations that happened at school.

Parent 5's comments are an example of the total community being a part of the children's well-being. Although this behavior is not a program offered by the church, it is an example of the youth leader demonstrating compassion and concern for the youth that he or she leads.

Training and support are key elements mentioned by the parents. The parents made remarks about the need for training among the total congregation. Parent 6 commented

I think that it is important to train the congregation on bullying. I know that I could talk with the family involved in the bullying situation but I am not going to kid myself to think that it would not be hard to control myself because it is my child.

What are the perceptions and understanding of bullying among the people in the church community? Church leaders, parents and children agreed that bullying is an aggressive action that someone does to demonstrate their dominance over another person. The participants identified that bullying was a *mean* action and some went so far as to describe bullying as *nasty*.

Children. The children interviewed provided their perspectives on bullying, which ranged from seeing bullying as disrespectful behavior to viewing it as aggressive behavior. During the interview with Child 5, she commented that bullying was "mean and disrespectful." A second perception among children was that bullying was an action expressive of dominance.

With regard to the second perception of dominance, Child 1 stated bullying is "children hurting other children." He recalled a time when a bigger child was hurting a smaller child. While Child 2 commented bullying is "like somebody saying things or hurting them." He continued "we would play games and he would try to tackle me and sometimes we would play football but we would play a game and then he would try to tackle me and start punching me."

Child 3 addressed the dominance in the bully stating that bullying is “stomping on my foot, punching me in my face.” Child 3 mentioned that the child that was bullying him was a lot bigger in height than he was. Dominance was personally experienced and witnessed by Child 4, “At school she likes to tickle me to laugh and get into trouble and she tries to talk to me during class,” and describing another situation, “I saw him pushing and tackling each other along with the other little children.”

Five comments were made demonstrating that the children interviewed thought bullying was an aggressive behavior. Child 6 response was bullying was “aggressive behavior.” A comment that shows dominance and aggression came from Child 3 “stomping on my foot, punching me in my face.” Children found aggressive behavior in their recess time. Child 2 commented, “we would play a game and then he would try to tackle me and start punching me.” The action of hurting others can be an example of dominance or aggression. Child 4 experienced a child being aggressive to another: “I saw him pushing and tackling each other along with the other little children.” Child 1 stated bullying is “children hurting other children.”

The interviews from the children were analyzed and common key descriptors were identified. The next descriptor for bullying was meanness, the children interviewed thought that bullying was a mean act. Child 1 remembered a situation at school, “The boy was making mean comments about the clothes my friend was wearing and that he wasn’t good at sports. Not everyone is good at sports. My friend was bullied.” This description is of an incident that happened at school was a mean act of bullying. Child 2 described bullying to be, “Like somebody saying things or hurting them.” These two different acts described by Child 2 can be identified as physical and verbal bullying and were labeled using the key word mean. Child 3 defined bullying as “weird and mean.” While, Child 4 was slightly more detailed, “I think that

the bullies don't like . . . they are jealous of who you are. And they are mean to other people because they are jealous." The word *mean* was the descriptor used by Child 4 in his understanding of bullying.

Parents. Children and their parents had similar responses when describing bullying. The key descriptors for the parent group were aggression, dominance, and meanness. This section will share quotes from the interviews in the order of the three descriptors. Parent 6 described bullying as, "Aggressive behavior by children or adults to other children or adults." The aggressive behavior was coded as aggressive. Parent 5 recalled a situation at church saying

Um . . . there has been incidences with adults that I have witnessed other adults behaving in away in an open forum in church where they are targeting one person and it is obvious who they are targeting and the person is unable to defend themselves because they have a role in the church. Um . . . sometimes it happens when there are only adults present but there was this one incidence in front of the whole congregational . . . at a congregational meeting. I was a little taken back by that happening.

These actions taken by another adult in an open forum were acts of bullying with an aggressive behavior. This example was coded using the terms aggressive and showing dominance over another person. The targeted person was unable to do anything which was something that the bully understood. She continued to mention

one of my daughters had a situation that happened at school this year that became very ugly at school. And it was definitely a bullying situation, she stood up and was involved in a rebuttal to the bullies and um . . . there were a lot of threats made on social media and it became an issue at her school um . . . she was not in the wrong, she was not found to be in the wrong at school.

Parent 5 shared two stories of bullying that she knew personally about. The second one about social media shows another way that children can be constant victims of bullying, and is a form of bullying whose presence can be continuous. This example was associated during the coding process with the category of dominance, because of the dominate role the bully took over the person through the source of social media by the comments shared and others seeing who was in control.

Another example of dominance, and aggression was shared by Parent 1, “I think of kids who um . . . gang up on other kids to try to make them feel badly about themselves and in order to obtain something that they need... maybe psychologically.” The child described by Parent 1 is showing dominance over another child through aggression.

Parents talked about bullying being mean. Parent 4 described bullying as “Kids being mean mostly kids but adults can be mean as well.” This statement indicates that bullying can be multi-generational, it is not just children being bullies but adults exhibit aggressive behavior as well. Parent 2 believed that bullying is a mean act. She stated, “I think of children being mean to one another just for their own, that is right for their own good.” Parent 3 “bullying situations is where one person harasses another.” She extended her thinking about situations by recounting a specific event, saying

She talks down to people, complains loudly about people’s children, I remember serving at a coffee once and she didn’t like the cookie that she took so she spits it out onto a napkin and gave it to me. It was gross. I don’t know that she considers herself a bully or just a grumpy old person. People just say . . . oh that is just the way she acts. And you have probably encountered her before because that is just the way that she acts and we just let her do it. It’s obnoxious.

The situation Parent 3 described was coded as mean. People use their standing in an organization to do what they want and when they want to do as demonstrated in this context. The older woman of the church has been a long-time member of the community. This action is mean and it shows dominance over other people.

The next descriptor is bullying as *dominance*. Parent 1 stated, “I think of kids who um...gang up on other kids to try to make them feel badly about themselves.” The activity described by Parent 1 is showing dominance over other children. The data from this quote can be associated with all three descriptors: aggression, dominance, and meanness.

Public identification of the bully in order to humiliate is an emergent theme meaning that from the people interviewed bullying was seen as an action where the bully wants to humiliate the other person. Parent 2 stated that bullying was “children being mean to one another just for their own...um, that is right for their own good.” She continued

. . . in an open forum in church where they are targeting one person and it is obvious who they are targeting and the person is unable to defend themselves because they have a role in the church. I think of kids who um . . . gang up of other kids to try to make the feel badly about themselves. There were a lot of threats made on social media and it became an issue at her school um... she was not in the wrong, she was not found to be in the wrong at school. Children being mean to one another just for their own purposes . . . that is not right for their own good.

Although Parent 2 started out identifying bullying as an activity by children she continued talking and identified a time when bullying was in fact an adult activity as well. The examples used were examples of aggression, dominance, and meanness shown from one person to another.

Humiliating another person in a public setting and showing dominance was evident in various interviews.

Another parent described a bullying event where the bully was an adult and the action was towards children and adults at her church. The older woman that the parent was describing did not care about who was around. Parent 3 stated that there are

situations where one person harasses another. She talks down to people, complains loudly about people's children, I remember serving at a coffee once and she didn't like the cookie that she took so she spits it out onto a napkin and gave it to me. It was gross. In this account, the bully was being aggressive and showing dominance over others around her.

Church Leaders. In talking with church leaders about their perceptions and understanding of bullying they described it as aggression, dominance, meanness, and being nasty. Described bullying, Church Leader 1 shared

placing pressure, emotional stress or strain on the individual and making them feel inferior um...deliberate behavior to antagonize or um...put on a negative twist on a person on a person, belittling them making them feel as though they are less than you are the person who is bullying.

The information in the quote was describing bullying as aggressive when there is a deliberate act and a negative twist, meaning the comments made by the individual in negative comments about another person. It is also showing dominance over another person through belittling them and the act of making them feel less than the person who is bullying. This type of deliberate action and a negative twist are also indicative of the category of mean, by placing pressure and emotional stress is something that someone does to make a person feel uncomfortable and unable to fit into the group or the surroundings according to the interviewees.

Pastor 2 stated bullying is “aggressive, a way that does harm to another kid.” This comment uses the word *aggressive* to describe bullying. The harm that is placed on another child however is demonstrating dominance. Church leader 3 recalled personal moments from middle and high school when she thought of bullying

being shoved in lockers and being lifted up on top of the locker because I was so small that I could jump down because I was so small the lockers were so high. Being pushed into the boy’s bathroom. Umm . . . the PE [Physical Education] teacher bullying you and snapping your bras if you didn’t have big enough boobs . . . seriously. Um... kids being mean, calling you fat, ugly, scare face, zit face, umm . . . being short, being overly tall, bug eyes, four eyes.

Her comments were analyzed as aggression, dominance, and meanness when describing bullying. The aggression and dominance that were displayed by the actions of the classmates and PE teacher were forms of bullying. Achieving dominance over another person through the various actions and the meanness were stated in the comments made to describe a person’s face and body structure.

Church Leader 7 described bullying as “Kids in school being mean to their classmates either verbally or physical . . . teasing.” The connection to the literature is that these are two forms of bullying: verbal and physical and the descriptors demonstrated was mean and aggressive. This church leader used the word *mean* to describe what they understand bullying to be, and the rest of their statement contained examples of aggression and dominance.

In another interview with a church leader, Pastor 1 suggested that bullying means “trying to hurt another child.” Later on in the conversation, Pastor 1 shared, “I have seen others victimized and I have been victimized.” This statement demonstrates aggressive dominance

when analyzing bullying descriptors because one person overpowered another person in an aggressive way. Pastor 1 continued stating that bullying is “when the power rises up, and there is very inappropriate power plays and it is ultimately a spiritual issue trying to steer someone to an outcome.” Pastor 1 noted the dominance related to bullying when he mentioned power plays and trying to steer someone to an outcome.

Church Leader 3 shared an event that happened in the church setting between an older member of the congregation and a youth member.

I actually remember one particular older gentleman that was bullying a young girl that was being an acolyte and he was picking on her because she wore sandals to go up on the alter and he did not feel that it was respectful being an acolyte and she was getting very embarrassed and you could see that her face was getting all red.

This type of bullying is based on value differences and demanding that another person adopt the same views that one holds. The older member was not happy about the way the youth appeared to not respect the position of acolyte, which is a job that the youth were doing in the church. The elder’s value of performing the duties of acolyte in a particular manner. The manner in which he presented the situation to the youth and attempted to instill his values in the young person demonstrates the categories of aggression and dominance.

In another interview with Church Leader 6. She recalled a moment that happened during a congregational meeting of the adult congregation

people feel so strongly that they know everything and they know everything, what is best for the church and ram it down everyone’s throat . . . their own personal opinions. To hold a position and like that. I see the adults verbally bullying others in the church.

For this situation, the older members were demonstrating dominance over the younger adults in the congregation. The phase demonstrated aggressive behavior in the action of “ram it down everyone’s throat” approach of sharing the way things have been accomplished in the past. The adults verbally bullying others demonstrated the category of meanness and as well as dominance over others.

Church Leader 7 shared an event that happened to the church staff when an area church leader came to a staff meeting at the beginning of the new fiscal church year.

The area church leader was bullying the staff by talking down to them. He was the area church leader and he came to a staff meeting to talk with the staff. This meeting was supposed to be a positive reassuring experience but instead he came into the meeting and bullied the staff and told them that he just wanted to get everything that he could out of each staff person and then have the staff move on.

This situation was an example of aggression, dominance, and meanness. The area church leader talking down to the staff is representative of the category of dominance, because of the manner in which he bullied over the staff. He was aggressive in his word to “get everything out of the staff person and then have the staff move on.” This statement is also displays dominance in the fact that he will use what he needs and then move to someone else. His actions were associated with the category mean. In his dominance of his title as council president he belittled the staff that their positions would be replaced when he was finished with them.

Another example shared by Church Leader 7 referred to the way elders of her church respond to events. She stated

When he is approached about the items he starts yelling and jumping up and down acting like a child but at the same time he relays and gathers others to be on his side and then he talks bad about the other people.

This connects to bullying themes that were addressed in literature with children and grouping. The elder was grouping and gathering people to be on his side of a situation in a way that demonstrated his dominance over the other people in the church. The actions of a person yelling and jumping up and down are associated with the category aggressive. Talking bad about other people is again a connection to dominance as a bullying theme.

The next category that will be discussed is dominance, which can be found in the church leader's descriptions of bullying situation. Church Leader 2 stated bullying means "dominates over another person to someone else." The dominance over another person was coded as dominance perception. In the interview with Pastor 1, he said, "one or more person exercising a disruptive power over another person." The disruptive power described in Pastor 1's comment is dominance over another person. Church Leader 1 commented that bullying is "making them feel inferior, belittling them making them feel as though they are less than you are." The feeling of inferior is dominance as well as belittling another person. Church Leader 1's final statement of "making a person feel less than you are," culminates the thought of dominance over another person. A bully needs the dominance over another person.

Throughout the interviews with the church leaders there were many comments referring to bullying as demonstrating dominance over another person. Church Leader 6 described bullying as "A nasty kid picking on a scrawny little kid. Calling names, physical, picking on

them, punching, making fun, just general nastiness between another human being.” This is a connection to the literature of the bully targeting someone that is smaller than them or having dominance over another person (Bullock, 2002). Church Leader 7 had similar comments, “being mean to their classmates either verbally or physical . . . teasing.” A bully according to the church leaders is a person who attacks someone else either verbally or physically. Church Leader 2 mentioned that she felt bullying was “trying to hurt another child.” Church Leaders 2, 6, and 7 all related bullying to the actions that children do to other children either through verbal comments or physical attacks.

Three church leaders shared a personal experience of themselves being bullied. Pastor 1 stated, “I have seen others victimized and I have been victimized.” The people in this situation with Pastor 1 were trying to have dominance over the pastor. Another situation in the church setting happened to Church Leader 1 “there is definitely in the adult age category where individuals feel that that they have a right or privilege and are able to reprimand, belittle, correct.” Church Leader 1 experienced a situation when church members take it upon themselves to try to run the church and act as though they know what is in the best interest of the church and they therefore bully others around them. Church Leader 1 continued stating that these action caused new members to feel “they are left out or not as important.” Another comment was made by Church Leader 6 “people feel so strongly that they know everything and they know everything, what is best for the church and ram in down everyone’s throat . . . their own personal opinions.” These statements associate with the coding category of dominance demonstrated in bullying.

Next the Church leaders defined *bullying* as something that is *mean*. When asked about bullying, Church Leader 2 stated, “it is not good.” In another interview, Church Leader 1

described bullying as “placing pressure, emotional stress or stain on the individual.” Pastor 2 thought that bullying was when someone would “say hurtful things. Someone who is just mean.” In these three different interviews the participants referred to bullying as something that was mean or something that they described as a mean action.

The affirmation of bullying being meanness resonated as a common thread among the church leaders as a reaction to bullying. Church Leader 3 felt it was “kids being mean.” She used the words that children call other children in a mean way as “calling you fat, ugly, scare face, zit face.” These were names the participant was called as she was growing up. Church Leader 6 thought for a moment and then responded that bullying is “a nasty kid picking on a scrawny little kid. Calling names, physical, picking on them, punching, making fun.” Her comments describe meanness that is related to bullying.

Personal events were brought up throughout the various interviews on bullying. Pastor 3 mentioned that he called his daughter before coming to the interview to ask her about her bullying experiences as a child and if it was okay with her to share the experience during the interview. He started out saying the children were “constantly picking on our daughter.” As the new child in the school, Pastor 3 continued by recalling

I think . . . I think of my daughter being bullied in the eighth grade very seriously at school. We moved to a small town and the class sizes were very small. One child had 12 in her class and the other child had 14 in his graduating class. The girls were constantly picking on our daughter. One day a girl was chosen by the group to present her a wrapped box. Inside the box was live bugs.

The girl's actions were associated with the category of meanness. Pastor 3 shared that as a pastor his family was moved around numerous times throughout his career, however this was the only time that his children had to experience bullying as a result of being the new child.

When talking to other church leaders, Church Leader 7 defined bully as "being mean to their classmates either verbally or physical . . . teasing." This quote was also coded as dominance because of the actions that Church Leader 7 added to her description. Church Leader 2 shared that "If you see them try to hurt another child to try to put a stop to it in a nice way." She was describing how she would handle a bullying situation however the action of trying to hurt another person was coded as meanness in the descriptors for bullying. Church Leader 6 stated

people feel so strongly that they know everything and they know everything, what is best for the church and ram in down everyone's throat . . . their own personal opinions. To hang position and like that. I see the adults verbally bullying others in the church. That we aren't all kind to each other and that what we have to say is more important.

Thoughts and how things should go. There is no plan in place to address it one on one. I just can't stand meanness.

Parts of this quote have been mentioned above as it also was coded as showing dominance and aggressive behavior. The examples that Church Leader 6 is describing was coded as meanness and she concluded her statement commenting that she "can't stand meanness" demonstrating that meanness is a descriptor for bullying.

Nasty is associated as the category used to define bullying. Church Leader 2 defined bullying as "it is not good with anybody that is nasty." Nasty was used again in another interview this time with Church Leader 6 and she stated, "A nasty kid picking on a scrawny little

kid.” In her comment of a bullying situation she is defining the bully as a “nasty kid.” Later on during the interview, Church Leader 6 commented that bullying is “just general nastiness between another human being.” Here *nasty* was being used as adverb in the description of what the action of bullying is between two people.

In two other interviews with Pastor 3 and Church leader 2, they used the term *nasty* as a descriptor for their understanding of bullying. Pastor 3 suggested bullying is “Other kids doing nasty and hurtful things to other kids.” Church leader 2 stated bullying is “being really nasty.” Later on in the conversation, Church leader 2 continued bullying “is where one is nasty and dominates over another person to someone else. Not letting them do what they want to do.” In connection with the literature, nasty has been used as a term to describe the actions a bully does.

The church leaders used the term *nasty* to define bullying yet no other group, children or parents, used the term in their description. Therefore, the common descriptors used by all three groups; children, parents, and church leaders are dominance, aggression, and meanness. These terms are also used in connection with the literature in the standard definitions of bullying. The term nasty for the church leaders is similar to the term disrespectful that was used by the children group. The term disrespectful used to define bullying was not evident in the other two groups; parents and church leaders.

Figure 1 shows the five categories that were created during the analysis of the interview data.

Figure 1. *Leader, parent, and children response rate on bullying descriptors.*

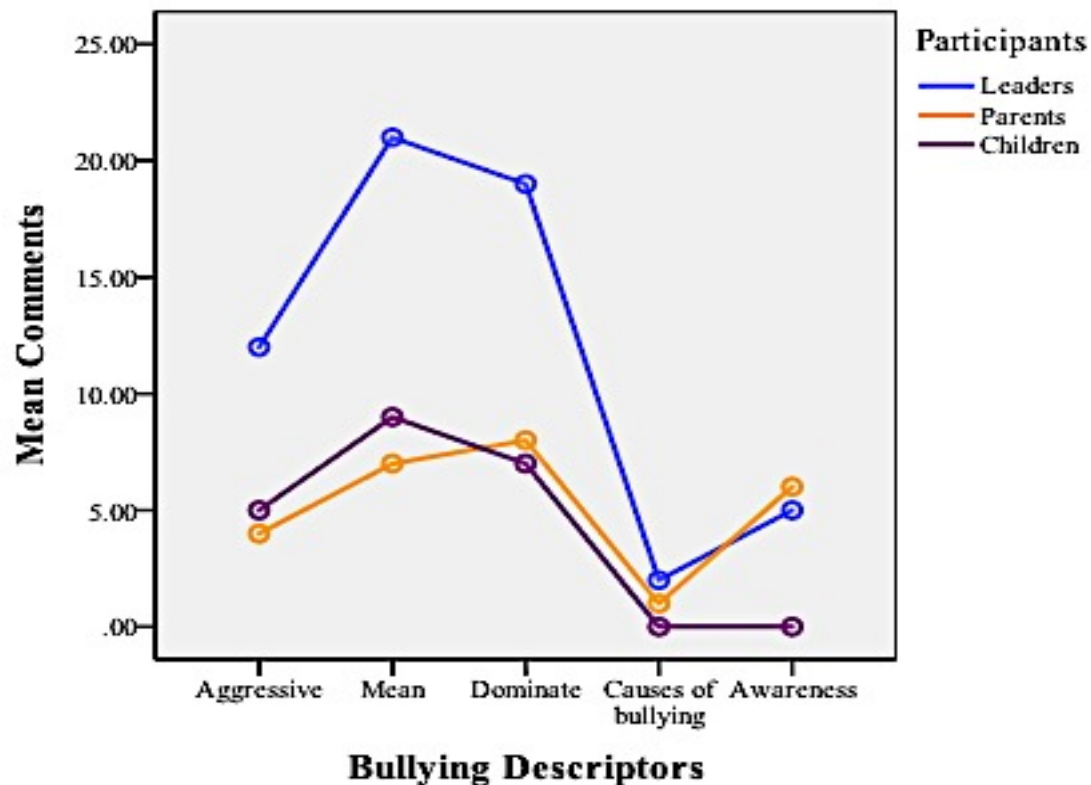


Figure 1. This chart shows the data analysis from the interviews and compares the comments made and the descriptors used to describe bullying from all three groups: children, parents, and church leaders. The church leaders had more comments and more descriptors when describing bullying. This data comes from the study, *Bullying and the Church Environment*. The graph was created using SPSS [Statistical Package for the Social Sciences] software.

What do children and families in the church have and not have to enable them to prevent them to handle a bullying situation? During the interview with children their interview comments demonstrated these themes when analyzed: respectfulness, go tell my parents, go tell an adult, and there is nothing to learn.

Children. Child 4 stated “I kind of wish that they would teach that that they can I wish that they would stop teaching like to be respectful when the teacher is talking because we are all trying to learn and they are just fooling around.” In another interview, Child 5 commented, “I

don't know, (um) my parents.” The children were consistent with their comments about telling their parents about a bullying occurrence. Child 3 stated that she would, “Probably my mom, and I would tell her what has happened. I would tell my dad or you.” Child 2 stated she would tell, “My parents.” Child 1 stated he would tell, “My parents, you, . . . um . . . my shepherd.” In the interview with Child 1, *the shepherd* was a person who was the acting parent of the Sunday School group. The shepherd was someone who is with the group on a weekly basis from September until the beginning of June who cared for the children's needs in their group.

After thinking more about the question, the children gave more thought about the topic of who to tell and what to do and they added more people to the list. Child 1 remarked

I would tell the closest adult about the problem. I would tell someone. Tell the teacher and tell the person to stop. In the church setting, I would not be able to tell the teacher but I would tell an adult.

Child 1 admitted that he himself had been bullied. His comments come from the fact of how he had responded when he was bullied.

In another interview with a child they shared a story about a friend that had been bullied by another child in the school setting and Child 2 shared,

I would, if it was like someone I would stop going there and tell someone about it. I would tell on them or stop being with them. I could go to like the . . . um . . . the people in charge and tell them about it or the kids parents. I would tell them to stop and go tell someone else about it. Tell someone.

All of the children responded that it was important to tell a parent but the ultimate conclusion was that the children needed to tell someone. Child 3 commented, “Go tell someone I trust. Yes. Like my mom or you or someone that I know and trust. I would go tell someone I trust. I would

tell you. I would go tell a principal or teacher.” The data supported that the children interviewed were all aware that bullying was wrong and all of the children were either personally victims or had a friend who was a victim. Another interviewed child, Child 4, responded

I probably either say stop or that ain't right or either say tell the teacher right away so that they would stop and hopefully because they know that I would tell they would stop right away. There are grow ups there like the kid's moms or the people that teach us how to use the bells. We told the teacher and then everything was good at the end. I saw him pushing and tackling each other along with the other little children. I don't want anyone to get hurt. I went to tell..., his dad about it.

Child 4 shared an experience they had with bullying at church. Child 4 was frustrated because the child that was the bully was actually a child of the pastor in the church. The child was much younger than she was but, she noticed that no actions were being taken against the bully. Child 4 was upset about the bullying that was happening at her church and that no one was doing anything to correct the problem. Child 4 shared that at the time of the interview, she was no longer attending Sunday School because what she considered unacceptable behavior was being accepted as the norm.

In the next interviews that were conducted with children, Child 5 commented, “Tell someone. I would tell someone no matter where I was. The person would be different if it was at church instead of at school but, I would tell an adult. Get an adult.” In another interview, Child 6 stated, “Tell an adult. Go tell someone that had power over them or someone trustable. But then we told my teacher and she got the counselor.” Child 6 agreed that the counselor was an adult. Even though she and her friends did not go to the counselor, at least an adult was told

about the situation. These quotes by Child 6 were taken from a story that she shared about a bullying situation that happened in the school setting.

Parents. The data show that parents want the church to provide a healthy and safe environment, support, an anti-bullying policy, an anti-bullying program, and to incorporate anti-bullying steps. Parent 1 commented

to provide a safe place . . . um to be able to express yourself if you feel like something is going on inappropriately um . . . to provide a place to forgive someone if you have been bullied. I don't know that there is anything in place but I would assume that if I felt very bullied by someone that I could go to a pastor or you and talk to you about it and something would get done.

In the interview, Parent 1 shared what they thought would be the steps that they would take in a bullying situation. She was unsure if the church had anything already in place but if there were something in place then she was not certain about the program, policy, or steps. As a victim, bystander, or perpetrator, she would feel comfortable going to talk with her pastor. Parent 1 showed an expectation of the intervention in the form of trust.

In other parent interviews, the comments were similar. Parent 5 commented, "the church for her . . . that teen group, provided a safe haven for her." The church providing a safe place for the congregation is important to the families attending. When they have a personal problem they want a place to go and therefore they rely on the church to provide a safe haven in the time of need.

Support is something that the parents interviewed for this study wanted from their church. Parent 2 gave an example of what happened during an event at her church, stated

There was no support whatsoever. Let's see . . . um . . . well I think it would be helpful if we had ministries that worked together instead of everyone wanting to work on their own which is basically what happened. At our church, we tried to have a meeting even with a third party there and that didn't work because nothing was ever really resolved.

In this example, Parent 2 was missing the support that she wanted from her church. Further into the interview she stated, "if it involves children at some point we would work together with our leader, our children's ministry leader and the parent of the child, both parties to kind of hash it out per say." She had the support from the children's ministry but not from the entire church and this was something that she was in search of from her faith community.

In another interview, Parent 1 commented, "I don't know that there is anything in place but I would assume that if I felt very bullied by someone that I could go to a pastor or you and talk to you about it and something would get done." This parent believed that she could go to a pastor or someone at her church and something would get done but again she looked to her church for support in a bullying situation. Parent 3 stated

I would probably ask for help but I would talk to her and I would probably approach the other child or adult depending I guess depending on the situation. It seems like it was really bullying to me then um . . . I might go online and do research.

This parent who is asking for help is categorized as asking for support. She followed up with the idea of conducting research but ultimately she would be looking for support from the church.

Another parent who was interviewed felt that the topic of bullying needed to be addressed with the entire congregation. Parent 5 shared a story of an incident that occurred at a church event

in an open forum in church where they are targeting one person and it is obvious who they are targeting and the person is unable to defend themselves because they have a role in the church. I would go to an adult if I needed support. So I feel like there is nothing in place because we are a church and I think that people are unaware that bullying and bad behavior can occur everywhere. It needs to be in a positive and loving way but it needs to be dealt with in a positive and loving way. There are probably children that don't feel comfortable in an unsettled situation and wouldn't feel comfortable to go to Sunday School on a regular basis because they may not feel like there is that adult that they know and that safety net set up for what's appropriate.

Parent 5 talked about the need for support from the church in the event of a bullying situation. Her statement indicates the need for a stable Children's Ministry Director to be present for Sunday School which would offer the support and consistency for the program.

In two other interviews with parents they brought up different ways for the church to provide support. Parent 4 suggested

Finding a way to empower the kids to reach out for help and to share with you. But that not just the church. I believe that it is everywhere. The more that we can empower are kids, the better off they are.

This suggestion is something that Parent 4 suggested that the church could do to offer the children and families a solid foundation to handle bullying. This is one way that the church could support the congregation by offering lessons or classes to empower. Another suggestion was made by Parent 6. She brought up the idea of an existing church program, "I really like the parent classes that have been offered throughout the different stages of my child's life. Perhaps bullying can be a part of the classes to educate on different aspects about bullying." The classes

mentioned in the comment could be an example of the support the church could provide by equipping the members of their congregation.

Church Leaders. Church leaders agreed with parents that a church should provide support to the congregation. Church Leader 1 stated

a support system in place that will work with the person that is being bullied to take care of the situation. To let them know and to teach them that it is inappropriate, unacceptable behavior and again presenting to them that again the behavior is not acceptable. Um that they would not want to be treated that way and to have a game plan as far as having a set support system to not leave either individual to flounder on their own.

In this interview, Church Leader 1 described the support system that they feel is important to offer to the church members. She also describes that it is important to identify appropriate and inappropriate behavior. Church Leader 3 responded, “I got very very upset with this person. Almost to the point where I made another relative not like me so much.” She continued that this “needs to be addressed by the congregation.” Church Leader 3 stated that the congregation needs to be included in on the anti-bullying education.

In other interviews with church leaders, there were comments made that the church needs to equip the congregation as a whole, this is evident in the comments that Church Leader 6 shared

I think it would be a great idea to have a program in place but I’m not sure that the right parties will be involved. The ones that need it and take over a situation they would think that they are exempt from that but I think that it would be great to make an attempt to have a program in our church.

She believed that if everyone was not included in the information then the people who really need to hear the information will opt out of attending the program. Pastor 3 mentioned

I've actually talked about this with kids at a children's sermon. And we all agreed that the first person you talk to about this is your mom and dad. If that is possible . . . if they are close enough to do that. You can also talk with a teacher or another adult that you feel comfortable with.

Pastor 3 was already educating his congregation about bullying. Using a children's sermon, he was able to support the entire congregation with steps to take in a bullying situation. Church Leader 7 stated, "There needs to be awareness for parents and leaders. A lot of people see things happen and they don't understand the effects that bullying has on children. People in the church need to know about bullying." The comments made by Church Leader 7 were categorized as support. If the church provided the awareness to the families, then the support for everyone will be presented in the form of equipping others.

According to church leaders, training and education are important for the church to offer when it comes to anti-bullying. Church Leader 2 responded, "what to look for hopefully you would use your own good judgment about having a program." She continued, "you need to use your own judgment." In another interview, Church Leader 1 stated, "more work is needed, to teach about bullying and bullying behavior."

The interviews with church leaders demonstrated the need for church-wide programs. Pastor 1 commented

I think that there is a need for education that involves learning how to listen well and pay attention to relationships in a healthy way. Learning how to be self-aware. Why it is important to teach children to be healthy instead of dysfunctional in relationship.

His description of the education that is needed in the church community involves teaching about bullying by education of healthy relationships. Church Leader 1 suggested

teach them that it is inappropriate, unacceptable behavior and again presenting to them that again the behavior is not acceptable um that they would not want to be treated that way and to have a game plan as far as having a set support system to not leave either individual to flounder on their own.

Later on in the interview, Church Leader 1 added, “Taking care of or remedied or corrected that it is teaching opportunity so that it doesn’t go any further.” Teachers and parents are able to use current actions as teachable moments which is categorized as training.

Pastor 2 talked about programs already in place at her church that they “used both safe sanctuary and other teaching orientations.” The Pastor continued, “we need to help the teachers understand what is bullying. This leader felt good about the process her church has in place but still felt that more needed to be done in the education for the teachers. Church Leader 3 believed that education on bullying needs to be completed by the entire congregation. She said

they need to be taught that other adults bully other adults whether it’s in a domestic disputes or whether its um... just regular family situations, aunt and uncles or um . . . their grandchildren. Nieces and nephews type thing there’s a lot of different bullying. Most definitely the church needs to have a program, policy, and plan in place and I think anti-bullying classes for everyone, not just certain age groups but everyone.

Church Leader 3 suggested ways to help in the education by having pastor led sermons and “I think anti-bullying classes for everyone, not just certain age groups but everyone.”

The message from the church leaders continued to be the same throughout the different interviews. Church Leader 6 stated

I think it would be a great idea to have a program in place but I'm not sure that the right parties will be involved. The ones that need it and take over a situation they would think that they are exempt from that but I think that it would be great to make an attempt to have a program in our church. I really hate bullying.

And in another interview Pastor 3 commented, "I can see that we should have a program in place for the whole multi-generational community. It isn't just the kids but the whole congregation that needs to know about bullying as a way to help educate the congregation." The overall consensus from the church leaders was that a need existed for a total church-wide educational program. According to the church leaders, the churches can offer support to their congregation through education on bullying. The church leaders shared that the entire church community needs the support when it comes to an anti-bullying program. This leads to the next question about the churches' anti-bullying programs, anti-bullying steps, and anti-bullying policy.

Figure 2. *Leader, parent, and children action items.*

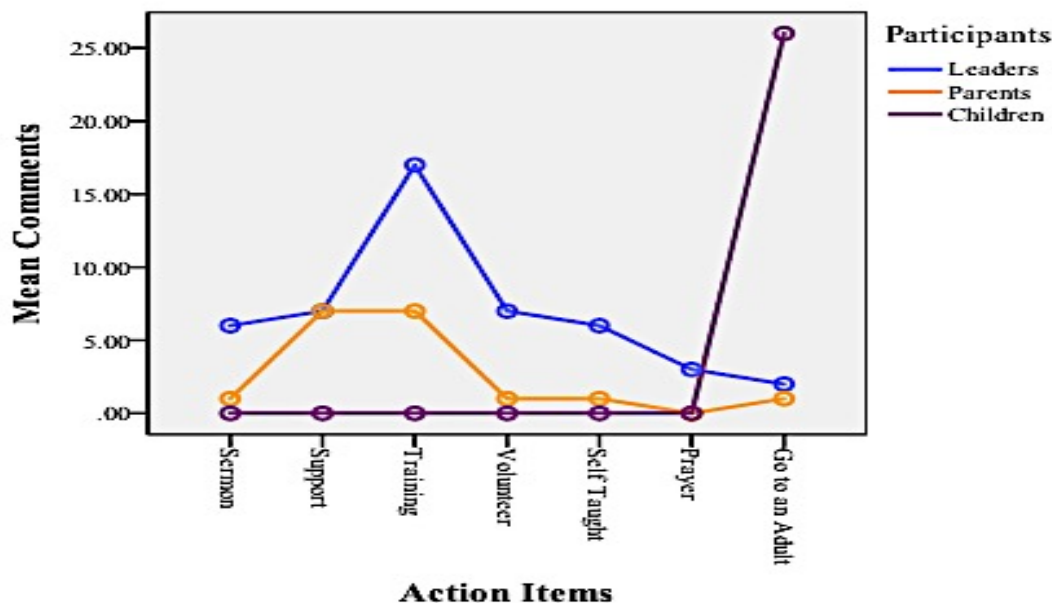


Figure 2. This graph compares the responses from children, parents, and church leaders participating in the study that concern with what the church should be providing the congregation. The first plot demonstrates that children had many comments about going to tell

an adult but the rest of the comments were singular. Parents' responses are second representing a consistent response of answers across the common responses. The third plot for the church leaders shows multiple responses with the highest responses with training. The graph was created using SPSS software.

Anti-bullying programs, steps, and policy. When asked if the participants' church had anti-bullying programs, anti-bullying steps, or anti-bullying policy in place at their church the responses from the parents ranged from not being certain to a resounding response of "no."

Parents. The parent participants shared the following ideas concerning anti-bullying programs in the church environment. Parent 2 stated

I think a policy or some kind of um . . . guidelines on how people should work together because you have all different personalities and backgrounds coming together. And everyone needs to work together. I guess if we have to have something in place for bullying at church then there should be steps. So that if parents know what to do. But we don't have anything in place.

Parent 6 suggested, "I really like the parent classes that have been offered throughout the different stages of my child's life. Perhaps anti-bullying can be a part of the classes to educate on different aspects about bullying." These two parents have identified the lack of programs in their churches currently.

In the discussion pertaining to the anti-bullying steps that are currently in place at the church, Parent 1 commented, "I don't know that there is anything in place." However, she said, "I think a policy or some kind of um . . . guidelines on how people should work together because you have all different personalities and backgrounds coming together. And everyone needs to work together." Another interview, Parent 3 responded, "I don't have any idea that there are any. I know we do all the background checks but I don't know that it has anything to do with bullying." In the interview, Parent 3 shared that she was unaware of what the church has in place

but she did know that background checks were conducted. Parent 4 suggested, “I have no idea considering that I have never experienced anything.” The parents all agreed that they have no information concerning what the church has in place in regards to anti-bullying and this is again mentioned in the interview with parent 5. She stated

I have no idea. I don’t think that we have a policy. We need to establish a regularity of how you are going to interact in the church even with adults because kids just don’t know, you know if your parents are dropping you at the door and separating from you it is just like you are at school.

The final parent interview was with Parent 6. She like the other parents commented, “I don’t know that there are any.”

Church Leaders. In the interviews, the church leaders were asked about the anti-bullying programs, anti-bullying steps, and anti-bullying policy at their church and the responses varied from descriptions of what they had in place to what they felt should be implemented. Church leaders were looking for a healthy and safe environment, anti-bullying program, anti-bullying steps, anti-bullying policy, support, and training. Pastor 1 commented that there needed to be a

healthy environment for people to be safe, healthy relationships staff and congregation. I think that there is a need for education that involves learning how to listen well and pay attention to relationships in a healthy way. Promote healthy communications.

He continued later in the conversation saying “needing some help, care, and love.” Pastor 1 felt that it was the churches’ responsibility to provide a healthy environment filled with love and support. Church Leader 1 believed “encouraging and making people feel good about

themselves. Having a support system in place that will work with the person that is being bullied to take care of the situation that will work as a support system.”

In another interview with a church leader, Pastor 2 stated “the church becomes the safe haven for a child that doesn’t feel accepted and popular at school as they wish.” Church Leader 6 shared her ideas of what is happening and what should be happening in the church environment when she commented

I would think that . . . that is going to church each week and listening to the Word of God. Live like Jesus and love one another . . . the WWJD kind of thing. What would Jesus do? And going forth like that. It comes out in every service how Jesus loved everyone, He helped the lowly and took care of them, did away with the rich but I don’t consider that bullying.”

Church leaders confirmed the parent comments that there were no anti-bullying program currently in place. Church Leader 2 shared

I don’t know that we specifically have one but I know what to look for hopefully you would use your own good judgment about having a program. Well I guess if you are working with children they would expect us to handle it. I just think you use your own judgment. That is a pretty key thing for everyone to be aware of.

Using your own judgment was categorized as no training was the program in place at this church. Volunteers are expected to handle a situation that happens when the children are in Sunday School or in the church environment. On another day in an interview with Pastor 1, he said

that is a pretty key thing for everyone to be aware of. Um...the best way to respond is to back away give space and time and then visit with that person. More work is needed, to

teach about bullying and bullying behavior. That is still on the shelf waiting to get done. I think that there is a need for education that involves learning how to listen well and pay attention to relationships in a healthy way.

Pastor 1 had similar comments as the other church leaders who were interviewed and he was aware that something needed to be done in the church for his congregation. Church Leader 1 stated, "I'm really not sure that there is one." While Pastor 2 suggested, "we need to help the teachers understand "what is bullying." In another interview, Church Leader 3 commented "Most definitely the church needs to have a program, policy, and plan in place and I think anti-bullying classes for everyone, not just certain age groups but everyone." Church Leader 6 responded to the question about anti-bullying program, anti-bullying policy, and anti-bullying steps that are in place at their church responding by saying

No we do not have anything in place at our church. That we aren't all kind to each other and that what we have to say is more important. Thoughts and how things should go.

There is no plan in place, to address it one on one.

Other church leaders had similar comments to the question. Pastor 3 responded, "I'm not sure that there is one in place. I . . . I think that some individual teachers have chosen to talk about it with their kids but it is not about of any program. To my knowledge." Church Leader 7 said, "It needs to start with prayer. Something set in place for when bullying happens there are steps in place and everyone in the congregation should know the steps." Pastor 1's comments were also categorized as the support that the church needs to offer the congregation. His comments were

the best way to respond is to back away give space and time and then visit with that person. More work is needed, to teach about bullying and bullying behavior. I think that

there is a need for education that involves learning how to listen well and pay attention to relationships in a healthy way.

Church Leader 1 was short and to the point with her comments, “I’m really not sure that there is one. Don’t know if there is one in place.” Again, the response to the question about the anti-bullying program, anti-bullying steps, or anti-bullying policy was coded as support as well in Pastor 2’s statement

don’t know that we have one to be honest you would know more than I would I think we rely on skills and abilities of our teachers to make sure that there is not any bullying. We need to help the teachers understand “what is bullying.”

In the final two interviews with church leaders the comments were reflective of the other comments from church leaders. Church Leader 3 shared

I’m not aware of any anti-bullying program that I know of other than just being a normal human being and being respectful to persons. It’s a part of being a Christian but, no program that I am aware of. I’m not aware of any. Most definitely the church needs to have a program, policy, and plan in place and I think anti-bullying classes for everyone, not just certain age groups but everyone.

The church leaders suggested that their churches currently have nothing in place that they were aware of in the form of anti-bullying programs, anti-bullying steps, or anti-bullying policy. The final interview was with Church Leader 7. She responded “It needs to start with prayer. Something set in place for when bullying happens. There are steps in place and everyone in the congregation should know the steps.”

It is clear from the comments made by both the parents and the church leaders that all three churches currently did not have in place any anti-bullying program, anti-bullying steps, or

anti-bullying policies in place. All of the parents and church leaders stated that they thought it was important to create anti-bullying program, anti-bullying steps, and anti-bullying policies for the church-wide community for their churches.

Figure 3. Issues with current protocol.

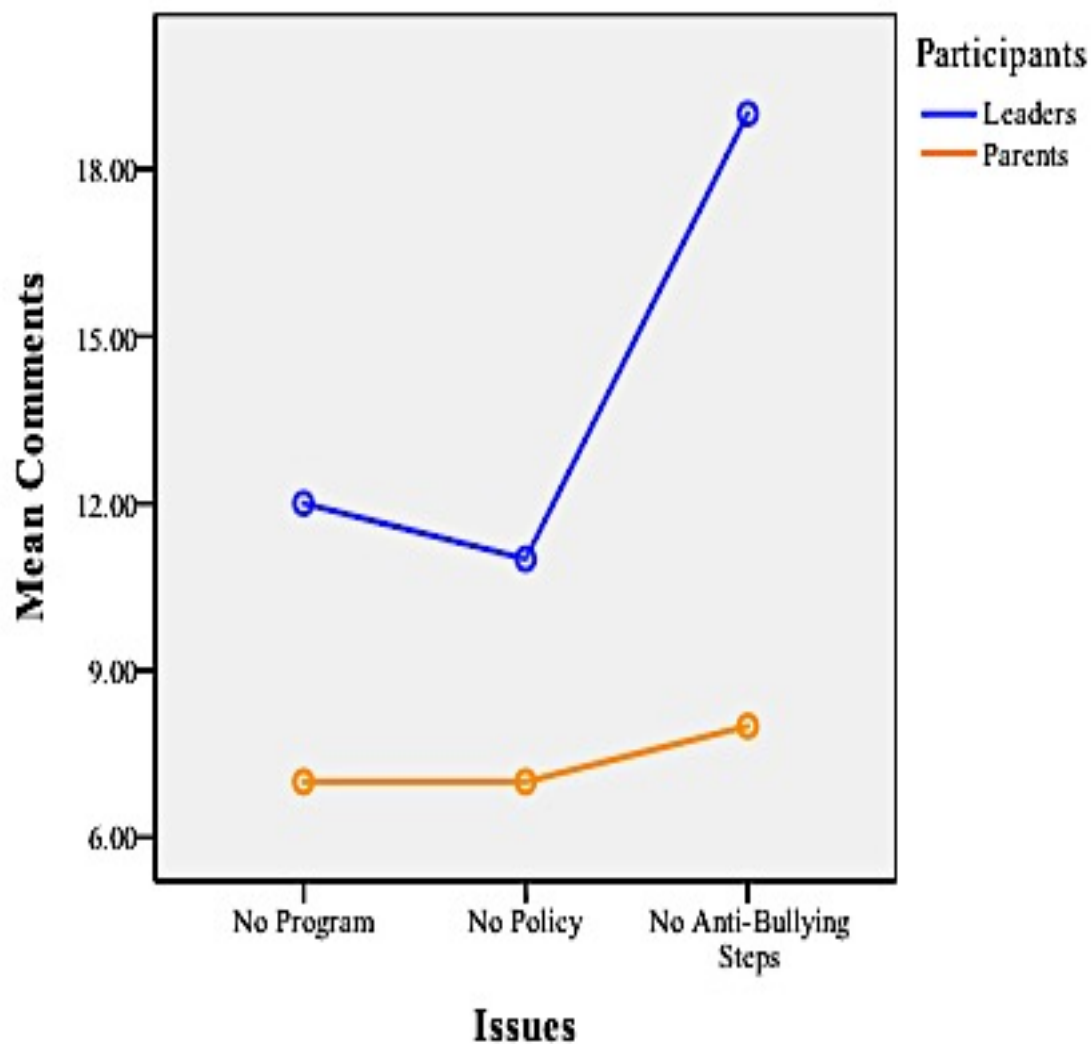


Figure 3. The church leader's comments about not having a church-wide emphasis on anti-bullying came up more times than it did with the parents. The parents quickly addressed the lack of program, steps, and policy and moved on while the church leaders continued to address the need for a program, steps, and policy. (Graph was made using SPSS software)

Group 1: What would you like to see change at your church when it comes to anti-bullying support and programs? Church Leader 1 started the conversation, “It needs to start from the top and work its way down throughout the congregation. Bullying does not just affect children.” Then Church Leader 3 added, “After participating in the interview, I have been taking notice of what happens at the church. The adults are worse than the children. The adults are bullying other adults with things that they say.” Next, Parent 4 commented

I never thought of bullying that way. Bullying was always a physical act not something that people did verbally. There is a lot of verbal abuse that happens in a church. I have notice I am more aware as well. I think that when I started talking in my interview that I was just thinking about the children. This experience has been really eye opening.

Parent 4 responded to the question and added to the conversation that was started by two other members in her group. She talked about the total experience of being a participant in the study. These comments from Parent 4 made others join into the conversation.

Church Leader 7 remarked that, “The children are probably more educated than I am about bullying.” Church Leader 1 brought the focus back commenting

Getting back on subject . . . It needs to start at the top. There should be a lead contact person, volunteer from each church that will work with the Senior Pastor to discuss getting the information disseminated to all of the congregation. First it should be brought up in the staff meeting. The information that was shared here today at the focus group presentation should be shared with the staff. The staff can then take the information and share it with their ministry team. That way the trickling down effect will take place. The lead person should take and share the information with the church council, finance committee, and trustees. I think that the finance committee is really important because

they control the money and feel like they are in control Is that bullying? You know, each church may be different on its governing groups. The lead person could work with the Senior Pastor to identify the groups that this information should be shared with. Wait . . . all the groups need to get the information.

After Church Leader 1 added information to the conversation, Parent 4 added a personal story

I can remember growing up and being bullying by my sister. She would say really mean things to me. Oh, for me it was my teacher. Um . . . a teacher is supposed to be a support for their students but this teacher did not do that. She made comments about students in front of the entire class. I am thinking about a bullying situation at my church. It is always verbal abuse. The older people can be really harsh with their comments.

Acting as the group leader, Church Leader 7 stated, “Getting back on subject . . . We need to make a change today. Well . . . we all made a commitment to a change when we said yes to participate.” Parent 4 added

That is actually when this whole process started. Going the next step of changing our churches needs to happen now. I think the person that is chosen should start the meeting process on Monday morning. The sooner we get this started the sooner change will happen.

After coming back to the question that had been asked, Parent 4 agreed with the comments that Church Leader 1 had shared. Church Leader 1 commented, “Wait . . . what about Easter?! What about Easter? It is a really busy time in the church with Lent and Easter. Perhaps we should wait.” Church Leader 7 said

Yes, the church is always busy and by starting now talking about bullying, then it will give us the summer to address and prepare for the change. When do you think that something will be in place?” In unison . . . “September!”

Group 1 was able to work through the three questions that were asked of them through sharing personal stories and conversations.

How can you make the change? The next question that the groups discussed was how to make the change. Group 1 started talking about the second question. Church Leader 1 said

The change needs to start at the top. In my church there is bullying at the top. In order to make a change the people that are at the top needs to become aware of what they are doing. I think starting at the top is a good idea. I think that you would make a good person to lead the change.

Church Leader 1 was directing her conversation towards Church Leader 7. Church Leader 7 responded

Who me? I would love to. I feel very passionate about changing and getting rid of the bullying. I am so glad I was able to participate! I think that the plan should be discussed over the summer and the church council will need to set a policy in place for bullying.

The conversation continued with input from Parent 4

Wait! Our church saying is “All are Welcome.” Are we really welcoming all if people are being attacked? I think most churches want to welcome all but do they really welcome all? I think that most churches probably try but you can’t help the people that come to church. Yes . . . churches are a mixture of different people and different personalities. I think a policy would be good but it needs to be for all. Including the adults that are mean to other people.

Parent 4 addressed the issue that everyone in the church needed to be included in the educational programs on bullying. If the church is going to welcome all, then the church needs to include all when they are addressing the topic bullying.

As the conversation progressed the ideas were flowing. Church Leader 1 began talking They need to be held responsible for their action as well as the children. A program could start off being something like teaching that God loves everyone. Well, yes He does but . . . when would the program happen? I don't think that the children need it as much as the adults. Let's have a dinner.

Church Leader 7 responded to Church Leader 1 by saying

Yes, but . . . the people that should come won't come because they don't think they are doing anything wrong. I think that it should be when you have everyone's attention . . . At church. We have other days when the service is about other things like mission Sunday, youth Sunday . . . why not a Bullying Sunday.

The conversation continued back and forth between Church Leader 1 and Church leader 7.

Church Leader 1 commented back with "People wouldn't come if they hear it is about bullying. Perhaps it should be called. Something like, um . . . Love One Another. The pastor can preach about bullying." Church Leader 3 added to the conversation when she said

What about a children's chat? That way the children are educated as well. I really like that it needs to hit all of the congregation. Starting at the top. Well it can start at the top and work its way down but everyone needs to hear the message.

When will the change take place? Church Leader 7 started the discussion on the question, "The change should take place now. I think we said that we should start on Monday.

The sooner we start the better we will be.” Then Church Leader 1 confirmed her thoughts saying, “A program needs to be in place at the start of Sunday School in the fall of 2016.”

Coding of Group 1’s conversations. Group 1 discussed that the groups and church members that should be included in anti-bullying program. They came up with adults, children, church council, ministry teams, the pastor, and the church staff. A comment was made that other groups should be included which encompassed everyone in the church community.

The plan that was discussed in Group 1’s discussion had four parts. The first action they felt was important was appointing a contact person. This person would talk and work with the church’s lead pastor to arrange being included in the various meetings throughout the church: church council, staff meeting, and others. Creating a name for the program that is fun and would draw people to a meeting or activity was considered important to this group. The pastor would start the church-wide education through a Sunday sermon. The participants in the focus group indicated that the timeframe for implementation should be immediate. The group discussed that through them agreeing to be participants in the study the education had already started; however, in unison the group agreed that a program would start 6 months into the future.

Group 2: What would you like to see change at your church when it comes to anti-bullying support and programs? Parent 1 stated the conversation for her group by saying, “You know I never really thought about my church having a problem. I think I said that in the interview. This has really been an eye opener.” Then Church Leader 6 added

We have people bullying other people just because the other person doesn’t think like them. Our congregational meetings can be really rough with some of the people that are there and they want to get their opinions out. I want to see that be changed! I hate going to the congregational meetings.

Group 2 had a very in depth conversation about what they would like to see change at their church. Parent 2 continued the conversation

People can be so mean. I think something should be in place. Clearly there is a problem even if I didn't really think of it as bullying before. I guess that is what it is. I think the best solution is education through sermons.

Parent 2's comment addressed the problems at her church as well as what she believes to be a solution. Parent 1 stated, "I think that we need to bring in a guest speaker. I don't know about that . . . people may not come." Pastor 1 suggested, "What about having a dinner?" Parent 1 spoke up, "Dinner is not the only answer. I think people would not come even with free food."

After the quick discussion about having a dinner, the conversation changed. Church Leader 6 made a suggestion to her group, "The church could have a WWJD campaign." Parent 2 addressed Church Leader 6, "What?" Church Leader 6 explained her idea to the group.

You know, WWJD, What Would Jesus Do? I think we could use that idea and have something for a period of time, say month. This will give us time to educate everyone about bullying. I think we need to have a plan and a policy too!

Church Leader 6 gave a more detailed description to the group about her idea of using WWJD as a basis for a bullying program. She ended her comment suggesting the need to have more in place at the church on the topic of bullying. Parent 2 responded to Church Leader 6's idea stating

Our church has nothing yet, and clearly we need to have something in place. I never thought that we needed to have something at our church about treating people the right way. Never did I but, I think we should.

After the discussion visited how to present the information, the conversation made a change to who should be included. Pastor 1 responded, “It seems like it is going to be more for the older generation than the younger generation.” Parent 2 remarked to Pastor 1’s commented stating “Yes, children are learning in their schools about bullying. I think they could maybe have some lessons on what to do when they are at church.” The conversation continued when Church Leader 6 commented, “I think we would have to make it fun. (Ha-ha)” Parent 1 responded, “How can you make bullying fun?” The group discussion was referring to an event that was hosted at their child’s school and the children had no idea that the event was all about bullying because of a unique name of the program.

The conversations within the groups ended with a discussion on the type of program to offer and who would be in charge of leading the program and present the information. Parent 2 suggested, “What about finding someone that would spearhead this project.” Answering Parent 2’s question, Church Leader 6 said, “I think that would have to be one of us . . . I don’t know that I could do that because I am so strapped at work. But I do like the idea.” Parent 1 ignoring the previous comment brought up another point, “Who would create a policy? Would that be church council or staff?” Pastor 1 attempted to answer the question presented stating, “I think that because it would be church wide it would fall in the hands of the church council.” Taking a leadership role, Church Leader 6 commented, “Getting back to the question . . . I would like to see people being nice to other people and not hurting others because they have a different view.” Pastor 1 ended the discussion his group was having with something similar to what he used in his interview stating

I agree but I think that we could use what Paul says, 1 Corinthians: there is one body and many parts and when one person suffers everyone suffers. That is very very true. That

would be the spiritual corner stone for the evil dysfunctional and why it is important to teach children to be healthy instead of dysfunctional in relationship.

How can you make the change? Church Leader 6 starting the conversation for this question bring up comments that were from the previous questions

I think that this goes back to what we were saying in the first question. Find someone to create a program/ activity focusing on the saying WWJD that would include the entire church. Have the church council create a policy around bullying?

Others in the group started to add on by recapping information that the group had already shared. Pastor 1 shared, “I think we all agreed that just saying a bullying program would not get everyone but having a fun activity that people could put their hands around like WWJD could be fun.” Then Parent 2 suggested, “Hey. . . perhaps a new slogan.” Church Leader 6 responded to Parent 2, “Like what?. . .” Parent 2 answered “I’m not sure. The committee could be creative.” Church Leader 6 ended the conversation by adding, “If we stay with a common theme, then things could be purchased because they are already out there.”

When will the change take place? To start the discussion for the next question, Pastor 1 made the comment, “I don’t know when this will happen in my church.” Church Leader 6 was quick to respond by bring more people into the conversation saying, “I think we could say in 6 months. What do you think?” Participant (11) answered, “There is a whole summer and some people could start working on the program sooner.” Agreeing, Parent 2 said, “Okay . . . 6 months from now there could be something in place.”

Coding of Group 2’s conversation. Group 2 worked well together getting through the questions that were asked of them. As a group they decided that four different main groups needed to be included in anti-bullying program: (a) adults, (b), staff, (c) children, and (d) church

council. According to Group 2, the church council would be instrumental in creating anti-bullying policy for the church.

Working through the questions, Group 2 came up with six different ideas for answering question 2, How can you make the change? Their plan included offering a dinner program. Some in the group were skeptical about offering a dinner program and if the people that really should participate would in fact attend. As a group they agreed that having a program name or a theme was important. A suggestion given was WWJD, what would Jesus do? Having a pastor provide a sermon on the topic of bullying was a definite idea, along with appointing a contact person to oversee that the various steps were being completed in a timely fashion.

Group 2 agreed that the churches needed to put into place an anti-bullying policy that would serve all of the members of the church, not just children. This policy would be the responsibility of the church council to create. Another idea that was approached was the possibility of bringing in a trained professional to educate the church on bullying and the various anti-bullying programs, anti-bullying steps, and anti-bullying policies. Group 2 concluded that something would be in place in the next six months for the start of the next Sunday School season.

Group 3: What would you like to see change at your church when it comes to anti-bullying support and programs? Group 3 started their conversation about bullying by discussing information that they already know about bullying. Parent 5 started the conversation saying, “Bullying is in the eye of the bullied.” Puzzled by the comment, Pastor 3 commented “What do you mean by that?” Parent 5 answered Pastor 3’s question, “People who are bullied know the effects that bullying has on them. I have seen bullying and the child really changes

because of the situation.” The comments from Parent 5 about bullying made another participant in the group think about a situation that she wanted to share with the group. Parent 3 said

I haven’t witness children bullying but I have adults. Like when I miss church for a couple of weeks and someone . . . this one person will make a comment about me not being there. I wonder if it is me feeling guilty because I missed or is it really the way it was presented. I think it is the way it was said. Yes, I may feel guilty because I missed coming to church but the way it was said makes it seem like I was a really bad person because I missed.

Suddenly, Parent 6 became a part of the conversation saying, “Thinking back to the definition on bullying . . . repeated action. What was the definition again?”

A question was asked of me. The research brought up the slide on the screen from the power point presentation. The slide read

Olweus (1993) stated “a student is being bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time to negative actions on the part of one or more other students” (p. 9). It is important to note that the act of being bullied is a form of harassment and it is not *children being children*.

All of the members of the group read the slide again to themselves. There was silence before Parent 6 took it upon herself to read the slide out loud.

Picking up the conversation after the reading of the slide, Parent 3 added, “There should be a church-wide training program. Everyone in the church should be asked to come. Training should be provided for all staff members.” Everyone else in the group still was quiet and they seemed to be thinking about the information from the slide, until Parent 6 spoke up and said,

“There should also be a training of sorts for children, that is, what they should do when they are bullied? How you should treat others?” Pastor 3 added to the conversation by saying

I think there should be yearly training or discussions on the matter. It is so serious of an issue that a lot of people put in the background. There is a faith stepping stone program that is required to be completed by the parents. This sort of set up should be in place for parents and children when they enter the church.

The comments made by Pastor 3 described an idea that could happen in the education of the congregation about bullying. This plan would encompass the starting of anti-bullying program for the families but nothing was mentioned about the rest of the congregation. Parent 3 then suggested

Money should be invested in bringing in a trained professional to come and speak about this to start with staff. Then pastors can take their new knowledge to put into a sermon. This should be done in the next couple of months.

The comments made by Parent 3 addressed how the pastors would be educated on bullying in order to address the congregation through sermons. Parent 6 added

Then programs for parents and children should be in place within the next 6 months. Change should be seen for start in the next few months and there should be full effect within a year of a bullying church-wide program.

Another idea was advanced by Parent 3 when she added

We need to bring in a trained professional because many people don’t understand bullying as well as they think. Leaders need this guidance of how to help stop bullying. Then they can take and spread this to the rest of the community.

Parent 3 brought up the idea again about a trained professional to educate the leaders of the church so that the information can then be trickled down throughout the rest of the congregation. Parent 6 concluded the conversation for the question with the statement, “Sticks and stones may break my bones but words can never hurt me kind of makes bullying seem okay but, it is not.” The group decided to end the discussion there and move on to the next question.

How can you make the change? There was a discussion about how to make the change among Group 3. Parent 3 started the discussion by saying, “I think that we should bring in a trained professional. That could be amazing but . . . I think we can spread the information that we have received here.” Pastor 3 commented in on the conversation with the following statement

I believe that the pastor will be instrumental in making the change. The pastors need to share the information so that others in the church can then learn about bullying. You know, there can be a church sermon to reach all of the congregation.

The idea of a pastor-led sermon about bullying is a way to reach the whole congregation. Having a pastor presenting this idea seemed to make everyone in the group stop and think. The group was quiet for a few minutes and then a couple of people starting to try to speak at the same time. Parent 5 then shared her thoughts

This can’t just be a 1-week and done activity. Perhaps a 3-week activity that could highlight a different type of bullying each week. Getting everyone in the church on board with this new program will be very important to the success of getting rid of bullying.

When Parent 5 finished speaking, Parent 3 gave her comments saying, “I think that bullying is a huge problem and one that I never really stopped to think about before.” Very quickly, Pastor 3 replied, “Agreed! As a church we can help others to understand what bullying is all about.”

The group seemed to go full-circle with their discussion when Parent 5 added “Wow . . . perhaps a professional would be a good idea. Having someone that could come in and . . . she just stopped talking and appeared to be thinking of more to say.” Parent 3 quickly picked up on the lull in the conversation and responded, “We need a policy, steps for when something happens, and a program.” Getting back into the conversation, Parent 5 added, “I think that if you have defined statements then there needs to be consequences.” Acting confused about the statement, Pastor 3 questioned, “Consequences?” Ready to answer the question presented, Parent 5 explained

Yes. We can’t just say that you can’t bully. You know it is like children who want to eat candy before dinner. The parent will say no and the child eats the candy anyway. If there are no consequences for the child’s actions he will do it again! So if we say no to bullying there has to be consequences.

Responding to the remarks that were just shared by Parent 5, Parent 6 said, “But . . . we are not dealing with just children...” Parent 5 responded to the statement, “Well they sure are acting like it!” Members of the group laughed. Pastor 3 revisited the statement on consequences asking, “What type of consequences?” Answering the question, Parent 3 said, “Having to talk with the pastor may be a good one.” The group looked at each other after the comment and Parent 6 questioned, “Well, is that a punishment for the person or the pastor?” Parent 3 answered the question about the consequences, “I think it is to let the person know that it isn’t acceptable behavior in the church community. Or . . . there should be consequences.” Moving the conversation along, Pastor 3 remarked, “And the plan, the program, could be like faith stepping stones for the parent and children but there needs to be sermon chats for the children and the total

congregation.” Pastor 3 made several comments throughout about a pastor sermon to educate the congregation on bullying.

When will the change take place? Like the other two groups, Group 3 very quickly was able to answer the last question. Parent 5 started the conversation saying the change can take place, “In the next 6 months . . . yes I think it can happen in the next 6 months.” Parent 6 quickly figured out when 6 months would be and responded, “Wait that will be like September...” Parent 5 replied back, “Yes that sounds good. At the beginning of Sunday School. Everyone should be ready to start a program in 6 months.” The conversation ended and the group waited for the other groups to be finished with their discussions.

Conclusion of the Focus Group

At the conclusion of the brainstorming, the small groups were brought back together as a whole group and the secretary from each group shared the key points to their answers for the questions. Answers were written on the whiteboard by the research assistant. Common threads in the data were identified by the groups. All the participants agreed that a contact person was a good idea and that something in the form of anti-bullying plan, anti-bullying policy, and anti-bullying program were needed to be in place within six months. The contact person would be starting to set up times to meet with the church council and staff to share the information from the focus group presentation. The three groups varied slightly on who should be involved in the anti-bullying program. All three groups agreed that adults, staff, and children should be included however Group 1 and Group 2 agreed the church council should be included as well. Group 1 and Group 3 agreed that a pastor should be included.

Looking at the plan that the three different groups came up with, Group 1 and Group 2 agreed on four elements: (a) dinner program; (b) program name; (c) sermon; (d) contact person.

Group 3 had similar responses to Group 2 in 4 areas: (a) program name; (b) sermon; (c) policy; (d) trained professional. All three groups agreed on a program name and sermon. Group 3 conclude that the church should have in place anti-bullying program and anti-bullying steps. These comments were not addressed by Group 1 and Group 2. The groups also agreed that the program would be in place in September for the beginning of the new Sunday School year.

In figure 4, the three groups all agreed on a particular timeline for the start of an anti-bullying program for their churches.

Figure 4. Timeframe

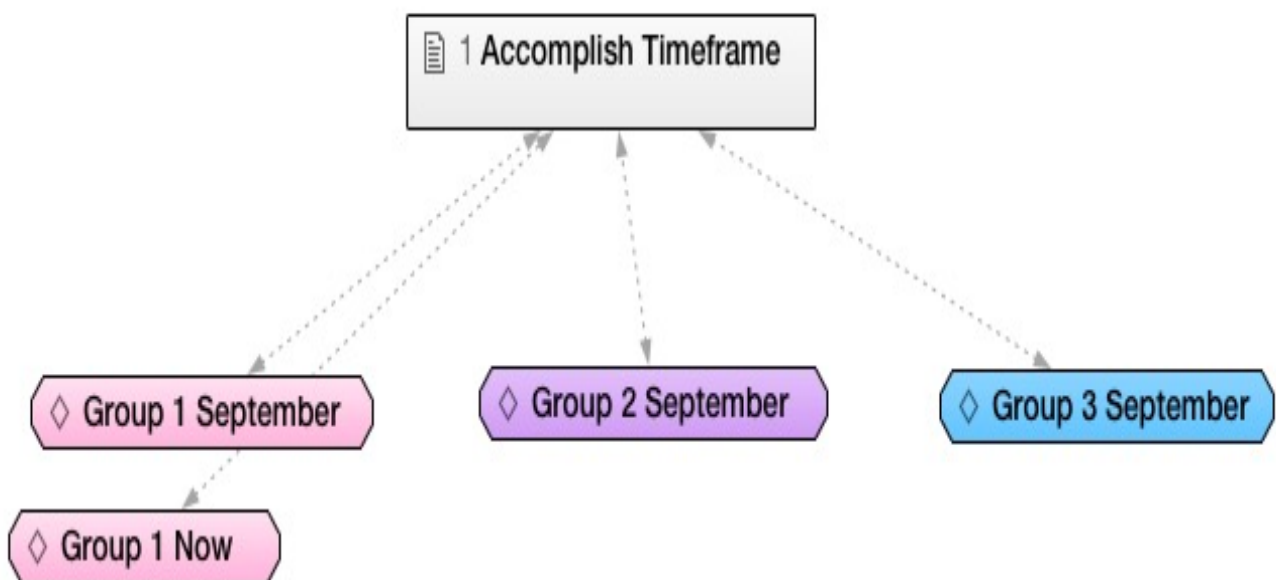


Figure 4. All three groups were in agreement that the change in their churches needed to take pace by September.

Figure 5 demonstrates the information that the groups shared as to who should be included in the education within the church community. As seen in the figure, Group 1 had the most groups identified, with Group 2 being the second. Some of the group responses were similar to other groups.

Figure 5. Who is Involved

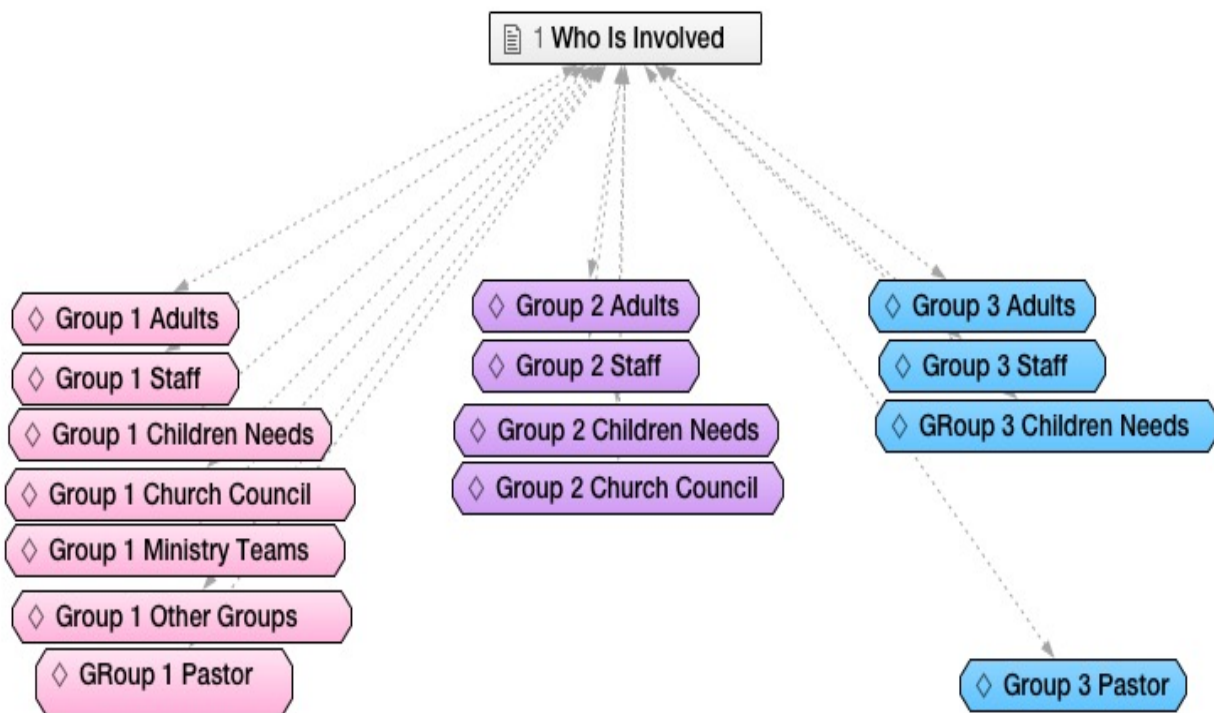


Figure 5. These results were from the focus group presentation brainstorming activity. The three groups had similar ideas to who should be involved in the anti-bullying education and training.

Group 1 thought seven groups should be included, Group 2 had four of the same groups as Group 1, and Group 3 had four of the same groups as Group 1.

Figure 6. The Plan

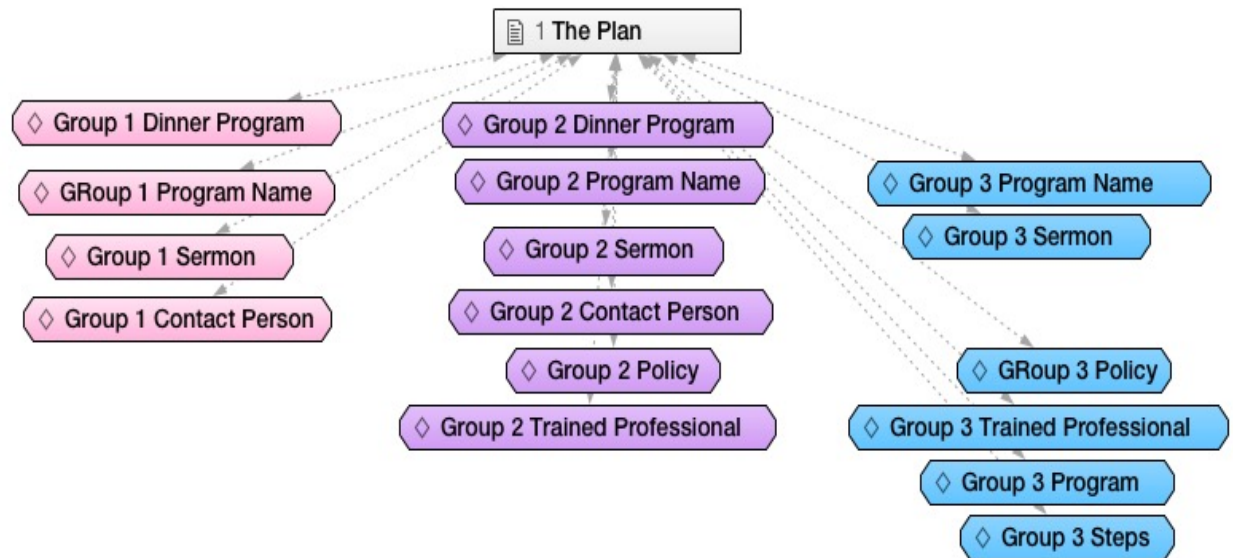


Figure 6. These results were from the focus group presentation brainstorming activity. Groups 2 and 3 both came up with six different ideas for the plan with some overlapping of the same ideas occurring among the three groups.

Chapter 4 Summary

I learned several things during the data analysis. First, children, parents, and church leaders had similar descriptors for bullying. Second, the three churches represented in the study did not have anything in place in the form of anti-bullying program, steps, or policy. Third, through the focus group presentation, participants were interested in changing the fact that there is not anything in place at their churches. Common threads about the perception of bullying between children, parents, and church leaders about bullying were that bullying was a mean action was revealed in the data analysis.

The data from the interviews showed similar results from the parents and church leaders when addressing what an effective anti-bullying program within the church should look like and how it works. Both groups responded that there was a need for sermon training, telling an adult, and developing their capacities to be self-taught. Parents did not have a positive comment about being self-taught.

Bullying was defined by the three groups—children, parents, and church leaders—using language that was associated with the following categories: aggressive, showing dominance, being mean, disrespectful, and nasty. Parents and church leaders both felt that the role of the church was to provide a healthy, supportive, and safe environment for the congregation. The data analysis showed that children wanted the church to teach them respectfulness, and going to tell their parent or an adult in the event of a bullying situation.

The focus group presentation provided an opportunity to share the data with the participants of the study and it enabled the involved adults the opportunity to gather the information and to brainstorm a plan to further their church in offering anti-bullying program, steps, and a policy in the future.

The next chapter will provide a general discussion of the results, a discussion of the results in relation to the literature, the limitations of the study, implication of the results for practice, and my recommendations for further research.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

Introduction

This study has provided some answers to research questions while also prompting more questions concerning the vast topic of bullying. Olweus (1978) defined bullying saying that “a student is being bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time to negative actions on the part of one or more other students” (p. 9). Prior to starting this study, I believed that in order to address the problem of bullying a community approach was needed and that the entire community, including churches, was needed to provide adequate solutions to the problem. At the conclusion of this study I was able to establish that there is a need for the church community to open their doors to providing education and support for bullying occurrences.

Olweus (1993) described his anti-bullying program as including “everyone” as part of the solution: teachers, administrators, students, and parents. Olweus focused his approach on schools. Based on the strategies of the *Olweus Bully Prevention Program*, it was reasonable to conclude that an effective anti-bullying approach in a church setting would benefit from including multiple stakeholders that included pastors, church leadership, children, and parents who can create a multi-generational approach to the commitment towards eliminating bullying. Past research that was reviewed for this study’s literature review on bullying did not include the church community as part of the solution. This research has mainly focused on the school settings, and little attention has been given to how church communities, which represent a significant number of people in the United States, could be included as a part of the community solution to this problem. The findings of this study support the conclusion that study participants thought the church community has a role to play in addressing the problem of bullying and that

participants considered a church-wide anti-bullying program to be an effective means for filling this role. This idea is one that had not been explored before at the research sites. Creating a total community involvement (Olweus, 1993) would help educate and equip families to understand and effectively respond to a bullying situation. The church research sites have work to do. From the research data, interviewees expressed the need for the church to equip and educate the congregation about bullying. The comments made pertained to just the church research sites environment. If research sites do not include the schools and the community in their efforts they will be just repeating the same mistake the schools have done.

Summary of the Results

The research question. The purpose of this study was to answer the following research questions:

- What does an effective anti-bullying program within the church look like and how does it work?
- What are the perceptions and understanding of bullying among the people in the church community?
- What do children and families in the church have and not have to enable them to prevent them to handle a bullying situation? and;
- What are the effects of implementing a focus group presentation designed to explain the best practices for a church on anti-bullying programs?

The interviews and the focus group presentation helped provide answers to the research questions.

Theory. This section will discuss the findings from the interviews and the focus group presentation. First, discussion will explore the interviews. After interviewing 20 people for the

study from three different groups that comprised children, parents, and church leaders, the data from the results indicated that all three groups knew that bullying is not a positive behavior and the majority of the people interviewed thought mostly of children when talking about bullying. According to Olweus (1993), the word *bullying* was thought of more as a physical action than a verbal or social problem. Results from the interviews provided data showing that all three churches from which the groups were drawn needed to implement anti-bullying programs, steps, and policies to the curriculum they already have in place.

Three groups were involved in the focus group presentation. From the data analyzed, all three groups wanted to have an anti-bullying program in place within six months or for the start of their church's fall Sunday School program. All three groups decided that it was important to use a sermon as the means to start the bullying education, because then the entire congregation could be reached. Although two groups mentioned the possibility of including a dinner, both groups, after considering advantages and disadvantages, groups concluded that the audience would not be as large and people who would best benefit from the lesson the most would probably not attend. All three groups thought it was important to have a "fun" name for the program instead of just calling it something like "Anti-bullying 101" because people would make a determination of the importance of the program before hearing the information.

Focus Group 1 and Focus Group 2 mentioned having a key contact person who would spearhead the program as part of their plan, while two groups, Focus Group 1 and Focus Group 3 also thought it was important to bring an outside trained professional to conduct the education. Creating a policy was an important part of the plan for two of the groups. All three groups thought people from different ministries and age groups needed to be a part of the program. One

group thought that it was important to start at the top first and then work through many different levels such as children, adults, the pastor, and staff.

Significance. The Chapter 2: Literature Review supported a need to include the whole community in an anti-bullying program. Little research on how programs might be developed in churches can be found in literature. Parents and church leaders interviewed agreed that something needed to be added to the church curriculum to equip the church community with strategic interventions to aid in dealing with a bully occurrence. Children receive limited education and resources from their schools which the parents are able to utilize. However, the older population of the church is not privy to the education or resources due to the lack of participation in the school setting.

In the next section, I will discuss the connections that can be made from findings of the interview protocol and the past research literature on bullying.

Review of Literature. When people are not acting and treating others as they should, then many people may not want to stay in church and may not come back to church because of the lack of church support. Researchers King and Furrow (2004) commented “Religion not only seems to help protect adolescents from problem behavior, but it also seems to promote health-related outcomes and prosocial behavior” (p. 704). This statement relates to a comment Pastor 2 stated, “The church becomes the safe haven for a child that doesn’t feel accepted and popular at school as they wish. The church needs to be ready to offer to all of its members a safe place for everyone.” One way that this could be achieved was suggested by Church Leader 7

Something set in place for when bullying happens there are steps in place and everyone in the congregation should know the steps. There needs to be rules and consequences. Just having rules isn’t enough. People need to know the consequences.

In the literature review, consequences for bullying were discussed in reference to numerous research studies. Researchers Elza Venter and Eliza duPlessis (2012) wrote one of the articles that addressed the idea of consequences from bullying similar to the comments made by Church Leader 7. They stated, “Most anti-bullying programs prompt school staff to get involved in learner problems and to create a warm atmosphere with firm boundaries concerning unacceptable behavior, consistently applying non-hostile and non-violent consequences for violation of rules” (p. 4).

These data support the idea that education of the congregation is warranted because of how congregational members’ actions can hurt or harm other people. Today’s families are looking to their church community to provide support in the form of education and comfort. As discussed in the interviews with the parents, many families turn to the church when something is wrong.

Methodology. The purpose of this study was to determine the key components in an effective anti-bullying program and to use that knowledge to develop questions to gather information from church leaders, parents, and children on the current practices in the various churches along with information needed to support having an anti-bullying program implemented in the church setting. The object of this research was to examine the role a church can have in addressing the problem of bullying. The study was undertaken using a program evaluation design to investigate the subject of bullying in a church environment

Summary of Findings

Data gathered during this research study support the finding that members of these church communities look to the church to provide opportunities for education to families to equip them in their child rearing. Fifth graders, parents, and church leaders interviewed had

limited knowledge pertaining to the subject of bullying. All three participating churches agreed that their church current did not currently have any anti-bullying programs, policies, and steps in place. At the conclusion of the focus group presentation the three churches agreed to implement anti-bullying programs, policies, and steps in their church community.

Discussion of the Results and Relation to the Literature

Results of the interview data analysis from the interviews related to the literature. This similarity is seen in the definitions that researchers presented about the incidents on bullying in the United States. These demographics about children were examined in Chapter 2. In the review of past research, the literature review demonstrated a need for more studies to be conducted in the field of bullying from many different angles. Some of the different angles include how bullying affects children, how often children experience bullying, and who could be a victim of bullying.

The literature review performed for this study yielded limited on the problem of bullying within church communities, and how the problem affects church communities. The literature review yield research on churches and their moral teachings on bullying identified studies from Wagner (2014) and Perren et al. (2012). Although, Wagner (2014) addressed social identity as a theoretical framework of Christianity, the study was about Christian day school communities. Researchers Perren et al. (2012) explored the relationship of moral reasoning for adolescents and the impact morality plays on youth development and bullying. In the conclusion of their study they stated

As expected, our first main finding is that adolescents involved in bullying showed the highest levels of morally disengaged reasoning. This finding is consistent with previous developmental research revealing a positive association between bullying in adolescence

and morally disengaged or egocentric reasoning strategies. (p. 524)

Moral teachings from the church could be an answer to aiding in strategic inventions for bullying. Churches provide moral instruction concerning what actions are right and...

the church teaches of what is right and what actions are wrong. It is through moral instructions that the church can provide support for the congregation and bring more people together. The church leaders need to collaborate with other leaders to produce a program that is larger than just the church community, a transformational community. A transformational society is a society that through collaboration with other groups and environments: schools, community centers, and others, will put a stop to the bullying cycle. Transformation means to change something and in the case of bullying, it is important to transform what people know and understanding about the topic. It is through spreading the awareness of bullying and equipping families with strategic inventions that a transformation can occur to decrease the number of bullying incidences.

Therefore, a transformational society is a society that through collaboration with other groups and environments: schools, community centers, and others, works consistently and diligently to reduce instances of bullying with the goal of ending cycles of bullying. Stephen Covey (1993) described transformational leadership saying

the principle-centered approach to leadership is transformational because it gives people the conviction that they are a function not of arbitrary personalities but of timeless, correct principles, particularly if principles are embedded in the mission statement and emanate to management style, practices, procedures, policies, strategy structure, systems, and so forth. (p.300)

Transforming environments to equip people with strategic inventions for bullying prevention will require institutions, which are dedicated to “timeless, correct, principles” and are able to educate their members through using clear procedures, policies, and practices.

Anti-Bullying theory. Olweus’s research supported his conclusion that the full school community needed to be involved in anti-bullying efforts. However, his research did not extend beyond school settings. My research supports the extension of these anti-bullying efforts to include other communities beyond the school such as community centers. This extends Olweus’s general principle to include additional components of the “whole community,” namely church community groups, which Olweus did not reference in his work. The children, parents, and church leaders from the three different churches who participated in the study defined bullying as an aggressive, mean act when someone is trying to dominate over another person. Olweus (1993) stated “a student is being bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time to negative actions on the part of one or more other students” (p. 9). The aggressive actions discussed within the interviews were negative actions and the person receiving the aggressive dominant behavior were being victimized. In studies reviewed in the Chapter 2 Literature Review, researchers stated that

Bullies . . . learn to use violence and aggression to solve problems. They learn to gain emotional, social, and often monetary benefits from their aggressive behavior. They gain or maintain dominance in an abusive way and often lack a sense of empathy. (Venter & duPlessis, 2012, p. 3)

The types of dominant and aggressive behavior described in the interviews were consistent with research information discovered during the literature review.

Many parents, and church leaders in the present study, shared that an effective anti-bullying program within the church would include all of the people of the congregation. There is alignment here between the parents and church leaders' insights and the general import of Olweus's approach to widening the circle of knowledge. Olweus believed that everyone-- parents, teachers, administrators, and students-- needed to be included in anti-bullying program. Olweus was addressing the people in the school as well as parents and students. Chapter 1 introduced the idea that the church community is an important element to add to the list of community supporters. Creating a strong community base from more than just the people associated with the school would reach more people. Additional community members, such as church members and members of the community centers, who were not associated with schools, could be involved.

During the focus group brainstorming, the three groups came up with a list of ministry groups that should be a part of the anti-bullying training and program. This list included staff, pastors, church council, ministry groups, and congregation. These groups of people make up the body of the church community. All of the members would be included as a part of the program, according to the focus group action plans. This type of approach is in line with core ideas in Christianity and Christianity's emphasis on the interconnection of its members. The point is highlighted in a comment that Pastor 1 made during the interview stage:

There is one body and many parts and when one person suffers everyone suffers. That is very very true. That would be the spiritual corner stone for the evil dysfunctional and why it's important to teach children to be healthy instead of dysfunctional in relationship. This statement was the way Pastor 1 explained how something that happens to one member of the congregation affects the entire congregation.

Through a search of the literature, analyzed data of the interviews, and the focus group I concluded that it indeed “takes a village to raise a child” and the churches need to open their doors to extend further into the community. If the church community just helps those within the walls of their own church community, then the church is no different than the schools. My long term goal is to include community leaders and to create a program that follows the Bible passage of breadth and depth as mentioned in Pastor 1’s reference to Corinthians. What I suggest is that the development of an anti-bullying effort that a lot of different community groups from across the board to be educators and supporters in an anti-bullying solution. Before starting this study, I questioned the component that might be needed in the needs of a church-wide anti-bullying program. The next step following the development of any programs at the research sites, would be a follow-up study to examine how these developing programs might be extended to go further and include even more people and places such as community centers, schools, and multi-generational programs.

Olweus (1993) found the school environment is an important part of a successful program. “An environment of warmth, firm limits, consistent application of non-punitive, nonphysical sanctions for unacceptable behavior, and adults who act as authorities and positive role models can help the children” (p. 13). The parents and church leaders wanted a church that is safe, supportive, and has a healthy environment which in some ways mirrors Olweus’s findings regarding schools. The three groups of participants that were active in the focus group thought it was important to include everyone in the church: children, parents, older members, pastors, and lay leaders, so that everyone understood and could work together to support the program. Pastor 1 commented, “So I guess it's the kind of thing that even the person who never says a word but is still a part of the community and everyone is affected.” When the body is

thought of as the congregation of people, many people make up the various parts of the congregation. It was stated in the Bible

Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church—for we are members of his body. “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. (Ephesians 5:25-32, New International Version)

The body, which is the church needs all of those different people making it a complete body. In my opinion, this analogy can be used to understand the importance of including all people in the anti-bullying program.

Through the years, researchers have concluded that bullying is not just a problem for children. Since 1978 when Dan Olweus first studied bullying and its effects on children, there has been additional research that examined bullying within adult populations (Rigby, 2000). Researcher Ken Rigby (2000) found, “Bullying is generally conceived as repeated unprovoked aggressive behavior in which the perpetrator or perpetrators are more powerful than the person or persons being attacked” (p. 57). This research suggests that these actions carry over to other people and children. Parent 3 stated in her interview, “Adults bullying . . . I can think of one adult that is a bully at the church. Um . . . how she interacts with other people” and Church leader 3 had a similar story to share, “I actually remember one particular older gentleman that

was bullying a young girl.” These statements indicate that bullying can occur at various ages. The participants in the focus group discussed that all members of the congregation, not just parents or the younger families, needed to share in the church-wide learning about bullying.

In one of the conversations during the focus group, Church Leader 1 stated that education on bullying “needs to start from the top and work its way down throughout the congregation. Bullying does not just affect children.” This is one of the many comments that addressed the need for everyone to be educated and to have input in the process similar to Bullock (2002) and his research on bullying, “Families need to be aware of the specific sanctions that will be imposed on children who bully, and they need opportunities to offer feedback and suggestions” (p. 132). The participants in the research study thought it was important to incorporate anti-bullying steps, policy, and a program into the church environment. All of these components would have input from the church community, thus allowing for feedback and suggestions. The participants were not planning on acting alone in the venture to start the new program but to be catalysts for inception. One thing that everyone agreed on was that bullying is a problem, and that the problem extended even into the church community. The next section moves from the discussion on the effects of *Olweus Anti-Bullying Program* to Erikson’s prosocial theory. I was able to relate the data from the interview analysis to this theory.

Prosocial theory. Erikson’s stages of psychosocial development comprise eight developmental stages through which healthy, developing humans should pass from infancy to late adulthood. “Erikson’s theory conceives of development as proceeding in eight stages revolving successively around conflicts of trust, autonomy, initiative, industry, identity, intimacy, generativity, and ego integrity” (Wilt et al., 2010, p. 156). When a person is not successful in moving from one stage to the next, they can develop a maladaptive tendency, or a

bad quality related to that particular conflict. Maladaptive tendency not just a “bad quality.”

Google search says “In other words, the behavior can be adapted to something else. In contrast maladaptive behavior is a type of behavior that is often used to reduce one’s anxiety, but the result is dysfunctional and non-productive.”

Erikson (1993) also stated that if one is not successful, the maladaptive tendency could emerge later on in life. Parent 1 commented about bullying that, “I think of kids who um . . . gang up on other kids to try to make them feel badly about themselves and in order to obtain something that they need . . . maybe psychologically.” According to Erikson, aggression can develop as early as infancy. An infant who does not develop trust will develop mistrust that can lead to depression or paranoia. During the stage of autonomy versus shame and doubt, if toddlers think that they can do anything, they might become impulsive later on in life, which could contribute to bullying. Parent 5 stated, “People who are bullied know the effects that bullying has on them. I have seen bullying and the child really changes because of the situation.” This comment relates to what Erikson (1993) found that children who do not take outcomes into consideration would more likely just do what they can to get what they want without thinking about it. They could also develop sociopathy during industry vs. inferiority, which makes them do what they need to do in order to succeed without thinking about what other people want or how their feelings/behaviors affect others. In the interview with Parent 5 the story shared pertained to an adult situation.

I haven’t witnessed children bullying but I have adults. Like when I miss church for a couple of weeks and someone . . . this one person will make a comment about me not being there. I wonder if it is me feeling guilty because I missed or is it really the way it was presented. I think it is the way it was said. Yes, I may feel guilty because I missed

coming to church but the way it was said makes it seem like I was a really bad person because I missed.

These theories are tied to this study in that they provide the reader a context in which to understand how aggressive behaviors such as bullying develop in human beings.

The next section will briefly review Fowler's moral development theory and discuss its application to the results and findings of this study. Fowler's six stages of faith and moral development, were discussed in chapters 1 and 2 and are part of the conceptual framework that guided the study. Children interviewed described a situation with a younger child bullying others and that the child should know the difference of right and wrong as well. If churches implement anti-bullying programs, positive behavior could result. As the interviewed people were more engaged in the bullying discussion they developed an awareness of the problems of bullying in their own church environment.

Moral development. Moral development is described in Fowler's six stages of faith and the development starts when a child is in preschool. Fowler (1981) found that at this stage, Stage 1: Intuitive-Productive Faith, in a child's life "is the fantasy-filled, imitative phase in which the child can be powerfully and permanently influenced by examples, moods, actions, and stories of the visible truth of primarily related adults" (p. 133). This describes the child as using the information obtained to form his or her understanding throughout his or her life. Fowler concluded from his research that faith is difficult to explain and to understand for the child. He was quoted, "Faith is a complex term, denoting many different things, such as one's belief system, religious zeal, entrusting oneself to God's providence" (Feldmeier, 2007, p. 64). Fowler found that comprehension of faith begins between the ages 3 and 7 meaning that preschoolers have a basic faith and are able to share their image of God, according to Fowler.

Stage 3: Synthetic-Conventional faith is the “emergence of formal operational thinking allows persons of faith to step outside their own narrative and see the story as a whole. That is, they can now start trying to put the pieces of their faith lives together” (Feldmeier, 2007, p. 66). Adolescents between the ages 11-13 are included in this category. Fowler believed this stage is when the child thinks logically and everything that they learn or believe has to be logical because they develop a diverse self-image.

Figure 7. Needs and Desires

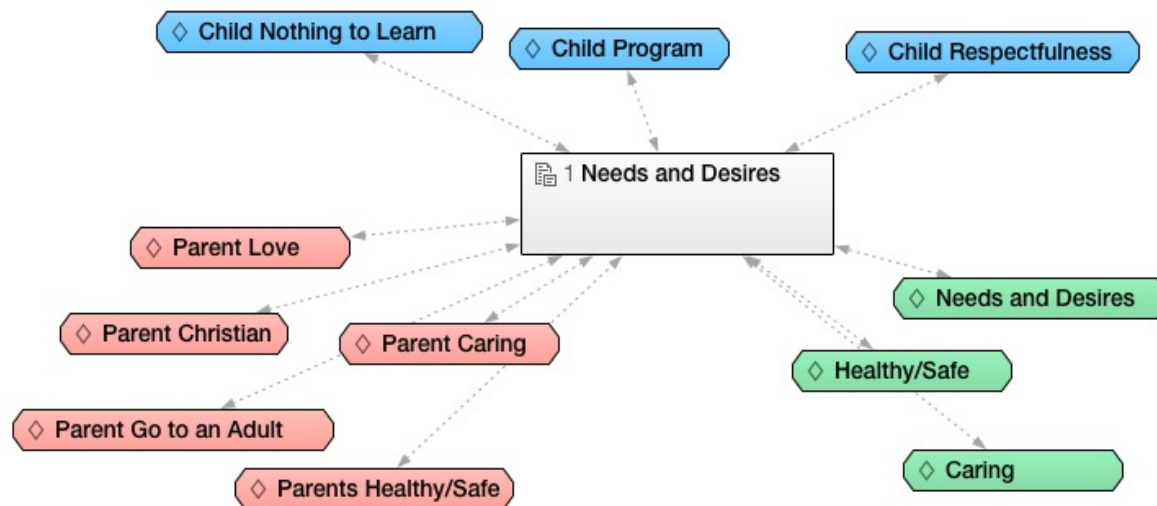


Figure 7. Shows the way parents, church leaders and the children who were interviewed responded to interview questions pertaining to their needs and their church’s desires for them. The arrows start in the middle for needs and desires and connect to the comments made during the interviews. Interview data were associated with the following areas of parent need and desire: wanting love, care, children to go to adults when being bullied, children to be healthy and safe, and children to have a Christian base from anti-bullying program. Church leaders stated caring and a healthy and safe environment are important. Children believe that teaching respectfulness needs to come from the church as well as anti-bullying program.

The interviews contained many references to loving, caring, and Christian values. As seen in Figure 7, both the parents and the church leaders thought Christian values were an

important element to an anti-bullying program. Lee (2003) discusses the importance of Christian schools promoting such values for their communities, when he says that these schools need to embrace the example of Jesus and the teaching of the Gospel, especially in relation to faith, hope, love, forgiveness, justice and freedom; their care for those within the school community, especially those experiencing disadvantage; promote the dignity of the human person and the value of human life; encourage students to contribute to the sacredness of the human story by promoting justice, peace, harmony with creation, and service to the community. (p. 81)

These things described by Lee are missions of Christian schools and are things that they need to do. According to the interview data, people expect the church to provide a loving and caring environment. Forgiveness is a quality that needs to be demonstrated and understood similar to the comment one of the children made about respectfulness. Christians are taught to forgive others for the negative actions. Forgiveness is taught in the church environment. Venter and duPlessis (2012) stated, “The behavior of bullies shows a tendency to adhere to group norms that are unacceptable and not seen as normative within the Christian worldview” (p. 5). The behavior of the bullies is not what the families wanted from their church environment. Parents and church leaders wanted a safe and healthy environment from their church, one that provides a Christian values base for their families. The importance of educating for Christian values within the church environment was noted by researchers Venter and duPlessis’s (2012) study of bullying and Christian values, where they stated, “Investigated solutions to the problem of bullying by emphasizing the inculcation of Christian values such as tolerance, neighborly love, care and respect in learners, so that learners would display these virtues even in a group context” (p. 2) This reflects Fowler’s six stages of faith and moral development that children are capable of

neighborly love and respect to learners.

Connecting the interview data to the research data provided by Fowler, five of the six children that were interviewed had been a victim of bullying or knew someone that had been a victim. The children participating in this study had experienced bullying first hand or knew someone who had. Alessi (2011) stated, “Bullying occurs in just about every school” (p. 20). All six children interviewed agreed with this statement. According to the United States Department of Social Service, one in five elementary school and one in 10 middle school students are being bullied. The data from the research study and the United States statistics are in line with the study results along with researchers Brown et al. (2005). They conducted a study of 9- to 13-year-olds regarding the magnitude of, causes of, and remedies for bullying. This study included 1229 students visiting 11 health education centers in seven states. “Half the respondents said they have been bullied at least once in a while. When bullied, almost half said they fight back, about a fourth tell an adult, and 20% do nothing; only 8% try to talk to the bully” (p. 384). The present study included 11-year-old fifth graders. The age of participants and their responses were similar a study by Brown et al (2005). This was the range of the Brown et al.’s (2005) study and the responses of participants in this study were similar in the findings of Brown et al.

When asked how to respond to bullying, all of the children responded to tell an adult or parent. Bullock (2002) suggested “developing both immediate and long-term strategies for identifying and working with bullies may be necessary” (p. 132). The children conveyed that they would walk away from the bullying and write the information on a slip of paper and place it in a box at the guidance counselor’s office. These were all strategies that are in place at their current public schools that encompass both the long term and the short term strategies mentioned

by Bullock (2002) but the moral support could be provided by the church community. “Many anti-bullying programs encourage children to speak up against or reject bullies” (Piotrowski & Hoot, 2008, p. 362).

Parents interviewed for this study noted a number of activities that they pursue in school setting to receive support for bullying situations that involve their children. I imagined that professional relationships could provide a bridge between communities. Parent 3 stated, “I even talk to the school counselor to see if she has experienced anything in school. Their counselor is very approachable. And really cares about a lot of these things.” The fact that the school counselor is easy to approach for the families in the school district creates a resource for the families. This resource could help in the development of programs in the church setting. Parent 3 continued talking about her daughter’s school and the anti-bullying program they held, “it was like four or five hours long on a half-day of school where they had more than 100 girls and their mom’s or someone else that was a trusted female. They called it Girl’s Night Out.” The program described by Parent 3 is reflective of school based programs identified in the literature review. Meraviglia, Becker, Rosenbluth, Sanchez, and Robertson (2003) noted, “There are various anti-bullying strategies that aim to alter the broader school environment. A school-wide anti-bullying policy provides a framework that guides the school’s actions to address the problem of bullying” (Meraviglia et al., 2003, as cited by Sherer & Nickerson, 2010, p. 218). It is clear the school referred to by Parent 3 has anti-bullying strategies for the broader school, for the children and families in the school community.

Researchers, McNamee and Mercurio (2008) stated, “Parents must recognize that bullying is a big problem that should have everyone worried” (p. 371). From the data analysis it is evident that the parents, church leaders, and children realize that bullying is a problem.

Parents in the study commented that bullying in the church environment could be addressed through the Christian perspective. This can be connected to the research by Venter and duPlessis (2012) as they stated, “In Christianity the moral virtues are grounded in the character of Christ and embodied in Biblical ethics” (p. 2). The basis of Venter and du Plessis’s study was to “investigate solutions to the problem of bullying by emphasizing the inculcation of Christian values” (p. 2). Drawing a connection from the Christian values groundwork, the results from analyzed data from the study identified the need for people in the church environment to act according to God’s Word. Church Leader 3 believed people have Christian values and she stated, “It’s a part of being a Christian” and Parent 5 commented, “Just because it is a Christian setting doesn’t mean that people will always behave in a Christian manner.” Some people believe that because they are in a church setting it will dictate the way one should act, but as these two comments pointed out that is not always the situation.

Outcomes of the Research

The study produced a number of outcomes for research participants and research sites which can be arranged around the following headings: (a) the development of personal knowledge and awareness of the issue of bullying by participants; (b) recognition for participants of the lack of institutional awareness of the issue of bullying by the site churches, evidenced in the lack of church programming related to this issue; and, (c) movement of the participants during the study to increase institutional awareness by stimulating the development of church programs, which was an outgrowth of the participants’ developing personal awareness.

Personal Awareness: Development of Personal Knowledge through the Interview Protocol

In this section the perceptions and understanding of bullying will be explored by looking at the limited knowledge of bullying indicated by the children, parents, and church leaders

interviewed for this study. Next, I will address the haves and have nots of church communities. The haves are the programs that are already included in the research site churches and the have nots are the programs that have been excluded.

Limited knowledge. The perceptions and understanding among the interviewees showed that there was limited knowledge of bullying. Data from the interviews demonstrated that children, parents, and church leaders were interested in the topic of bullying. Each participant was able to share some information about bullying which provided me with some understanding of the participants' knowledge of the issue. Some participants were able to recall situations from their past while others had stories of bullying from more recent occurrences. The participants' abilities to share experiences from their past can be related to the literature from McAdams (2001) life stories. The Chapter 2: Literature Review included a review of Dan McAdams's research on narrative and life stories. McAdams defined life stories as a way in which people share experiences that they had in their life and this is the same activity the participants interviewed, they were sharing experiences in their lives with the researcher. At the beginning of each of the 20 interviews the participants took time to think and process their answers before they began answering. This indicated to me that the participants wanted to give a thoughtful response to the question. It could also mean they were thinking carefully before answering. No one interviewed responded quickly to the questions when they were asked. Their story and narrative responses were of the kind McAdams discusses of their past experiences. The interviewees appeared to process the question and formulate their response before beginning to speak.

The people in the church community understand bullying as behavior that can be categorized as being mean, nasty, and aggressive. Participants also view bullying as behavior in

which the bully has or is seeking dominance over another person. Of the 20 people interviewed, more than half of the group thought of bullying as an action that children did to other children. After the interview, 15 participants commented that the experience of discussing the topic of bullying during the interview made them think more about the topic and also realize that bullying was more than just a physical action, but also something that may involve verbal or social actions. Six parents and nine church leaders agreed that bullying is a topic that needs to be talked about and that everyone needs to have a better understanding of bullying. Church Leader 3 noted that through the interview process she now understands why “she acts the way she does to certain situations is because of her past experiences.” She expressed that being bullied in school by other students had made her put guard up in personal relationships and influenced the way that she meets new people.

The table below shows the results from the interview data that was coded as anti-bullying descriptors. Comments made were tallied and are reflected as the results below. Church leaders had 21 comments that bullying was mean and 19 comments referring to bullying as dominate. Aggressive was mentioned 10 times among parents and the children had 9 comments labeling bullying as mean.

Table 3

Results from Interviews

Anti-Bullying Descriptors	Children	Parents	Church Leaders
Aggressive	5	10	12
Disrespectful	1	0	0
Dominates	7	8	19
Mean	9	7	21
Nasty	0	0	7

The children interviewed had an understanding of bullying from life lessons based on experience learned in the school setting. Referring to the literature from Olweus (1993), bullying has been described as an aggressive action and one that can be a physical, social, or verbal attacks. Today schools in the area of the research site have provided the children with a plan and policies regarding what to do if a bully occurs within the school setting. The children have been trained to go to an adult or parent to tell them of what has happened.

Parents who were interviewed had some knowledge of the topic of bullying because of their children and the schools that they attend. Some of the schools in the area surrounding the research sites are providing open forums for parents to learn about bullying. Unfortunately, not all schools are as intentional as others in the surrounding areas of the research sites. Leadership in schools is different because the people working with the children are paid workers and the children are expected to attend school on a daily basis, thus it can dictate the environment. From the data analyzed from the interviews, the schools that had a full-time guidance counselor on staff were providing education to parents and a solid anti-bullying program, steps, and policy for

the children. The parents and children who had the most knowledge about bullying said they had meetings with their school guidance counselor. They commented on the activities the school had in place, such as Mother and Daughter or fun school-wide bullying awareness campaigns. One example of a fun school-wide activity presented was a day-long retreat where students would come together on a Saturday. For these retreats, the children completed various activities surrounding the idea of community and accepting other, however, the issue of bullying was not discussed. Parents who were interviewed agreed that if the word *bullying* had been mentioned in the title of the retreat, then they thought that participation would have decreased. The implications of these findings demonstrate that bullying has a negative note and that by presenting the information in creative ways enables a greater participation. Therefore, when creating new practice, policy, or theory for bullying it is important to think of creative ways to present the information in order to achieve the greatest participation.

Church leaders representing the three churches had the most experience with bullying among the ages in the church community whereas children discussed school experiences. Pastors and church leaders shared stories of experiences within their church communities demonstrating their awareness of multi-generational bullying that was happening. Bullying in the church setting is evident from bullying during congregational meetings, with verbal attacks in the open public church-wide setting, to church council members bullying staff members in an attempt to increase staff productivity. Through the many comments and stories shared the idea of including wider groups of people in a program became evident. The church leaders, like the parent and children groups, understood bullying to be an aggressive and dominant action performed by a person upon another person and in some situations the bullying was directed from one person to a group or church groups to other church groups. Overcoming the problem

of including more people could be accomplished by opening the door to expand on awareness to the community outside of the church by including the community center, other churches, and partnering with the schools. If more people and the community were included in the education on bullying, then greater personal knowledge and awareness could be developed in the community. Communication and education are the keys to developing awareness of bullying. Increasing conversations and working together could bring about community cohesion.

There are three main points regarding education that I will note for the reader: the need for education; education needs to be for entire church; and, types of education. After conducting 20 interviews with parents, children, and church leaders and a focus group presentation, the data that was analyzed from both events points to the need for further education in the field of bullying at the church sites. Parents and church leaders shared a strong need to incorporate education throughout the church to the entire church community. The three churches were interested in implementing learning from various avenues: church sermons; children chats; parent classes; and, Sunday School lessons.

The adult participants who attended the focus group presentation commented that they were glad and excited that they were a part of the study because they learned information that they were missing about themselves personally and about bullying. Remarks referring to learning more about bullying, the need for educating their church community, and the excitement from the group demonstrated that even after all of the research that has been completed in the field subsequent to Olweus's foundation 1978 study, there remains a need more education on the topic of bullying at these church sites. The participants were quick to respond that they had never thought so much about the topic of bullying before agreeing to participate. Church Leader 3 commented, "After participating in the interview, I have been taking notice of what happens at

the church. The adults are worse than the children. The adults are bullying other adults with things that they say.” It was because comments from other participants that were similar to Church Leader 3’s that I concluded the entire church congregation needed to be included in anti-bullying programs. The research data demonstrated that children are getting education on bullying in their school environment, however older people including parents could use more information to better equip them on their understanding of bullying and ways to handle a situation.

Researchers Piotrowski and Hoot (2008) defined bullying as an aggressive act that takes physical, emotional, or verbal forms. Parent 4 stated, “I never thought of bullying that way. Bullying was always a physical act not something that people did verbally. There is a lot of verbal abuse that happens in a church.” The comment from Parent 4 was a typical comment that was addressed during the focus group. Eighteen of the 21 participants associated bullying with physical interaction. The analyzed data indicated that sharing knowledge about the full definition of bullying is important in whether bullying truly exist in a given environment. A broader definition of bullying, encompassing the many forms that in which it can be manifested, was not provided to interviewees at the beginning of the interview protocol. From the comments given after the interviews at the focus group it could be concluded that this would have changed the results of the data from the interviews. Interviewees were not given any information about bullying before participating. Clearly if the definition of bullying was given, the results of the data would have been altered which could be a limitation.

Parent 4 continued, “I have noticed I am more aware as well. I think that when I started talking in my interview that I was just thinking about the children. This experience has been really eye opening.” This parent was commenting on her experience of being involved in the

study. Before the study parents that did not fit into the criteria, parent of a fifth grader, wanted to be included. Positive comments included parents wanting to know more and to be a part of something positive for their church community.

The present study looked at three different churches in a relatively small geographic area. Members within all three churches have experienced bullying in one capacity or another. First the participants indicated that bullying as a child to child issue and then they moved to bullying being an issue for other generations as well. I concluded that the members of the church community needed education that would provide information about the bullying among multiple generations. Participant responses indicate that bullying is an issue that is effecting members of the three churches at some level. This is indicated by the participants' stories about bullying issues and by their readiness to develop a program to educate and assist their congregations. Bullying is a problem found with all three churches by their indication of the need for something about anti-bullying throughout the entire church. Church Leader 7 stated, "We all made a commitment to a change when we said yes to participate." This comment tells me that the participants thought about bullying before they agreed to be interviewed and that they resigned themselves to committing to using the results, whatever they may be, in their church community.

One month following the focus group presentation, each church had started implementing an idea or ideas brought up during the brainstorming activity that occurred at the end of the day. The information that the groups took with them was that someone needed to take the charge and talk to the senior pastor and the church council. Self-driven change at the site seems to be an important outcome of this study. Participants have taken new knowledge and ideas derived from the study and have shared the information with their church community. These activities were pursued independently of the study parameters, and seem to be prompted by the information

gathered from the focus group presentation. A few weeks after the completion of data collection, it was the case that in two of the three churches the lead contact person had already met with the lead pastor and had scheduled time to meet with the church council to discuss further action that needed to take place over the subsequent months. This was an activity that was part of the focus group planning. Following data collection, two of the three churches stated that they felt they were in line to meet the six-month timeline set out by the focus group. Two months after participating in the focus group, the group from the third church site was slightly behind due to other activities happening currently at their church, however, the participants felt they would be able to still reach the expected deadline.

All three of the pastors interviewed are committed to spreading the word about anti-bullying educating and teaching their congregation based on the information they received as part of the focus group. After the focus group presentation, a follow-up conversation occurred between myself and each of the participating pastors. All three of the pastors expressed that they received valuable information from the focus group and that they were going to oversee the task of preaching on the topic of bullying to the entire congregation as part of the adult and children's sermons. The pastors expressed that this would be a first step in educating the congregation, in anticipation of other forms of education that might be implemented by the churches

Church programs: Participant identification of resource lack and provision through interview protocol

In this section the reader will be introduced to the various activities that churches have and do not have: The Haves and Have Nots. Through the interview protocol participants shared about existing programs. The interviewees made personal discovery of programs lacking in their own church environments. I have shown that the three research sites have educational programs

for their children and parents to equip them on many different topics however there are no programs in place to educate parents and children on bullying.

Haves. The research sites have many programs to equip their families with a multitude of information, this would be referred to as the *haves* of the church. Some of the parents interviewed felt safe in their church environment and because of this security they felt equipped to handle a bullying situation. The church provides them a place to go and talk to someone and feel comfortable in their surroundings. The pastors of the churches offer the families a solid resource to help them in a time of need. When a family has a need, they feel they that they could talk with their pastor or children's ministry leader and that their family would receive support. Youth Directors have served as a great asset for the families in offering support at all three churches. Families shared stories of the love and care they have received from the Youth Director with their older children and themselves through follow up phone calls, emails, text messages, and caring one on one conversations. One family described a positive experience in their church and how their youth turned to the Youth Director when something happened at school. A youth was being bullied at school and the first thing she wanted to do was to go to church. The guidance that was offered by the Youth Director is an example of what families are looking for in their church, which is a safe place to go for help through a difficult problem.

Table 4

Needs and Desires: Responses from Interviews

Needs and Desires	Parents	Church Leaders
Care	6	10
Christian	2	5
Love	3	0
Healthy/Safe Environment	3	12

Table 4 displays the number of interview comments that were associated with four categories related to needs and desires of participants. These four codes were derived from literature and are linked with this section's theme by addressing the needs and desires that were important to the participants interviewed for this study. As seen in Table 4 above, both parents and church leaders have 40% difference in first line. No similarity in the third for needs and desires. Six comments from the parents and 10 from church leaders stating that caring is important from the church community. Twelve church leaders expressed the need for a healthy and safe environment was important and three parents had comments indicating this as a need or desire. The third highest response among church leaders (5) was the Christian element where only two parents made the same comment. The top three needs for parents were care (6), love (3), and healthy and safe environment (3). The same question was asked of both groups during the interview. The next section will explain the different items that parents and church leaders discussed that their churches currently did not have.

Have nots. Unfortunately, not all of the families interviewed have the same sense of comfort within their church community. There were participants who have experienced bullying

incidences happening in the church setting who did not feel that the support was not provided from their church. Both parents and church leaders agreed that at the time of the study all three churches currently had no anti-bullying steps, policy, or program in place. As seen in Table 6 below, parent's responses to the question was that there were no steps (8), no policy (7), and no program (7). Church leaders commented repeatedly that their churches currently had no anti-bullying steps (19), no policy (11), and no program (12). It was determined from a review of program materials that all three churches currently had no anti-bullying steps, no anti-bullying policy, and no anti-bullying program in place.

The children's ministry directors supported and offered help throughout the situations yet when the parents wanted care and the opportunity to feel safe, the pastor was not able to offer the support. Interviewed parents want a training program or a family class to provide support, knowledge, and understanding on how to handle a bullying situation. They want a place to turn to get answers for their family. Families look to the church as a place that should provide the answers in a difficult situation and bullying is one of those difficult situations according to the parents that were interviewed. I can conclude that people tend to seek growth in the places where they have safety and access to knowledge through others. Churches seek to provide this for their congregation and if they are not providing for a significant need it may be because of the lack of awareness.

Table 5

Anti-Bullying Steps, Policy, and Programs: Responses from Interviews

Steps, Policy, Programs	Parents	Church Leaders
No Steps	8	19
No Policy	7	11
No Program	7	12

The idea that churches need to be more than just a place where people come on Sunday to worship has been supported by interview data. In the literature review researchers King and Furrow (2004) found

A number of emerging studies have demonstrated the benefits of participation in religious life for adolescents. These studies, while highlighting that religion protects and promotes adolescent well-being, are limited in explaining what aspects of religious life influence these positive outcomes. (p. 711)

They were not just referring to Sunday worship. This statement coincides with the statement from Church Leader 1 who believed, “Church is a place to be and encouraging and making people feel good about themselves. To love and be kind toward people that are different or who disagree.” From the findings it can be concluded that this is true because more people attend church functions throughout the year. Then worship on Sunday mornings. Families are looking for a church that provides them more in the form of support and education. A place that is there for their children through their adulthood, and a place that they can connect with others like themselves. Families participate in church activities that are geared toward their family needs. Such as families with younger children participate in the young family activities and the older children families attend the youth activities. Pastor 1 suggested, “Learning how to be self-aware as well as with one or more people in small groups.” These small groups become a support mechanism for the families. Church Leader 1 shared that churches should, “Have a game plan as far as having a set support system to not leave either individual to flounder on their own.” Church Leader 1 was referring to all of the parties involved in the bullying situation: the bully and the victim. When the families are able to create the family bond with others in the church,

then the church becomes more to the family. This was a conclusion drawn from the interview data as well as literature from King and Furrow (2004)

Communities in which the majority of adolescents attended religious services at least once a month were found to be twice as likely to be identified among the healthiest communities as were comparable cities in which the majority of youths did not attend religious services. (p. 704)

There is a strong community in cities where there is a strong youth attendance and participation in church according to King and Furrow. This literature has demonstrated the importance of church involvement for family growth. The six parents and the eight church leaders have stated in their interviews that churches do not have bullying programs in place and that it is something that needs to be added. In Table 4 below are the action items that came from the coded data from the interviews. Each number represents the count of comments during the interviews with children, parents, and church leaders.

Anti-bullying programs.

Table 6

Action Items: Responses from Interviews

Action Items	Children	Parents	Church Leaders
Go to an Adult	29	1	2
Prayer	0	0	3
Self-Taught	0	1	6
Sermon Training	0	1	6
Support	0	7	7
Stop Being with Them	3	0	0
Training	0	7	17
Volunteers Handle It	0	1	7

According to these data, when a bullying problem occurs, whether it is something within the church environment or outside the church community, families want a Christian moral perspective to help and guide them through bullying and other situations. Providing training and education about bullying is a way that the church can show support and care. Parent 5 commented, “Just because it is a Christian setting doesn’t mean that people will always behave in a Christian manner. Behavior in a church setting should be Christian-like.” Setting the expectations of how to act in a church setting is a lesson that parents feel need to be addressed to the congregation. Families noted that they bring their children and come to church because it should be a safe place.

The participants from all three churches wanted to implement anti-bullying programs for the children and the youth as part of the Sunday School classes in the next six months.

According to children, parents, and church leaders an effective anti-bullying program within the church would include many, if not all of the people of the congregation. The participants thought the program should start with leadership of the congregation and be implemented throughout the church. Starting with the entire staff, who would educate their ministry teams and then on throughout each ministry. The church council would play a part in the start of the new program as well. The church council would provide the leadership needed to implement and approve a new church-wide program, steps, and policy according to the participants.

The church-wide program would educate the entire congregation on bullying. Children and their parents would receive information on bullying in their regular school setting but the elders of the church would not be included in the training. Church sermons, children sermons, and parent classes were some of the ideas considered for spreading the information as soon as possible. These lessons in bullying could start before fall and provide the backbone of information to lead the church in a church-wide learning process. These developments and actions mean that the participants felt there was a need to make changes in their church communities to accommodate the whole church community. The participants indicated that the church needs and mission is to welcome all at the three churches. The families' needs are to be equipped to handle a bullying situation, which has been concluded from the analyzed data from the interviews and focus group. This means that the churches need to implement an anti-bullying program and educate the whole church congregation. Church Leader 7 stated, "It needs to start with prayer."

When there is a lack of Church programs and a lack of awareness to bullying, then the church is not providing everything that they could as a church community. There needs to be an

awareness surrounding bullying and the total community at large needs to be a part of the solution.

Personal Awareness to Organizational Awareness: Effects of Implementing a Focus Group Presentation

Participants' reactions. Participants in the focus group had the opportunity to hear the results from the analyzed data from the interviews. Each adult was able to brainstorm and create a new understanding about bullying and the lack of a program, policy, or steps at their own church. Through the small group brainstorming, the participants had the chance to design a plan to equip others in their church community.

Confidentiality. I reminded participants that to keep their church name and other names out of the comments when they were talking. After reviewing the confidentiality section from the adult consent form the procedures that were taken to analyze the data was shared. First the results from the study were analyzed in three groups; church leaders, parents, and children. Next the data from the interviews was evaluated, and divided into four categories: bullying descriptors, action items, programs, policies, and steps, and desire and needs. Finally, the data was input into a qualitative data program, Atlas.ti from which the following graphs were exported.

The data analysis from the interviews was shared from the bullying descriptors, program, policy, and steps, needs and desires, and action items. Bullying descriptors came from the three groups: children, parents, and church leaders. Children in the study described bullying as aggressive, disrespectful, dominate, and mean. Results are similar to a study conducted on children about bullying by Jacobson (2014), who found six common categories among their children participants. Jacobson stated that

Coding of the responses revealed six themes. The themes reflected (a) direct teasing, threats, and bullying; (b) observed aggressive behavior and threats; (c) environmental conditions; (d) recalling events that had occurred in earlier school grades; (e) academic stressors; and (f) other. (p. 155)

Using some of the similar descriptors, the parent group defined bullying as aggressive, dominant, and mean. The terms used by the children and parents to describe bullying were consistent with categories used to describe bullying in the literature. Brown et al., (2005) described bullying as Aggressive behaviors are common in children as young as one year, bullying is unique because it usually involves a recurring pattern of harassment and because it typically entails an imbalance of strength or power between the harassers and those being harassed. (p. 384)

Bullying, as noted earlier in the literature review, has been described with all of these descriptors. The codes above were emergent codes from the analyzed data.

Church leaders used these emergent categories from terms used in the verbal interviews: Aggressive, mean, dominates, and nasty. Both parents and church leaders felt they knew what the causes of bullying were. Pastor 2 commented, “Someone that is just mean and aggressive. A way that does harm to another kid.” However, Parent 2 stated, “children being mean to one another just for their own that is right for their own good.” Another parent had a different perspective when she commented, “Kids being mean mostly kids but adults can be mean as well.” The National Children’s Bureau (2011) identified “bullying as proactive aggression has meant that the intention of bullying has usually been taken as given, and when bullying researchers have discussed intentionality, it has usually been to refer to aggressiveness and the intention to cause harm” (The National Children’s Bureau, p. 269). This statement reflects the

comments made in the interviews and they were coded as demonstrating knowledge of the causes of bullying.

Figure 8. Bullying Descriptors

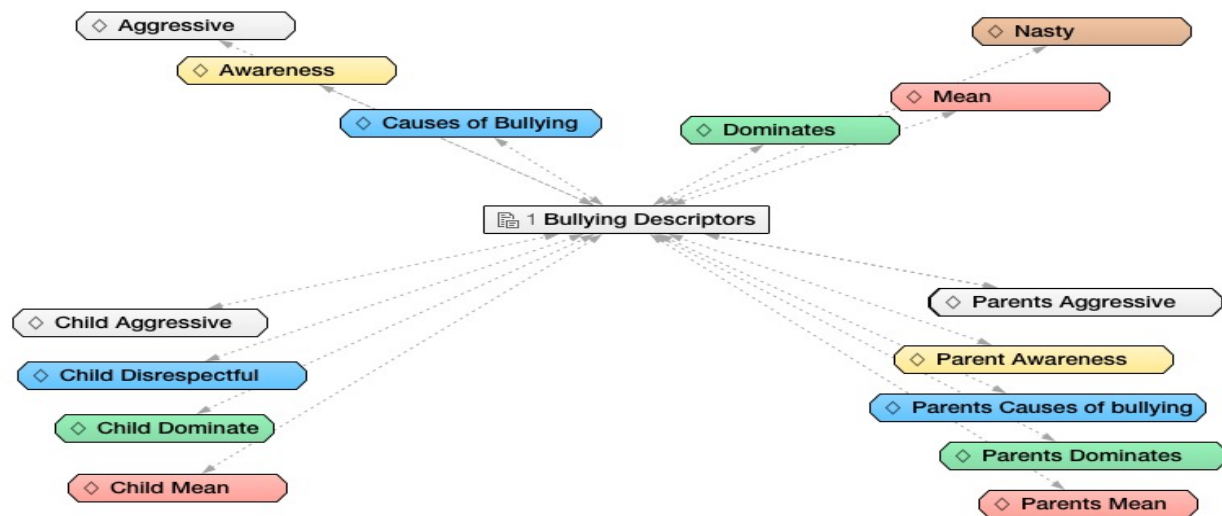


Figure 8. Shows the key components addressed by the three interviewed groups: church leaders at the top, children and parents on the bottom. All three groups had similar bullying descriptors.

The participants heard that it was unanimous that all of the interviewees commented that their church had no anti-bullying program, steps, or policy in place. From this the needs and desires from each group were discussed. The children's comments ranged from not needing anything from the church to having anti-bullying program and learning from the church about being respectful. Parents wanted love, caring, a Christian environment, and a healthy and safe church environment. Church leaders were concerned with a healthy and safe church environment, caring, and describing the needs and desires of the church in general such as: there needs to be support; encouraging and making people feel good about themselves; churches need to teach children to be healthy instead of dysfunctional in relationship; and church members need

some help, care, and love. For the church, this means that they need to assess their environments to ensure that they are meeting the needs of their congregation and as for the congregants they can be proactive in the church community by volunteering.

The presentation portion of the focus group concluded with the discussion of the coded data on the action items mentioned in the interviews. The data demonstrated that children have learned to go to an adult, to tell their parents, to remove themselves from the bullying situation, and to write down the problem in order to tell the school guidance counselor. When coding the data from the verbal interviews participants described actions that they wanted the church to act on and those comments were coded as action items. The action items mentioned by the parents were coded with these descriptors: self-taught; sermon taught; volunteer takes control; training; and, support. Self-taught refers to people being able to educate themselves about bullying and sermon taught is when a pastor educates the congregation by including a lesson on bullying from the pulpit. Volunteer takes control is a reference that enables the volunteer to control a situation and the education of bullying and training would be when the church offers classes. The church leaders' comments and the parent comments yielded similar ideas: self-taught; go to an adult; volunteers handle it; support; and, sermon training. The two additional types of categories from church leaders were training and prayer, meaning that the church would educate the congregation and offer prayer to the participants. Church leaders talked about training in different forms other than just sermon training and ultimately prayer had an influence on the actions that church leaders saw happening in their churches. In the literature review, Venter and duPlessis (2012) stated "It is to be hoped that when they teach Christian values, teachers will also educate their class as a group in accepting each other and caring for each other" (p. 2). This example is from a church school classroom. After the action plan, they were anticipating the training of accepting

each other as a lesson taught in the church setting.

Figure 9. Action Items

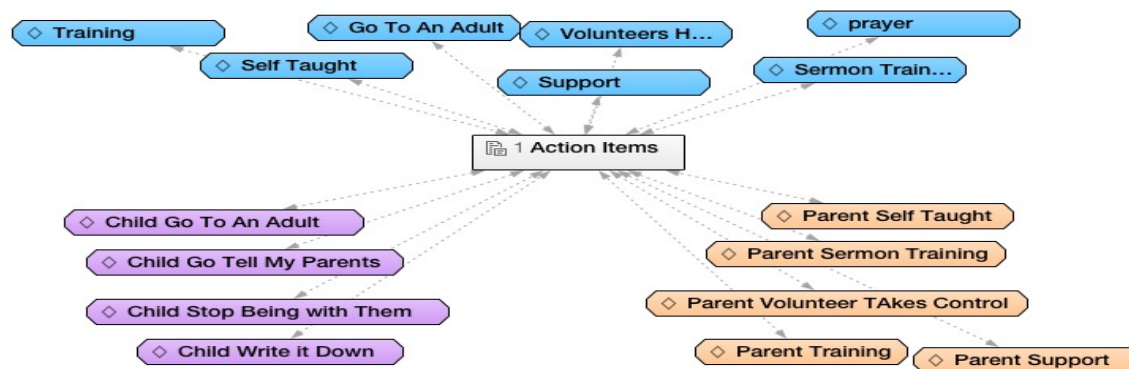


Figure 9. Church leaders and parents had similar ideas of action items needed from the church. The children were less responsive on their ideas for action items.

In the focus group presentation, I shared the definition as defined by Dan Olweus (1993) “a student is being bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time to negative actions on the part of one or more other students” (p. 9). The group then learned from me about the various anti-bullying programs that are available in school settings. Based on this information, the focus group then developed ways a church can help educate the congregation on bullying. The following approaches to supporting the congregation in understanding bullying were shared by participants during the focus group. These ways were taken from the comments made by the interviewed participants.

- The church could provide a church-wide anti-bullying campaign that would be addressed in the services to the entire congregation on Sunday mornings.
- Pastors could take the opportunity of having the attention of the congregation and talk about bullying through the use of Bible stories.

- Integrate an anti-bullying lessons into the regular Sunday School program to the children by teaching God's love, and support of His children.
- Another way the church could assist in helping to equip families is to offer anti-bullying classes for the parents. These classes would serve as education on the topic and provide strategic strategies to enable parents to equip their children to handle.

After the data collection, I challenged the churches to “make the change.” They were provided with data from the focus group sessions that related to three questions.

What would you like to see change at your church when it comes to anti-bullying support and programs?

- How can you make the change?
- When will the change take place?

Action planning. There were three groups of four members each working on discussing these questions. All three groups concluded the importance of having a sermon be the means to the bullying education because then the entire congregation would be educated. The importance of having a sermon on bullying is that in a church community the congregation listens to the pastor as they educate and relate scripture in a current atmosphere. This method of a sermon to educate the congregation about bullying was only one way the churches planned to equip their congregation. Although two groups mentioned a program that would include a dinner, both groups were able to discuss the pros and cons to this type of program. The groups concluded that the audience would not be as large and people who could use the lesson the most would probably not attend, whereas a program that had a “fun” name or a catchy name would gather more people to the event. Two of the groups plan outlined having a key contact person that would spearhead the program while two groups also thought it was important to bring an outside

trained professional to conduct the education. Creating a policy was an important part of the plan with two of the groups.

Figure 10. The Plan



Figure 10. Group 1 discussion the group determined that their action plan was to have a dinner plan, education through a pastoral sermon, a program name, and a contact person to lead the anti-bullying campaign. Group 2's action plan listed having a dinner program, agreed with a program name, a pastoral sermon, and a contact person but they also added that there needs to be a policy in place and some consideration should be given on paying a trained professional to make a presentation. Group 3's action plan was to create a program name and a pastoral sermon but they felt there should be a policy, program, and steps in place and that a paid trained professional should be brought to the church.

All three groups thought people from different ministries and age groups needed to be a part of the education team. One group named many groups and thought that the education on bullying needs to start at the top and work down throughout the many groups and ministries. Including children, adults, the pastor, and staff was included across all three groups as an important avenue to address.

Figure 11. Who Is Involved

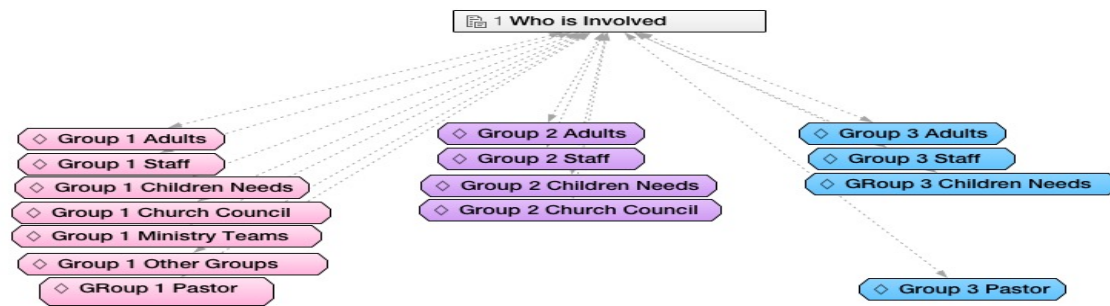


Figure 11. All three groups thought the staff, adults, and children needs such as classroom time should be included however only Groups 1 and 2 included the church council. Groups 1 and 3 included the pastor. Group 1 also included other groups and ministry groups. This data shows that the three participating groups concluded that multiple group of people in the church community should be included in the education on bullying.

Implementation of a program.

This movement from the personal awareness to organizational awareness includes everyone in the church community, meaning that the pastor and all of the various church groups from multigenerational would be a part of a church-wide project.

Limitations

Weather. There were more limitations than the researcher anticipated when starting the study. Weather was a major contributor to the delays with the study. Planning to conduct interviews during the winter months on the east coast should be avoided or alternate plans in place. During the time when interviews were scheduled, a blizzard changed affected participants' ability to attend scheduled interview sessions. This caused the interviews to have to be rescheduled until after the snow had been cleared away

Illness. Interviews also needed to be rescheduled because of illness. Three of the people interviewees became ill, causing more rescheduling. Interviewing around sports schedules was

another problem. Children from the three churches interviewed were active in the community with sporting activities making it difficult to schedule interviews.

Relationships. Working with the churches and having relationships with people within the church community was also be a limitation. The children, parents, and church leaders were very comfortable with talking with me as a researcher therefore the interviews provided an opportunity for people to share and discuss their experiences openly. For some people, the interview brought up situations that happened in the past thus creating an opportunity for the participants to remember situations they were trying to forget. Without the trusted relationship with the research, it is possible that the participants would not have shared such personal stories especially the ones about occurrences in the church community.

Parent's presence. Having the child's parent present during the interviews with children might have limited responses. Choosing fifth graders to participate in the interview was a decision based on the information from the literature review. Researchers Elza Venter and Elize duPlessis (2012) found the highest bullying situations occurred "Grade 4 to Grade 6 (40%), followed by Grade 7 (36%) in primary schools and in Grade 8 to Grade 9 (40%) in secondary schools. Bullying mostly occurred during break (75%), but also after school, before school and during classes" (p. 5). Choosing fifth graders for the study also made sense because of the way the church divides children and youth. Children birth through sixth grade are consider members of the children's program and those seventh grade and higher are participants in the youth program

Age parameter. Another limitation was choosing to limit the study to six fifth-grade children and their parent. This age parameter was chosen based on literature from Fowler (1981) and Erikson's (1968) research. Their research stated that children in fifth grade would be able to

understand and articulate about bullying experiences. After introducing the study to the churches and inviting people to be a part of the study, there were families who did not fit the age parameters of the study.

Many families submitted signed consent forms to be chosen as participants but only one fifth grade boy and one fifth grade girl from each church and their parents were included in the sample. The research protocol specified one girl and one boy, in order to help determine if gender played a role in the experiences and comments. In this study gender did not appear to be a deciding factor in the bullying experiences of the children interviewed.

Recommendations for Further Research

Given that this study's participants identified that there was a lack of anti-bullying steps, anti-bullying policies, and anti-bullying programs within their church environment and the fact that all three of the churches identified bullying situations that had occurred in their church environment, it is recommended that future research focus on exploring and creating a church-wide anti-bullying program that can be adopted by church communities as a whole. After thorough search through multiple data bases, the literature review search yielded only two existing Christian-based anti-bullying programs: Reconciling Works (2013) and The Protectors (2007). Both of these programs have the Christian component, that can be linked to moral development framework based on Fowler (1981) earlier in this chapter where God is at the center of the lessons on bullying, however they both programs leave out other key components described in the Olweus (2015) anti-bullying program which is a program that has been recognized around the world for its success in lower bullying incidences. Bullies having the highest levels of morally disengaged reasoning is another angle that could be explored in future research. Unfortunately, although *Olweus (2015)-Bullying Prevention Program* offers more than

other programs, for the church environment it leaves out an important element of a moral development framework of a Christian base.

The participants in this study who ranged in ages from 12 to 75 years old had limited knowledge about bullying and the consequences related to bullying. All of the participants in the study (children, parents, and church leaders) felt their specific church needed to do more to assist members in addressing the issue of bullying. Suggestions included specific steps to provide anti-bullying education, to initiate anti-bullying policy development, and to support the development and implementation of anti-bullying programs. Further research could follow up on the three churches to understand the impact of adding the steps, policy, and program to the church environment.

Additional studies could be conducted with different churches and churches that have no relationship the researcher in order to conclude if the final data results would be interpreted differently than this study. Future area of research or analysis of church programs needs to incorporate the school community. In order to increase understanding of the impact of bullying for churches, future studies could include broader age ranges of child participants in order to see if there are differences in the responses given during the verbal interviews. The literature review analyzed a study of high school students and bullying. Researchers McNamee and Mercurio (2008) found “one-third of 9th to 12th graders know someone who has been mean on the internet, and that 32% have been bullied on the Internet through gossip, rumor, and /or harmful, negative comments” (p. 370). The parents who participating in the study commented that the youth programs had directors who were emotionally close to the teens which could cause a difference in the results from the children portion of the study because the Youth Director was educating and providing support to the youth of the church when they were having bullying

incidences at their schools. The interviewed parents believed that their high school students were better prepared to handle a bullying occurrence than their younger children because of the extra support provided from the church for older teens. There is no anti-bullying program for the youth but the relationship that the Youth Director has with the youth makes him a resource for the youth when they need support. Future research could explore the effects of a different types youth programs, programs that have a large number of active youth participating on a regular basis, or the numbers of bullying incidences among high school students in a church environment.

Finally, it is important for future research to consider the needs of the different age groups throughout the church setting and how the church could best serve all of the members of the church community. This future research could include interviews with the older population of the church community to get input on their knowledge and experiences with bullying in the church.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this was a thorough study that analyzed the data from interviews to secure answers to the questions:

- What does an effective anti-bullying program within the church look like and how does it work?
- What are the perceptions and understanding of bullying among the people in the church community?
- What do children and families in the church have and not have to enable them to prevent them to handle a bullying situation? and;

- What are the effects of implementing a focus group presentation designed to explain the best practices for a church on anti-bullying programs?

Through interviews with participants from three different churches who had different age and role characteristics (children, parents, and church leaders) this study became an opportunity for 20 people to share their experiences and *life stories* of bullying. McAdams (2001) described life stories as “life scripts, self-schemas, story grammars, personal myths, personal event memories, self-defining memories, nuclear scenes, gendered narratives, narrative coherence, and narrative complexity” (p. 101). The participants shared personal event memories from their past about bullying experiences. These memories and past experiences had shaped their life history and influenced how they understood the issue of bullying at the time of the research study

Participants embraced and shared their stories in the focus group and concluded that they needed more from their church community. The participants felt there was a need to have anti-bullying steps, anti-bullying policies, and anti-bullying programs in place for the entire church community. Today’s church members rely on the church to provide caring and understanding, while providing help to the members for crisis situations such as bullying that they encounter. Based on the participant responses it is clear that participants think the church needs to offer a safe and healthy environment.

The interviews provided the opportunity for the participants to share their personal feelings and beliefs about bullying. Whereas the focus group brought the parents and church leaders together to hear the analyzed data and to discuss the changes that were needed for the three different churches. All of the members were receptive to making changes to their current programs. The responses to the data analysis indicated concern that the church community had experienced such trauma from a place, that is, the church. According to moral theory, the church

should be supportive and caring. Based on interview data and literature, people think of church as a safe place to go and to be treated as God would want people to treat others. According to the moral framework of Fowler (1981), bullying is not an example of how to treat anyone. The data analysis report demonstrated there is information that the churches needed in order to evaluate the occurrences taking place in the religious setting. Children, parents, and church leaders identified that bullying is an aggressive dominant, mean act that someone does to another person. Although the children and some of the parents had some basic knowledge and strategies concerning bullying, they still agreed with the church leaders that churches need to be a part of the total community through having a relationship with the school key stakeholders in helping to educate through anti-bullying steps, anti-bullying policy, and anti-bullying programs.

A church program can work in conjunction with the school to build a total unified community. In the research study, parents and children discussed the various programs being offered in the school setting pertaining to bullying education. As mentioned earlier in this document, programs involving Mother and Daughter outings and other school-wide activities have been offered from the school. *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program* (1978) is a comprehensive approach that includes students, teachers, administrators, and other adults. Although, Olweus was talking about only the school community. I think that a program needs to be all encompassing by including the total community.

Children and youth ministry directors should connect with the local schools to collaborate on programs. It is important for the churches to know what the schools and neighboring churches are doing by combining efforts between schools, churches, and community centers to create a unified front on combating bullying.

Anti-bullying efforts should extend beyond school programs. Addressing the problem of bullying should be a total community effort. The interview data for this study support that children, parents, and church leaders have experienced or witnesses bullying in the church community. Interviewees commented about bullying experiences in congregational meetings, church councils, and with other members in the congregation. Following the traditional saying that “it takes a village to raise a child,” it is my belief that “it takes a village” to put an end to bullying.

This study showed that bullying is not just a problem for children but that bullying is a multi-generational problem therefore it needs a multi-generational approach. Collaboration with community centers as well as schools will reach different populations and generations of people. The evidence this study, show that there are individuals in churches who lack the awareness of bullying. This lack of awareness can be addressed by multi-generational education within churches.

The first step is churches to develop their programs, then expand to connect with schools and the next step is other neighboring churches and community centers. This study was a small sampling of churches from a small geographic area, however, this study may be transferable to other churches with similar characteristics. My study provides support for thinking that there may be a broader need to include anti-bullying programs, steps, and policy in other church communities. All three of the churches interviewed stated there was a lack of awareness and education among their congregations. From the review of literature, I have found there is a lack of research within churches on bullying and anti-bullying programs. Churches who initiate anti-bullying programs help to unite the total church community.

The educational efforts in the congregation work toward educating the congregation needs to be multi-generational. Participants shared that bullying in the church environment is not just something that was happening among the children in the church but actually even more situations concerning bullying were taking place among the older population.

Interview data revealed that children in the church have experienced or seen bullying. Participants identified in the interviews that they had experience verbal, physical, and social bullying. All of the children interviewed experienced or knew someone who had been involved in a bullying situation.

Having a relationship with the churches involved in the study was beneficial in the way that it enabled me to having a meaningful conversation with the children. The children felt that reporting a situation to me was their solution to a bullying problem. Even the introvert child was able to have a discussion about bullying. The extroverted children provided the information needed in the interviews with a multitude of life stories.

In conclusion, this study provided the information needed to answer the research questions. The information gathered from the interviews in this study aligns with other studies completed on bullying in the past by other researchers. My hope is that the information from the data analysis will lead churches to create something new in the form of anti-bullying programs, steps, and procedures for their churches around the education of their congregations on the topic of bullying.

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APPENDIX A

Interview Questions

Church Leaders

1. What do you think of when I say the word “bullying?”
2. What can you tell me about the bullying experiences of members of your congregation, including children?
3. Describe the type of anti-bullying program you already have in place?
4. What are the anti-bullying steps that your church follows in the event of a bullying occurrence?
5. What do you feel your church needs are when it comes to bullying?

Parents

1. What do you think of when I say the word “bullying?”
2. What can you tell me about the bullying experiences of members of your congregation, including children?
3. How do you think that your church can help you in a bullying situation?
4. What are the anti-bullying steps that your church currently follows in a bullying situation?
5. Do you feel that you are equipped to handle a bullying situation if it were to happen to your child? Can you explain?

Children

1. What do you think of when I say the word “bullying?”

2. Have you ever been involved in a bullying situation at school or at church?
3. What did you or would you do if you were involved in a bullying situation?
4. Is there someone you can go to in your church setting if you were involved in a bullying situation here at church?
5. Do you know of anyone that was involved in a bullying situation? Were they the bully, bullied, or the bystander?
6. Is there something that you wish the church would teach or tell you about bullying?
7. If you have never seen or experienced bullying at church? Why do you think that you have not?
8. If you saw someone being bullied at church what would you do?
9. If you saw someone bullied at school what would you do? Would the actions be the same as what you would do at church?

APPENDIX B

Identification of Attributes

Table 1.2 Study #1 Programs Identified through the Literature Search that was Analyzed

	Allan Bean Bullyi ng Preve n-tion Progra m (Bean e, 2015).	Olweus (Olweu s, 2015)	Reconci ling Works (Recon ciling- works, 2013)	Safe Teen (Robert s, 2015).	Steps to Respect (Committe e for Children, 2015)	The Gentle Warrior Program (Twemlow , 2015)	The No Bullyin g System (Carlisl e, 2015).	The Protec tors (Coug hlin, 2012)	There's No Excuse for Peer Abuse (Utterly Global, 2015)
Study surveys	*	*	*			*			*
Whole school/ church awareness	*	*	*		*	*	*	*	*
Curriculum teaching tolerance	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Immediate consequenc s	*	*	*			*	*		*
Parent involvement	*	*	*		*	*	*	*	*
Training/ planning	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Discussion with bully/victim	*	*		*	*	*	*	*	*
Christian perspective			*					*	