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Impact of Victimization of Bullying on Attitudes of Middle School Students in NCSA Schools in Arkansas

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IMPACT OF VICTIMIZATION OF BULLYING ON ATTITUDES OF MIDDLE

SCHOOL STUDENTS IN NCSA SCHOOLS IN ARKANSAS

by

Bradley D. Gist

Dissertation

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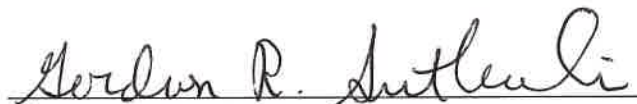Doctor of Education

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IMPACT OF VICTIMIZATION OF BULLYING BEHAVIORS ON MIDDLE

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Dissertation

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Completing this dissertation was made possible with the assistance of some important individuals. Dr. Gordon Sutherlin provided me with countless hours of as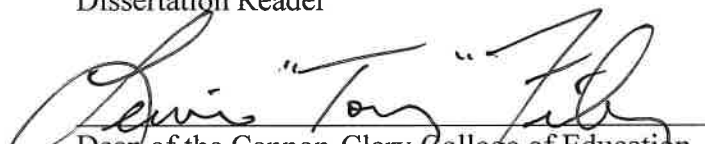sistance and guidance throughout this process. Additionally, Dr. Connie Elrod and Dr. Wendy Ellis provided great assistance as my dissertation readers. Their comments and editing suggestions made the final product better and served to improve both my writing and communication skills. Dr. Michael Brooks was an invaluable resource that provided the answers to many questions for all those involved in this research project. To each of these, along with the entire faculty within the doctoral program at Harding University, I am profoundly grateful.

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this degree and research study to the one who makes all things possible, our Father in Heaven. Without the grace, mercy, and love of God, nothing like this can be accomplished. It is through His great care that I have been blessed to have had the support of my family, my faculty, my professors, and my dissertation committee. This same love provided me the strength to persevere through the challenging times in this process and see it through to the end.

ABSTRACT

by
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December 2012

Title: Impact of Victimization of Bullying on Attitudes of Middle School Students in
NCSA Schools in Arkansas (Under the direction of Dr. Gordon Sutherlin)

The purpose of this study was to add to the limited research with regard to
bullying in private schools in general and specifically to member schools of the National
Christian School Association (NCSA). Middle school students in grades 6, 7, and 6 were
given a survey concerning bullying and bullying behavior in their schools. The effects by
grade level of students in rural school settings versus urban school settings were
determined with regard to the responses of the survey in four areas: prevalence of
bullying, willingness to seek help, aggressive attitudes about bullying, and the overall
results of the survey.

The quantitative, non-experimental study was conducted in four NCSA member
schools in Arkansas. Two of these schools were in rural settings and two in urban settings
as defined by the United States Census Bureau. The data collected were the results of a
survey administered by a third party.

Students were selected in a stratified random sampling. They were stratified by
grade and gender before being randomly selected for the study. A total of 20 students
were selected from each grade at each school, when the total number of subjects in that

group exceeded 20. In some cases, the number of students in a specific grade was less than the desired sample size. In these instances, the entire group was selected for the sample.

A 2 x 3 factorial analysis of variance was used for the analysis of collected data for each of the four hypotheses. The independent variables for each hypothesis were the grade levels of the respondent (sixth, seventh, and eighth) and the location of the school (rural and urban). The dependent variables were the four areas measured by the survey: prevalence of bullying, willingness to seek help, aggressive attitudes about bullying, and the overall results of the survey, respectively.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The relationships that exist between students within the framework of any educational setting are impacted by many factors. Students interact with one another on many different levels every day and have the multiple opportunities to affect the lives of their classmates in both positive and negative ways. The manner in which students react to one another are often directly related to the nature of the contact. Positive actions generally produce positive reaction with the opposite effect resulting with negative actions.

A negative interaction between students, perhaps one that has existed since the beginning of organized school settings, is that of bullying. Much research has been conducted regarding the prevalence and nature of bullying. Bradshaw, Sawyer, and O'Brennan (2007) indicated that 49% of students reported being bullied in past month. This was supported by a study by Pergolizzi et al. (2009) in which 45.1% of the middle school students surveyed admitted being bullied a little of the time. However, not all research supports these numbers. Holt, Kantor, and Finkelhor (2009) found that bullying rates were somewhat higher at 59%, and Carliyle and Steinman (2007) found a much lower rate of 20.1%.

Studies conducted both in the United States and abroad have focused on varying age groups (Bauman, 2008; Carlyle & Steinman, 2007; Cheng et al., 2010; McGuckin,

2010; Raskauskas, Gregory, Harvey, Rifshana, & Evans, 2010). Each of these has incorporated findings that describe bullying based on gender, age or grade level, and race or ethnicity. Findings are inconclusive as to which category within each of these factors demonstrates higher rates of bullying or victimization. Carlyle and Steinman (2007) stated that males hold a slight edge over females with regard to bullying and victimization. According to findings from another study, Bauman (2008) found no difference in the bullying rate based on gender. These studies also stated that bullying and subsequent victimization generally declined as grade level increased: Langdon and Preble's (2008) findings indicated that this trend does not always hold true because 9th and 10th graders reported more frequent bullying than their younger counterparts did. Cheng et al. (2010) supported these findings and found that the same grade levels were likely to experience bullying at similar rates to younger students. Finally, the debate over bullying rates based on race and ethnicity is equally inconclusive. Langdon and Preble (2008) found that minorities suffer bullying at higher rates than do non-minority students. However, this was not supported in the study done by Bauman (2008). Bauman pointed out that Caucasian students are bullies or victims at much higher rate than their minority counterparts are.

The specific rates of bullying victimization do vary from study to study. This may be related to several factors including the specific schools, the size of the sample, the type of schools involved, and the particular instrument utilized (Bradshaw et al., 2007; Holt et al., 2009; Langdon & Preble, 2008; Pergolizzi et al., 2009). This is especially true of studies conducted outside the United States. In a study of non-American schools, McGuckin (2010) found that 30.4% of students in schools in Northern Ireland reported

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being bullied. Likewise, Raskauskas et al. (2010) reported that only 15.1% of students in New Zealand were victims of bullying, and Cheng et al. (2010) asserted that 25.7% of Chinese middle school students reported being victims of bullying. The differences found in these studies may be attributed to culture as well as the fact that each utilized instruments peculiar to their countries, aimed at identifying the efficacy of anti-bullying programs.

Regardless of the exact numbers of bullying victims, it should be stated that bullying has historically been and continues to be a problem for students in schools across the globe. However, the consequences of bullying do not affect the victim alone. Those who are considered perpetrators as well as those who witness these acts feel the impact as well. Pergolizzi et al. (2009) found that 54.5% of the students observed others being bullied some, most, or all of the time, along with 38.5% who stated they had bullied others at school. Bradshaw et al. (2007) noted that 70.6% had observed bullying but only 17.4% admitted that they had bullied others. Though varied, these findings support the fact that the victims of bullying include not only the target, but perpetrators and witnesses as well.

Responses to bullying have become one of the greatest challenges in this debate along with selecting the best method of intervention. Hirschstein, Edstrom, Frey, Snell, and MacKenzie (2007) outlined a method of *walking the talk* with regard to bullying prevention in which teachers are encouraged to both teach and model anti-bullying expectations. The Support Group Method (SGM), a "non-punitive [program], seeking to change the behavior of children involved in bullying by making them aware of the suffering of the victim…" has been developed and used extensively across the United

Kingdom with some success (Smith, Howard, & Thompson, 2007, p. 4). Samara and Smith (2008) investigated the effectiveness of a whole school policy entitled *Don't suffer in silence: An anti-bullying pack for schools*, by infusing the program into schools throughout the United Kingdom in the 1996.

Along with concerns over intervention at the school and even at the community level, school leaders are increasingly concerned with what to expect from victims and witnesses in response to bullying (Bandyopadhyay, Cornell, & Konold, 2009). When students exhibit aggressive attitudes with regard to bullying, both as examples of bullying and reactions to being victims or witnesses to bullying, school leaders feel that these attitudes should be addressed. These reactions to the inappropriate acts of bullies, as well as the subsequent consequences for perpetrators of bullying, are becoming a concern to multiple stakeholders (Holt et al., 2007; Oliver & Candappa, 2007; Smith et al., 2007). Considering how students respond includes understanding the aggressive attitudes outlined by Bandyopadhyay et al. (2009), as well as understanding whom students will talk to about bullying. Smith and Shu (2000) found that students would talk with almost equal comfort to their friends and family members but with significantly less frequency to school faculty and staff. Oliver and Candappa (2007) supported this idea and indicated that the discrepancy was even greater. According to this study, results supported the claim that students want to talk about what they are experiencing but not always to those who may have the greatest effect on stopping the problem.

Bullying is a prevalent activity in many schools around the world. The importance of identifying both the nature and the extent of the issue cannot be overstated. However, simple acknowledgement of the problem, without action, will only serve to perpetuate the

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issue. It is a global phenomenon with multiple methods of containment. The question remains: What can and should be done to help the victim, the perpetrator, and the witness?

Statement of the Problem

There were four purposes to this study. The first purpose was to determine the effects by grade level of students in rural school settings versus students in urban settings on the prevalence of teasing and bullying in school for sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students in member schools of the National Christian School Association in Arkansas. Second, the purpose was to determine the effects by grade level of students in rural school settings versus students in urban settings on willingness to seek help when being bullied for sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students in member schools of the National Christian School Association in Arkansas. Third, the purpose of this study was to determine the effects by grade level of students in rural school settings versus students in urban settings on aggressive attitudes with regard to bullying for sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students in member schools of the National Christian School Association in Arkansas. The fourth purpose of this study was to determine the effects by grade level of students in rural school settings versus students in urban settings on overall attitudes toward bullying for sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students in member schools of the National Christian School Association (NCSA) in Arkansas.

Background

Bullying behaviors are actions that have been prevalent in educational settings as long as schools have existed. The research indicated that these types of behaviors vary in

type and frequency, with the intended purpose being as varied as the resulting impact on the victims.

Prevalence of Bullying

Bullying has become entrenched in many schools. These actions have become so much a part of their culture that schools are beginning to create specific plans and programs to address this issue (Bandyopadhyay et al., 2009; Samara & Smith, 2008; Smith et al., 2007). Schools are not alone in this endeavor. States are beginning to enact legislation that specifically addresses the fact that schools must develop methods for dealing with bullies.

The exact extent of bullying in schools across the globe varies based on many factors. School climate, prevention programs, age of students, school demographics, and adult-student relations are just a few of these factors. However, the prevalence of bullying has been the subject of numerous research studies (Bradshaw et al., 2007; Carlyle & Steinman, 2007; Cheng et al., 2010; Holt et al., 2009; Langdon & Preble, 2008; McGuckin, 2010; Pergolizzi et al., 2009). Bradshaw et al. (2007) estimated that 49% of children reported that they were victims of bullying during the last month along with 30.8% reporting that they had bullied others. Pergolizzi et al. (2009) discovered similar numbers in that 45.1% of students reported victimization and 38.5% admitted bullying others.

The most alarming results came from a survey conducted by Landgon and Preble (2008), which found that 96.6% of students had experienced bullying in some form. On the other extreme of data is a study by Carlyle and Steinman (2007), they found that only 20.1% of the students admitted being bullied during the past year with an additional

28.2% admitting that they had bullied others. Although discrepancies in data do exist, the fact that bullying exists in schools is evidenced by the results of each of these studies.

The existence and prevalence of bullying is not an American problem alone. Bullying is a global phenomenon that has touched educational settings in nearly every corner. Rakauskas et al. (2010) studied primary students in New Zealand and found that 15% of the subjects reported being victims of bullying. Cheng et al. (2010) found that 25% of middle school in China were found to have experienced victimization in the past month, with 10% experiencing it 20 of the 30 days in that month. Finally, in a study of bullying in schools in Northern Ireland, McGuckin (2010) indicated that 30.4% of students had been bullied in school, and 7.5% stated that they had bullied others. Each of these studies demonstrates two important facts for educators in the United States. First, American students are not alone in their struggles against bullying. Others like them around the world are being victimized as well. Second, statistics seemed to indicate that American students deal with bullying at greater rates than their counterparts in other countries (Bradshaw et al., 2007; Carlyle & Steinman, 2007; Cheng et al., 2010; Holt et al., 2009; Langdon & Preble, 2008; McGuckin, 2010; Pergolizzi et al., 2009).

One aspect of bullying that is incorporated in some studies is the students who witness bullying (Bradshaw et al., 2007; Pergolizzi et al., 2009). This has become increasingly important to educators due to the effect that seeing bullying occur often has on students as well as the impact on the overall climate of the school. Reported rates of witnessing bullying vary from 65% to 84% (Bradshaw et al., 2007; Pergolizzi et al., 2009). These rates seem to support both the concern about bullying in schools and the need to generate prevention and intervention programs.

Nature of Bullying

Bullying in schools takes on many forms. The traditional methods employed by bullies include physical harm, real or perceived threats to the victim's safety, name calling or teasing, as well as the spreading of false rumors intended to shed a negative light on another student (Bond, Wolfe, Tollit, Butler, & Patton, 2007; Cheng et al., 2010; Patchin & Hinduja, 2010; Pergolizzi et al., 2009). According to these studies, additional methods that are becoming more prevalent among school age children today include intentionally leaving someone out of group activities, threatening group members who would seek to include the victim, and cyberbullying. The latter is a newer method with the increased availability of technology to students.

Bond et al. (2007) found that between 35% and 50% of students reported being bullied in some form. According to their research, teasing or name calling and spreading rumors were the primary forms at 33.3% and 25%, respectively. Actual physical harm and hurting the victim was the least common reported form of bullying in this study, at 10.4%, behind even the growing method of exclusion from activities at 12.5%. This might seem to indicate that bullies are showing a greater desire to limit their activities to areas with little chance of proof. These statistics are supported by other research, including Pergolizzi et al. (2009) who found that 60.7% of students stated that gossip or rumors were the primary methods of bullying and Cheng et al. (2010) who stated that verbal or exclusion bullying was more prevalent than physical bullying by a margin of almost 2 to 1.

Cyberbullying, the use of technology to threaten fellow students, is among the newest forms of bullying that schools must address (Patchin & Hiduja, 2010). The

expanding use of cell phone text messages and photographs, as well as social media websites, has made instant access and communication the norm for school age children. Patchin and Hiduja found that the number of students who indicated they had used any or all of these mediums to bully another student was at 21.8%, along with 29.4% who had received bullying messages or pictures. Pergolizzi et al. (2009) supported these results when they found that 27.9% of middle school students had been cyberbullied with another 15.2% stating that they had been a cyberbully. Patchin and Hiduja (2010), as well as Pergolizzi et al. (2009), demonstrate that cyberbullying is affecting schoolchildren at a rate that rivals more traditional methods of bullying.

Reporting Bullying Incidents

Although there are many responses that are available to any victim of bullying, the one most often encouraged is simply to report the incident to an adult, preferably a school staff member. This seems like a reasonable response, though it is not always the method selected by either victims or witnesses to bulling activity (Holt et al., 2009; Oliver & Cadappa, 2007; Pergolizzi et al., 2009). Holt et al. (2009) found that although 86% of the students in their study indicated that they had been victims of bullying, only 61% of these ever reported it to their parents. Oliver and Candappa (2007) indicated slightly better rates at 70% to 78 % but also indicated that only 51% of fourth graders and 31% of seventh graders were comfortable telling a teacher or other faculty member. Other studies have reported even lower rates of reporting bullying, including Brown, Birch, and Kancherla (2005) that found that only one fourth of the students told an adult when they were bullied.

Regardless of whether a victim or witness would tell an adult, much has been discovered about the comfort level of victims in schools. Students indicated, at a rate of 68.8%, there was a faculty or staff member in their school with whom they felt they could talk to about bullying (McGuckin, 2010). The author also found that another 22.8% stated they would not talk to an adult at school if they were victimized, with 59.5% stating that it depended on the circumstances and their relationship to the staff member. Students may feel that they have an advocate if bullied but are still leery of confiding in them.

The question remains, then, if students feel comfortable talking about bullying and even seek individuals out with whom they can confide, who are they choosing to tell? Oliver and Candappa (2007) stated that 78% of fourth graders are most likely to tell their mother, 70% their father, or 68% a friend. For seventh graders, the numbers drop for parents with 58% for mothers and 44% for fathers but are consistent for friends at 71%. The facts seem clear, though students are willing to share their experiences about victimization; they seem reluctant to do so with those who are in a position to provide the highest levels of assistance (Holt et al., 2009; Oliver & Candappa, 2007; Pergolizzi et al., 2009).

Student Response to Bullying

Students who find themselves victimized by bullying have been found to react in many different manners (Oliver & Candappa, 2007; Pergolizzi et al., 2009; Samara & Smith, 2008). These studies indicated that the manner of reacting is often without regard to any possible consequences. The hope of the victim is only to get the bully to stop the negative behavior.

Parents frequently provide alternatives for their children as a means of responding to bullying. Holt et al. (2009) found that of the parents surveyed, 45% gave ideas about how to avoid the bully. Additionally, 45% indicated that they instructed their child to stand up for themselves, with 27% stating they gave permission for their child to retaliate physically. Pergolizzi et al. (2009) supported this by stating that 38.8 % of boys and 17.7% of girls react by hitting back. Oliver and Candappa (2007) found, "72% of pupils in Year 5 and 61% of pupils in Year 8 thought that 'learning to stand up for oneself' would 'always' or 'usually' work to stop bullying" (p. 77).

Additional methods of dealing with victimization do exist that are generally less severe with fewer consequences for the victim. Pergolizzi et al. (2009) found that 40.2% of girls and 25.7% of boys tended to ignore the bully. This study also found that 20% of the victims stated that they did nothing when bullied, and two thirds told an adult. The response of telling an adult or other person is the one that is usually encouraged by school personnel though the one commonly chosen as a confidant is not always an adult (Oliver & Candappa, 2007; Pergolizzi et al., 2009). Additionally, Samara and Smith (2008) indicated that peer mediation not only was used as a reactionary method but was becoming more prevalent among students.

Attitudes Regarding Bullies

Bullies, like any student in school, may be seen in a variety of ways. These various opinions are often based on the interaction of the perpetrator with other students, witnessed by the victim and even faculty members. It should be stated that the opinions held might not be related to the individual's behavior. They may be widely held opinions

generated by the bully's general demeanor, outside of the bullying act (Bradshaw et al., 2007).

Regardless of when the opinion is formed, pre or post bullying incident, Bradshaw et al. (2007) found in their study that three general perceptions of bullies were widely held among their sample of students. The first was that bullies are generally seen as popular or may be popularized due to their bullying. Their study included 4th through 12th graders and found that 40% of elementary students, 65.1% of middle school students, and 61.2% of high school students felt that bullies were generally more popular.

A second perception, from Bradshaw et al. (2007), was that elementary students feared bullies at a rate of 30.5%, middle school students at 48.3%, and high school students at 48%. The authors indicated that bullies were feared due to the nature and severity of their behavior. Similar to this perception was their third that stated that elementary students disliked bullies at a rate of 64.4%, middle school students at 65.3%, and high school students at 66.8%. The difference in these values seemed to indicate, at least for this study, that it is more likely that bullies will be disliked for their actions than actually feared. This is particularly true at the elementary level as opposed to middle and high school where nearly half of the students indicated they were afraid of bullies. This study did not investigate particular causes for increased fear of bullies other than their bullying behavior.

Willingness to Seek Help

Parents and school personnel alike have a growing concern for students that have become victims of bullying activity as well as the perpetrators. Each of these groups of adults wants to intervene on behalf of all children involved in bullying. The challenge for

adults working to influence the lives of these children is fostering a desire to seek the help needed to both overcome victimization and perpetration of bullying (Bandyopadhyay et al., 2009; McGuckin, 2010). Multiple studies have indicated that some victims will not report the bullying incident, choosing rather to remain silent (Oliver & Cadappa, 2007; Smith & Shu, 2000; Williams & Cornell, 2006). Smith and Shu (2000) discovered that bullies often relish in and benefit from the silence of their victims.

For this reason, a victim's willingness to seek help is imperative for their own benefit and that of the bully (McGuckin, 2010; Oliver & Candappa, 2007). One individual that is often a source of comfort and strength is the counselor. Oliver and Candappa (2007) stated, "Speaking to a counselor was described as a useful means of reducing emotional tension, and enhancing self-confidence and self-esteem" (p. 80). In this study, students indicated that they found solace in the confidentiality that exists with a counselor. This feeling of security changed somewhat when asked if they would contact a help line. The study indicated that 39% of fourth graders said they would, and 32% said they would not. The authors also found that these numbers worsen as they move on in middle school grades where 51% of seventh graders said they would not call. Findings seemed to indicate that a face-to-face interaction is a preferred method of discussion as student progress through school. Based on this fact as well as the research of Williams and Cornell (2006), willingness to seek help seems to decline as students get older. This study indicated that students' willingness to seek help drops dramatically between sixth and eighth grades, as well as being lower for male than female students. Many possible reasons exist for these findings though an exact cause was not determined in this study.

In the end, students tend to be willing to seek help in school environments where they feel safe and there is a program in place to address bullying (Bandyopadhyay et al., 2009). This study, using a school climate survey, discovered that when an educational setting fosters a climate that defends the victims of bullying and seeks to intervene on their behalf, students feel safe and, more importantly, comfortable in seeking help from school personnel.

Prevention Programs

Across the globe, individual schools as well as entire school districts are endeavoring to address the issue of bullying. These efforts are often grass roots in nature, primarily focused on addressing bullying after the incidents have occurred (Bandyopadhyay et al., 2009; Cheng et al., 2010; Hirschstein et al., 2007; Langdon & Preble, 2008; Samara & Smith, 2008; Smith et al., 2007). These research studies show that though prevention and intervention methods are not always punitive, they are by nature reactive rather than proactive.

The most extensive efforts have stemmed from various organized prevention programs. Some are begun as national initiatives such as the *Don't suffer in Silence* program begun in the United Kingdom in the 1990s (Department of Education, 1994). This program, funded by the Department of Education and Science, was introduced in two offerings in 1996 and 2002 as a method of assisting schools in developing their own anti-bullying programs.

Samara and Smith (2008) found that schools employing whole school policies had greater degrees of success in stemming the tide of bullying in schools. This study also indicated that over the six years between the two offerings, the number of school

employing these whole school policies had risen from 29% to 68%, a clear sign that schools were acknowledging and addressing the issue of bullying.

Another type of prevention program that has found success in the United Kingdom, with some introduction in the United States, is the Support Group Method (SGM) (Smith et al., 2007). This approach, initially published as the No Blame Approach by Robinson and Maines (1997), seeks to be a non-punitive method of intervening in bullying situations (Smith et al., 2007). Interestingly, this study, which surveyed both schools that employed SGM as well as local authorities in each school's community, found that although the schools often cited positive results and lowered rates of victimization, local authorities were less convinced of success. The researchers found that success in schools often depended on who administered or managed the SGM program, teachers or administration, along with how strong the consensus was on implementation and utilization.

Regardless of the prevention program that is implemented, research indicates that teachers must be the first line of awareness, defense, and intervention (Bradshaw et al., 2007; Hirschstein et al., 2007). Additionally, these facets will only hold true if teachers model and enforce the program that they are selling to students. Students are more responsive to prevention efforts if teachers *walk the talk* (Hirschstein et al., 2007). According to this study, the manners in which teachers speak of bullying prevention and then enforce their speech are more effective when these methods are varied. These findings seem to place an emphasis on the fact that no two incidences, victims, or perpetrators are alike. According to Hirschstein et al., methods must span across all layers

of curriculum and instructional techniques to meet the needs of the overall school program to address bullying.

When teachers walk the talk, they are beginning to address the one factor that most often affects whether bullying is accepted or rejected in an educational setting, school climate. In order to address the acceptance of bullying, and thereby encouraging the reporting of victimization and witnessing of bullying, a school's climate must be such that bullying is unacceptable (Bandyopadhyay et al., 2009). The authors found that for bullying to be seen as unacceptable, schools should evaluate what the climate is with regard to bullying, and then seek to address any areas that will encourage or discourage an appropriate view of bullying.

Ultimately, for any prevention program to be effective, bullying must become so unacceptable that students are eager to report it and faculty and staff are prepared to address it. This is borne out by research studies that indicated that when students, parents and teachers alike are willing to work in concert to defeat bullying in schools, greater success can be achieved. (Bandyopadhyay et al., 2009; Holt et al., 2009; Samara & Smith, 2008; Smith et al., 2007)

Parent Involvement

Parental involvement in the bullying dilemma affects both the victim and the perpetrator (Holt et al., 2009; Oliver & Candappa, 2007; Smith & Shu, 2000). Intervention by any adult carries with it some risk for the student. However, victims are more likely to tell their parents of the bullying than faculty or staff at their school. Of fourth graders, 78% and 58% of seventh graders felt comfortable telling their mothers, compared to only 51% of fourth graders and 31% of seventh graders who would tell a

teacher (Oliver & Candappa). Smith and Shu (2000) found that 45% of victims talked to family members, and only 35% talked to faculty and staff.

Though parents often do not understand the magnitude of the bullying problem at the school their children attend, they do agree that it is harmful. Holt et al. (2009) found that 88% of parents felt that teasing was harmful, and 81% felt that school should be more aware of the problem. Additionally, the authors stated that 82% of parents felt that the consequences for bullies should be severe, and 93% stated that positive interactions between students were the best defense against bullying. However, the study also found that although 59% of students reported being the victim of a bully, only 41% of the parents were aware of the victimization. Additionally, although 31% of the students admitted that they were perpetrators of bullying, only 11% of the parents thought this was the case. Clearly, a discrepancy exists between what parents believe to be true and what is actually occurring in schools.

The challenge for the victim and the bully is to maintain stronger interactions with parents when bullying occurs. This is taking place as 69% of students who were found to be bullying others, received consequences at home as well (Holt et al., 2009). With regard to the victim, parents handled the situation with different methods, ranging from talking to their child, speaking with school personnel, and talking with the bullies parents. Holt et al. reported,

> Among parents who suspected that their child was being teased or picked on at school, they responded in a number of ways. Most parents (79%) talked to their child about it; 45% told their child to stick up for him/herself; 44% talked to the child's teacher; 45 % talked to the principal about it; 10 % took their child to a

counselor; 14% talked to the parent of the other child involved; 44% gave their

child ideas about how to avoid being teased; and 27% told their child not to hit

back. (p. 53)

This variety of interaction indicated that parents were generally concerned about these

incidences and wanted to provide some resolution for the problem.

Hypotheses

The review of literature suggested that many students in schools have been

victims of bullying. It also supported the claim that the type of bullying employed varies

drastically as does the impact on those who are victimized. The majority of research and

subsequent literature referenced these actions within the settings of public schools. A lack

of research, however, existed among private schools in general, and member schools of

the National Christian School Association in particular. For this reason, the following

hypotheses were developed.

1. No significant difference will exist by grade level between sixth, seventh, and

   eighth grade students in member schools of the National Christian School

   Association in Arkansas in rural school settings versus students in urban

   settings on the prevalence of teasing and bullying in school.

2. No significant difference will exist by grade level between sixth, seventh, and

   eighth grade students in member schools of the National Christian School

   Association in Arkansas in rural school settings versus students in urban

   settings on the willingness to seek help when being bullied.

3. No significant difference will exist by grade level between sixth, seventh, and

   eighth grade students in member schools of the National Christian School

Association in Arkansas in rural school settings versus students in urban

settings on the aggressive attitudes with regard to bullying.

4. No significant difference will exist by grade level between sixth, seventh, and

eighth grade students in member schools of the National Christian School

Association in Arkansas in rural school settings versus students in urban

settings on the overall attitudes toward bullying.

Description of Terms

Aggressive attitudes. Aggressive attitudes are behaviors or actions in response to

bullying that are of an aggressive nature (Bandyopadhyay et al., 2009). These actions

may themselves be similar to bullying activities.

Bullying. An action where individual consciously and intentionally seeks to exert

control over another is known as bullying (Bradshaw et al., 2007). These actions may be

verbal, physical, or a combination of both. The control may be real, perceived, or make

little difference to the victim. The objective is for the bully to gain control over the

victim. Actions by true bullies are repetitive and most often targeted at a particular

individual.

Bullying behavior. Bullying behavior is characterized by actions carried out by

an individual with no conscious effort to gain real or perceived control (Bandyopadhyay

et al., 2009). These actions, though intentional, generally are not repetitive or targeted at

a particular individual. They are simply actions that are similar to what a bully would do

when seeking control of an individual (Bradshaw et al., 2007).

Cyberbullying. The newest method of bullying individuals is cyberbullying and

involves the utilization of technological devices to send threatening or embarrassing

messages. The most common mediums are social media pages, text messages, and photos (Patchin & Hinduja, 2010).

National Christian School Association (NCSA). The NCSA is an organization made up of private, religious schools holding to the doctrines of the churches of Christ (National Christian School Association, 2011). Schools range in size and numbers of grades offered and are spread throughout the United States. For this study, four schools in Arkansas will be used.

Rural school setting. Rural schools are defined as those educational institutions located in non-urbanized areas with a population of less than 50,000 (United States Census Bureau, 2010).

Urban school setting. Urban schools are defined as those educational institutions located in urbanized areas with a population of greater than 50,000 (United States Census Bureau, 2010).

Significance

The significance of this study stems from the general assumption that private schools are less affected by bullying behaviors than their public school counterparts. This belief may be due in large part to the character of private school students, faculty, and staff members. It is often assumed that schools with religious affiliations are especially immune to this phenomenon, including member schools of the National Christian School Association. Anecdotal evidence, however, strongly suggests this to be an inaccurate assessment of bullying in these educational settings. Experienced administrators within secular and religiously affiliated private schools support the notion that bullying exists in all educational settings. The purpose of this study was to determine if bullying does exist

within member schools of the National Christian School Association; and, if so, to what degree.

Research Gaps

Despite the acknowledged existence of bullying in private schools, much of the research studies focused on public education (Bauman, 2008; Bradshaw et al., 2007; Carlyle & Steinman, 2007; Hirschstein et al., 2007; Oliver & Candappa, 2007). None of these studies addressed bullying as it exists among private schools in general or NCSA member schools specifically.

Although the presence of bullying in this particular subset of private schools has generally been recognized only through anecdotal evidence, it was necessary to investigate the existence of bullying and the possible extent of such behavior among this particular subset of schools. This study was designed to address the gap in research that currently exists, in the hope that these schools will benefit from the study's results.

Possible Implications for the Practice

The information collected and analyzed in this study will benefit National Christian School Association member schools specifically, as well other private schools and their leaders in several ways. First, for the schools involved in the study, the collection of data and their analyses regarding the existence and extent of bullying within their educational setting will be beneficial. Data will enable administrators to determine the best methods of addressing the problem, if one exists. Second, for National Christian School Association member schools across the country and other private schools, this study provides a framework for evaluating the issue of bullying. This is especially true as it relates to the three primary areas of the study. The ability to emulate a study for a

specific educational setting, without creating the entire study, makes the evaluation easier. Finally, the study could serve as a starting point for other similar studies of bullying. The information collected and analyzed can be mined for other information as well as providing future researchers with the beginnings of a study.

Process to Accomplish

Design

A quantitative, non-experimental strategy was used in this study. This causal comparative, survey study was conducted in two rural and two urban private schools in Arkansas. The independent variables for all four hypotheses were setting of the school (rural or urban) and grade level of the students surveyed (sixth versus seventh versus eighth). For the first three hypotheses, the dependent variables were the results of the three different subsections of the student survey, which included prevalence of teasing and bullying, willingness of students to seek help, and aggressive attitudes toward being bullied, respectively. For the fourth hypothesis, the dependant variable was the overall attitude toward bullying measured by the composite result of the survey.

Sample

This study utilized sixth through eighth grade students in four private schools in Arkansas. The four schools were selected because of their membership in the National Christian School Association. Students were selected using a stratified, random sample. A total of 20 students from each grade were selected creating a pool of 80 students from each grade, with a total sample of 240 involved in the study. The students were given a survey, administered by the researcher, relating to their perceptions with regard to bullying in their schools.

Instrumentation

   The survey used for this study was the School Climate Bullying Survey created by Cornell and Sheras (2003). The authors originally developed a 24-question survey, calculated on a Likert-type scale. They later modified the survey to include 20 questions divided into three main areas of school climate: prevalence of teasing and bullying, willingness of students to seek help, and aggressive attitudes related to bullying activity. Three additional questions were added related to demographic information. Cornell and Sheras noted that the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated for each component of the survey with the results indicating a reliable instrument. The alpha values were as follows: prevalence of teasing and bullying was $\alpha = .65$ after reducing the number of questions to four, willingness to seek help was $\alpha = .80$, and aggressive attitudes was $\alpha = .80$.

Data Analysis

   To address the hypotheses related to the survey results, four 2 x 3 factorial analysis of variances (ANOVA) were conducted using school setting (rural versus urban) and grade level (sixth versus seventh versus eighth) as the independent variables. The dependent variables for the ANOVA were the survey results separated into three subdivisions the composite results. The first three dependant variables were the three components of the survey: prevalence of teasing and bullying, willingness of students to seek help, and aggressive attitudes in response to bullying, respectively. The fourth dependant variable was the overall attitude toward bullying measured by the composite results of the survey. When testing the results of the study, the researcher used non-directional hypotheses with a .05 level of significance.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Children of all ages in today's schools are exposed to an increasing number of negative experiences. One of these is the bullying that leads to the victimization of from 20.1% up to 96.1% of students (Carlyle & Steinman, 2007; Langdon & Preble, 2008). Three areas were discussed in this chapter related directly to the issue of bullying; the prevalence of bullying, the attitudes of both the bully and the victim of bullying, and the willingness of victims to seek assistance.

Prevalence of Bullying

The prevalence of bullying has been well established by multiple studies from across the globe (Bradshaw et al., 2007; Carlyle & Steinman, 2007; Kobayashi, 1999; Lai, Ye, & Chang, 2008; Popoola, 2005). Research studies have presented varied ideas regarding the nature of the bullying (Bond et al., 2007; Cheng et al., 2010; Patchin & Hinduja, 2010; Pergolizzi et al., 2009), along with diverse responses to specific incidences (Bandyopadhyay et al., 2009; Bradshaw et al., 2007; Hirschstein et al., 2007; Williams & Cornell, 2006). These various perspectives on different aspects of bullying and victimization provide evidence to the fact that this type of behavior occurs globally.

Prevalence in American Schools

The prevalence of bullying is an important concern for schools and school administrators. Students, parents, and educators alike often share this concern. In a survey

of middle school students across four states, 81.6% believed that bullying is a problem in their school with 17.3% indicating they feel it is a serious problem (Pergolizzi et al., 2009). Nolin, Davies, and Chandler (1995) stated that 71% of students stated that bullying does occur with an additional 25% who are worried about bullying, specifically being a target. A study by Khosropour and Walsh (2001) placed that number at 56%. Although this final study did indicate a lower percentage of students see bullying as a problem, the study still demonstrated that more than half of the students surveyed are concerned about bullying.

With regard to the parents' perspective, though potentially less informed than other constituents, results still showed that 46% believe, as their children do, that bullying is a problem (Drosopoulos, Heald, & McCue, 2008). Of this group of parents, 19% stated that their children had complained about witnessing or being victims of bullying. Of the 59% of students who claimed to be victimized by bullies, according to Holt et al., (2009), only 41% of their parents stated that they thought their child was being bullied. A similar difference existed between the 31% of students who admitted to bullying, despite the fact that only 11% of their parents knew about their children's activities.

Teachers, as well as parents and students, have indicated their concern about bullying activities in school, along with the impact that is felt by the victims. Of teachers, the Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network (GLSEN, 2005) 53% reported that bullying and harassment of students is a serious problem. Drosopoulos et al. (2008) found that teachers observe various kinds of bullying including 33% who witness name calling, 29% who have discovered students spreading rumors and gossip about other students, and 15% having witnessed teasing.

In many cases, the actions of bullies are observed not only by the victim but also by those who witness the unpleasant incident. According to Perolizzi et al. (2009), 83.7% of the students surveyed had witnessed bullying with 25.7% stating that they have seen these actions on a frequent basis. Additional studies have demonstrated similar results of between 80% and 96% (Isernhagen & Harris, 2002; Langdon & Preble, 2008). Therrien (2011) stated that 52% of students always or often see bullying occur. Of the teachers, 30% stated they see bullying at least 10 times a day and 7% witness it 20 times a day. Another study indicated that 56% of students confirmed that they witness bullying in their schools (Nolin et al., 1995).

The extent of bullying and victimization within educational settings fluctuates between studies. Anderson and Swiatowy (2008) stated that 75% of the students involved had been bullied at school, and 25% indicated that they had bullied others. A similar study indicated that 58% of the students had been bullied by other students, and 24% stated that they had bullied others (Patterson, Ramsey, & Womack, 2005). Other research has found that only around 45% of students reported victimization, and between 35% and 38% admitted personal involvement in bullying (Drosopoulos et al., 2008; Pergolizzi et al., 2009).

Not all studies reported such high results. Multiple studies have indicated that bullying, though present, generally involves a minority of students. A study of harassment and intimidation in public schools in Maryland found that 28.4% of students had been victims of bullying in the past year (Maryland Department of Education, 2008). Similarly, Carlyle and Steinman (2007) stated that 20.1% of students reported victimization, and 18.8% acknowledged being the perpetrator of bullying acts. Devoe and

Murphy (2011) showed that 28% of students ages 12 to 18 reported that they were the victims of bullying. If further studies are considered, the percentage of victimization drops to around 12% (Langdon & Preble, 2008; Nolin et al., 1995). As these various studies indicated, the number of reported incidents of bullying varies greatly. The particular causes of these variations may be related to the location of the school, the grade levels involved, or the degree to which the school has already or will begin addressing bullying, among other possible reasons.

Prevalence in Non-American Schools

Bullying among school age children is not unique to those residing in the United States. Several studies regarding bullying and victimization have been conducted involving schools from around the world, with varying results. Nonetheless, each study indicated that bullying is a problem. A study in Australian schools found that of male students in years 3 through 12, essentially second through eleventh grades, 13% admitted to bullying students at least once per week with 8% reporting that they had been victims of bullying (Hutchinson, 1996). This study found that for male and female Australian students in year 8, between 56.6% and 60.5% of students reported being bullied in school (Bond et al., 2007).

Raskauskas et al. (2010) indicated similar results in a study of New Zealand students in years four through eight where 15% of the students had been targeted by a bully, and 13% stated that they had bullied other students. Of Turkish students in seventh and eighth grade, 43.4% had exhibited bullying behavior toward others, although only 29.7% of the students had been victimized (Onder & Yurtal, 2008). Mellor (1990) indicated in his study of Scottish secondary students in year 1 through year 4 that 50%

reported victimization and 44% admitted being perpetrators of bullying. These studies, from three different countries on three different continents, all seemed to support the idea that bullying is a concern for most educational settings, though not always to the same degree.

In the Asian-Pacific region, several studies have been conducted that indicate bullying may be equally wide spread there as other areas of the globe. In a study of multiple regions across Korea, students reported victimization at a rate of 24.2% (Lee, 2003). Students in Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore all reported victimization of at least one type of bullying at a rate of more than 25% (Lai et al., 2008). When considering multiple forms of bullying, Lai et al. found that the percentage of victimization drops to between 10% and 15% for three or more, and below 5% for four or more indicating that students seem more likely to choose and stay with one method of bullying. Kobayashi (1999) conducted a study that focused primarily on Japanese schools. His report stated several findings regarding bullying in junior high schools in Japan. The first result was that 77% of sixth graders and 62% of eighth graders had been involved in bullying as either a victim or a perpetrator. These numbers are higher than other studies have indicated for countries for this region. Second, in more 83.1% of the classrooms involved, fewer than 20% of students in any one class in the schools involved in the study did not know of any bullying in school. "For contemporary Japanese students, bullying incidents are not abnormal but every day and ordinary incidents in school life" (p. 5). Third, Kobayashi indicated that of the teachers whose classrooms were involved, 73% of them had reported bullying incidents in their classrooms.

Type of Bullying

        In the United Stated, many types of bullying have occurred to school age children, including both physical and verbal forms (Anderson & Swiatowy, 2008). Drosopoulos et al. (2008) found that nearly 28% of students in their study were verbally victimized compared to 54% who were physically bullied. In many cases, the method of bullying may be both physical and verbal. Furthermore, in a national study of 8th through 11th grade students pertaining specifically to teasing and sexual harassment, it was determined that 76% of the students experienced non-physical harassment, and 32% of were physically bullied (Lipson, 2001). This study also found that although 52.1% of middle and high school students were teased, only 33.4% were physically attacked. Newgent et al. (2009) stated that most victims suffer non-physical rather than physical bullying, indicating that they are victimized verbally and socially more than they are physically touched or harmed. These findings support that fact that even though physically bullying does occur, it seems to be less prevalent than non-physical means.

        Perolizzi et al. (2009) cited multiple ways in which bullies elected to treat their victims. Over 60% of those who had been victims of bullying stated that their bullies had gossiped about them, with another 59.2% said that they were teased in a variety of ways. However, this study also found that exclusion, 42%, hitting, 34.3%, and cyberbullying, 27.9% were common forms of bullying to which they were subjected. With regard to cyberbullying, Burnham, Wright, and Houser (2011) found that 14.9% of all seventh and eighth grade students had cyberbullied others, and 29.8% had been the victims of cyberbullying.

Petrosino, Guckenburg, Devoe, and Hanson (2010) found in their study of northeastern United States students that of the 35.8% of the students who had reported bullying, 55.5% of these were threatened with physical harm, and 60.5% stated that bullies had physically hurt them. They also found that 51.3% of those who reported being victimized had property destroyed. Additionally, it was found that 12% to 14% of victims were robbed of their possessions or money (Greenbaum, 1988; Nolin et al., 1995). In addition, the Montana Healthy Schools Network (2005) issued a discussion paper that stated 28.9% of students surveyed indicated that other students had purposely destroyed their property, and another 7.1% had been injured or threatened with some type of weapon. These findings seem to support that fact that some perpetrators of bullying are intent on real, physical damage as opposed to perceived, emotional, or mental damage.

The forms of bullying vary as much abroad as they do in the United States. In their study of students of primary and secondary students in New Zealand, Carroll-Lind and Kearney (2004) found that multiple forms of bullying exist in schools. Of the students who had been bullied, 46% said that they had been teased, and 41% stating they had been hit by another student. Additionally, a study of 14 year old students in Australia indicated that between 45.8% and 52.8% of victims were teased at some point during the school year, as well as 19.1% to 25.5% who were intentionally excluded from activities (Bond et al., 2007). Moreover, 7th through 10th grade students in China admitted that when they were victimized by bullying, the methods of choice included physical contact at 19.7%, insults of how they looked or their body style at 15.4%, and sexual jokes or gestures at 10.5% (Cheng et al., 2010).

Location of Bullying

Bullying can occur almost anywhere, at school or at home. Those who are perpetrators of bullying generally select areas where students are most vulnerable or where supervision is at a minimum, especially if the bullying act is physical in nature. That is why many bullying victims choose to avoid areas where bullying often takes place. Devoe and Murphy (2011) found that of those students who reported their victimization, 10.7% sought to avoid specific places at school, especially where bullying is more likely to occur. The study also showed that 3.9% of students would skip a class, and 4.0% would skip school all together.

The most likely places for bullying to take place are the playground, bus, and hallway (Anderson & Swiatowy, 2008). This study found that 90% of the bullying acts reported occurred on the playground, with the bus being a second at 45% and the bathroom third at 34.5%. The common link to all of these sites is the minimal amount of supervision and the overcrowded nature of these places. Anderson and Swiatowy found that less than 23% of bullying incidents occurred in the classroom because the number of students is smaller and the supervision can be intensified. Bradshaw et al. (2007) found that middle school students were as likely to be bullied in the classroom as the hallway, with 29.1% of the students indicating these were sites of bullying incidents. This study also stated that less supervised areas such as the playground are likely locations of bullying, especially in younger grades. It was shown that 30% of elementary students experienced bullying in this type of location.

A study by Isernhagen and Harris (2002) found that the site of victimization can depend on the gender of the victim or the bully. In their study of 9th and 10th grade

students in Nebraska and Texas, they found that girls are more likely to be victimized more often at lunch at 17.1%, during class breaks in the hallway at 14%, during extracurricular events at 12.9%, and in class at 10.7%. By comparison, boys are generally bullied more often during extracurricular events at 17% and lunch at 12.6%. The other locations or times indicated for girls are infrequent locations for boys in this study.

Frequency of Victimization

Although research shows that bullying exists in schools across the globe, the frequency with which students are victimized varies. In some studies, students stated that they are often or very frequently bullied, and in others, they are only sometimes the victim of bullying. Still, other studies revealed that victims are bullied one or more times per day, week, or even school year. Regardless of the terminology, bullying prevalence can be categorized by how frequently bullying occurs.

Third and fourth grade students in a Canadian study indicated that they had been the victims of bullying only once during the school year at a greater rate than those that had experienced a second occurrence of victimization (Beran & Shapiro, 2005). According to these findings, 34% of students were excluded from activities by their peers one time compared to only 9% who were excluded twice. Likewise, when comparing various bullying incidents that occurred one time versus twice, Beran and Shapiro found that 23% of students reported being hit once, compared to 8% who said they were hit twice. Similar trends were indicated for being called names, 29% compared to 11%, and having personal items taken, 20% compared to 2%. The number of victims dropped even more as the number of incidents rose above two.

Other studies seem to indicate similar findings regarding the frequency of bullying as time goes by. Carroll-Lind and Kearney (2004) found that although 63% of students were victimized at least one time, only 50% were bullied once in a while with 8% bullied once a week and 5% bullied more than once per week. Similarly, 29% of elementary and middle school students in New York reported being bullied *sometimes*, compared to 11% who reported being victimized 'often' and 9% who were bullied *always* (Therrien, 2011). The study did not indicate if the decline in reported bullying incidents was due to better intervention procedures, isolated bullying that is not repeated, or lack of reporting of additional victimization. However, as the frequency of bullying increased, studies indicated that the number of occurrences decreased.

Student Grade Levels

Research on bullying has indicated that the age or grade level of the students involved is a factor in the prevalence, type, and frequency of the victimization. However, the trends stated in the research do not always agree. One study indicated that bullying seems to decline as students move into middle school (Newgent et al., 2009), and other studies say that the peek years are during and even after middle school (Cheng et al., 2010; GLSEN, 2008; Tikkanen, 2005). A report by ACCESS ERIC (1998) pointed to the trend of bullying increasing through elementary school and declining during high school. The peak years are generally during middle and junior high school.

O'Connell et al. (1997) found that in Canadian schools, which designate increasing grade levels as primary, junior, and intermediate, reported bullying seems to continue to increase through each progressive level, rising from 4.2% for primary to 7.4% for intermediate. Victimization, however, declines as grade level increases. O'Connell et

al. showed that 26% of primary level students were victimized as compared to 15% of junior level and 11.5% of intermediate. These findings were consistent with a study of four Midwest middle and high schools, which determined that 37% of students in middle school identified bullying as a problem and only 22% of their high school counterparts agreed (Hurford et al., 2010). If grades 6 through 8 are considered middle school, which seems to be the traditional designation in the United States, then the report by Devoe and Murphy (2011) would support the idea that bullying and victimization peak in middle school and decline thereafter. They stated that in sixth through eighth grade, bullying drops gradually from 39.1% to 31.7%, continuing to drop to 20.4% by a student's senior year.

Grade level has also been shown to have an impact on the frequency with which bullying occurs. Isernhagen and Harris (2004) found that 17% of middle schools students were more likely to be targeted once per week than high school students at 13%. A study of Norwegian students indicated that bullying, which occurred on a weekly basis, presented virtually no differences between elementary, junior high, and high school students (Tikkanen, 2004). However, less frequent bullying, which occurred two to three times per month, was found to impact 11% of elementary students, 8% of junior high, and 5% of high school students. It appears that the level of school that students attend may have an impact on how often bullying occurs for individual students.

Although studying the prevalence of bullying at various grade levels, Bradshaw et al. (2007) also included types of bullying in their research study. They were interested in which types of bullying were more likely to occur at various grade levels. The types of behavior that were investigated included verbal methods such as teasing, name calling,

threats, and sexual comments, as well as physical behaviors such as pushing, hitting, and stealing others possessions. In addition to verbal and physical bullying, their study also analyzed indirect or relational bullying such as emailing, spreading rumors and lies, and exclusion. After surveying more than 15,185 students and 1547 teachers, their results found that the top three forms of bullying for each level of education, elementary, middle, and high school, were the same, though at different rates. Bradshaw et al. found that teasing was a problem for 42.9% of elementary students, 43.3 % of middle school students, and 35.7% of high school students. Name-calling affected 40.8% of elementary, 44.2% of middle, and 32.9% of high school students. Finally, spreading rumors and lies was the type of victimization for 36.6% of elementary, 36.3% of middle, and 24.1% of high school students. Although the results showed that any form of physical bullying was fourth on the list for each level, it is interesting to note that this trend is stable at any school level.

Perhaps the most intriguing research study conducted was that of GLSEN (2008) involving school principals at all levels of education. Their intent was to determine the degree to which individuals are harassed sexually, especially because of their sexual orientation. Although this was a very limited study, the perspective of the principals surveyed provided insight into how general bullying might be viewed as well. According to GLSEN, although 49% of principals agree that bullying is a problem in their schools; the numbers are not consistent across grade levels. Of administrators who observed negative treatment of others, 75% of middle and junior high school observed negative treatment compared to 45% of high school and 43% of elementary administrators.

Student Gender

Bullying and the impact that it can have on the victim is not limited to either gender. Many studies indicated that both males and females are involved in various acts of bullying and are both likely to be victimized by these acts (Burnham et al., 2011; Carlyle & Steinman, 2007; Gropper & Froschl, 1999; Langdon & Preble, 2008; Lipson, 2001; Milsom & Gallo, 2006; Nishioka, Coe, Burke, Hanita, & Sprague, 2011; Popoola, 2005). Although each of these studies has found that male and female student alike are likely to commit bullying acts and be victimized by bullies, their findings differ with regard to various aspects of the bullying and victimization.

Male and female students across the country in third through eighth grade experienced bullying in differing ways (Nishioka et al., 2011). The study investigated the bullying experiences of students, by gender, for the most recent month of school. The primary methods of bullying for each were found to be similar, most notably teasing, physical harm, threats, having tricks played on them, lies being told, being ignored by peers, and exclusion from assorted activities. Nishioka et al. found that there were gender related differences in the results. On the one hand, girls were most likely to experience teasing, 61.3%, having lies spread about them, 48.1%, ignored by peers, 45.8%, and exclusion, 45.4%. On the other hand, boys were teased and had lies told about them at high rates, 59.7% for teasing and 41.7% lies being told, and they were more likely than girls to be physically harmed at 42.3%, and have tricks played at 33.2%. These results seem to indicate a desire in male victims to deal more with physical bullying than girls.

Specific types of bullying provide their own evidence of gender differences. After comparing the frequency of cyberbullying and victimization to the gender of the students

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involved, Brunham et al. (2011) found that with respect to the cyberbullying act, there is a wider gap than with respect to victimization. Their study of seventh and eighth grade students indicated that when considering those who had cyberbullied other students three to five times a week, girls were less likely to be involved than boys by a difference of 11.8% to 28.4%. When comparing male and female victims of cyberbullying, the rates were much closer. Just over 28% of girls were victims of cyberbullying three to five times a week, compared to 32% of boys.

A national study that focused on the sexual harassment of students in grades 8 through 11 found that sexual harassment occurred with more than 80% of the students, with 54% of the students saying that they had sexually harassed another student (Lipson, 2001). Of the students involved, 59% answered that they had been harassed often or occasionally and more than 27% saying it happened often or frequently. With regard to gender differences in sexual harassment, Lipson found that 30% of girls and 24% of boys were victimized. While these studies investigated specific types of bullying, the results are consistent with other forms of bullying.

A study of students in metropolitan middle and high schools found that 22.3% of males are likely targets of bullying compared to 17.9% of females (Carlyle & Steinman, 2007). The study also demonstrated the fact that boys are more likely to be perpetrators of bullying than girls by a difference of 23.3% to 14.3%. Gropper and Froschl (1999) found that male students were more likely to be bullied than girls, 52% to 48% respectively; but they also found that boys are generally more likely to initiate bullying incidents. They discovered that boys, compared to only 22% by girls, initiated 78% of the bullying encounters. It would seem, based on this and other studies, that while female

students are often as, or even more likely to be perpetrators or victims of bullying, the general perception that bullying is primarily an issue for male students carries some validity. Regardless of divergent findings from multiple studies, many others support the fact that male students are more likely to be the target of bullying (Landgon & Preble, 2008; Milsom & Gallo, 2006, Popoola, 2005).

Aggressive Attitudes with Regard to Bullying and Bullying Behavior

With regard to bullying, both the perpetrator and the victim of bullying develop very distinctive attitudes related to the act. The attitudes and actions range from entirely aggressive to the opposite end of the spectrum. Although the bully's actions may often be seen or perceived as entirely aggressive, the victim may choose less aggressive means of handling the situation.

Attitudes of Bullies

Aggressive attitudes and actions among perpetrators of acts of bullying is common. In a study conducted by the Maryland State Department of Education (2008), researchers found that 54.9% of self-reported bullies committed their acts to be mean or to impress others. In this same study, 30.3% of respondents indicated that they bullied others simply because of the victim's real or perceived personal appearance. Additionally, research has shown that 53% of those who admitted bullying did so because it brought them enjoyment (Patterson et al., 2005). O'Connell et al. (1997) found that 31% of students stated they would join in bullying, merely because they did not like the victim.

Nishioka et al. (2011) found, in their study of aggression and victimization of students in third through eighth grade, that the attitudes of some students support the

aggressive nature of bullying. Their findings indicated that 33.8% of boys and 19.6% of

girls agreed in part that it is okay for kids to fight each other. Furthermore, this study

found that 13.9% of boys and 14.6% of girls agreed to some degree that making fun of

other kids was acceptable. Finally, the results showed that 44.9% of boys and 31.7% of

girls agreed that some students deserve to be pushed around. These findings support the

fact that bullying is often manifested by aggressive attitudes and actions.

The aggressive attitudes that are demonstrated by bullies are not limited to

physical behavior. Some bullies elect to exact verbally abuse on the victims. Although

males were much more likely to be physically aggressive to their victims, older male

students demonstrated more verbal aggression (Nacev & Brubach, 2000). Likewise,

although 58% of bullies were seen as physically aggressive in a study of fifth grade

students, 83% of those who were identified as bullies also showed verbal aggression

(Khosropour & Walsh, 2001).

One important issue regarding bullies that would seem to indicate an attitude of

aggression would be feelings for the victim. In reference to bullies, a report by ACCESS

ERIC (1998) said, "They appear to derive satisfaction from inflicting injury on others,

seem to have little empathy on for their victims, and often defend their actions by saying

that their victims provoked them in some way." (p. 2). An additional study of Korean

students found that 41% of those identified as bullies had little empathy for their victims

(Lee, 2003) giving further evidence that bullies often care little for their victims.

Attitudes of Victims

Although the acts of those who perform bullying are generally seen as exclusively

aggressive, victims may react with a variety of behaviors. One such behavior might be to

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retaliate against the bully in kind. According to Nishioka et al. (2011), up to 12% of girls and 20% of boys in third through fifth grade believed that it is okay to retaliate against bullies. The types of retaliation discussed when the bullying was verbal was saying something in response or hitting the bully. However, this study showed that, generally, students do not support retaliation.

Anderson and Swiatowy (2008) indicated that fewer than 14% of students stated that fighting back was an appropriate way to handle being bullied. Therrian (2011) found that only 18% of students stated that they would use physical aggression against someone who mistreated them, with 8% of parents stating that they would encourage their children to hit the bully. While these are small numbers, the concept of physical retaliation does exist. Research has also shown that 20% of boys and 11% of girls would use a physical response to bullying (Gropper & Froschl, 1999). This compared to the 15% of boys and 21% of girls who would use a verbal response to bullying. In addition, a study of third and fourth grade Canadian students indicated that fewer than 6% would hit the bully, and only 4% would say anything mean (Beran & Shapiro, 2005). Finally, Webb (2006) found that victims of bullying are often unlikely to retaliate due to the emotional impact that the victimization has.

The physical and verbal types of retaliation that sometimes are employed by victims are not the only seemingly negative responses that might occur. Victims can and will find other methods of responding that present challenges for them. When considering all the possible methods that victims might use for addressing a bullying situation, Maines and Robinson (1994) stated,

Over and over again we hear from victims that they are advised and urged to change their behavior in some way, either by parents, teachers, or through group work. They try to 'stand up for themselves,' 'hit back,' 'walk away,' 'pretend they don't care,' and each time their failures to act in a way which ends their misery just makes it worse. (p. 3)

Maines and Robinson noted that for many victims, their efforts alone, regardless of what these efforts are, traditionally do very little to solve their specific problem of being the target of bullying.

Among several other ways of reacting to a bully, absenteeism is commonly employed. "Children who are bullied by their peers are more likely than non-bullied children to avoid attending schools and have been found to have higher rates of absenteeism" (Limber, 2003, p. 23). Choosing not to attend school, class, or even a school function can provide a sense of escape and safety for the victim. A national study of 8th through 11th graders indicated that 22% of victims did not want to return to school along with 18% who wished to avoid certain areas in school and 16% who stated they felt like cutting class would help (Lipson, 2001). In addition to wanting to miss school, some victims decide to attend a different school. In this study, 10% of the victims indicated that they had given this serious thought.

Other studies support these findings and indicate that absenteeism is a preferred response of some bullying victims. Isernhagen and Harris (2002) found that 7.9% of girls and 5% of boys had stayed home from school after being victimized. They also indicated that 12.5% of boys and 22.3% of girls had considered it, demonstrating that although victim absenteeism from school is not wide spread, it is a consideration. Further studies

indicated that while fewer than 4% of those bullied will choose to miss school, between

10% and 17% of victims will avoid specific places at school, usually those where they are

most often victimized (Devoe & Murphy, 2011). Koki (1999) recorded similar data for

eighth grade students who missed school at a rate of 7% after being bullied. Research,

therefore, seems to place absenteeism on similar ground with retaliation as a reaction to

bullying.

Research also indicates that absenteeism from school may not be the independent

decision of the student. Nearly 5% of parents whose children had been victimized

encouraged or allowed their children to stay home after being bullied (Anderson &

Swiatowy, 2008). Their research indicated that although the parent overwhelmingly

supported the child making an administrator at school aware of the problem, in some

cases, they felt that avoiding the situation might be the best approach. The percentage of

parents who feel this way is in line with the percentage of victims who miss school or

school activities due to bullying.

In addition to negative reactions to perpetrators of bullying, victims have

developed negative attitudes about school. This may be a factor in absenteeism or may

simply facilitate a jaded opinion of education in general or a particular school. Lai et al.

(2008) stated in their study of bullying in the Asia-Pacific region that in some countries

"…students who are bullied in schools tend to have negative attitudes toward schools,

teachers, and classmates." (p. 508) A further study found that the percentage of students

who hated school after being bullied had nearly doubled in a two year period from 5% to

8% (Hutchinson, 1996). Considering the age of this study, it is unknown how these

numbers might be impacted by either the growing prevalence of bullying in schools or

the greater awareness of the problem that has led to the growing efforts of intervention. Comparing these findings to those regarding absenteeism today may shed light on why students who are victimized might choose or the least consider missing school.

Although negative responses and attitudes generated by the victimization that bullying creates do exist, however, not all school age children choose to react negatively. In many cases, they would opt for positive reactions rather than succumbing to the temptation to react otherwise. Researchers discovered that of the students surveyed, 49% stated that they would elect to walk away from the bullying situation (Therrian, 2011). Moreover, 44% stated they would respond by telling the bully to stop. Beran and Shapiro (2005) pointed out that there were multiple positive responses that were used. When students were asked how they would react to being bullied, 92% said they would tell the bully to stop and 89% stated they would ignore the bully or walk away. Furthermore, 80% indicated they would use positive statements in the face of a negative situation. Although these are students who may or may not have been victimized, their initial choices with regard to reacting to bullying are overwhelmingly positive.

An additional study of elementary students in Oregon exposed to an intervention program found that the number of students who would tell a bully to stop increased from 2% to 30% as did the number who would choose to walk away, which increased from 3% to 13% (Ross & Horner, 2009). These results were found as a pre-test and post-test for a specific bullying intervention program; still, positive approaches to handling bullies do exist and can be embraced by those who are victimized.

Victims of bullying frequently find themselves battling a wide range of emotions. These can range from anger to depression but are all the result of being the target of

bullying. Some students who are bullied fear that they will be harmed while at school and therefore view school as unsafe (Greenbaum, 1988; Koki, 1999). Devoe and Murphy (2011) found that 10.8% of those victimized fear they will be attacked or harmed. Additionally, Lipson (2001) stated that 4% were scared at school. Perhaps Nolin et al. (1995) found the most alarming statistics in their study. Results indicated that 29% of elementary and 34% of middle and junior high students worried about being victims of bullying. Essentially, one third of the students, whether previous victims or not, thought that there was a chance that they could be bullied.

Victims of bullying do not exclusively feel fear because of being victimized. The breadth of possible emotional reactions is immense. Lipson (2001) indicated several emotions that victims stated, including 10% simply feeling bad, 9% uncomfortable, and 8% experiencing emotional pain. Researchers have stated that more than 83% stated that felt unpleasant about being targeted as well as 51% who felt sad (O'Connell et al., 1997; Patterson, Ramsey, & Womack, 2005). Isernhagen and Harris (2002) stated that 5% of boys and 10% of girls experienced feelings of misery related to their victimization.

Another prevalent emotional response is that of anger. The results of some research studies indicates that the number of victims who feel angry about being bullied and those who seek some sort of retaliation are comparable. It has been shown by Isernhagen and Harris (2002) that 15% of boys and 16% of girls get angry after being victimized. This is compared to later findings that indicated that 23.2% of middle school students and 17.6% of high school students experience anger as well (Isernhagen & Harris, 2004). Patterson et al. (2005) stated that 34% of those surveyed were angered by

their victimization. Anger, along with other emotional responses, is prevalent among victims.

Willingness to Seek Help When Combating Bullying

It seems likely to the outside observer that any victim of bullying would seek help from any available source. It might be assumed that victims want only to be assisted in ending suffering that they seem powerless to end themselves. However, results of various studies along with the information found in multiple reports and investigations indicate that not all victims seek this help. In some cases, victims do not even desire the assistance that could be at their disposal.

Schools across the globe that have sought appropriate measures to address the bullying issue have met with one consistent roadblock: lack of awareness that the bullying occurs. Bandyopadhyay et al.'s (2009) study involving school climate in both middle and high schools indicated, "Bullying thrives in schools because teachers and school officials are often unaware that it is taking place and only learn about it when students report it" (p. 340). For schools to understand the breadth of the problem, students must begin reporting incidences when they occur.

The National Center for Education Statistics collected information from the 2008-2009 school year regarding bullying and cyberbullying in American schools (Devoe & Murphy, 2011). The results of this survey gave great insight into how students respond to bullying, including their willingness to report or seek help when bullying occurs. According to the National Center for Education Statistics report, reports of bullying to adults were highest among sixth and seventh grade students, 51.9% and 52.2%, respectively, with the rates of reporting steadily declining through 12th grade where only

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one fifth of the students informed an adult when they were bullied. When considering the type and location of various schools, the National Center for Education Statistics found that the rates of reporting bullying activities varied only slightly. The geographic region in which the school is located had little impact on the rate with all regions, Northeast, Midwest, South, and Central indicating rates of between 32.0% and 39.0%. Students in public and private schools reported at similar rates, 36.2% and 38.4%, respectively. In the same vein, schools based on their locale of city, suburb, town, or rural ranged from 32.4% to 42.6%.

The greatest range of reporting rates found in the National Center for Education Statistics report were in two main areas: grade levels in the school and the size of the school (Devoe & Murphy, 2011). Of the schools involved in the study, primary students were most likely to report bullying to an adult with high school students reporting at the lowest rate. Primary students reported bullying at a rate of 66.6%, and high school students did so at a rate of only 29.7%. When the size of the school was considered, smaller schools of less than 300 students had larger rates of reporting at 50.7% , and schools with more than 2000 students reported at a rate of 26.2%. Although the size of the school had a substantial impact on reporting, the size of the class made little difference. Classes with 13 or fewer students reported at nearly the same rate as those with 20 or more, 40.3% versus 33.9%, respectively.

When students seek help, the choice of individual to provide assistance is varied. In a study involving elementary students and the effect of an intervention program, researchers found that 59% to 62% of students from each group surveyed would choose to tell an adult (Beran & Shapiro, 2005). Of these same students, 41% to 43% indicated

that they might get help from a class mate, and 49% to 52% would get help from their parent. However, Beran and Shapiro showed that nearly half, and in some cases more than half, of all the students surveyed would not request assistance in dealing with bullying issues.

Petrosino et al. (2010) found that the likelihood of reporting bullying increased as the number of differing types of bullying experiences increased. Those bullied in one manner were less likely to report the incident (25.7%) than those who had been bullied in multiple ways. Furthermore, this study discovered that the more frequent bullying occurs, the greater the chance that bullying will be reported. Of those bullied once or twice a year, only 32.6% reported. Those students bullied on a nearly daily basis reported at a rate of 48.5%.

According to Smith and Shu (2000), it seems increasingly unlikely that students will begin reporting bullying to school staff members at higher rates than others will who are less likely to be able to address the problem. Smith and Shu found that only 35% of students seemed likely to tell a school staff member they were being bullied. While the fact that this study found students more likely to tell a friend (43%) or a family member (45%) is encouraging, it still indicated that more than half of all bullying incidents go unreported by the victim. Smith and Shu noted success rates of telling are compromised by the fact that the risk of reprisal was believed to be more substantial if a staff member was informed. Isernhagen and Harris (2004) discovered that only 7.9% of high school students and 12.4% of middle school students would tell a counselor or teacher they were being mistreated. The researchers found that more students in both groups were more likely to tell a friend than any category of adult.

Research on Canadian schoolchildren in first through eighth grades found that 41% of victims had talked with a teacher, and 54% had talked with their parents about being victimized (O'Connell et al., 1997). Anderson and Swiatowy (2008) found in their survey of parents of fourth grade students that 42% of parents would encourage their child to tell a schoolteacher or administrator that they were being bullied. However, this same study also found that 66% of the students surveyed said they would tell an adult or teacher. A study of male students at day schools and boarding schools in Perth, Western Australia, found that 56% of the students would always or sometimes tell a staff member if they were bullied (Hutchinson, 1996). Furthermore, this study showed that 75% would *always* or *sometimes* tell a parent.

Researchers found that secondary students in Scotland who reported being bullied, only half were willing to report the incident to anyone (Mellor, 1990). The study encompassed students in a variety of educational settings ranging from inner city to rural. Mellor found that of the students who did speak to someone of the incident, less than half (47%) told a parent and less than one third (31%) told a staff member. Only 13% of those reporting being victimized would tell a guidance counselor. Less than 25% of all students who were bullied ever told anyone, and most told someone other than an adult.

Middle school students in English schools felt more comfortable seeking help from their mother than a friend by a rate of 78% to 68% (Oliver & Candappa, 2007). This study also found that as age increases, students become more comfortable telling friends. While seeking help from any source is important to resolving bullying issues, Oliver and Candappa also found that students felt that "…talking to teachers was associated with a wider range of risks, particularly in relation to the potential for retaliatory action…" (p.

79). According to their findings, only 51% of fourth graders and only 31% of seventh graders were likely to tell a teacher about being bullied. These numbers support the belief that students are less likely to seek help from a faculty or staff member than another source.

The fact that students wish to seek help at all seems to vary from study to study. The GLSEN (2005) study found, in a survey of students and teachers regarding harassment in school, that 32% of students reported bullying to the principal, a staff member, or to a teacher at least some of the time. In this same study, when asked why they chose not to report the bullying, 28% stated that it was not important or serious. Of the students, 15% said they did not want to make the situation worse or be labeled as a tattletale or snitch.

In a nationwide study of more than 2,000 8th through 11th graders, researching bullying of a sexual nature, it was discovered that fewer than half (40%) would be willing to tell a faculty or staff member that they were being bullied (Lipson, 2001). Additionally, the study found that girls were more likely to report it than boys were by a rate of 52% to 29%. Despite the specific type of bullying surveyed in this study, these results are consistent with other, broader surveys. When students were asked to whom they would report the bullying, Lipson found that more than 60% would choose to tell a friend over any other person, including parents and school faculty.

Another factor in a student's willingness to seek help for bullying lies in their belief in whether the school can or will do anything to address the issue. According to McGuikin (2010), 43.7% of Irish students surveyed did not believe the school would provide real help. Oliver and Candappa (2007) found that 31% to 36% of teachers could

not deal with bullying once it was reported to them. ACCESS ERIC (1998) stated that students felt like adult intervention served only to bring more harassment. Bandyopadhyay et al. (2009) stated, "It seems reasonable that schools where students feel comfortable seeking help and are confident that teachers will respond to their concerns will have lower levels of teasing and bullying…" (p. 351).

The need of students to know that the school will offer help when bullies mistreat them is paramount. According to O'Connell et al. (1997), 29% of victims felt that teachers *almost always* intervene when told of bullying. The study went on to find that 11% of those surveyed believed their peers would intervene to stop bullying. As part of their *No Blame Approach to Bullying,* Maines and Robinson (1994) stated the students feel more comfortable reporting that they have been bullied when they know that the school will intervene, working to positively modify the behavior of bullies. Their approach stated that disclosures of bullying is likely to increase if those accused of bullying do not fear consequences and therefore have little reason to retaliate against their victims. They stated that consequences levied on perpetrators generally create reprisals on victims that often reduce the rate at which help is sought.

Additional studies support the idea that students' faith in the schools ability to intervene often dictates whether or not they will seek help. In a study of 9th and 10th grade boys in rural Nebraska and suburban Texas, Isernhagen and Harris (2002) discovered that 15% of boys and 14% of girls said they would not tell a school administrator, and the same groups answered they would not tell teachers at rates of 20% and 27.4%, respectively. The reason stated was that they felt that these individuals were not interested in trying to address bullying. A factor adding to their trepidation in telling

was the fact that 14.8 % of boys and 20.8% of girls reported bullying and the issue either worsened or was no better after the report was made.

Isernhagen and Harris (2004) supported the belief that administrators may not address bullying further in a study of four rural middle and high schools. Of the students surveyed, 63% of high school and 45% of middle school students felt that administrators were uninterested in trying to stop bullying. In addition, 33% of middle school students, along with over 50% of high school students, believed teachers were equally uninterested in solving the issue of bullying. "Teachers must not ignore or dismiss student reports of bullying if their goal is to prevent or decrease bullying. They must take every report seriously" (Milsom & Gallo, 2006, p 5).

Conclusion

The prevalence of bullying in public schools has been cited by multiple studies and reports from around the world indicating that students in schools report bullying at varying rates (Carlyle & Steinman, 2007; Langdon & Preble, 2008). The range of reporting is caused by multiple factors related to both the research and the school that the students attend. Regardless of why results vary, what these and other studies indicate is that bullying does exist in schools, in multiple forms, and students at all grade levels and both genders are bullied.

Despite the prevalence of bullying, not all victims seek assistance to resolve the issue. Unfortunately, many students would rather suffer in silence rather than seek help to alleviate the pain they experience because of bullying (Bandyopadhyay et al., 2009). Still others will seek assistance but not always from someone at the school who can help bring resolution (Beran & Shapiro, 2005). Those who do not seek the help of another individual

often cite different reasons including fear of retribution and the uncertainty of the administrator's willingness to assist them in their struggle (Isernhagen & Harris, 2004). The reality often is that even though students are encouraged to report bullying, either as a victim or as one who simply witnessed the act, students do not always tell.

The attitudes of bullies and victims and the reaction of those who are bullied are an important concern or school leaders. Whether the target of the bullying ever seeks help or reports the incident, numerous approaches to handling the bullying situation are employed (Lipson, 2001; Ross & Horner, 2009). Retaliation, absenteeism, avoidance at school, and overall negative feelings about school are common responses by those who are victimized (Anderson & Swiatowy, 2008; Devoe & Murphy, 2011; Lai et al., 2008). The aggressive attitude of the bully brings an added dimension to the problem, with several studies noting the aggressive nature of the perpetrator as the primary reason for bullying (O'Connell et. al., 1997; Patterson et al., 2005).

Despite the abundant research that is in existence, a noticeable lack of studies involving private schools is evident. This research study was designed to add to the limited research that is available with regard to bullying in private schools. This study provided insight into the extent of bullying, the attitudes of those who are involved, and the desire of victims to seek assistance. The effects of the location of the school and grade level of these three facets were analyzed for these schools.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The presence of bullying in schools across the globe has been documented by multiple research studies (Bradshaw et al., 2007; Carlyle & Steinman, 2007; Kobayashi, 1999; Lai et al., 2008; Popoola, 2005). Each of these indicated that bullying occurs at multiple grade and age levels, in various locations, and in many different forms. Although there is a large body of research with regard to bullying in public school settings, a lack of adequate studies exist that analyze the subject in private schools generally and faith based schools specifically. This research study addressed this identified gap in research.

This study examined the effects of school location (rural or urban) and grade level of students (sixth, seventh, and eighth) on the prevalence of bullying, aggressive attitudes with regard to bullying, and willingness of victims to seek help when bullied. The hypotheses are as follows:

1. No significant difference will exist by grade level between sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students in member schools of the National Christian School Association in Arkansas in rural school settings versus students in urban settings on the prevalence of teasing and bullying in school.

2. No significant difference will exist by grade level between sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students in member schools of the National Christian School

Association in Arkansas in rural school settings versus students in urban

settings on the willingness to seek help when being bullied.

3. No significant difference will exist by grade level between sixth, seventh, and

eighth grade students in member schools of the National Christian School

Association in Arkansas in rural school settings versus students in urban

settings on the aggressive attitudes with regard to bullying.

4. No significant difference will exist by grade level between sixth, seventh, and

eighth grade students in member schools of the National Christian School

Association in Arkansas in rural school settings versus students in urban

settings on the overall attitudes toward bullying.

This chapter discussed the research design, the process of obtaining a sample, a

description of the sample population, and the instrument used to gather student responses

with regard to the prevalence of teasing and bullying, aggressive attitudes related to

bullying, and willingness to seek help when bullied. Finally, the limitations of the study

were discussed.

Research Design

A quantitative, non-experimental strategy was used in this study. This causal

comparative survey study was conducted in two rural and two urban private schools in

Arkansas, with the permission of the heads of each school. Each head of school provided

a letter of consent for their students to be involved in the study. In the fall of 2011, each

student in grades 6, 7, and 8 at all four schools completed a survey. To avoid creating any

bias in the results on the part of the researcher, a third party administered the survey. The

results of the surveys were coded and compiled into an excel spreadsheet from which sampling occurred.

Sample

The study was conducted in four private schools in Arkansas, each a member of the National Christian School Association. The K-12 enrollment of the schools fell between 250 and 900 students. The schools were identified as rural or urban based on the United States Census Bureau's (2010) definition of urban and rural population areas. The enrollment of two schools was small enough that each grade level surveyed consisted of a single classroom, and the larger schools had multiple classes at each grade level. The overall demographic makeup of the population was more than 95% Caucasian with the remaining 5% consisting of African-American, Hispanic, Asian, and Native American. There were no foreign students involved in the study.

In the spring of 2011, the heads of each school in the study provided a letter of approval for the students in grades 6 through 8 to be involved in the study. In the fall of 2011, these students were given a survey that asked them about bullying in their school, the aggressive nature of both bullies and victims with regard to bullying, and the willingness of victims to seek help when they were bullied. Each student in attendance on the day on which the survey was administered completed the entire survey.

Instrumentation

The instrument used in the study was the School Climate Bullying survey developed by Cornell and Sheras (2003). The authors originally developed a 24 questions survey with answers given on a four-point Likert scale. In an effort to increase the reliability and validity of the survey, it was adjusted to 20 questions relating to three

primary areas with regard to bullying: prevalence of bullying, aggressive attitudes related to bullying, and the willingness of victims to seek help. The survey consisted of four questions related to the prevalence of bullying, seven questions dealing with aggressive attitudes connected to bullying, and nine questions associated with students' willingness to seek help. The authors of the original study sought to determine the effects of school location and grade level on each of these. The researcher for this study added three additional questions for demographic purposes related to grade level, gender, and specific school.

Cornell and Sheras's (2003) adapted version of survey created an increased reliability for each component within the survey. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for each component was determined as follows: prevalence of bullying was $\alpha = .65$, willingness of victims to seek help was $\alpha = .80$, and aggressive attitude was $\alpha = .80$. These coefficients indicated good internal consistency for aggressive attitudes and willingness of victims to seek help, and acceptable internal consistency for prevalence of bullying.

Because each aspect of the research was represented by a section of questions on the survey, Questions 1-9 related to the student's willingness to seek help. Questions 10-13 related to the prevalence of bullying, and questions 14-20 covered aggressive attitudes toward bullying. A scoring rubric was established to generate a composite score for each aspect of the survey, creating a single score that represented each student's responses in that section. Each student's numerical responses to the questions in a specific section were added to create that single score. Willingness to seek help, containing nine

questions had a range of 9-36 for each student surveyed. Prevalence of bullying had a range of 4-16, and aggressive attitudes related to bullying ranged from 7-28.

Data Collection Procedures

Following IRB approval on September 14, 2011 (see Appendix M), the researcher contacted each school to schedule the completion of the School Climate Bullying Survey. Each of the four schools was assigned a number one through four, and each grade level was assigned a number one through three for identification purposes. Additionally, though gender was not a consideration within the study, students' gender was also identified numerically. In November of 2011, the researcher who instructed a third party surveyor on how to properly administer the survey visited each school. Every student in grades 6-8 was asked to complete the survey. During all sessions, the students were advised that they did not have to complete the survey. If they agreed to take the survey, the surveyor read a statement of explanation regarding the definition of bullying as it pertained to the research study. No students in attendance failed to participate. Additionally, students were instructed not to write their name on the survey in order to protect confidentiality and avoid bias by the surveyor or the researcher. Once completed, the researcher entered the survey answers into an Excel spreadsheet and stored them on a laptop computer that was password protected. Hard copies of each student's survey were locked in a fireproof file cabinet. A stratified random sample was taken of students and their survey answers at each school using a random sampling function within Microsoft Excel. Twenty students were selected from each grade level at three of the schools. Due to smaller class sizes, one school did not provide a large enough population for random sample size to be used. In this case, the entire population was used.

Analytical Methods

To address the hypotheses related to the survey results, four 2 x 3 factorial analysis of variances (ANOVA) were conducted using school setting (rural versus urban) and grade level (sixth versus seventh versus eighth) as the independent variables. The four dependent variables for the ANOVAs were the survey results separated into the three subdivisions and the composite result. The first three dependent variables were the three components of the survey: prevalence of bullying, willingness of students to seek help, and aggressive attitudes in response to bullying. The fourth dependent variable was the overall attitude toward bullying measured by the composite results of the survey. The purpose in using a factorial ANOVA was to examine the interaction effect of school location and grade level and the main effects of school location and grade level on the components of the survey. The researcher used a two-tailed, non-directional test with a level of significance set at .05 in order to test each hypothesis.

Limitations

The research study carried with it certain limitations that might adversely affect the results or the interpretation of those results. The first of these limitations was any preconception with regard to bullying activity. Each student surveyed may have developed their own belief about bullying and bullies that may have affected the way in which they completed the survey. Additionally, the individual schools may have worked to address bullying in various ways that may have influenced how the students felt about certain activities that are classified as bullying.

A second limitation related to the definition of bullying activity itself. Individual states, school districts, and even school buildings may define bullying based on

previously experienced or observed activities. These definitions, once passed on to the educational setting, may have affected how the students viewed and interpreted the answers to particular questions.

Another limitation may have been differences in schools previously attended. It is likely that some students surveyed may not have attended their particular school for the entirety of their educational career. Whether a student had started during the survey year or transferred in at some point during their school years, being exposed to a different school climate with regard to bullying could have had an effect on survey results.

A fourth limitation that should be given consideration was the overall attitude of all involved in the survey and survey process. Any student who had a negative attitude while being surveyed, due to the survey or some outside influence, could have negatively affected results. Furthermore, any adult involved in the study, be it the person administering the survey, a faculty member, or administrator at the school, who demonstrated unfavorable feelings with regard to the study, the survey, or the existence of bullying in their school, could have influenced the results.

A fifth limitation was the population size for each school. Although three of the schools provided a large enough population to randomly select students, one school's enrollment in Grades 6-8 was too small. In this case, the entire population was used as part of the study.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

A quantitative approach was used to examine the effects that location of a school (rural or urban) and grade level (sixth through eighth) would have on various aspects related to bullying. Two rural private schools along with two urban private schools in Arkansas that were members of the National Christian School Association were selected and all sixth, seventh and eighth grade students were surveyed concerning the prevalence of bullying in their school, the willingness of students to seek help with regard to bullying, and the aggressive attitudes related to bullying practices. The locations of the school as well as the grade level of the student served as the independent variables. The dependent variables were the three aspects of the survey: prevalence of bullying, willingness to seek help, and aggressive attitudes. A fourth dependent variable was the composite of these three components creating an overall attitude with regard to bullying. An ANOVA was run to investigate each of the four hypotheses. The alpha level was set at .01 because the Levene's Test of Equality of Variance indicated that two of the three aspects of the survey violated the homogeneity of variance (Pallant, 2007). The results of this analysis are found in this chapter.

Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis 1 stated that no significant difference will exist by grade level between sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students in member schools of the National

Christian School Association in Arkansas in rural school settings versus students in urban settings on the prevalence of teasing and bullying in school. The population sample for both the location of the schools involved and the grade level of each student was normally distributed. Based on the size of the sampling groups at each grade level and school location, the Law of Large Numbers would allow for any violation of normality. Two, non-extreme outliers, existed for prevalence of bullying with regard to grade level. The entered data was evaluated and found to be correct. These outliers, being within three standard deviations of the mean were not excluded from the data set (See Appendices A and B for a comparison of the group distributions).

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for both urban and rural location as well as the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades showed significant results with values below $p = .01$. This indicated non-normal distributions for these groups. However, an ANOVA is robust to violations of normality assumption (Mertler & Vannatta, 2005). Group means of survey responses for questions on prevalence of bullying along with the standard deviations are displayed in Figure 1.
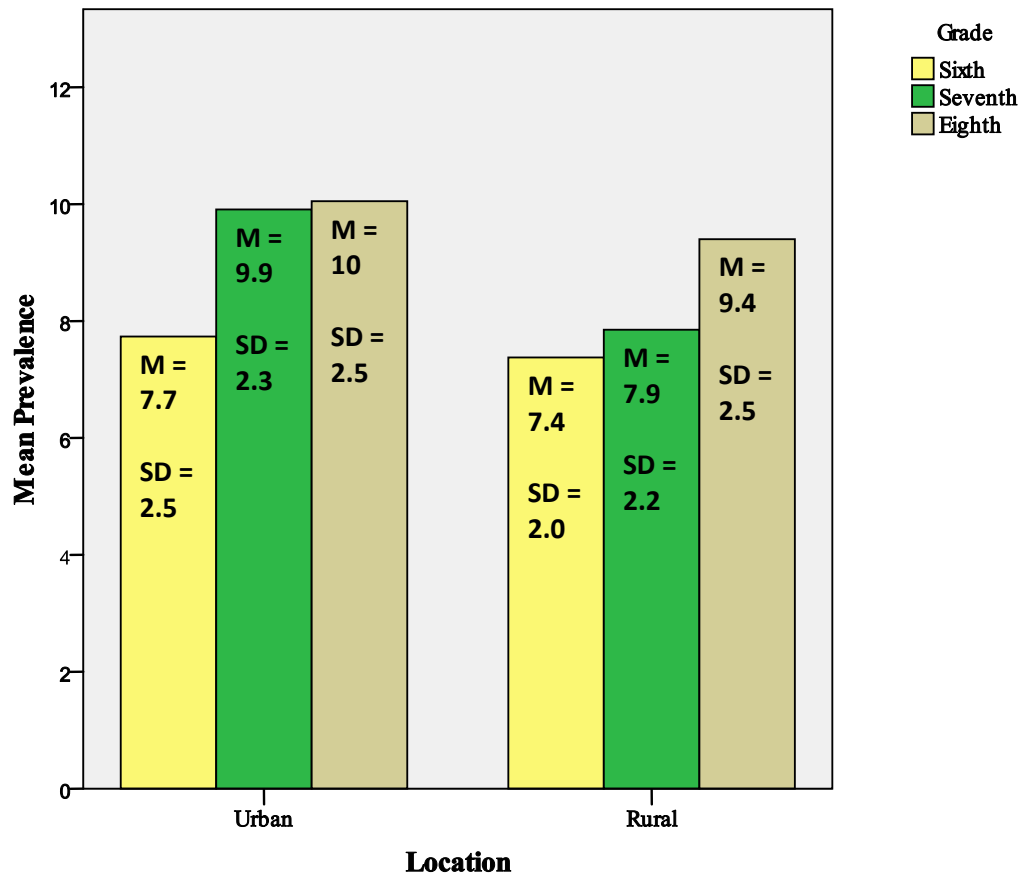
Figure 1. Group means of survey responses for questions on prevalence of bullying.

Levene's test of equality of variances was conducted as part of the ANOVA. According to this test, homogeneity of variance was not violated across groups for prevalence of bullying, $F(5, 221) = .53$, $p = .751$. The analysis of the data to determine the effect that school location and grade level would have on students perceptions about the prevalence of bullying in school based on survey responses indicated the results found in Table 1.

Table 1

Composite Response for Prevalence of Bullying

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p	ES
Location*Grade	30.25	2	15.13	2.746	.066	0.024
Location	58.99	1	58.99	10.709	.001	0.046
Grade	182.22	2	91.11	16.54	.000	0.130
Error	1217.32	221	5.51			

The line plot indicated no interaction between grade level and location of school (See Appendix C). Therefore, there was no statistical significance for the interaction effect between location and grade level for the prevalence of bullying, $F(5, 221) = 2.746$, $p = .066$. However, there was statistical significance with the main effects of both location, $F(5, 221) = 10.709$, $p < .01$, and grade level, $F(5, 221) = 16.450$, $p < .01$. Location had a small partial eta effect size of .046, and grade level had a medium effect size of 0.130 (Pallant, 2007).

Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2 stated that no significant difference will exist by grade level between sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students in member schools of the National Christian School Association in Arkansas in rural school settings versus students in urban settings on the willingness to seek help when being bullied. The population sample for both the location of the schools involved and the grade level of each student was nearly normally distributed. Based on the size of the sampling groups at each grade level and school location, the Law of Large Numbers would allow for any violation of normality. One, non-extreme outlier existed for willingness to seek help by both grade level and

location of school. The entered data was evaluated and found to be correct. This outlier, being within three standard deviations of the mean was left in the data set (See Appendices D and E for a comparison of the group distributions).

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for both urban and rural location as well as the sixth and seventh grades showed significant results with values below $p = .01$ indicating non-normal distributions. However, an ANOVA is robust to violations of normality assumption (Mertler & Vannatta, 2005). Group means of survey questions for questions pertaining to student willingness to seek help along with standard deviations are displayed in Figure 2.
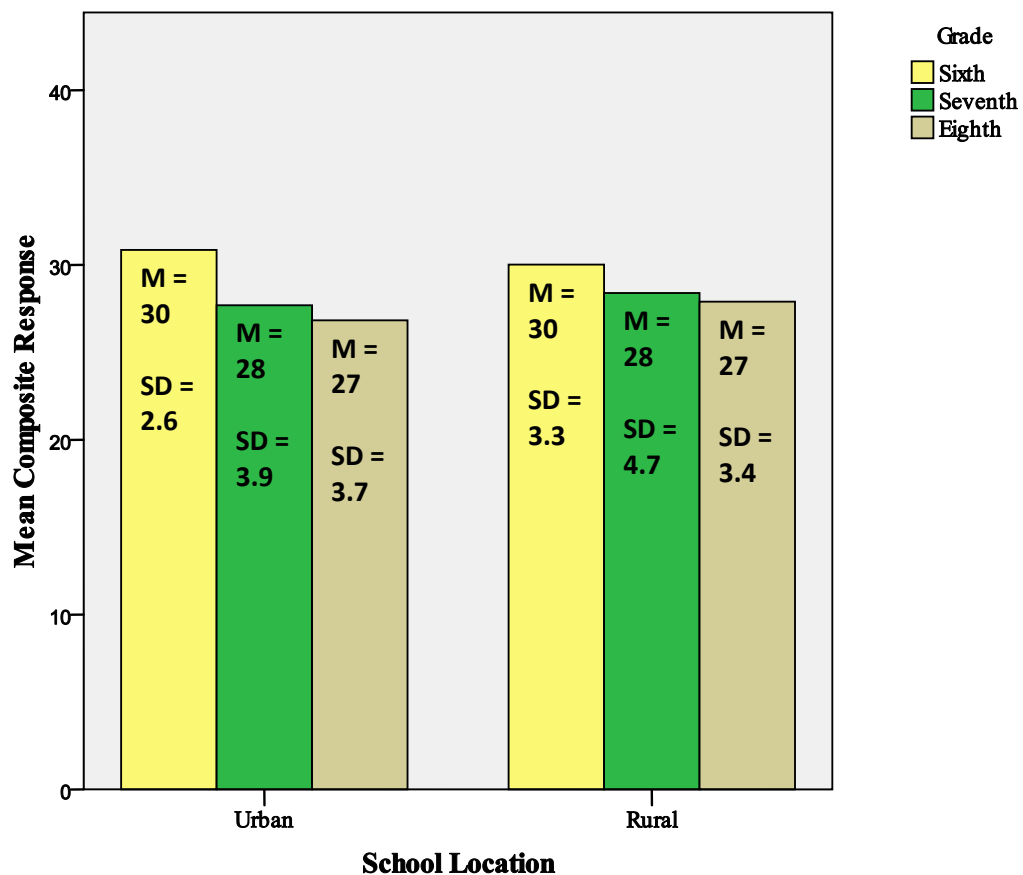
Figure 2. Group means of survey responses for questions on willingness to seek help.

Levene's test of equality of variances was conducted as part of the ANOVA and indicated that homogeneity of variances was violated across groups for willingness to seek help, $F(5, 221) = 2.479$, $p = .033$. The analysis of the data to determine the effect that school location and grade level would have on students willingness to seek help with regard to bullying in school, based on survey responses indicated the results found in Table 2.

Table 2

Composite Response for Willingness to Seek Help

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p	ES
Location*Grade	38.26	2	19.13	1.41	.245	0.013
Location	5.65	1	5.65	0.42	.519	0.002
Grade	393.06	2	196.53	14.53	.000	0.116
Error	2989.18	221	13.53			

The line plot indicated no interaction between school location and grade level (Appendix F). Consequently, there was no statistical significance for the interaction of grade level and location of schools, $F(5, 221) = 1.414$, $p = .245$. Additionally, the main effect of location indicated no statistical significance, $F(5, 221) = .418$, $p = .519$. However, the main effect of grade level did demonstrate a statistical significance, $F(5, 221) = 14.530$, $p < .01$ with medium partial eta effect size of 0.116.

Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis 3 stated that no significant difference will exist by grade level between sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students in member schools of the National

Christian School Association in Arkansas in rural school settings versus students in urban settings on the aggressive attitudes with regard to bullying. The population sample for both the location of the schools involved and the grade level of each student was nearly normally distributed. Based on the size of the sampling groups at each grade level and school location, the Law of Large Numbers would allow for any violation of normality. There were no outliers for aggressive attitudes related to bullying (See Appendices G and H for a comparison of the group distributions).

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for both urban and rural location as well as the sixth and seventh grades showed significant results with values below $p = .01$. This indicated non-normal distributions for these groups. However, an ANOVA is robust to violations of normality assumption (Mertler & Vannatta, 2005). Group means of survey responses for questions related to aggressive attitudes along with standard deviations are displayed in Figure 3.
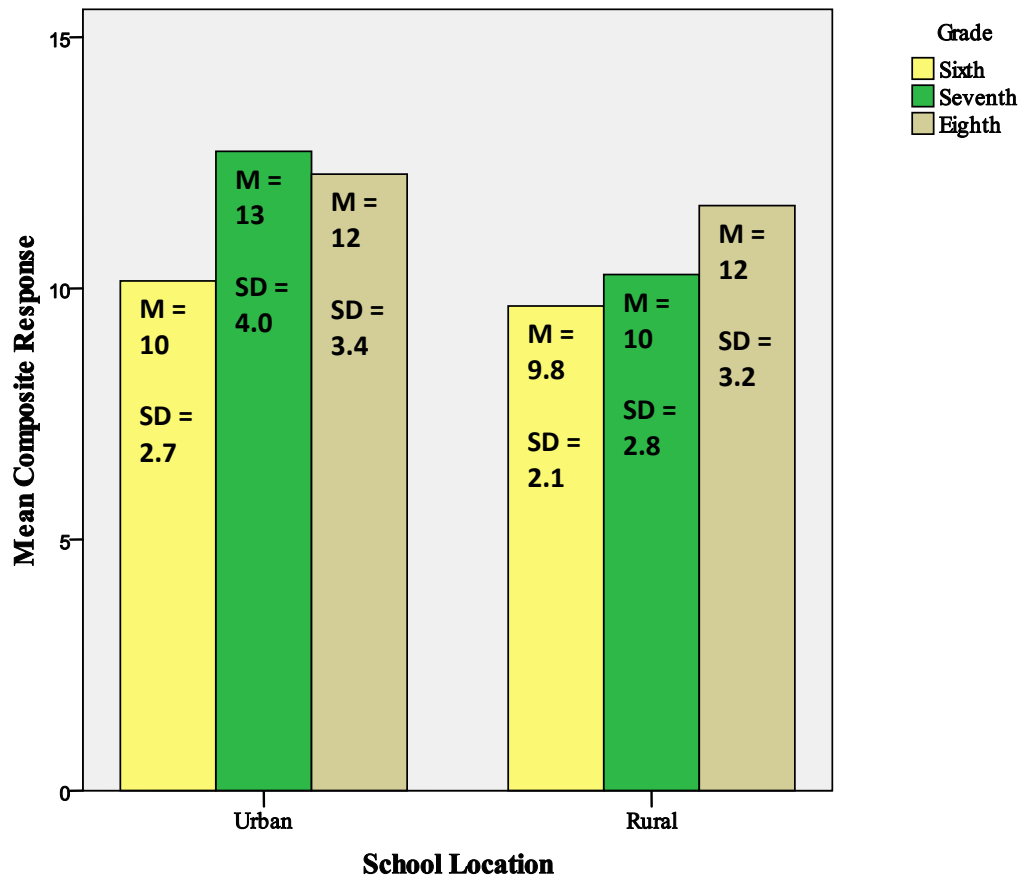
Figure 3. Group means of survey responses for questions on aggressive attitudes.

Levene's test of equality of variances was conducted as part of the ANOVA and indicated that homogeneity of variances was violated across groups for aggressive attitudes related to bullying, $F(5, 221) = 3.338$, $p = .006$. The analysis of the data to determine the effect that school location and grade level would have on students perceptions about aggressive attitudes with regard to bullying in school, based on survey responses indicated the results found in Table 3.

Table 3

Composite Response for Aggressive Attitudes

Source	SS	df	MS	F	P	ES
Location*Grade	43.99	2	21.99	2.31	.102	0.020
Location	79.99	1	79.99	8.39	.004	0.037
Grade	176.85	2	88.43	9.28	.000	0.078
Error	2104.96	221	9.53			

Although the line plot indicated interaction between school location and grade level for the variable of aggressive attitudes related to bullying (Appendix I), there was no statistical significance, $F(5, 221) = 2.309$, $p = .102$. There was statistical significance for the main effects of both school location, $F(5, 221) = 8.398$, $p < .01$, and grade level, $F(5, 221) = 9.284$, $p < .01$. There was a small partial eta effect size for school location of .037 and a medium effect size for grade level of 0.078 (Pallant, 2007).

Hypothesis 4

Hypothesis 4 stated that no significant difference will exist by grade level between sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students in member schools of the National Christian School Association in Arkansas in rural school settings versus students in urban settings on the overall attitudes toward bullying. The population sample for both the location of the schools involved and the grade level of each student was nearly normally distributed. Based on the size of the sampling groups at each grade level and school location, the Law of Large Numbers would allow for any violation of normality. One, non extreme outlier existed for overall attitudes by grade level, and six were present with regard to school location. The outliers, being within three standard deviations of the mean

were left in the data set see (See Appendices J and K for a comparison of the group distributions).

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for both urban and rural location showed significant results with values below $p = .01$. This indicated non-normal distributions for these groups. However, an ANOVA is robust to violations of normality assumption (Mertler & Vannatta, 2005). Group means of composite survey responses, indicating an overall attitude with regard to bullying along with standard deviations are displayed in Figure 4.
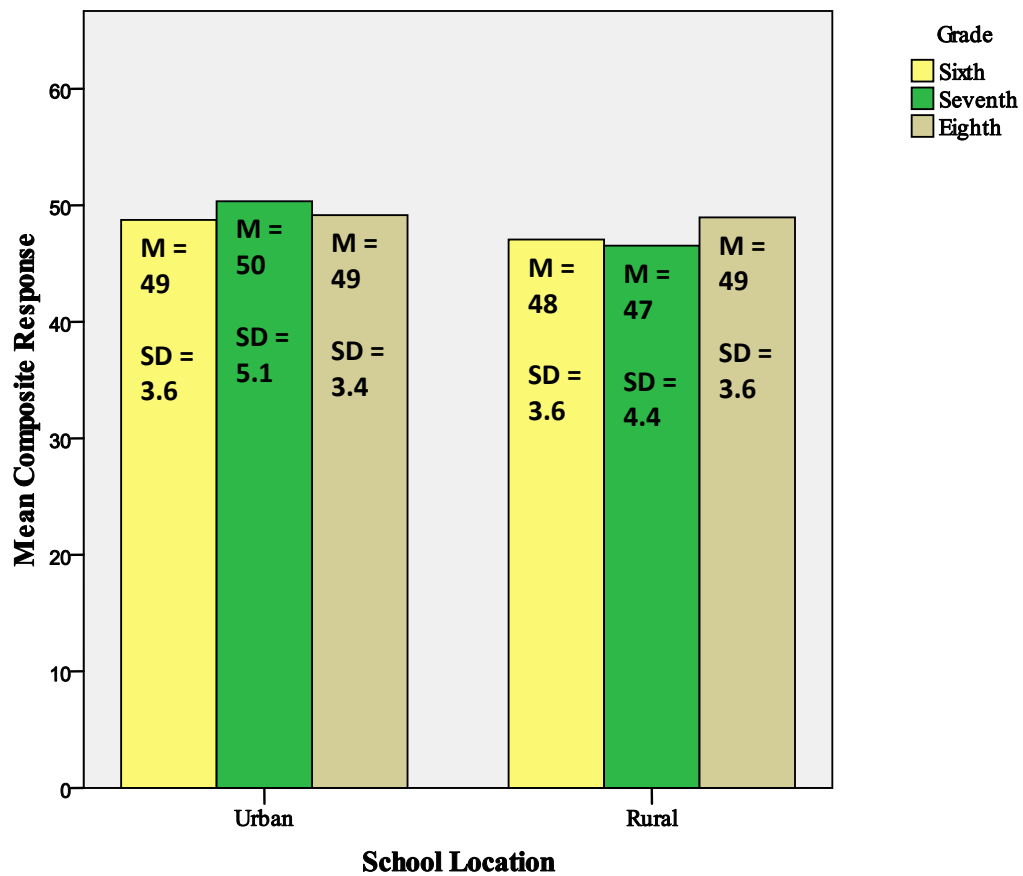
Figure 4. Group means of composite survey responses for overall attitudes.

Levene's test of equality of variances was conducted as part of the ANOVA and indicated that homogeneity of variances was violated across groups for the overall combined attitude related to bullying, $F(5, 221) = 2.515$, $p = .031$. The analysis of the data to determine the effect that school location and grade level would have on overall attitudes of students with regard to bullying in school, based on survey responses indicted the results found in Table 4.

Table 4

Composite Response for Overall Attitudes

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p	ES
Location*Grade	124.29	2	62.14	3.92	.021	0.034
Location	202.97	1	202.97	12.79	.199	0.055
Grade	51.53	2	25.77	1.62	.000	0.014
Error	3506.83	221	15.87			

Although the line plot indicated interaction between school location and grade level for the overall attitudes about bullying (Appendix L), no statistical significance existed for this interaction effect, $F(5, 221) = 3.916$, $p = .021$. Likewise, no statistical significance was indicated for the main effect of grade level, $F(5, 221) = 1.624$, $p = .199$. However, the main effect of school location did demonstrate statistical significance for overall attitudes related to bullying, $F(5, 221) = 12.791$, $p < .01$. The partial eta effect size for school location was small at 0.055 (Pallant, 2007).

Summary of Results

Review of the collected data and the results of the Univariate ANOVAs indicated some facts with regard to the results of the bullying survey. The distribution of the sampling groups was normally distributed, especially when the Law of Large Numbers was applied due to the number of individuals surveyed. Although the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test produced significant results within each hypothesis representing a violation of distribution, an ANOVA is robust for such violations of normality (Mertler & Vannatta, 2005).

The results of the ANOVA pointed out no significant effects among the interaction effects of school location and grade level for any of the four hypotheses. Among the main effects, there were some significant demonstrated. With regard to prevalence of bullying and aggressive attitudes about bullying, the main effects of school location and grade level were both significant. For the students' willingness to seek help for bullying, only grade level indicated a significant result. The main effect of school location showed significance for the overall attitudes toward bullying.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Bullying is a problem that has existed within the walls of both public and private educational settings. It is imperative that leaders in all schools and school districts assess the nature of the problem as a means of addressing potential solutions. Though it may never be eradicated, neither should it be ignored. The objective of this study was to add to the body of work pertaining to bullying among middle school students, especially with regard to those students in private schools. Because the perception among some may be that private schools struggle very little with bullying, there has been a lack of substantive research on the matter among their ranks.

The focus of the study was to examine various aspects of bullying among sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students in member schools of the National Christian School Association. The areas under study were the prevalence of bullying in the schools, the willingness of students to seek help, and aggressive attitudes that exist among bullies and their victims. A causal-comparative study was conducted on each of these three aspects individually and as a combination of all three areas, based on results of a survey completed by the subjects of the study.

Initially in this chapter, a reflection on the data collected and its analysis will be discussed. Second, recommendations will be suggested based on the conclusions found in the data analysis. These suggestions are pertinent to the administrators at each of the

schools who were involved in the study but may also provide information for others

seeking to conduct a similar study. Finally, implications of the study will be discussed

along with consideration of the study's significance to increasing knowledge on the

subject of bullying as well as future research possibilities.

Conclusions

To address all four hypotheses, four 2 x 3 factorial ANOVAs were conducted

using school setting (rural versus urban) and grade level (sixth, seventh, and eighth) as

the independent variables. The dependent variables for the analyses were the aspects of

the results of a bullying survey completed by each subject. The results of individual

survey questions were based on a four-point Likert scale with questions grouped to

address specific aspects of bullying. The responses to survey questions for each aspect

were combined to create three composite categories from the survey. These categories

were prevalence of bullying, willingness to seek help, and aggressive attitudes with

regard to bullying. A fourth composite was created by combining each of these into a

single overall category. The combined score for prevalence of bullying with four

questions had a range of 4-16, willingness to seek help with nine questions had a range of

9-36, and aggressive attitudes with seven questions had a range of 7-28. These combined

dependent variables were used for the factorial analysis to determine main effects for

each independent variable within the study and the interactive effects between variables.

Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis 1 stated that no significant difference will exist by grade level

between sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students in member schools of the National

Christian School Association in Arkansas in rural school settings versus students in urban

settings on the prevalence of teasing and bullying in school. There was no significant interactive effect between grade level and school location for the prevalence of bullying; therefore, the hypothesis was not rejected. For the main effect of school location and grade level, statistical significance did exist and the main effect hypothesis was rejected.

In this study, urban middle school students perceive that bullying is more of a problem in their schools than the rural school students do as indicated by both the statistical significance for the main effects of school location and grade level and higher mean scores of survey results. This is especially true of students in seventh and eighth grade, although all three grade levels involved indicated a greater prevalence in urban schools than their rural counterparts according to the mean scores. Among rural students, eighth grade students responded that bullying is a problem more than the sixth and seventh graders did. Analysis of the mean scores for responses to the prevalence of bullying showed no interactive effect. This lack of statistical significance for the interactive effect, based on survey responses, seems to demonstrate that students in grades 6, 7, and 8 in both rural and urban schools agree that bullying is a problem in their schools.

Although grade level and school location seem to have little combined effect on the students understanding of prevalence of bullying in their schools, individually, the location of a student's school and the grade level can shape a student's perception of how wide spread bullying might be. Grade level effect is supported by several studies that indicate that students in middle school grades state that bullying is a problem in their schools (Holt et al., 2009; Nolin et. al., 1995; Pergolizzi et al., 2009). There is no indication among the literature that the location of schools, rural or urban, has an impact

on the prevalence of bullying because most research focuses on comparisons between countries (Hutchinson, 1996; Lai et al., 2008; Onder & Yurtal, 2008).

Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2 stated that no significant difference will exist by grade level between sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students in member schools of the National Christian School Association in Arkansas in rural school settings versus students in urban settings on the willingness to seek help when being bullied. No statistical significance was present for the interactive effect of school location and grade level for the willingness of students to seek help for bullying. In addition, the main effect of school location was not significant; therefore, the hypothesis could not be rejected. Conversely, the main effect of grade level demonstrated significance, indicating that the main effect hypothesis could be rejected.

Both rural and urban students indicated a desire to seek help with regard to bullying. The mean scores for individual grade levels were identical for both locations of schools, with sixth grade students seeming to be the most willing to get help with bullying problems based on higher mean scores. This similarity of mean scores effectively explains why there was no statistical significance for location of school or the interaction of grade level with location. The mean scores indicated that grade level is the greatest indicator of a student's desire for assistance when it comes to bullying in schools because sixth graders in both rural and urban had higher mean scores. Differences in the mean scores may be attributed to the younger student's greater dependence on those in authority to assist in solving problems and the older student's desire for greater

independence, creating a culture of both solving one's own problems as well as not wanting to be seen as one who involves teachers.

There was little combined effect existing between grade level and school location for the willingness of students to seek help in bullying situations. The desire for middle school students to seek help is supported by research literature, which shows that more often than not, students in grades 6, 7 and 8 will seek help (Anderson & Swiatowy, 2008; Beran & Shapiro, 2005; Devoe & Murphy, 2011). Each of these studies sought to ascertain whom students would tell about bullying, both inside and outside of school. According to these studies, whom students will tell varies depending on the specific incident, the location of the event, and how frequent the bullying occurs. The survey used in this study specifically asked students about their willingness to approach individuals at their school.

Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis 3 stated that no significant difference will exist by grade level between sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students in member schools of the National Christian School Association in Arkansas in rural school settings versus students in urban settings on the aggressive attitudes with regard to bullying. The interactive effect of school location and grade level revealed no statistical significance for aggressive attitudes about bullying; therefore, the hypothesis was not rejected. There was statistical significance for both of the main effects school location and grade level, and the main effect hypotheses were rejected.

Urban students seem to indicate a greater aggression with regard to bullying than their rural counterparts for sixth and seventh grade and only a slight difference for sixth

grade. Eighth grade students in both locations showed similar results. The mean score of the survey for seventh grade indicated that those in rural schools possessed a less aggressive attitude about bullying than those in urban schools. One possible reason for this particular grade difference may be the location of this grade in the school. For both urban schools, although seventh grade is considered middle school, it is the lowest grade found in the building. For both rural schools, the elementary (K-6th grade) and the secondary (7th-12th grade) are located in the same building. As has been shown by previous research studies, a consistent climate and culture within a school that addresses bullying appropriately can help in diminishing the problem (Bandyopadhyay et al., 2009).

The results of the study for the aggressive attitudes that students display with regard to bullying showed that there is no link between grade level and location. Although this lack of statistical significance was indicated by the data analysis, the mean scores of the survey also seemed to support this with grade levels in similar locations having the same or nearly the same mean scores. However, the mean scores for the individual grade levels did demonstrate a difference between these locations most noticeably with seventh grade students. Research has shown aggressive attitudes are varying among students regarding bullying, with some students choosing retaliation, walking way, missing school, or standing up for themselves (Burnham et al., 2011; Gropper & Froschl, 1999; Limber, 2003; Nishioka et al., 2011; Therrian, 2011). The responses in this study centered on how to interact with other students to avoid being bullied or as a bully.

Hypothesis 4

Hypothesis 4 stated that no significant difference will exist by grade level between sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students in member schools of the National Christian School Association in Arkansas in rural school settings versus students in urban settings on the overall attitudes toward bullying. There was no statistical significance for the interactive effect of school location and grade level for the overall attitudes about bullying, nor for the main effect of grade level. However, there was statistical significance for the main effect of school location. Although the hypothesis was not rejected for the interactive effect of school location and grade level or the main effect of grade level, the main effect hypothesis for school location was rejected.

When all three components of the survey were combined into a single composite score, the overall attitude toward bullying was consistent for both rural and urban schools. The mean scores for sixth grade students in both locations were similar and identical for eighth grade in each location. Seventh grade students in urban schools had a higher composite mean score than those in rural schools. Consistent composite mean scores for overall attitude in both school location and grade level provided evidence as to why these main effects showed statistical significance and the interactive effects did not.

Recommendations

The results of this study indicated that middle school students in member schools of the National Christian School Association in Arkansas believe that bullying is a problem in their schools. This was found to be the case in both rural and urban schools, although the mean scores indicated that the perception of the degree to which bullying is a problem does vary from grade to grade and between the two locations. According to the

mean scores with regard to seeking help, the presence of bullying does not deter students from seeking help in the face of inappropriate behavior by bullies. However, these mean scores also indicated that seeking help is based more on grade level than school location. Finally, the nature of attitudes among middle schools students with regard to bullying was consistent across grade levels and school location, indicating that the response to bullying and other inappropriate actions was similar.

The first recommendation is that private schools, like their public school counterparts, must address the fact that bullying does exist. Although the nature and extent of the problem may not be as high as that found in the research studies of public schools, which place it as high as 96% (Carlyle & Steinman, 2007), this research indicates that it is present. Students in all grade levels, both in rural and urban settings, indicated that it does exist, though not all perceive it equally. It is clear from the data that like their public school counterparts, students at private schools must also deal with the issue of bullying.

Second, it is recommended that schools provide effective means for students to find the help they need to combat the problem. Students in all middle school grades involved indicated that they would attempt to find someone, even within the confines of the educational setting, to assist them in addressing a bullying situation. Included in this desire to seek help for them is an inherent desire to seek help for their friends in similar situations. Maines and Robinson (1994) have indicated that having a plan or program that allows and even encourages students to report bullying as a victim or a witness increases the likelihood that bullying will decline, especially if those reporting need not fear reprisal. Bandyopadhyay et al. (2009) stated that if the school culture is such that students

believe administrators and teachers will work to stop bullying when reported, then the number of reported incidences will increase and bullying will summarily decrease. It is important to create an avenue of seeking help among victims and witnesses. Once this method of seeking help is in place, it can have a positive effect on those that are struggling with bullying.

A third recommendation would be to employ a program that educates the bully, the victim, and the witness to bullying. Students in both rural and urban schools as well as those in all three grades involved in the study indicated that the aggressive nature of bullying and reaction to bullying are concerns. Studies indicated that typical reactions to bullying and the behavior of bullies include the personal interactions of both physical and verbal confrontation. The use of technology to post or send inappropriate and even threatening messages through social media is another common tool in reacting to bullying situations (Beran & Shapiro, 2005; Burnham et al., 2011; Gropper & Froschl, 1999; Khosropour & Walsh, 2001). A program whose purpose was to educate about appropriate and inappropriate behavior for both bully and victim would prove beneficial to the climate and culture of the school.

A final recommendation would be that schools should institute a substantive monitoring and recording system specifically for bullying as part of the overall discipline policy. This should be done as a means of identifying those who would benefit most from a bullying education program, providing evidence to the intervention that is taking place to address the issue as well as assessing increases or declines in bullying incidences within the school. When teachers are aware of what is happening with their students, students feel safer and are more inclined to talk about what they are experiencing. Having

a program to address bullying and promote the reporting of bullying may only be effective if accurate records are kept.

Implications

Significance and Expansion of Knowledge Base

Any study of bullying among school age children sheds light on the specific settings that are studied. The setting for this study was private schools, specifically member schools of the National Christian School Association in Arkansas for which very little research is in existence. As the data demonstrated, students in middle school at various private schools indicated that bullying is present and that generally they want to get help when facing bullying. Furthermore, students may struggle with how best to interact positively with peers as both a bully and the victim. Providing the knowledge that the existence of these problems is not limited to public schools may be of benefit to school leaders facing these issues.

The study demonstrated several strong points including the reality that different school locations, rural and urban, produced similar results. Students in the same grade, but in different locations having similar responses, lends credibility to the wide spread nature of the bullying problem. Additionally, the indication among the results that students in different grade levels did not respond identically shows that the subjects of the study may have developed their own opinion about the nature of the problem in their school. There seemed to be very little guidance from those who administered the survey or local school officials on the best answers to give among grade levels at specific schools. Finally, this study provides a starting point for other private school organizations

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to use the survey and possibly the results of this study to determine and address bullying in their schools.

Future Research Considerations

By design, this study had a narrow focus that included middle school students at member schools of the National Christian School Association in Arkansas. Although this narrow focus provided tremendous feedback on bullying in these schools, ultimately, it was limiting in its scope. Future researchers could broaden the study beyond middle school and include private schools that are not faith based or represent a divergent group of faith-based schools. Furthermore, while the survey used in this study included identification of the subjects gender, which was coded into the data analysis software, this was not utilized as part of the study. As part of research studies to come, gender could play a role in assessing differences in bullying according to gender. Many studies on the subject of bullying include gender as a main effect (Carlyle & Steinman, 2007; Lipson, 2001; Nishioka et al., 2011). Although these studies do not limit their research to gender, results include the impact of bullying and victimization based on gender. Finally, the school locations identified were urban and rural. However, greater differentiation could be placed on school location to include, among others, suburban, inner city, and even boarding schools. This would provide information on a wider range of private school settings.

In order to fill in the gap of research that exists with regard to bullying in private schools, more research should be conducted at all grade levels and in multiple locations to provide school leaders with more information with regard to bullying. A broader spectrum of research could be integral in addressing the bullying problem in all schools,

both public and private. Although some may see the nature of private schools and their

students as being considerably different to public schools and their students, in many

ways, they are similar. Filling in the gap of research could prove mutually beneficial.

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APPENDICES

Grade Level Comparison for Prevalence of Bullying Composite Responses
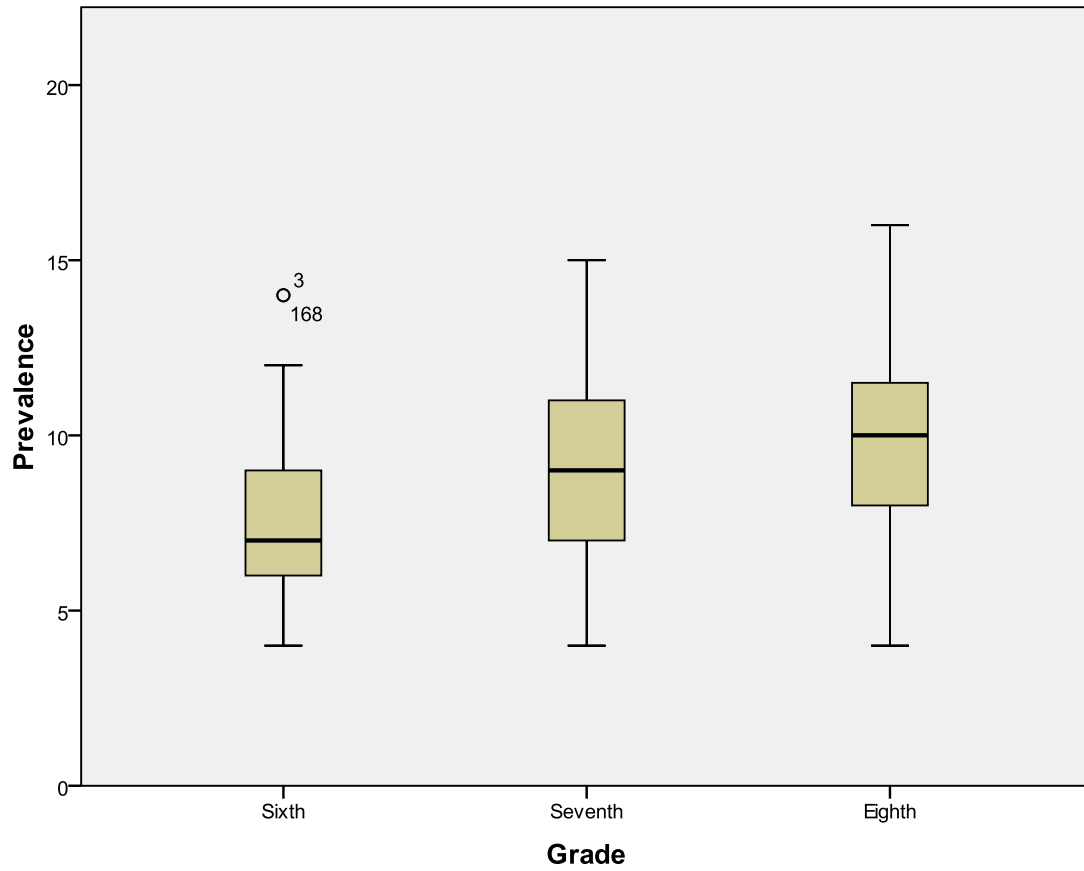
APPENDIX B

School Location Comparison for Prevalence of Bullying Composite Responses
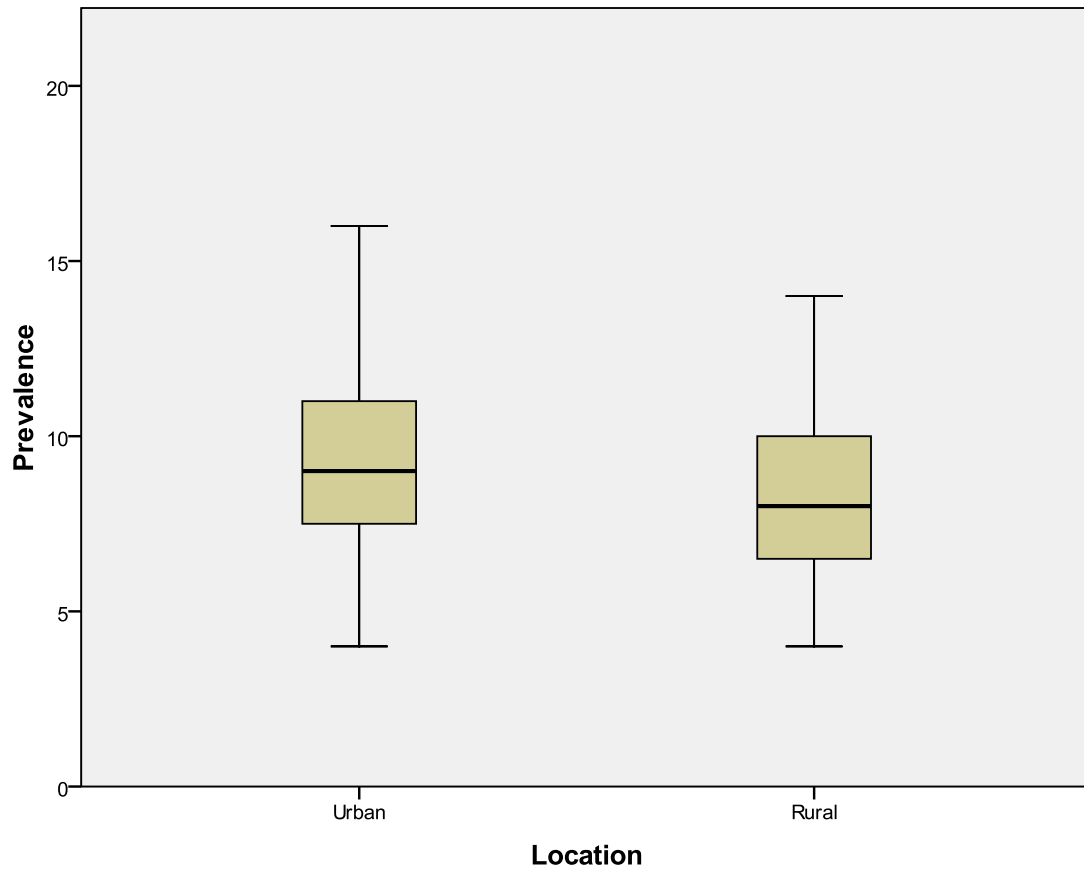
APPENDIX C

Estimated Marginal Means for Composite Responses for Prevalence
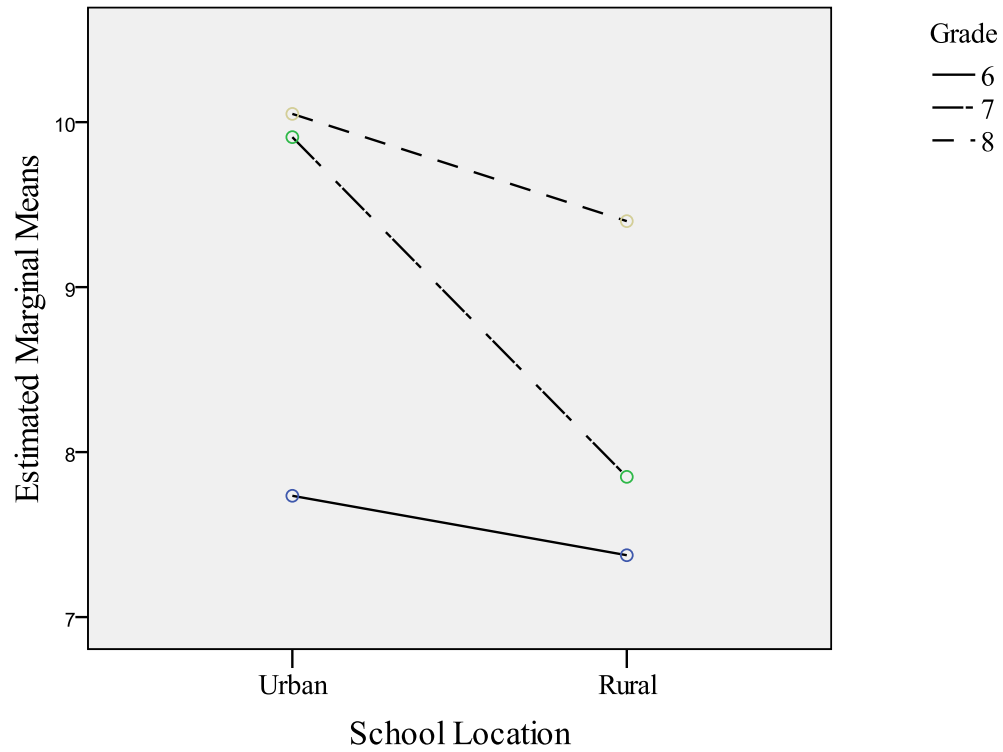
Grade Level Comparison for Willingness to Seek Help Composite Responses
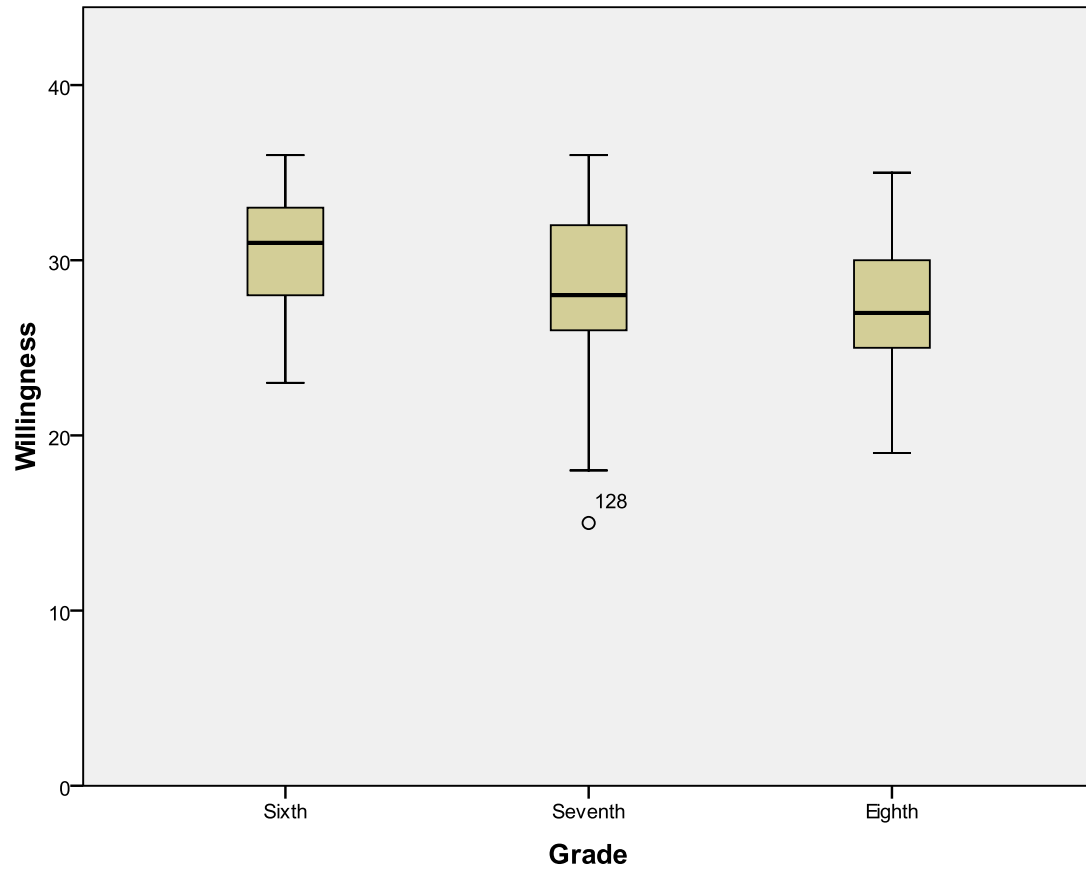
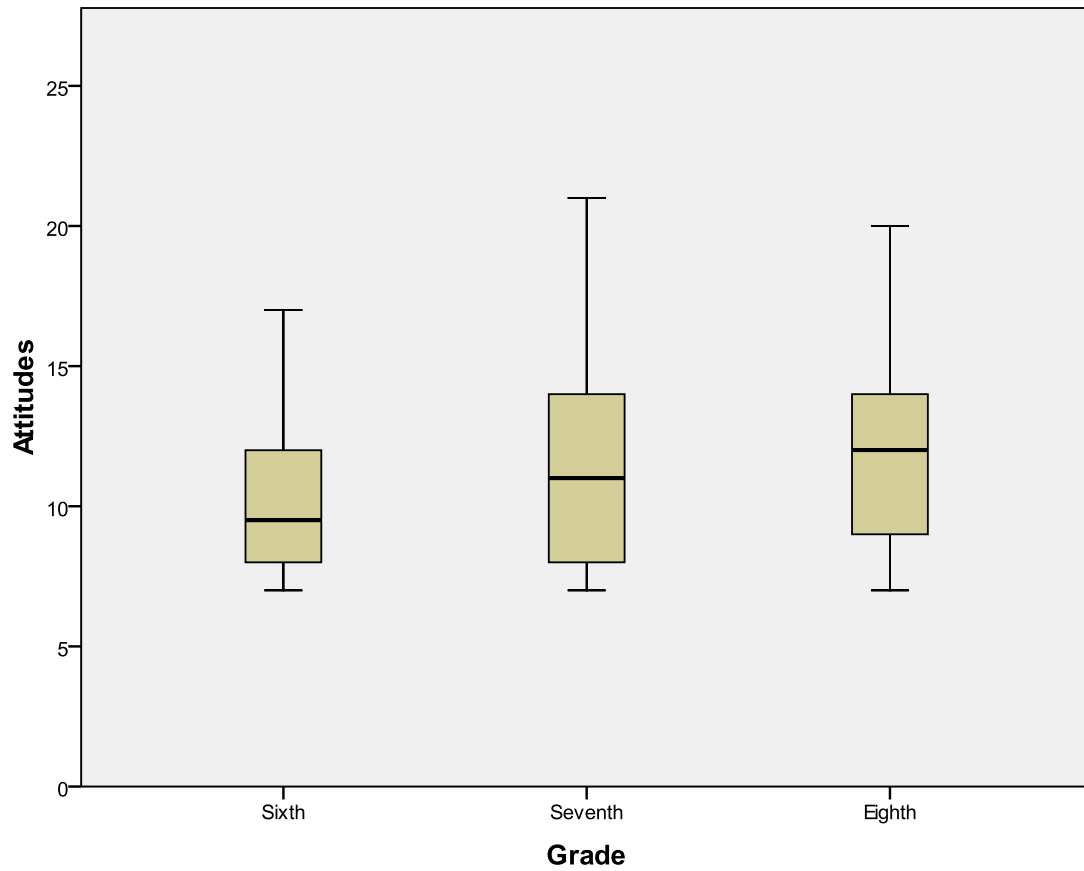**School Location Comparison for Willingness to Seek Help Composite Responses**
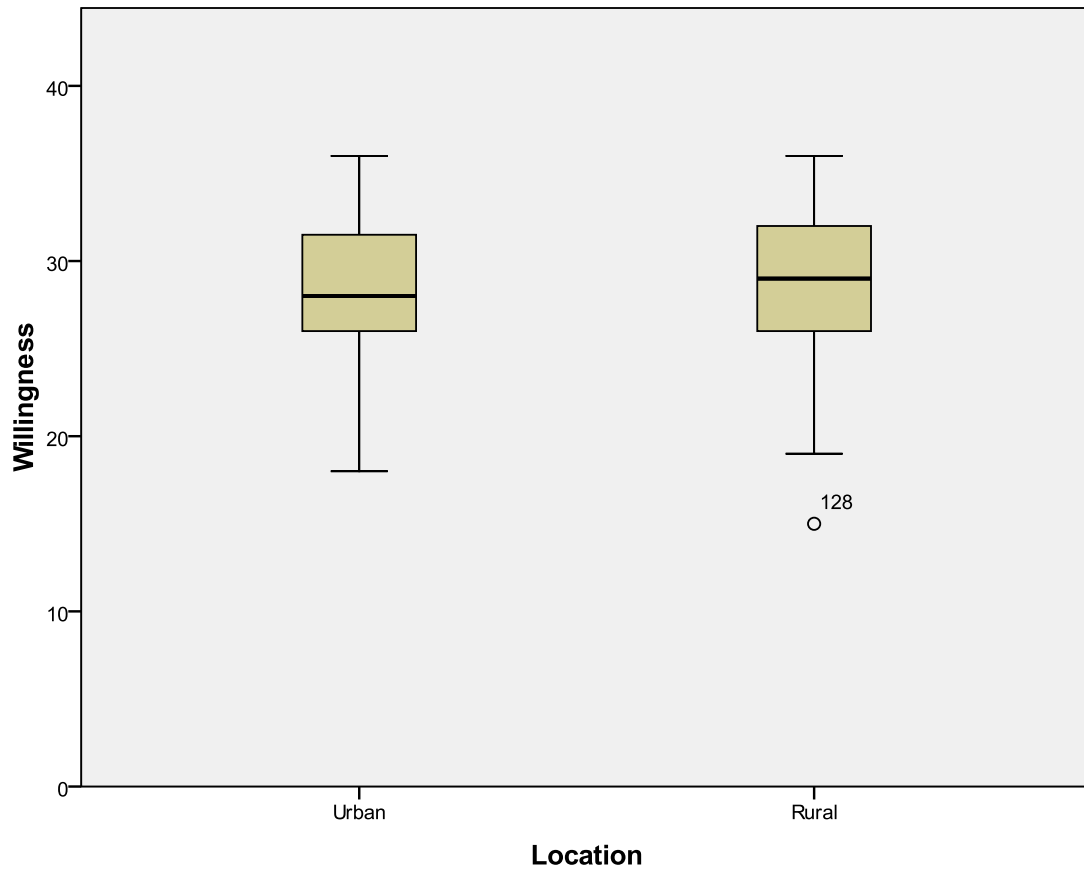
APPENDIX F

Estimated Marginal Means for Composite Responses of Willingness to Seek Help
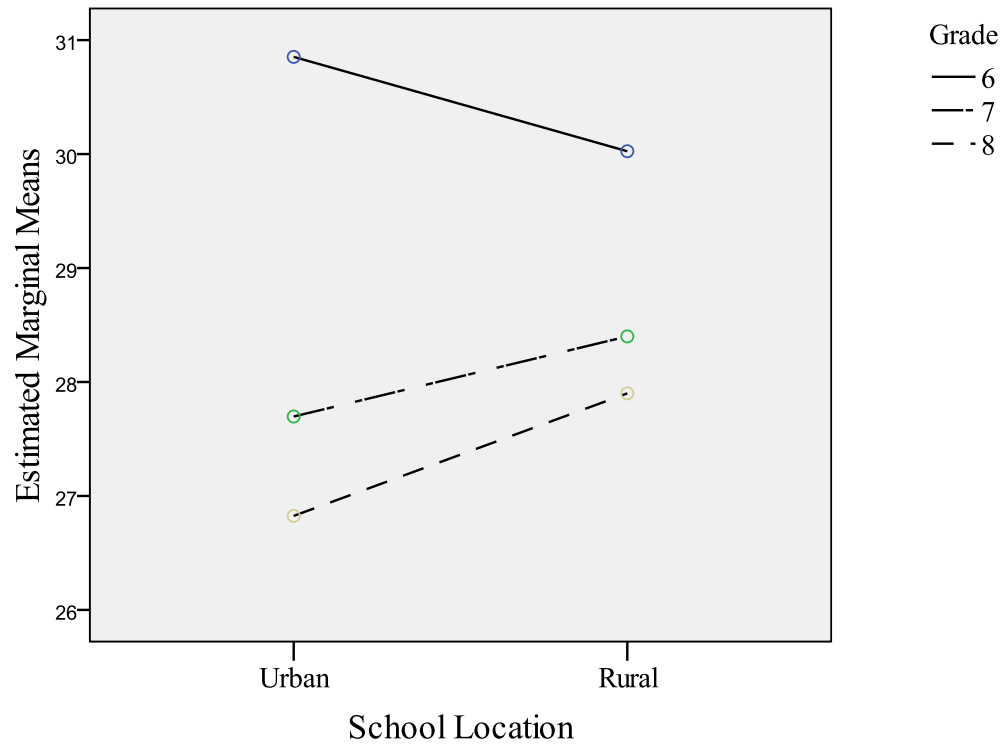
Grade Level Comparison for Aggressive Attitudes Composite Responses

School Location Comparison for Aggressive Attitudes Composite Responses
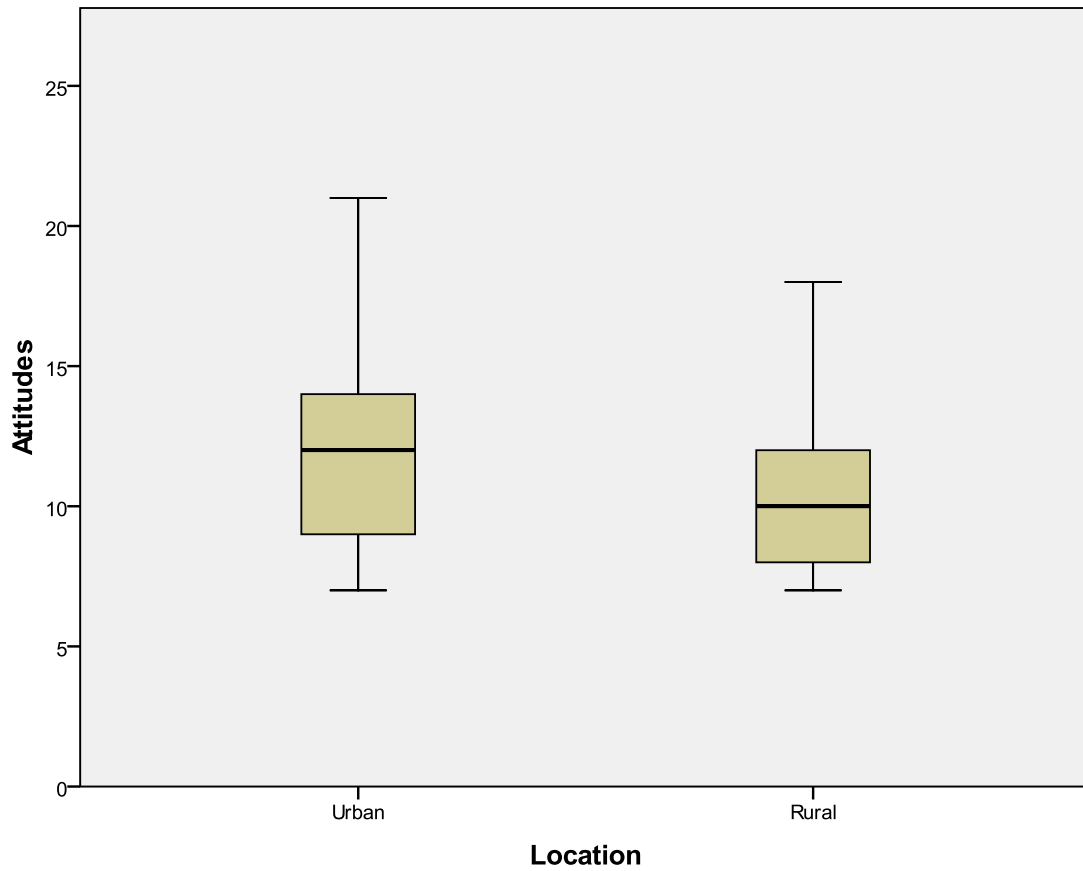
APPENDIX I
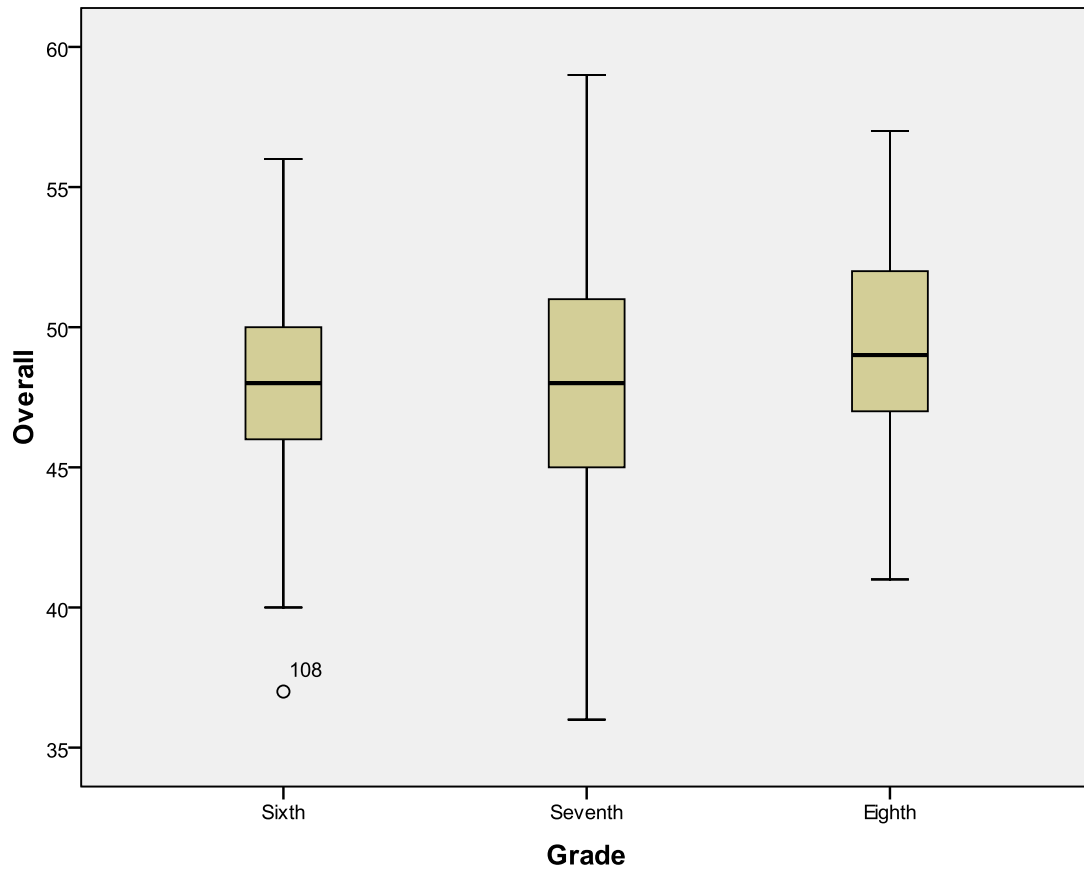
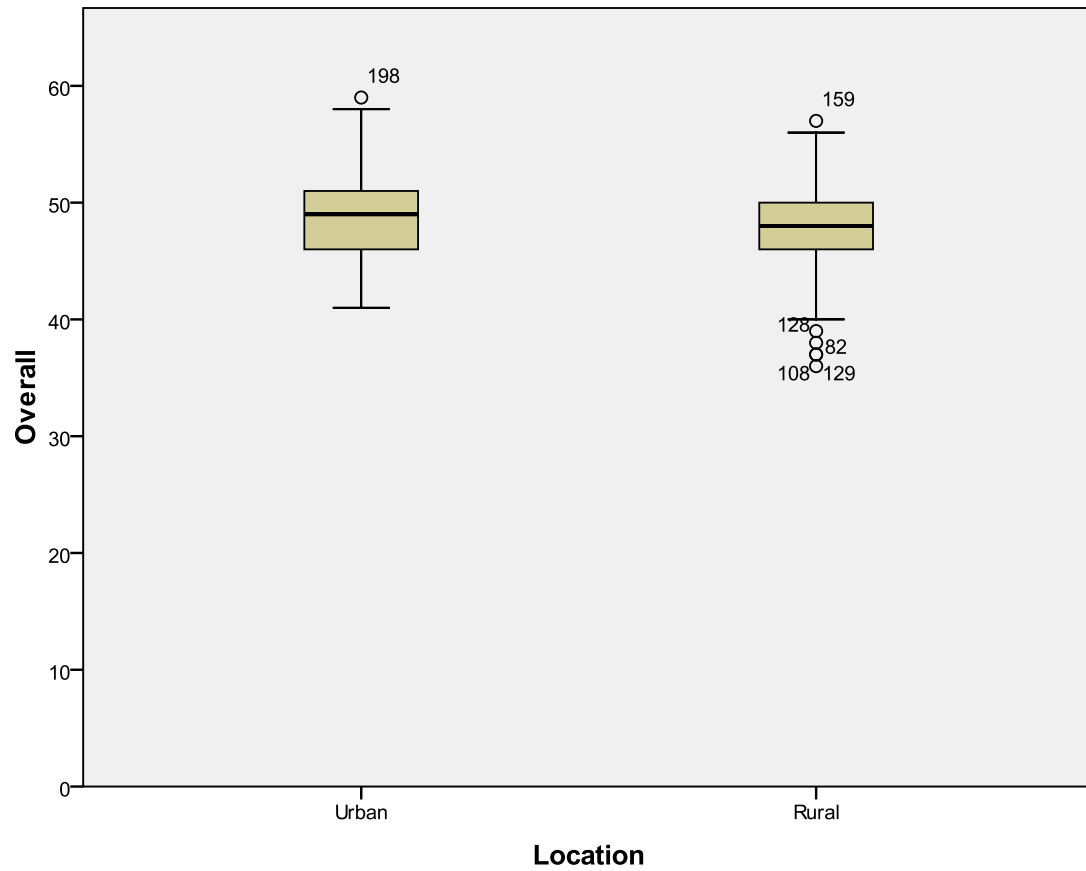**Estimated Marginal Means for Composite Responses of Aggressive Attitudes**
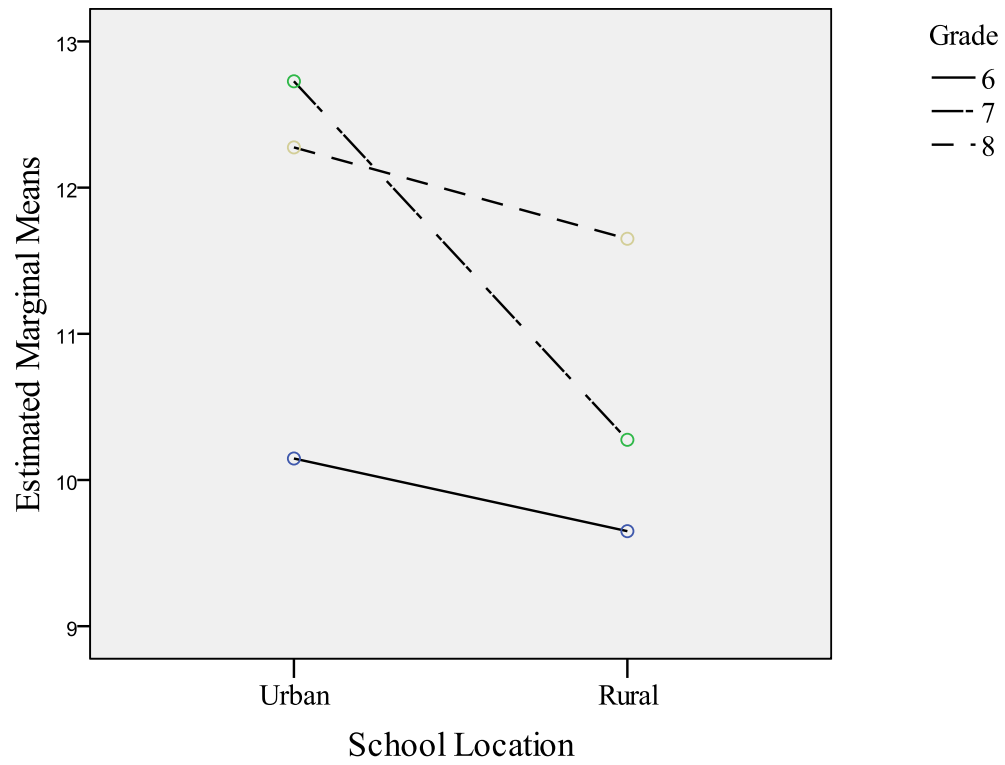
Grade Level Comparison for Overall Attitudes Composite Responses

APPENDIX K
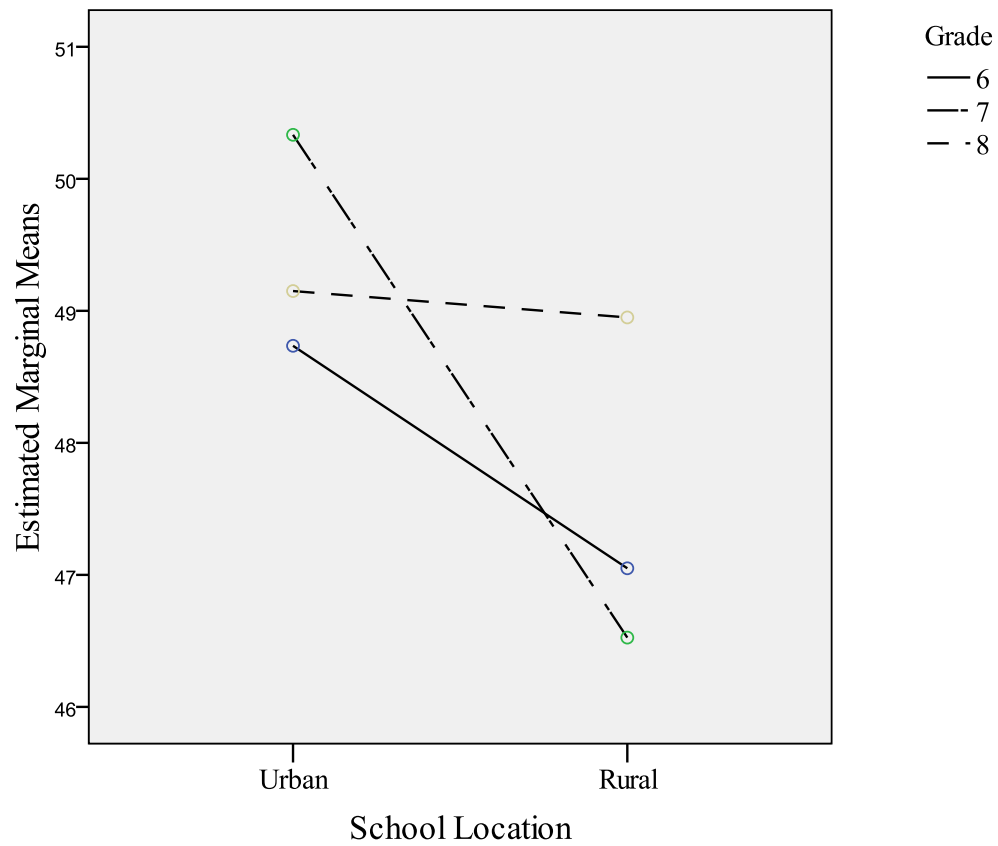
School Location Comparison for Overall Attitudes Composite Responses

Estimated Marginal Means for Composite Responses of Overall Attitude

APPENDIX M

IRB Approval Form

HARDING
U N I V E R S I T Y
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Status of Request for Expedited IRB Review
(For Board Use Only)

Date: September 14, 2011

Proposal Number: 2011-66

Title of Project: Perceptions of Bullying Among Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Grade Students in
                         Four Private Schools in Arkansas

Principal Investigator(s): Bradley Gist

■   Research approved.

☐   Approved with modifications.

☐   Committee requests further information before a decision can be made. (See next page.)

☐   This proposal has been denied.

I have considered your request for an **expedited review**, and my decision is marked above. Please review the appropriate text below for the decision that was rendered regarding your proposal:

Research Approved: If your protocol has been approved, please note that your project has IRB approval from today for a period of one year and you are free to proceed with data collection. If there are changes to the research design or data that is collected, you will need to submit a *Request for Amendment to Approved Research* form. The IRB reserves the right to observe, review and evaluate this study and its procedures during the course of the study.

Approved with Modifications: If approved with modifications, you are allowed to proceed with data collection provided that the required modifications (see attached) are in place. You will need to submit an *Amendment to Approved Research* form within 30 days. If this study continues unchanged from that amended protocol for more than one year, you will need to submit a *Request for Project Continuation*. If this study continues for more than one year and there are changes to the research design or data that is collected, you will need to submit a *Request for Amendment to Approved Research* form.

Committee requests further information: Please see the attached document and use it to guide required modifications, then re-submit your request.

This proposal has been denied: See the attached document for an explanation of why your proposal has been denied.

Ken Pierson Yeck

Chair, Harding University Institutional Review Board