A SURVEY STUDY OF THE PERCEPTIONS OF MIDDLE SCHOOL PERSONNEL WITH RESPECT TO LEARNING DISABLED STUDENTS AS VICTIMS OF BULLYING/HARASSMENT AND THE CORRESPONDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH BULLYING PREVENTION AND DISCIPLINE

A dissertation submitted to the Kent State University College of Education, Health, and Human Services in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

by

Matthew C. Bradic

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A SURVEY STUDY OF THE PERCEPTIONS OF MIDDLE SCHOOL PERSONNEL WITH RESPECT TO LEARNING DISABLED STUDENTS AS VICTIMS OF BULLYING/HARASSMENT AND THE CORRESPONDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH BULLYING PREVENTION AND DISCIPLINE (199 pp.)

The purpose of this quantitative survey study was to examine the perceptions of administrators and other support staff in public middle schools across the United States regarding the current bullying prevention/treatment program being used in their school building and whether it is effective with all types of students, regardless of academic standing (particularly the effectiveness for students with learning disabilities). Secondary purposes included surveying administrators and other support staff about the differences in bullying behaviors between LD students and students not on an Individualized Education Program (IEP) and soliciting feedback from administrators to determine disciplinary procedures when an LD student is a bullying victim.

The survey was distributed to public middle school principals, assistant principals, school psychologists, and school counselors across the United States. A correlational ex post facto design was used, and the survey instrument used was created by combining two surveys from previously published studies.

The instrument data were analyzed using analysis of variance (ANOVA) and an independent samples t-test. Findings revealed significant differences amongst the administrator and school psychologist populations regarding the effectiveness of anti-
bullying programs for all student populations (including the learning disabled). Further, findings indicated significant differences between school psychologists and the other populations surveyed with respect to the frequency of learning disabled students as victims of bullying. The results support a greater need for specialized bullying prevention programs, more intervention for this population following incidents of bullying, and heightened sensitivity with respect to the overall safety of students placed on IEPs.
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to:

My wife, Erin – your love, support, and encouragement for the past 10 years made the completion of this dissertation possible.

My sons, Griffin and Lucas – your smiles, love, and sense of wonderment about life serve as a constant reminder that being a dad is the most important career and achievement of all.

My parents, Charles Bradic, Laura Bradic and Nancy Inman, as well as my in-laws John and Jeannie Stock – for providing support not only to me, but more importantly to my wife and children.
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DEDICATION</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical Framework/Background</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of the Study</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Questions</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operational Definitions</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance of the Study</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delimitations</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of Bullying</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevalence of Bullying</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Differences in Bullying Behaviors</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullying at the Middle School Level/Age Variables</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk Factors and Protective Factors With Respect to Bullying</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effects of Bullying Behaviors for Victims</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctoral Dissertations Exploring Bullying at the Middle School Level</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-Bullying Policies/Initiatives at the Federal Level</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Government Policies/Laws on Harassing Students With Disabilities</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policies to Reduce and Prevent Bullying/Harassment at the State Level</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Policy and Ohio Law</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullying and Children With Learning Disabilities</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characteristics of Learning Disabled Students That Make Them a Target of Harassment</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility/Response of the Administrator</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility/Response of Support Staff (Psychologists and School Counselors)</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

vii
III. METHODOLOGY ........................................................................................................62
  Research Design........................................................................................................62
  Instrument ..................................................................................................................64
  Population/Sample .....................................................................................................67
  Field Testing/Content Validity ....................................................................................70
  Administration/Data Collection Procedures .............................................................72
  Human Subjects Approval ..........................................................................................73
  Reliability/Validity ......................................................................................................74
  Data Analysis ..............................................................................................................75
  Summary ......................................................................................................................76

IV. RESULTS ....................................................................................................................78
  Pilot Study Results ....................................................................................................78
  Response Rates .........................................................................................................81
  Demographic Data .....................................................................................................83
    Race ...........................................................................................................................84
    Age ................................................................................................................................86
    Gender ......................................................................................................................88
    Years of Experience as an Educator .........................................................................89
    Years of Experience in Current Position ....................................................................92
    State of Employment ...............................................................................................94
    School District Location/Type of Community Served ..............................................94
    School Enrollment ...................................................................................................97
    Percentage of Learning Disabled Students ............................................................100
  Research Question One ............................................................................................102
  Research Question Two ............................................................................................113
  Research Question Three .........................................................................................121
  Summary ....................................................................................................................126

V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....................................130
  Conclusions—Demographic Data .............................................................................131
  Conclusions—Research Question One .......................................................................134
  Conclusions—Research Question Two .......................................................................139
  Conclusions—Research Question Three ....................................................................146
  Limitations ..................................................................................................................151
  Recommendations for Future Research ....................................................................154
  Survey Instrument Questions Not Reported On .......................................................157

APPENDICES ..................................................................................................................161
  APPENDIX A. SURVEY INSTRUMENT .......................................................................162
  APPENDIX B. MAIL SURVEY INVITATION COVER LETTER ONE (MAY 2013) .......171
APPENDIX C. PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM ........................................... 173
APPENDIX D. MAIL SURVEY INVITATION COVER LETTER TWO
(SEPTEMBER 2013) ................................................................................. 175
APPENDIX E. WEB-BASED SURVEY INVITATION COVER LETTER
............................................................................................................ 177
APPENDIX F. HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW APPROVAL LETTER ONE
............................................................................................................ 179
APPENDIX G. HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW APPROVAL LETTER TWO
............................................................................................................ 181
REFERENCES ............................................................................................ 183
## LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. States With Anti-Bullying Laws</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. State Law Recommendations and Requirements for the Adoption of State Model Bullying Policies by State</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Alternative Mixed-Mode Survey Collection and the Implications</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Classical Pilot Study Procedures to Improve the Internal Validity of a Questionnaire</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Sample Population Survey Response Rates for Administrators and Counselors</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Frequency and Percentage of Occurrence for Race</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Percentage of Occurrence for Race by Occupation</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Frequency and Percentage of Occurrence for Age</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Percentage of Occurrence for Age by Occupation</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Frequency and Percentage of Occurrence for Gender</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Percentage of Occurrence for Gender by Occupation</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Frequency and Percentage of Occurrence for Years of Experience in Schools</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Percentage of Occurrence for Years Employed in a School Setting by Occupation</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Frequency and Percentage of Occurrence for Years of Experience in Current Position</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Percentage of Occurrence for Years of Experience in Current Position by Occupation</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Frequency and Percentage of Occurrence for State of Employment</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
17. Frequency and Percentage of Occurrence for School District Location/Community .................................................................96
18. Percentage of Occurrence for School District Location by Occupation ..........97
19. Frequency and Percentage of Occurrence for Student Enrollment ..................98
20. Percentage of Occurrence for Student Enrollment by Occupation ..........99
21. Frequency and Percentage of Occurrence for Percentage of LD Students ....100
22. Percentage of Occurrence for Percentage of LD Students by Occupation ....102
23. Components of School District Anti-Bullying Policies Represented by Percentages .................................................................................................................................104
24. Descriptive Data for Components of School District Anti-Bullying Policies ..............................................................................................................................114
25. Perspectives of the Safety of Learning Disabled Students Represented by Percentages ....................................................................................................................116
26. Perspectives of the Bullying of Learning Disabled Students on an IEP ..........116
27. Perspectives of Whether LD Students are Bullied More Than Typical Students .........................................................................................................................117
28. Descriptive Data for Perspectives on Bullying Practices With Learning Disabled Students ...........................................................................................................120
29. Steps Followed When LD Students are Victims of Bullying Represented by Percentages ..............................................................................................................123
30. Descriptive Data for Steps Followed When LD Students are Victims of Bullying .........................................................................................................................124
31. Responses to Bullying Incidents for LD Students Represented by Percentages .........................................................................................................................125
32. Descriptive Data for Responses to Bullying Incidents for LD Students ..........126
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Background

Bullying in schools has been a focus of many researchers over the past 30 years and is a pervasive problem that has gathered an increased focus following the recent concerns over school shootings and other violent acts that have continued to gather the attention of various media sources. Research in this domain has particular relevance for educators, family members, and policy makers. Through better understanding of how bullying behaviors affects various students and populations, schools and support staff members can tailor treatment programs to meet the needs of those student groups found to be most at risk. A proactive approach is needed to identify those student groups most at risk for being victims of bullying behaviors, so that prevention and intervention programs can be implemented and specialized to meet their social and emotional needs, while improving overall well being.

Currently, the vast majority of schools have structured programs and policies in place to address issues of physical aggression, while either ignoring or not fully understanding the short- and long-term impacts of emotional aggression and bullying. It is widely known that instances of physical aggression, if not addressed early, will soon escalate. However, aggression of any type (physical or emotional) harms both the aggressor and victim. Because bullying is not readily identified or reported, parents, teachers, and other school personnel are generally unaware of the prevalence or severity of the problem. Bullying is difficult to recognize, prevent, and treat. It can occur
virtually anywhere, despite efforts to identify both perpetrators and victims. Victims of bullying may feel hesitant to identify the aggressors, out of fear of being labeled a “tattletale” or fearing that the bullying behaviors will increase if the person initiating in the bullying finds out. Even menial insults, such as one student teasing another about the kinds of clothing he or she wears, can have explosive results. Alienation and verbal taunting can ultimately lead to acts of violence because the victims have buried their feelings deep within and have locked up their emotions. In the most severe instances, these pent-up emotions are then released in a devastating manner.

Recent statistics paint a dark picture of school violence, as perpetrators in a multitude of school shootings have identified bullying as a motive in their attack. Klein (2012) identified 191 documented incidents of school shootings in the United States from 1979–2011, and the trend has indicated a sharp incline in the incidents by both year and decade. School shootings, which many times involve the suicide of the perpetrator, are the most horrific and extreme response to bullying and other anti-school conditions. Uncounted are the vast majority of other incidents that do not receive the direct publicity and attention from the media: physical altercations; dropping out of school; depression and anxiety of the victim; cutting and other forms of self mutilation; substance abuse; or engagement in any number of other destructive behaviors and crimes.

Empirical studies and some high profile cases in the media have indicated a link between suicidal ideation and prior experiences whether the individual was either a bullying victim or offender. Hinduja and Patchin (2010) conducted a random sample of 1,973 middle school students and found that youth who experienced either traditional
bullying or cyber-bullying, as either an offender or victim, had more suicidal ideations and were more likely to attempt suicide than those who had not experienced these forms of peer aggression. While both perpetrators and victims experienced suicidal thoughts, victimization was more strongly related to these thoughts than offending. Specifically, 20% of respondents reported seriously thinking about attempting suicide, and traditional bullying victims were 1.7 times more likely to have attempted suicide than those who had not experienced bullying behaviors.

As the leaders of school buildings, principals should strive to create a positive learning environment for all students, which include feeling safe and being free from peer harassment. For many student populations, school can be a stressful, troubling, and dangerous place. A school where both students and staff feel safe and free from harassment is vital for the school to be a positive learning environment for students and a work environment for staff.

A variety of studies/surveys have elicited feedback from school principals with respect to their perceptions of existing bullying behaviors within their schools, as well as current efforts in bullying prevention. On a national level, a survey instrument was developed by Dake, Price, Telljohann, and Funk (2004) to assess principals’ stages of change and the perceived barriers regarding both selected bullying prevention activities as well as the effectiveness of bullying prevention activities. They found a lack of school-based bullying prevention activities were identified, even though principals perceived no barriers regarding these activities. Characteristics that affected the offering of these activities included perceptions regarding the extent of bullying and the number
of bullying problems that were directly reported to them. The findings suggested that pre-professional training and continuing education were needed to educate principals in the area of need.

In another survey of principals’ experiences in complying with anti-bullying laws, LaRocco, Nestler-Rusack, and Freiberg (2007) developed a new instrument, the Bullying and School Climate Survey, to solicit this feedback. While the study was confined to the state of Connecticut, nearly all the participants reported that their anti-bullying policies contained a definition of bullying and that students were notified (at least annually) about the process for making anonymous reports of acts of bullying. On the other hand, the data also revealed that only slightly more than half the respondents indicated that their school district had policies in place related to intervention strategies to deal with incidents of bullying behaviors.

In 2008, the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) and Harris Interactive conducted an online survey of a nationally representative sample of 1,580 K-12 public school principals entitled *The Principal’s Perspective: School Safety, Bullying, and Harassment*. While the survey primarily focused on issues relating to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) students, the principals’ perspectives regarding student bullying and harassment, and policies, programs, and training that principals instituted within their school were also highlighted. GLSEN found that half of principals surveyed deemed bullying, name-calling, or harassment of students to be a serious problem at their school (more so than peer pressure to use alcohol or drugs, racial or ethnic differences, or other disciplinary issues). Nearly three quarters of junior high/middle school principals
described bullying, name-calling, or harassment of students as a serious problem in their school, compared to less than half of elementary school principals. While nearly all schools reported the existence of a “safer school” or anti-bullying/harassment policy, relatively few of the efforts were focused on increasing the safety of specific student populations (LGBT students in particular). Finally, principals emphasized the importance of professional development and awareness efforts to reduce bullying and harassment in their schools. Six in 10 principals reported that their professional development efforts during the past school year addressed bullying or harassment in general terms, but fewer than one in 20 said that they addressed specific populations of students (LGBT students).

At particular risk for becoming victims of bullying are students participating in special education programs, specifically those with learning disabilities (LD). While very little research has been conducted to date on the relationships between LD and bullying behaviors, there is reason to believe that children who possess LD are at greater risk of victimization by their peers. In addition, the co-occurrence of being victims of bullying and LD for adolescents may substantially increase these children’s chances of experiencing later social and emotional problems (Hugh-Jones & Smith, 1999). Furthermore, poor social skills and competence, noncompliant and disruptive behaviors, and poor academic achievement all increase the risks that a student with LD will experience psychosocial problems in the future (Greenham, 1999; Nabuzoka & Smith, 1993; Pearl & Bay, 1999). Each of these factors, along with the stigma of being labeled
as possessing a learning disability, may factor into the likelihood that a student will be a future victim of bullying by their peers.

While school support staff such as school counselors and school psychologists have become increasingly involved with bullying prevention efforts, their role in these interventions and the supports they provide to students are largely unstudied (Jacobsen & Bauman, 2007). Much has been written about the importance of a whole school approach to combating bullying in today’s schools (Olweus, 1993; Sullivan, Cleary, & Sullivan, 2004), and the perspectives and involvement of these individuals is essential to providing supports for various student populations that experience bullying, including the learning disabled. School counselors and school psychologists many times have provided the intervention and support following an instance of bullying, giving the victim psychological support (Olweus, 1993). Studies involving school counselors to date have primarily focused on the use of counselor interviews to confirm peer reports of bullying behaviors and have not solicited feedback with respect to anti-bullying efforts in schools (Cornell & Mehta, 2011; Phillips & Cornell, 2012).

Sherer and Nickerson (2010) conducted a nationwide survey of school psychologists soliciting their input about their schools’ current anti-bullying practices. Respondents indicated that school-wide positive behavior supports, modifying space and schedule, and immediate responses to bullying incidents were perceived as most effective, while avoiding contact between bullies and victims, a zero-tolerance policy with bullies, and a written anti-bullying policy were the least effective. The data on the form of bullying suggests that it is vital for staff to learn strategies for detecting physical,
verbal, and relational forms of bullying, particularly among middle school students. Bradshaw, Sawyer, and O’Brennan (2007) suggested that school psychologists can play an important role in this training, by educating fellow staff members on the effective intervention approaches that are developmentally appropriate as well as strategies for communicating their efforts with children across varying developmental levels.

**Theoretical Framework/Background**

This research project is theoretically guided by four separate, but closely related theories relating to child and adolescent development. *Social learning theory*, first proposed by Albert Bandura, emphasizes the importance of observing and modeling the behaviors, attitudes, and emotional reactions of others (Bandura, 1977). As much of human behavior involves modeling what is observed from others, social learning theory has particular relevance with respect to adolescents and the sometimes overt nature of bullying and harassment of one’s peers. Social learning theory explains human behavior in terms of a continuous reciprocal determinism between cognitive, behavioral, and environmental influences (Meece, 2007). In order for effective modeling to occur, the following conditions must be met: attention—the person must first be paying attention to the model; retention—the observer must be able to remember the behavior that they observed; motor reproduction—they must have the ability to replicate the behavior that the model demonstrated; and motivation—learners must want to demonstrate what they have learned (Bandura, 1977). Social learning theory has been applied to understanding aggression in children, and maintains that the environment plays a key role in their development (Corey, 2012). A variety of studies have examined the connections between
observational learning and bullying behaviors amongst youth, and these are addressed within the literature review contained in this study.

Erik Erikson proposed *stage theory development*, which believes that all individuals pass through certain stages at specific times in their life. His belief was that the outcomes of these stages would determine the fundamental aspects of a person’s eventual personality (Erikson, 1963). Erikson recognized that societies have agreed upon ways of meeting a child’s needs, but maturation does determine when certain personality dimensions emerge. Additionally, development is a life-long process and that a variety of crises are experienced at each stage (Meece, 2007). With respect to middle school aged children (the population for this particular study), Erikson believed that the adolescent crisis is one of *identity vs. confusion* (Erikson, 1963). The major developmental crisis during the adolescent years is related to the formation of a personal identity in that adolescents struggle to define who they are, where they are going, and how to get there (Corey, 2012). Erikson hypothesized that in their formation of a personal philosophy of life, middle school aged children must make key decisions, and peer interactions would be one of those decisions as adolescents consciously decide whether to bully another peer. Many studies have explored the increased prevalence of bullying with respect to middle-school aged youth, and these are defined further in the literature review section of this study.

Lawrence Kohlberg’s *moral development theory* also must be considered when investigating the behaviors of adolescents. Kohlberg attempted to explain the developmental stages of moral reasoning, as well as the thinking processes that occur
when we consider right and wrong. Kohlberg argued that as human beings develop intellectually we pass through as many as six stages of moral thinking, moving from simplistic and concrete towards more abstract and principal reasoning (Kohlberg, 1981). With respect to adolescence, Kohlberg stated that morality evolves to a more conventional level that upholds laws, school rules, and social expectations. Adolescents at this moral stage are also able to take the perspectives of others, and participate in behaviors intended to gain the social approval of others, such as bullying and harassment.

Finally, Carol Gilligan also explained personality development through moral stages, but stated that individuals use one of two sex-related constructs to make decisions. Gilligan posited that the male approach to morality is that individuals have certain basic rights; on the other hand the female approach to morality is that people have responsibilities to one another and that this is embedded in a cultural context (Gilligan, 1982). She also felt that females deal with ethical problems in a different manner than their male counterparts, and that the concepts of connectedness and interdependence are central to women’s development. According to Gilligan, women tend toward relationships with others, whereas males tend toward separation (Corey, 2012). This theory of development has assisted us in understanding how moral development and interactions with others differs with respect to whether one is male or female. Studies exploring gender differences in the bullying of others are explored further in the literature review section of this study.
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this quantitative survey study was to examine the perceptions of administrators and other support staff in public middle schools across the United States with respect to their perceptions about whether the current bullying prevention/treatment program being used in their school building is effective with all types of students, regardless of academic standing (particularly whether it is effective for LD students). Secondary purposes of the study included examining the perceptions of administrators and other support staff about the differences in bullying behaviors between learning disabled students and students who possess no learning issues that have resulted in an Individualized Education Program (IEP) and soliciting feedback from administrators to determine how discipline is handled when an LD student is a victim of bullying/harassment.

Research Questions

This study investigated three research questions: Primarily, do current public middle school personnel perceive that the current bullying prevention program in place at their school or in their district meets the needs of all students, regardless of learning and other corresponding social skills deficits that may be present with students who are on IEPs? Two secondary research questions also were answered through the data collected in this study:

1. Do current public middle school personnel perceive that learning disabled students (on an IEP) are bullied/harassed more than the typical learner (non-IEP)?
2. When a learning disabled student is a victim of bullying/harassment, do public middle school principals and assistant principals vary in their response, or are all incidents of bullying/harassment handled in a universal manner regardless of the victim being on an IEP?

**Operational Definitions**

*Bullying/Harassment:* Consists of three types (physical, verbal, social). For an incident to be considered bullying/harassment, there must be an intentional written, verbal, graphic, or physical act that a student or a group of students exhibited toward another particular student more than once. Additionally, the behavior both causes mental and physical harm to the other student; and is sufficiently severe, persistent, or pervasive that it creates an intimidating, threatening, or abusive educational environment for the other student (Ohio Department of Education, 2007). This includes electronically transmitted acts (i.e. through the Internet, a cell phone, personal digital assistance [PDA] or wireless hand-held device) that a student exhibits toward another particular student more than once.

*Learning Disabilities:* For the purposes of this study, Learning Disabled students are those who have been identified in accordance with Ohio Special Education Law and have qualified for special education services in one or more of the following categories: basic reading, reading comprehension, reading fluency, written expression, math calculation, math problem solving, oral expression, or listening comprehension. Students can qualify for special education services in one or more of these areas, which results in their being placed on an IEP. A team may determine if a child has a specific learning
disability if: the school-based team finds that a child has a severe discrepancy between achievement and intellectual ability in one or more of the areas listed above; and the child does not achieve commensurate with his or her age and ability levels in one or more of the areas listed above if provided with learning experiences appropriate for the child’s age and ability levels (Ohio Department of Education, 2008).

*Individualized Education Program:* An IEP is a written document for a student with a disability that is developed, reviewed, and revised (Ohio Department of Education, 2008). The IEP outlines the educational goals and objectives the student will work on in the coming year, as well as the supports and services the student needs to meet the goals stated in the IEP. Contained within the IEP are the following critical elements: a statement that discusses the child’s future; a statement of the child’s present levels of academic achievement and functional performance; and a statement of measurable goals, including academic and functional goals and benchmarks or short-term objectives; methods of measuring progress.

**Significance of the Study**

Perhaps of greatest relevance to bullying research is that the vast majority of bullying incidents involve members of the student’s peer group. If these bullying behaviors are influenced or positively reinforced by certain peer groups, then it is imperative to identify which groups not only engage in the bullying behaviors, but also to determine which subgroups are most at risk for becoming victims. This enables researchers to determine whether positioning within a particular school hierarchy plays a role in the maintenance of bullying over time. In addition, interventions for various peer
groups can also be implemented, such as social skills training; negative reinforcement of bullying behaviors and positive reinforcement of positive social behaviors; peer support groups; or mentoring programs.

To date, no research has been conducted that integrates the feedback from a variety of school personnel with respect to bullying practices amongst learning disabled youth and whether anti-bullying programs address this specific population. This study will assist administrators and other support staff personnel in being able to more critically examine the climate of their school to ensure that it provides a safe environment for all students, regardless of learning difficulties. Additionally, through an examination of current practices, principals and support staff may be more apt to prevent future discrimination/harassment of this particular population of students. This study also sought to determine whether the bullying prevention program currently in use meets the needs of the LD student—future bullying prevention programs could be diversified for all types of academic learners and a specific bullying or anti-harassment program could even be developed for use with LD students. Finally, the study solicited input from public middle school principals and assistant principals with respect to the disciplinary action taken following an instance in which a learning disabled student has been determined to be a victim of bullying/harassment.

**Limitations**

There were a variety of limitations to this study. First, and foremost, is the ever-changing legal landscape of school climate and bullying. The ongoing media coverage and high profile nature of the suicide of adolescents will continue to change public
education and educators’ perceptions about the severity of the topic. Second, this study examined participants’ perceptions, which may not reflect actual facts. Third, there are limitations associated with mailed data collection: the accuracy of mailing addresses on file, that some members of professional organizations may not be a part of the target sample, and the tendency of recipients to discard mailings that appear unfamiliar to them. Fourth, there are limitations associated with web-based data collection: the computer literacy of respondents, incompatible computer platforms or Internet browsers, the possibility of multiple survey submissions, difficulties accessing the survey weblink or other connection difficulties, and the submission of incomplete or partial survey data. Fifth, respondents were only able to expand on some of their responses due to the largely Likert-scale format. Finally, although there are legal requirements at both the federal and state levels with respect to reporting and addressing bullying and harassment, educators must continue to remind themselves that legal and compliance requirements do not always suggest best practices.

**Delimitations**

In order to assure manageability of the data collected, survey research using descriptive and inferential research methods was employed in this study. Seven qualitative questions were included in the study to enrich or further clarify the quantitative findings (although this information was not reported on for this particular study). Secondly, the study was delimited to school psychologists, school counselors, principals, and assistant principals who were members of a professional organization at either the national or state level. Third, blocked or limited access to the web-based
survey may have impacted the final survey response rate and demographic characteristics of school psychologists. Fourth, while a variety of state organizations for school psychologists were contacted, only eight provided consent to have the survey distributed to their members via their website or through email. Fifth, the use of web-based surveys generates concerns about coverage bias or error. Finally, the used of a mixed-mode survey design used in this study may introduce measurement error because of how characteristics of different modes can influence how people respond.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Definition of Bullying

Generally, bullying is defined as a negative and often aggressive or manipulative act or series of acts by one or more people, against another person or group of people usually over a period of time. It is abusive and based on an imbalance of power (Olweus, 1993; Sullivan et al., 2004, pp. 4-5). The acts themselves can be verbal (name calling, teasing, taunting), physical (pushing, kicking, punching), or nonverbal in nature (spreading rumors, excluding one from a peer group, manipulation of friendships, and cyberbullying or bullying another through social networking). Although a variety of definitions have been outlined through the literature, three commonalities have emerged (Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Garrity, Jens, Porter, & Stoker, 2002; Langevin, Bortnick, Hammer, & Wiebe, 1998; Marini, Fairbairn, & Zuber, 2001; Miller, Beane, & Kraus, 1998; Nansel et al., 2001; Walker, Ramsey, & Gresham, 2004). First, there must be an imbalance of power between the victim and the bully. Second, the bullying act is intended to cause physical or emotional harm to the victim. Finally, victimization is not a one-time occurrence and is generally repeated over days, months, or years.

Various sources for possible imbalances of power for students exist both through observable characteristics such as overall physical appearance, race and ethnicity, and gender, as well as less observable characteristics that include popularity amongst peers and one’s socioeconomic class. Bullies do not necessarily have to possess actual power over the victim, as perceived powerlessness is all that is required in order to establish a
bully-victim association (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008). Furthermore, students who are perceived by their peers to be more popular are less likely to be potential bullying victims than those students who are socially perceived as less popular. The variations in the possible sources of power regarding the bully/victim relationship add to the difficulty of defining, observing, and addressing bullying behaviors within the school setting.

To cause physical and/or emotional harm to another, an act of bullying must be intentional and the bully must have the intent to cause harm to the victim. Taken into context, the act of bullying must be intended to cause harm, and would exclude typical physical play that is often associated with sporting events or other outdoor activities (Orpinas & Horne, 2006). As such, unintentional activities that may cause embarrassment to the victim but do not result in fear and intimidation would not be included.

The repetitive nature of bullying is perhaps what most sets it apart from other forms of relational aggression. No single act of violence, teasing, or aggression would constitute a bullying behavior. Hazler’s (1996) definition of bullying highlighted the repetitive nature of bullying as an essential component. Bullying must occur repeatedly (not once or twice) and the situation must cause the victim to make adjustments in their daily lives in response to the bullying behaviors that they are experiencing.

Salmivalli (1999) described bullying as a group phenomenon, and defined specific participant roles in the bullying process within schools. Besides victims (who are repeatedly and systematically harassed) and bullies (their active, initiative-taking perpetrators), there are other children and adolescents involved in the act of bullying and
harassment. Salmivalli described assistants as those students who eagerly join in the bullying when someone else has initiated it. Others, described as reinforcers, offer positive feedback to the bully (come to see what is occurring, provide an audience, or incite further harassment by laughing or encouraging gestures). Outsiders are described as those students who tend to stay away and not take sides with anyone; although these students are not directly involved, silently approve the act. Finally, defenders are the students whose behavior is clearly anti-bullying; they comfort the victim, take sides with him or her, and try to stop the perpetrators.

Prevalence of Bullying

While bullying behaviors have been observed worldwide (Hazler, 1996), research on school bullying has shown higher prevalence rates in the United States (Hoover, Oliver, & Hazler, 1992). In the same study, Hoover and colleagues studied students aged 12 to 18 in the Midwestern U.S. and reported that 88% had observed bullying and 75% were bullied at least once. Glover, Gough, Johnson, and Cartwright (2000) studied British students aged 11 to 15 and indicated that 75% were bullied, with 7% initiating or suffering bullying behaviors that were severe and repetitive. Nearly one third of students aged 4 to 14 in Toronto, Canada, were found to be involved in bullying other students (Charach, Pepler, & Ziegler, 1995). In another study, nearly 14% of primary and secondary students in Australia were bullied at least once a week (Slee, 1994). Finally, in a national study of bullying, 13% of sixth graders reported being a victim of bullying at least once a week and 10% reported bullying others (Nansel et al., 2001).
In a more recent study, Seals and Young (2003) found that 45% of seventh graders and 42% of eighth graders reported that bullying occurred “often” in the schools that participated. In addition, 24% reported direct involvement in bullying: 10% bullied others at least once per week, 13% were victimized by bullying at least once per week, and 1% were bullied and bullied others on a weekly basis. In all studies, students perceive a high frequency of bullying behaviors.

More recent statistical data support the previously reported prevalence rates. The National Center for Education Statistics and the Bureau of Justice Statistics collects annual data with respect to students’ experiences with crime and violence in the school environment, including bullying behaviors. The *Indicators of School Crime and Safety* is published yearly, with questionnaire results from the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), and School Crime Supplement (SCS) to the survey. Created as a supplement to the NCVS, the SCS has been conducted in 1989, 1995, and biennially since 1999 to collect information about student and school characteristics related to victimization on a national level. This report covers topics such as victimization, teacher injury, bullying, school conditions, fights, weapons, availability and student use of drugs and alcohol, and student perceptions of personal safety at school. Indicators of crime and safety are compared across different population subgroups and over time. Subjects are asked to recall bullying incidents at school within 6 months immediately preceding each data collection point (Dinkes, Kemp, Baum, & Snyder, 2009).

The 2009 report indicated that in 2007, about 32% of students reported having been bullied at school during the school year. More specifically, 21% of students
reported they had experienced bullying that consisted of being made fun of; 18% reported being the subject of rumors; 11% stated that they had been pushed, shoved, tripped, or spit on; 6% said that they were threatened with bodily harm; 5% stated that they were excluded from activities on purpose; and 4% of respondents said that someone had tried to make them do things that they did not want to do and that their property was purposefully destroyed. Of those students in 2007 who reported being bullied during the school year, 79% said that they were bullied inside the school building. Finally, of those students who had reported being a victim of bullying, 63% said that they had been bullied once or twice during the school year, 21% had experienced bullying once or twice a month, 10% stated that they been bullied once or twice per week, whereas 7% reported being bullied almost on a daily basis (Dinkes et al., 2009).

Gender Differences in Bullying Behaviors

Gender has been found to be one of the most important characteristics of offenders, with affective and physical conditions being secondary (Ma, 2002). Males have been shown to engage in bullying behaviors significantly more than females (Branwhite, 1994; Charach, Pepler, & Ziegler, 1995; Seals & Young, 2003). Traditionally, males tend to bully both males and females, whereas females often only bully other females (Clarke & Kiselica, 1997). Salmivalli (1999) found varying roles for males and females with respect to bullying behaviors (victim, bully, bystander, reinforcer of the bully, helper of the bully, and defender of the victim). Following this study, it was found that males are more often found to take the roles of bully, reinforcer, and helper, whereas females more often take the roles of bystander and defender. Furthermore,
females tend to have more negative attitudes towards bullying (Pellegrini & Bartini, 2000).

The primary difference with respect to bullying and gender appears to be the form of bullying behaviors in which males and females engage. When girls do engage in bullying, they more often will utilize relational, indirect or social aggression (Bjorkqvist, Lagerspetz, & Kaukiainen, 1992; Crick, Nelson, Morales, Cullerton-Sen, Casas, & Hickman, 2001). Due to the covert nature of female bullying, it is possible that researchers (and school personnel) have underestimated or underreported the acts of aggression engaged in by girls (Hay, 2007).

In a study examining bullying relationships amongst middle school students, Seals and Young (2003) found that both male and female bullies who bullied alone tended to target victims of the same gender. More females than males were involved in mixed-gender group bullying. Results also showed that verbal name calling represented the most prevalent form of bullying that was experienced, followed by physical aggression. Within this particular study, males were significantly more involved in bullying than were females, and males were twice as likely to be identified as bullies.

Complicating the matter with respect to addressing bullying amongst male students is that there is a large gender imbalance in the utilization of available peer support. As Cowie described in a 2000 study, girls significantly outnumber boys at all stages of recruitment, training, and implementation in peer support programs. In addition, there were reports from peer supporters that involvement in a peer support group could provoke negative comments from other students, particularly boys, outside.
of the peer support service. Furthermore, the study suggested that many males did not choose to use their caring abilities to help other bully victims unless they were sure that such an action did not threaten their perceptions of masculinity. These factors make it difficult for some male victims of bullying to seek out the help and assistance of others. This perception of one’s masculinity as an influential factor was also supported by Young and Sweeting (2004); they reported that gender atypical males were significantly less likely to be bullies, but were at a significantly higher risk of being bullied themselves.

**Bullying at the Middle School Level/Age Variables**

Specific populations are at greater risk for bullying behaviors, and various studies have documented an overall decrease in bullying across the school years (Loeber & Stouthamer-Loeber, 1998; Smith, Madsen, & Moody, 1999). However, this does not seem to be the case when students make the transition to middle school during their early adolescent years. Some characteristics of middle schools seem to be at least partially responsible for an increase in bullying behaviors during the adolescent years. The characteristics include: large/interpersonal classes (Simmons & Blyth, 1987); stress on competition and social comparisons between peer groups (Eccles, Wigfield, & Schiefele, 1998); and teachers lackadaisical attitudes towards the severity of bullying (Eslea & Smith, 1998). Another factor may be the tendency of school districts to structure their schools such that students converge into one larger setting (middle school) from a variety of smaller elementary schools. Adolescents then find school and interpersonal relations more difficult, as they do not have a consistent group of students with which they are paired in their classes throughout the school day. They have a number of different
teachers, which can encourage other subtle forms of bullying by their peers (Eccles et al., 1998).

The majority of bullying research has documented that bullying typically peaks during the middle school years. Smith et al. (1999) used large scaled student surveys to indicate a declination in being bullied through ages eight to 16. Various developmental factors have been used to explain the differences in bullying behaviors between individuals of varying ages: social context of where bullying occurs, age specific social and cognitive skills, and the understanding of what bullying means (Smith et al., 1999). However, due to the nature of the studies and a reliance on self-report questionnaires, younger children may have a much more broad definition of bullying and may include many behaviors in their reports of being bullied that would not necessarily be viewed in the same way by older students. Additionally, younger children are much more likely to report bullying in obvious and overt ways such as physical and verbal aggression, while indirect or more covert forms of relational aggression are more frequent in later adolescence.

Eslea and Rees (2001) conducted a cross-sectional questionnaire survey with male and female adults to determine if the decline in bullying behaviors with age was due to a real change in behavior or due to a child’s changing definition of what bullying is. Bullying memories were also compared with memories for other aspects of one’s childhood to assess the accuracy of the memories. The findings supported the notion that bullying decreases with age, and not only the most memorable but the most severe
bullying occurred during middle childhood; the most frequent bullying occurred around 11–13 years of age.

While this decline in aggression continues across the school years, this is not the case when students make the transition from primary to middle school. Various studies have focused on bullying behaviors with regard to adolescence (Olweus, 1993; Smith et al., 1999), and each have shown an increase in bullying behaviors as students transition into middle school, before declining again as the students near high school age.

Pellegrini (2002) has suggested that this increase in aggression is due to adolescents’ exploration of new social roles and their quest for status amongst their same age peers. This notion was supported by Blake, Kim, Sohn-McCormick, and Hayes (2011), who found that middle school students were more likely to be the target of verbal social victimization than were elementary school students. Verbal social victimization in this particular study was defined as being the target of malicious gossip and friendship exclusion. Blake and colleagues hypothesized that middle school students’ increased use of verbal social victimization may be attributed to their attempts to vie for social standing within a new network of their peers. As a result, middle school adolescents may use more forms of verbal social aggression and bullying as a means of gaining power and social status amongst other students their age.

Nansel and others (2001) conducted a survey of a national representative sample of US youth in grades 6 through 10 comprised of 15,686 students. The results show a pattern of declination in bullying behaviors as middle school adolescents make the transition to high school. As a result of the study, 13.3% of 6th grade students, 10.5% of
7th grade students, 7.6% of 8th grade students, 5.7% of 9th grade students, and 4.8% of 10th grade students reported being bullied on a weekly basis. The rates did not just apply to chronic victims of bullying, as 26.2% of 6th grade students, 28.6% of 7th grade students, 25% of 8th grade students, 22.1% of 9th grade students, and 18.8% of 10th grade students reported being bullied only once or twice during a term. So the pattern appears to be a true decline, and not just one that applies to the severity or longevity of bullying that student’s experience.

Data estimates from the 2007 School Crime Supplement (SCS) to the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) also support the perception that bullying peaks at the middle school level and lessens as students progress through the high school years. Amongst the 5,621 students ages 12-18 who completed the SCS questionnaire during the 2006-2007 school year, bullying peaked at grade 6 and was at its lowest in grade 12. Specifically, 43% of 6th grade students, 31% of 9th grade students, and 23% of 12th grade students reported that they had been bullied at school that year (“at school” includes the school building, school property, school bus, and going to and from school).

**Risk Factors and Protective Factors With Respect to Bullying**

There are a variety of individual, family, peer, and school risk factors that have been shown to increase the likelihood of bullying and verbal aggression. A variety of studies have examined the relationships between direct and indirect bullying and victimization and several psychosocial risk factors, including: normative beliefs about antisocial acts, angry-externalizing coping, social anxiety, depression, self-esteem, temperament, attachment, parent monitoring, and peer relational problems (Marini, Dane,
Bosacki, & YLC-CURA, 2006). Adolescents involved in indirect bullying were found to have a higher level of normative beliefs that legitimized antisocial behaviors and had less parental monitoring than those that were not involved in bullying behaviors. Furthermore, victims were found to demonstrate greater internalizing problems and peer-relational problems than those that were uninvolved.

A separate study identified 13 predictors (both individual and contextual) in the extant literature to examine factors that predict bullying and victimization in childhood and adolescence across multiple investigations (Cook, Williams, Guerra, Kim, & Sadek, 2010). Individual-level predictors included gender, externalizing behaviors, internalizing behaviors, self-related cognitions, other-related cognitions, social problem solving, and academic performance. Contextual factors included family and home environment, school climate, community factors, peer status, and peer influence. As a result of their meta-analytic findings, Cook et al. were able to define the typical bully victim as one who was likely to demonstrate internalizing symptoms; engage in externalizing behavior; lack adequate social skills; possess negative self-related cognitions; experience difficulties in solving social problems; come from negative community, family, and school environments; and be noticeably rejected and isolated by their peers.

Various studies have provided a link between parental maltreatment or verbal abuse with later bullying and victimization behaviors exhibited by their children (Baldry, 2003; Shields & Cicchetti, 2001; Spillane-Grieco, 2000). Teenagers who reported an extreme case of verbal abuse in their families were much more physically aggressive compared to teens who did not report these existing behaviors. Bullying was particularly
evident amongst abused children who experienced physical or sexual abuse.
Maltreatment by parents also placed children at increased risk of peer victimization.
Shields and Cicchetti (2001) hypothesized that victims of bullying have deficits in emotion regulation, and heightened anxiety and hyper-arousal. As such, these emotional disturbances predisposed them to and contributed to their risk for bullying and victimization by their peers. Baldry (2003) investigated the relationship between bullying and victimization in school and exposure to inter-parental violence; findings indicated that bullying and victimization were predicted by exposure to inter-parental violence, particularly mother-to-father violence. These studies indicate that parental modeling is positively correlated with bullying and harassment of one’s peers.

Other studies have focused on the concept of social learning and peer modeling as it relates to the bullying of classmates, primarily focusing on the school playground (Craig, Pepler, & Atlas, 2000; O’Connell, Pepler, & Craig, 1999). O’Connell and colleagues examined the peer processes that occur during bullying episodes on the school playground from a social learning perspective. Averaged across all observations, peers spent 54% of their time reinforcing bullies by passively watching, 21% of their time actively modeling bullies, and 25% of their time intervening on behalf of the victims. They also found that older boys (grades 4–6) were more likely to actively join with the bully than were younger boys (grades 1–3) and older girls. Craig et al. (2000) also employed naturalistic observation to compare bullying and victimization in both the classroom and the playground. Results indicated that the frequency of bullying was higher in the playground (4.5 times per hour) than in the classroom (2.4 episodes per
The nature of the observed bullying behaviors reflected the context of the environment (direct bullying was more prevalent on the playground while indirect bullying was more prevalent in the classroom setting). Finally, it was found that non-aggressive children were more likely to bully on the playground, while aggressive children were more likely to bully others in the classroom. The results of both studies were interpreted as confirming the central role that one’s peers have in modeling and reinforcing bullying behaviors.

While much of the research has focused on risk factors, various protective factors have been shown to mitigate the effects of bullying behaviors by fostering resiliency within youth (Baldry & Farrington, 2005). Protective factors related to the context of the family (supportive and authoritative parenting) and to the individual (problem solving coping skills) were found to be negatively associated with bullying and peer victimization. Baldry and Farrington also found significant positive correlations with regard to risk factors related to the family context; punitive behaviors and conflicting parents. Victimization was also positively associated with coping strategies that were emotionally oriented, but were negatively associated with problem solving strategies. Additionally, students with authoritative but highly supportive parents were associated with lower levels of victimization.

**Effects of Bullying Behaviors for Victims**

A large number of studies have been conducted that examine the relationships between bullying experiences and the vast number of health, academic, and emotional outcomes experienced by these individuals. Children who are the targets of aggressive
behaviors can have serious and long-lasting emotional consequences, such as depression and low self-esteem (Hawker & Boulton, 2000; O’Moore & Kirkham, 2001; Seals & Young, 2003). Children who are the targets of aggressive behaviors also may report more psychosomatic or physical complaints that include bed wetting (Williams, Chamgers, Logan, & Robinson, 1996). Depressive symptoms and poorer psychosocial adjustment has also been noted in the students who engage in bullying behaviors and those who are considered both bullies and victims (Kaltiala-Heino, Rimpela, Marttunen, Rimpela, & Rantanen, 1999; Nansel et al., 2001; Swearer, Song, Cary, Eagle, & Mickelson, 2001). Nansel and colleagues found that reactions to being bullied included fighting, alcohol use, smoking, poor academic achievement, a decline in peer relationships, and a poorer perception of school climate and overall attitudes about school in general.

Not surprisingly, youth that experienced multiple victimizations demonstrate more significant psychological and academic problems (Holt, Finkelhor, & Kaufman Kantor, 2007). Specifically, individuals with multiple victimizations reported more psychological distress than their peers and reported lower grades on average. Holt and colleagues evaluated youth victimization experiences in five domains: (a) peer victimization (physical and verbal), (b) conventional crime, (c) child maltreatment, (d) sexual victimization, and (e) witnessing/indirect victimization and in three primary areas (peer, family, and community). Additionally, youths with multiple victimization experiences also appeared to display more significant social difficulties in school, as evidenced by a high percentage of children in this group who were classified as bully-
victims within the school context. Nearly half the youth with multiple victimizations were categorized as bully-victims, which suggested that these were the individuals who were victimized significantly in their school, their communities, their homes, and who also perpetrated aggressive acts on their peers while at school (Holt et al., 2007).

In the long-term, there is a greater risk for any child who is teased or bullied. In general, students who were teased and bullied as youngsters are more likely to be anxious, depressed, socially dysfunctional, and physically unwell as adults. Allison, Roeger, and Reinfeld-Kirkman (2009) found that reports of early exposure to bullying were associated with an increased risk of emotional and psychosomatic disorders. Nearly one-fifth of adults surveyed reported having experienced bullying while they were in school and those reporting having been bullied experienced significantly poorer mental and physical health compared to those who had not been bullied. Adults recalling school bullying reported more anxiety and depressive symptoms such as feeling nervous, downhearted and depressed, together with low vitality and poorer functioning due to emotional problems. Additionally, although several demographic variables (gender, income, employment status, and marital status) had significant relationships with overall mental health, the relationship between school bullying and mental health was significant after adjusting for these factors.

In a study that examined the relationship between anxiety disorders and self-reported history of teasing or bullying experiences (McCabe, Antony, Summerfeldt, Liss, & Swinson, 2003), individuals with social phobia, obsessive compulsive disorder, and panic disorder were surveyed. A relationship between reported history of teasing and a
diagnosis with one of these disorders was found; a significantly greater percentage of individuals in the social phobia group (92%) reported a history of severe teasing experiences compared with those from the other groups. Participants reporting a history of severe teasing or bullying experiences had a significantly lower age of onset of their primary anxiety disorder, a greater number of reported problems in childhood and adolescence (emotional/behavior problems, legal trouble, school problems, drug abuse, or medical problems), and increased anxiety in social situations, compared with participants who did not report history of severe teasing or bullying experiences. Their findings indicated that self-reported teasing and bullying history during school-age years is related to a number of important individual characteristics and clinical outcomes.

Bullying victimization can also have devastating consequences, as a variety of studies have shown a positive link between being a victim and both suicide ideation and attempts (Brunstein-Klomek, Marrocco, Kleinman, Schonfeld, & Gould, 2007). Brunstein-Klomek and associates conducted a study in which adolescents aged 13 to 19 years were surveyed regarding bullying behavior and suicide attempts in victims of bullying, persons who exhibited bullying behavior, and bully-victims (adolescents who were both bullies and victims of bullying). The researchers found that the risk of depression, suicidal ideation, and suicide attempt were significantly higher for high school students considered either a victim or a bully compared with those students who were not. Further, the more frequent the bullying behaviors were (as either victim or bully), there was a greater risk of depression, suicide ideation, or suicide attempt. Adolescents who reported to be frequent bullying victims were five times as likely to
have serious suicidal ideation and four times as likely to attempt suicide as students who had not been victims. Additionally, students who reported that they frequently bullied others in school were considered three times as likely to have serious suicidal ideation and suicide attempts as those who did not bully others in school and were five times as likely to have serious suicidal ideation and suicide attempts as those who did not bully others outside of school.

Similar findings were reported by Viljoen, O’Neill, and Sidhu (2005), who questioned incarcerated adolescents on suicide ideation, suicide plans, suicide attempts, suicide attempts resulting in harm, and other areas of psychosocial adjustment. Results indicated that suicidal behavior was particularly high in both victim and bully-victim groups. Pure victim and bully-victims reported the highest levels of psychosocial distress and suicidality and were more likely to report suicidal ideation, suicide plans, suicide attempts, and suicide attempts with injury than bullies.

**Doctoral Dissertations Exploring Bullying at the Middle School Level**

A variety of dissertations have explored the relationships between bullying behaviors and self-esteem (Spade, 2007), school connectedness (Backus, 2010), and other variables (Totura, 2003) with respect to middle school students. The results of these studies reinforces the negative effects that bullying behaviors can have on the individuals involved, and also reinforce the need for bullying prevention programs and strong support staff personnel in schools. Spade (2007) explored the relationship between student bullying behaviors and the self-esteem of intermediate elementary school students in grades 3–5 (ages 8–13) at a small rural elementary school in Northwest Ohio. Each
student was surveyed using the Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire that measured the frequency and degree of bullying behaviors for both the victim and the bully. The results of the survey indicated that 15% of students had been bullied several times a week, with 8.2% of those students claiming that the bullying and harassment had occurred for several years. Additionally, the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Survey was administered to measure the levels of student self-esteem. While students overall had a positive self-esteem, some students did feel useless at times and wish they could have more respect for themselves.

When examining the relationship between bullying behaviors and self-esteem, a significantly negative mutual relationship was determined to exist between the bullying behaviors of bullies and victims and their overall self-esteem. A significant difference was also found between the bullying behaviors of victims in both grades 3 and 4. The results also indicated that bullies in grade 5 exhibited significantly lower levels of self-esteem than those at younger grades. Further, students in grade 4 had the highest reported levels of self-esteem and the lowest levels of both being a bully or a victim. As bullying behaviors increased, the levels of self-esteem decreased amongst those students surveyed. In addition, lower levels of self-esteem also increased bullying behaviors, and as self-esteem increased, bullying behaviors decreased for both bullies and victims.

Spade (2007) recommended that educational leaders work to foster a sense of urgency within their school buildings that address bullying behaviors in order to create a positive, caring, safe, and secure environment. Additionally, it was recommended that local school board policies regarding bullying prevention should be current, relevant, and clearly communicated to parents and the school community.
Backus (2010) examined the relationships between bullying behaviors and perceived school connectedness among middle school students in grades 5–8 enrolled in a northeastern Ohio school district. Those students that participated in the study completed a 56-item instrument about their involvement in bullying behaviors as both a perpetrator and a victim, as well as responses about their sense of overall school connectedness. Statistically significant mean differences between self-reported bullying and the grade level were noted (differences were revealed in bullying behaviors between 5th and 7th grade subjects and 6th and 7th grade subjects), indicating that bullying behaviors were most prevalent in 7th grade. Additionally, the study also confirmed differences in reported victimization in context of academic achievement in math and language arts. Specifically, subjects who earned either an A or B in math or language arts reported less victimization than subjects who earned a C or D, suggesting that subjects who earned lower grades were more likely to be involved in bullying than their more academically successful counterparts. The results supported continued investigation into the link between academic achievement and the involvement in bullying behaviors.

Totura (2003) examined the relationship between individual, family, and school variables and both bullying and victimization amongst middle school students. Students were randomly selected from 11 middle schools and completed questionnaires that assessed bullying and victimization, internalizing and externalizing behaviors, family factors, and school variables. The results indicated that variables within each of the domains significantly contributed to differences between bullying groups, by grade and
gender. The variables that had the most influence in describing differences among the Bully, Victim, Bully/Victim, and Control groups were primarily internalizing (depression and anxiety) and externalizing (anger and referrals) factors, primarily, followed by relationships with peers, bonding with school (school spirit, relationships with teachers, and feelings of belonging at school), school environmental factors (adult intervention and supervision and perception of school climate), and connectedness with family members. Specifically, bullies and bully/victims appeared to have the poorest reported adjustment in terms of behavioral difficulties, family functioning, and school variables, while both the victims and bully/victim groups experienced greater internalizing difficulties.

**Anti-Bullying Policies/Initiatives at the Federal Level**

While state laws have been responsible for the primary legislation aimed at reducing school bullying behaviors, federal laws and policies do provide some incentives for schools to address the safety of students. Through legislation such as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), the federal government provides funding for research and programs that specifically address the prevention and reduction of school violence.

In 2001, the federal government reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 with the mandate, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). This mandate was designed to improve the performance of primary and secondary schools in the United States by: (a) increasing student learning, (b) closing the achievement gap, and (c) ensuring that every child is taught by a highly qualified teacher. The Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act (SDFSC) as Title IV, Part A of the NCLB became effective on July 1, 2002. The purpose of the SDFSC is to support
programs that prevent violence in and around schools, involve parents and communities, and are coordinated with related federal, state, school, and community efforts and resources to foster a safe and drug-free learning environment that promotes student academic achievement (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). However, the SDFSC does not address anti-bullying or bullying reduction efforts in any specific way.

There are currently two pieces of proposed federal legislation aimed at addressing bullying and harassment in schools that were both presented at the 112th congressional session in 2011 (United States Congress, 2011b). The Anti-Bullying and Harassment Act of 2011 (H.R. 975) would seek to amend the Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities Act to require states to (a) use grants for safe and drug-free schools to collect and report information on the incidence of bullying and harassment; and (b) for local educational agencies (LEAs) and schools themselves to use sub-grants to prevent and respond to reported incidents of bullying and harassment. In addition, LEAs would be required to (a) notify parents and students annually of prohibited conduct in their school discipline policies, that now must include bullying and harassment; and (b) to establish procedures that allow students and parents to register complaints regarding such conduct. Currently, the bill is awaiting additional action as it was referred to the Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education in March of 2011.

The Safe Schools Improvement Act (SSIA) of 2011 (H.R. 1648) seeks to amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 by ensuring that schools and districts use comprehensive and effective student conduct policies that include clear
prohibitions regarding these behaviors. On an ongoing basis, states would be required to
(a) collect and report certain information on bullying and harassment by youth in their
schools and communities; (b) conduct, and report the results of a needs assessment for
bullying and harassment prevention programs; and (c) provide technical assistance to
LEAs and schools in their efforts to reduce bullying and harassment. SSIA would also
establish a definition of bullying and harassment in federal law and would require schools
that receive federal funding to specifically prohibit bullying and harassment based on the
protected classes of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, sexual orientation, gender
identity, or religion. In addition, this piece of legislation would ensure that schools and
districts develop prevention strategies and provide professional development so that
school staff can better able prevent, identify, and respond to bullying incidents.
Currently, the bill is awaiting additional action as it was referred to the Subcommittee on
Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education in May of 2011.

**Federal Government Policies/Laws on Harassing Students With Disabilities**

In addition to the anti-bullying legislation discussed above, there are a variety of
Constitutional issues, as well as other federal laws that may impact the ways in which
schools address bullying, particularly as it relates to students with learning disabilities.
Federal Civil Rights laws allow private parties to seek monetary damages from federally
funded educational institutions (which include all public schools) that discriminate on the
basis of sex, race, color, national origin, or disability. In 2010, the United States
Department of Education (2010a) issued a letter addressed to schools addressing bullying
prevention, stating that “some student misconduct falls under a school’s anti-bullying
policy also may trigger responsibilities under one or more of the federal antidiscrimination laws enforced by the Department’s Office for Civil Rights (OCR).” Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) specifically prohibit discrimination on the basis of disabilities. The OCR (United States Department of Education, 2010a) also states that

School districts may violate these civil right statutes and the Department’s implementing regulations when peer harassment based on race, color, national origin, sex, or disability is sufficiently serious that it creates a hostile environment and such harassment is encouraged, tolerated, not adequately addressed, or ignored by other school employees.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 applies to public school settings and stipulates that

No otherwise qualified individual with a disability in the United States . . . shall, solely by reason of her or his disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance. (Cambron-McCabe, McCarthy, & Thomas, 2004, p. 382)

Under the Rehabilitation Act, an individual with a disability is one who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, has a record of impairment, or is regarded as having an impairment. According to Cambron-McCabe and colleagues, only those children who meet the first definition (a disability that is substantially limiting) will be eligible for individualized instruction and services. In
addition, the limitation must *substantially limit a major life activity*, such as learning. When a student’s limitation qualifies as a disability, it is still necessary to determine whether he or she is *otherwise qualified*. For preK–12 education purposes, children may qualify under Section 504 if they are of school age, or if they are eligible for services for the disabled under either state law or the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (Cambron-McCabe et al., 2004).

In 1990 Congress passed the Americans with Disabilities Act, Title II being applicable to public schools. Like Section 504, Title II prohibits discrimination against persons (birth to death) who are disabled. However, unlike Section 504, Title II of the ADA requires the compliance of schools that do not receive federal aid (Cambron-McCabe et al., 2004).

Victims that pursue claims under either Section 504 or the ADA face a variety of legal challenges (Sacks & Salem, 2009). First, a plaintiff making a prima facie case of peer harassment under these laws must show that the harassment was *directed at the disability*. Therefore, if the harassment consists of physical abuse and did not involve any disability-related language, the victim will have difficulty in making a case. Second, a plaintiff that lacks the documentation of any prior complaints made to administration or school staff will find it difficult to establish that there was actual knowledge of the bullying or harassment taking place.

In addition to Section 504 and Title II, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and state law protect students with disabilities. All states receiving federal education funding must comply with federal requirements designed to provide a “free
appropriate public education” (FAPE) for children with disabilities. These include requirements for public schools and school districts to follow students’ Individualized Education Plans in addressing bullying incidents and place limits on how students with disabilities are disciplined (Huefner, 2000). To qualify for services, a child must be identified as being eligible under one of the categories (including learning disabled) and be in need of special education and related services. Under IDEA, if bullying adversely affects the academic performance of the student with a disability, a school board is legally obligated to develop a plan to remedy the bullying so to enable the disabled child to reach his or her full academic potential, to provide the child with a FAPE (Sacks & Salem, 2009). Additionally, a public school district’s failure to address bullying directed against a student with a documented learning disability might allow the parent to enroll their child in an alternative setting and to seek reimbursement from the school district.

Policies to Reduce and Prevent Bullying/Harassment at the State Level

The U.S. Department of Education released an analysis of state bullying laws and policies in December of 2011 that summarized current approaches to combat school bullying. According to the report, as of April 2011, 46 states had bullying laws, 45 of which directed school districts to adopt bullying policies. Forty-one states had model bullying policies and 36 states included provisions in their education codes prohibiting cyber-bullying or bullying using electronic media. Thirteen states specified that schools have jurisdiction over off-campus behavior if it creates a hostile school environment. Please refer to Table 1 for a current list of states with anti-bullying legislation in place, accompanied by the year in which the policy was passed (Montana remains the lone state
Table 1

*States With Anti-Bullying Laws*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of Passage</th>
<th>State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Georgia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>New Hampshire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Colorado, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oregon, West Virginia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Connecticut, New Jersey, Oklahoma, Washington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Arkansas, California, Rhode Island</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Vermont</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Arizona, Indiana, Maine, Maryland, Nevada, Texas, Tennessee, Virginia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Alaska, Idaho, New Mexico, South Carolina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Delaware, Iowa, Illinois, Kansas, Minnesota, Ohio, Pennsylvania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Florida, Kentucky, Nebraska, Utah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Alabama, North Carolina, Wyoming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Massachusetts, Missouri, New York, Wisconsin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Hawaii, Michigan, North Dakota</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>South Dakota</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Bullypolice.org

that has yet to pass anti-bullying legislation). Every single anti-bullying initiative at both the state and federal levels was passed following the incident in Columbine, Colorado in 1999.

In response to requests for assistance from state and local districts regarding appropriate legislation and anti-bullying policies, the U.S. Department of Education released a technical assistance memo (United States Department of Education, 2010b) that detailed 11 key components that encompassed their framework for suggested bullying legislation. These components are described in more detail below:

- Purpose Statement: Outlines the negative effects that bullying has on students, including the impact on student learning, school safety, student engagement,
and the school environment. The purpose statement also declares that all forms of bullying are unacceptable and should be taken seriously by all parties.

- **Statement of Scope:** Indicates that the policies should cover conduct that occurs on school property, at school-sponsored activities and events (on or off campus), on school-provided transportation, or through school-owned technology, or that otherwise creates a significant disruption to the school environment.

- **Specification of Prohibited Conduct:** Provides a specific definition of bullying (including cyber-bullying). The definition should include a list of specific behaviors that constitute bullying and specifies that bullying includes intentional efforts to harm others. The definition is also to be consistent with other federal, state, or local laws.

- **Enumeration of Specific Characteristics:** Explains that bullying may include acts based on actual or perceived characteristics of students who have historically been targets of bullying (e.g. race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, disability). The component also specifies that bullying does not have to be based on any particular characteristic.

- **Development and Implementation of Local Educational Agency (LEA) Policies:** Directs each LEA to develop and implement a policy prohibiting bullying with all stakeholders who have an interest (school administration,
staff, students, students’ families, and the community) that best addresses local conditions.

- **Components of LEA Policies:** The LEA policy should include a definition of bullying that is consistent with the definition that is specified in state law. The LEA policy should also include a procedure for reporting incidents of bullying (anonymously and with protection from retaliation), as well as a procedure for investigating and responding to these reports. Written records should also be maintained, a detailed description of consequences and sanctions should be kept, as well as procedures for referring the appropriate individuals for counseling and mental health services as appropriate.

- **Review of Local Policies:** Includes a provision for the state to review local policies on a regular basis to ensure that the goals of the state statute are being met.

- **Communication Plan:** Includes a plan for notifying students, families, and school staff of the components of the anti-bullying policy.

- **Training and Preventive Education:** Includes a provision for school districts to provide the necessary training to appropriate staff on preventing, identifying, and responding to incidents of bullying.

- **Transparency and Monitoring:** Includes a provision for LEA’s to report the number of bullying incidents and any responsive actions taken to the state. This information should also be publicly made available with appropriate privacy protections to ensure that students are protected.
• Statement of Rights to Other Legal Recourse: Includes a statement that the policy does not prevent victims from seeking other legal remedies.

According to the United States Department of Education (2011), as of April 30, 2011, 27 state laws included requirements to develop model policies addressing harassment, intimidation, or bullying and 41 states had developed bullying policy models or state guidelines that were available for distribution to local school districts (see Table 2). These documents provide specific guidance to the school district on how to outline local district anti-bullying policies and how to implement the provisions outlined in the law. State laws give the responsibility of developing model policies to a variety of state entities (regional or state departments of education, state school board associations, or superintendents of public instruction), and most often laws require that the state departments of education assume responsibility for developing and disseminating the anti-bullying policy (U.S. Department of Education, 2011).

Current Policy and Ohio Law

In response to the rising acknowledgment of bullying behaviors and the negative effects that can result, both state and local efforts have begun to change school policies that are directed at reducing violence and increasing the mental health of students. Many state legislatures have mandated that schools adopt anti-bullying or anti-harassment plans to address the problem (Furlong, Morrison, & Greif, 2003; Limber & Small, 2003). Policies that address discipline, suspension, and expulsion are determined through a combination of state legislation and the policies of local school districts. Furthermore,
Table 2

State Law Recommendations and Requirements for the Adoption of State Model Bullying Policies by State

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>State Model Policy Required or Encouraged?</th>
<th>State Model Policy Developed?</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>State Model Policy Required or Encouraged?</th>
<th>State Model Policy Developed?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Y</td>
<td>Montana</td>
<td>No Law</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Y</td>
<td>Nebraska</td>
<td>No Mandate</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>N</td>
<td>Nevada</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Y</td>
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<tr>
<td>Colorado</td>
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<td>No Mandate</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecticut</td>
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<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delaware</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td>No Mandate</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Y</td>
<td>North Dakota</td>
<td>N</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<td>Y</td>
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<td>No Law</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Oklahoma</td>
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<td>No Mandate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Iowa</td>
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<td>Kansas</td>
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<td>South Dakota</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Maine</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<td>Maryland</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Y</td>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>No Law</td>
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<td>Washington</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minnesota</td>
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<td>N</td>
<td>West Virginia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mississippi</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<tr>
<td>Missouri</td>
<td>No Mandate</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Wyoming</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Limber and Small (2003) stated that thus far, state laws have been the primary legislative vehicle for announcing new initiatives for combating bullying behaviors.

The adoption of specific state laws has been the primary influence in reducing bullying and harassment in public schools. While anti-bullying policies vary from state to state, the researcher has identified a number of core components and best practices that can assist state legislators and policymakers in the development of a comprehensive and effective plan (Limber & Small, 2003). These components include: (a) providing a precise and specific definition of bullying that is both consistent with research and include indirect forms of bullying; (b) the involvement of relevant stakeholders within the community; (c) the adoption of research based comprehensive bullying prevention programs; (d) training for all school staff; (e) development of appropriate sanctions and interventions for offenders; (f) measures that support and protect victims; (g) dialogue with parents of affected students; (h) forums for students to discuss bullying and relations with peers within the classroom setting; (i) assessments of the nature and extent of bullying within local schools; (j) particular attention to adult supervision in locations where bullying occurs; and (k) immunity for reports of bullying that are made in good faith. The overall effectiveness of any anti-bullying policy depends on the reliance of evidence-based research, as well as the ability of the law to influence school policy at the local level (Limber & Small, 2003).

Prior to the adoption of Ohio’s Anti-Harassment, Anti-Intimidation, or Anti-Bullying Model Policy in 2007, a variety of laws had been in existence that attempted to address the issue. Ohio Revised Code 2903.211 (implemented in April of 2001)
prohibited menacing by stalking in which “no person by engaging in a pattern of conduct shall knowingly cause another person to believe that the offender will cause physical harm to the other person or cause mental distress to the other person.” Two other potential statutory prohibitions were also in place regarding hazing (Ohio Revised Code statutes 2903.31 and 2307.44), and both laws were implemented in March of 1983. However, anti-bullying practices were not comprehensive and extensive enough to provide schools with the necessary elements with which to effectively curb these behaviors.

The Ohio State Board of Education adopted an anti-bullying and anti-harassment policy in October of 2004. The State of Ohio passed House Bill 276 on January 24, 2006, which requires mandatory school policies that prohibit harassment, intimidation, and bullying of students. On May 14, 2007, the Ohio State Board of Education adopted the Anti-Harassment, Anti-Intimidation, or Anti-Bullying Model Policy per House Bill 276. The policy is based on the belief that Ohio schools must provide physically safe and emotionally secure environments for both students and school personnel, and it was adopted on July 10, 2007. Per Section 3313.666 of the Ohio Revised Code, “the board of education of each city, local, exempted village and joint vocational school district shall establish a policy prohibiting harassment, intimidation, or bullying” (in accordance with the guidelines provided by this Model Policy). In order to involve all stakeholders, the policy also shall be developed in consultation with parents, school employees, school volunteers, students, and community members. As mentioned by the policy, there are 11
critical elements that must be included by the school district (Ohio Department of Education, 2007, pp. 4-5). These components include:

- A statement prohibiting harassment, intimidation, or bullying of any student on either school property or school-sponsored activity
- A definition of harassment, intimidation, or bullying
- A procedure for students, parents, or guardians to report incidents to teachers and school administrators
- A requirement that school personnel report prohibited incidents (either through witnessing them or through reports) to the school principal or other administration
- A procedure for documenting reported incidents
- A procedure for responding to and investigating any reported incident including providing intervention strategies for protecting a victim
- A disciplinary procedure for any student guilty of harassment, intimidation, or bullying that does not infringe on their Constitutional rights
- A requirement that school administrators notify parents or guardians of any student involved in a prohibited incident and have access to any written records
- A requirement that the district administrators provide a written report to the school board of all reported incidents of bullying at least on a semiannual basis
• Each board’s policy shall appear in student handbooks and in any publications that enforce rules, procedures, and standards of conduct for schools and students in the district.

• District employees, students, and volunteers are considered to be immune from liability in civil suits for damages that may arise if the report was made in good faith and in compliance with the additional procedures specified in the policy.

Additionally, Ohio Revised Code 3313.667 further documents school districts’ requirements in providing bullying prevention initiatives. ORC states that any school district may form bullying prevention task forces, programs, and other initiatives involving all stakeholders. Provided that there is adequate state or federal funding, each school district shall: (a) provide training to school employees and volunteers who have direct contact with students; and (b) develop a process for notifying and educating students about the policy.

On February 2, 2012, Ohio House Bill 116 (HB 116) was signed into law, which required schools to make several changes to their anti-bullying policies. House Bill 116 requires school districts to establish cyber-bullying policies and to annually instruct teachers and parents about their overall bullying policies. It also requires districts to teach students about the policies if state and/or federal funding is provided for that specific purpose. The following changes were also placed into effect as a result of the passage of Ohio HB 116: requires that anti-bullying policies and an explanation of the seriousness of cyber-bullying be made available to students and parents; requires a
written statement describing the board’s anti-bullying policy and the consequence for violating the policy be sent to parents once a year (either electronically or with report cards); and requires that school districts provide training on their anti-bullying policies as a part of the in-service training required for all teachers, administrators, counselors, nurses, and school psychologists. Finally, HB 116 includes a requirement that anti-bullying policies include (a) a statement providing for possible suspension of students who engage in cyber-bullying, (b) a means for making anonymous referrals of bullying behaviors, and (c) disciplinary procedures for students making false reports.

Victims who seek remedies under state tort law often face difficulties in receiving any form of compensation (Sacks & Salem, 2009). Ohio’s sovereign immunity law is typical of state statutes that immunize school districts from negligence by allowing teachers discretion in determining the level of supervision necessary to ensure the safety of their students, and allowing administrators to have discretion to investigate and respond to instances of peer bullying and harassment. In addition, statutes may also protect school employees from personal liability for ordinary negligence, making them liable only in instances in which their misconduct was considered reckless, malicious, in bad faith, or outside the scope of their employment.

As Sacks and Salem (2009) stated, even if a victim obtains legal remedies under state or federal laws, the resolution often comes long after the harm has been done to the student; after the student has been compelled to change schools, has withdrawn from school completely, or is well past the age of 18. This point further illustrates the need for
public schools to adopt and enforce anti-bullying policies that will protect them while they are attending.

**Bullying and Children With Learning Disabilities**

Empirical research on the bullying of students with learning disabilities is still a developing topic. A recent meta-analysis examining research conducted between 1989 and 2007 found 32 studies that examined bullying and the victimization of students with learning disabilities (Rose, Monda-Amaya, & Espelage, 2011). The authors separated the studies into the environment in which the student was being educated at the time, that is, special schools, special class, residential care, inclusion, and so forth. Of the 32 studies, seven were conducted in the United States, and three of those did not fall under the bullying and LD area (the studies were involving adult transitions, hearing impairments, and students with special health care needs).

The majority of studies on the victimization of students with disabilities indicate that these students are subjected to increased verbal abuse, social exclusion, and physical aggression when compared to non-disabled peers. Sabornie (1994) evaluated social affective differences amongst 38 students with learning disabilities and 38 demographically matched peers without disabilities in grades 6 and 7. While overall bullying rates were not measured through this particular study, the results indicated that students with learning disabilities were 3.5 times more likely to be victimized than non-disabled students. Morrison, Furlong, and Smith (1994) surveyed 4 groups at a Southern California high school about their experiences of school violence and overall feelings of safety while in school. Results indicated that the students with severe learning
disabilities in a special day class or segregated setting experienced higher rates of bullying than the other groups (general education and leadership class). The prevalence and frequency of peer and sibling victimization is not limited to students who are verbal, as increased harassment of students with diagnosed Asperger’s Syndrome and nonverbal learning disorders has also been reported (Little, 2002). The overall prevalence rate by mothers of peer victimization was 94%, and almost three-quarters of their children had been hit by peers or siblings in the past year and 75% had been emotionally bullied. Unnever and Cornell (2003) investigated the influence of low self-control and Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) on bullying and bully victimization in a sample of 1,315 middle school students and discovered that students who reported taking medication for ADHD were at an increased risk for bullying as well as victimization by bullies. Specifically, 34% of the students self-reported that they had been victimized 2–3 times per month when compared to the control group.

More recent studies have furthered the topic, examining whether the placement of special education students has a significant impact on bullying behaviors pertaining to students with learning disabilities. In a recent study of examining the rates of bullying and fighting perpetration and victimization amongst middle and high school students enrolled in general and special education classes, students in special education reported greater rates of bullying and victimization than their general education peers (Rose, Espelage, & Monda-Amaya, 2009). Furthermore, the results indicated that a more restrictive special education setting elicited higher rates of fighting, perpetration, and victimization. Finally, victimization and perpetration of bullying for older students was
less than younger students over the middle-school and high-school years, however, students with disabilities reported higher rates of bullying, fighting, and victimization throughout their educational career regardless of age.

Reports of increased victimization for students with learning disabilities have been reported in both students and teachers alike. In a smaller scale study (Carlson, Flannery, & Kral, 2005), 54 students in grades 6–8 were administered the Revised Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire (Olweus, 1996). Children in special education reported significantly more incidences of being bullied than their regular education peers. Additionally, the data suggested that a lack of protective factors such as liking school and the overall number of perceived friends, was negatively correlated with increased self-reported victimization and bullying behavior. Teachers of special education students have also reported increased harassment of their students. Holzbauer (2008) surveyed 90 special education teachers from a large public school district in Wisconsin and 96.7% of the respondents reported that they observed more than one incident of school-related disability harassment conduct (including epithets, slurs, mimicking, mockery, and staring). Holzbauer suggested that the results of the study indicate a very common occurrence of disability harassment in schools and that these findings should lead to important disability policy concerns and further research.

It has also been determined that academic performance, whether perceived or documented, has a differentiating relationship with bullying. Students with mild disabilities are more likely to be viewed by peers as being bullies than are academically gifted and general education students (Estell et al., 2009). Teachers also perceived
students with mild disabilities as being more likely to be bullies and victims of bullying than were the students in general education classrooms. Additionally, students with mild disabilities who associated with peers who were considered by others to be aggressive and popular were more likely to be bullies than all student types in the study.

A variety of studies have also explored the longitudinal associations between children’s bullying behaviors, special education placements in elementary school, and delinquent behavior that occurs in secondary school. While substantial continuity has been found between early aggression and special education placements, bullying, and delinquency (White & Loeber, 2008), the authors did suggest that the explanation is complex in that some youth may engage in delinquent behaviors after experiencing academic failures while others may be more prone to problem behavior in school based on a predisposition to aggressive behaviors. More research is needed in this area to determine the long-term negative effects of bullying, particularly as it relates to the learning disabled population.

**Characteristics of Learning Disabled Students That Make Them a Target of Harassment**

A substantial body of research has established some of the characteristics that are common with respect to children with learning disabilities. Reiter and Lapidot-Lefler (2007) discovered that being a victim of bullying was correlated with emotional and interpersonal problems. The study revealed that being a victim was significantly correlated with having emotional problems and with having problems in interpersonal relationships. Students with learning disabilities also typically display poor levels of
social adjustment, defined as their ability to find their place in their physical and social environment (Reiter & Lapidot-Lefler, 2007). Research has found that social status amongst one’s peers is a vital piece to the feelings of well-being and safety in students who are learning disabled. Overall, students’ perceptions of their learning disabled peers tend to be negative. Students diagnosed with learning disabilities not only appear to be less popular, but they are also less well-liked than their peers (Haager & Vaughn, 1995).

There is a growing concern that hostile school environments may harbor and facilitate a number of students that are likely to prey on children with disabilities of any kind (Flynt & Morton, 2004). Problematic peer relations are also considered to contribute to the victimization of this population. It has been well established that children with learning disabilities who have poor social skills are ostracized by their peers and more likely to be victims of bullying (Mishna, 2003). Approximately 25% to 30% of students with learning disabilities are socially rejected by their peers, in comparison to 8% to 16% of students without documented learning difficulties (Greenham, 1999).

Other perspectives have also focused on neurological deficits that cause both academic and social problems within these youth. There are many such deficits identified in the literature, which can present in many ways and interfere with everyday social interactions. Examples include difficulties with language and communication, attention and information processing, and problems interpreting social information such as the facial cues of others (Greenham, 1999; Pearl & Bay, 1999). Another perspective posits that the child’s academic problems lead to difficulties such as poor self-esteem,
increased frustration, and other barriers to developing appropriate social skills (Forness & Kavale, 1996; Greenham, 1999; Pearl & Bay, 1999). A final perspective hypothesizes that the isolation of these students in a variety of ways limits their opportunities to learn, practice, and receive reinforcement for their social skills and positive interactions with peers (Forness & Kavale, 1996; Greenham, 1999; Lewandowski & Barlow, 2000).

**Responsibility/Response of the Administrator**

As none of the most widely referenced bullying prevention programs acknowledge specific considerations to be used with the learning disabled population, principals and other school administration need to pay heed to how this group of students is treated within school. Flynt and Morton (2007) recommended that accommodations and modifications to the current bullying prevention programs take place in order for students diagnosed with learning disabilities to benefit, but also provide some suggestions for school administrators. Regardless of the type of bullying prevention program in place, principals should provide a leadership role in implementing the program. Specifically, principals and other administrators should be strong advocates for students with disabilities and not just treat them as a “surplus population” (Flynt & Morton, 2007). As described under many of the recommendations at both the federal and state levels, principals should also ensure an anonymous reporting procedure for victims, as well as proper supervision and an adult presence through the school setting.

Maintaining a positive school climate is a primary function of school administration with respect to preventing bullying. A variety of studies have explored the importance of a positive school climate with respect to bullying and victimization.
Elfstrom (2007) investigated the link between bullying in schools and three elements of school climate—the perceived level of social support received from teachers, the perceived level of social support received from peers, and school connectedness. Results indicated that students not directly involved in bullying perceive a higher level of social support and school connectedness than other students. Students who are bullied perceive less social support from peers than other students, while students who bully and harass others perceive less social support from teachers and other school staff. These findings highlight the importance of a positive school climate and overall school connectedness for all students, as well as the involvement of principals in the spearheading of bullying prevention efforts within their school building.

The majority of literature focusing on bullying behaviors has until recently focused on the adult perspective with little attempt at taking into consideration input from the students involved. Stevens (2006) conducted a study in which interviews were administered with students from grades K–8 in which they described how they defined, recognized, and dealt with bullies at school and to provide recommendations on what needs to be done to stop this behavior. A variety of themes emerged within the context of the student interviews: being picked on, targets, popularity, power, physical and emotional, gender, internet bullying, how students react when bullied by others, a support system, and reasons to bully. The study highlighted the need for principals and other school administrators to understand the perspectives of the students and to acknowledge that bullying is more prevalent than previously thought. Additionally, adults who are
given the responsibility of ensuring the safety of all students must witness and understand the dynamics of bullying as it occurs around them.

With respect to Ohio’s Anti-Harassment, Anti-Intimidation or Anti-Bullying Model Policy, a variety of responsibilities are outlined for school administrators (Ohio Department of Education, 2007, pp. 10-11). Under the guidelines of the policy, all such complaints (either formal or informal) of suspected harassment, intimidation, or bullying are to be investigated promptly. A written report of the investigation must also be prepared, and the report must include the following: findings of fact; a determination of whether the bullying act was verified; recommendations for intervention, including any resulting disciplinary action; and witness statements where appropriate. Ohio’s policy also provides conditions and protections for those individuals requesting anonymity.

Adhering to anti-bullying laws has become a focus of recent research efforts. LaRocco and colleagues (2007) conducted a statewide survey distributed to each public school principal in the state of Connecticut intended to describe their experiences with implementing the law. Of the 18% of individuals that responded, almost all of the respondents (93.5%) reported that their district policy included a definition of bullying. Slightly more than 85% indicated that “disciplinary and remedial consequences” were included, followed by “policy and procedure notification to students and parents or guardians” (84.4%), “reporting, including anonymous reporting” (80.2%), “investigation and review” (77.6%), and “intervention strategies” (55.2%). These findings have implications for all states however, as it appears that while a majority of states and districts have anti-bullying policies and procedures in place to address bullying reports
and response, more intervention is required. This has particular relevance with respect to
learning disabled youth and highlights a much needed provision: principals and other
school staff need to be proactive with respect to bullying prevention efforts and should be
mindful of understanding how bullying and harassment can be avoided with this
population.

Responsibility/Response of Support Staff (Psychologists and School Counselors)

While public school principals and administrators have traditionally taken the role
of investigators and disciplinarians for offenders, school psychologists and school
counselors have the dual roles of educating their fellow staff about the severity of
bullying while also providing support for victims and perpetrators alike. Research has
shown that school staff members underestimate the prevalence of frequent bullying
across all school levels and need increased opportunities for enhancing their ability to
handle bullying properly when it occurs (Bradshaw et al., 2007). The data reviewed has
magnified the need for staff to learn strategies for detecting physical, verbal, and
relational forms of bullying, particularly with the middle school population. Based on the
research (Bradshaw et al., 2007), staff appear to need more training on effective
intervention approaches that are developmentally appropriate and strategies for
communicating these efforts with children at their appropriate developmental level.

Bradshaw and colleagues (2007) also provided some specific recommendations
for school psychologists and school support staff in collaborating with their colleagues.
First, these individuals should determine the level of engagement and interest from
teachers and other staff members to ensure that the bullying prevention program is
effective. School psychologists and counselors can also educate school personnel about the negative effects of peer harassment and aid in the dissemination of information regarding effective bullying prevention strategies. Finally, school support staff can play an integral role in educating parents about effective strategies for talking to their children about the negative effects of bullying behaviors for both perpetrators and victims and how they can effectively communicate their concerns to school personnel.

Professionals involved with students who have learning disabilities must also actively but subtly question them about bullying after it occurs. The lack of social skills displayed by some of these children, as well as their reluctance to seek out help, further highlights the need for adult intervention (Mishna, 2003). When exploring these problems through conversation, school psychologists and school counselors can also investigate whether other underlying psychosocial difficulties may be present; school and social phobia are but two of these concerns (Mishna, 2003). Further, it has been determined that once a peer group has rejected one of their own, the perception of the individual as being rejected persists over time (Coie & Cillessen, 1993). This further highlights the need for school supports from adults, to both help the group in order to prevent rejection or victimization of the victim, and to help the group accept the victim who has been previously harassed back into the peer group. If preventing these behaviors in the future and assisting the victims is to truly become a focus of schools, these points illustrate the need for interventions that change the classroom and school environment, allowing school support staff to intervene in the group process as it evolves over time (Mishna, 2003).
While specific guidelines are not provided for school psychologists and school counselors within *Ohio’s Anti-Harassment, Anti-Intimidation or Anti-Bullying Model Policy*, a variety of responsibilities are outlined for teachers and other school staff (Ohio Department of Education, 2007, pp. 9-10). As stated in the policy, any staff member that either witnesses an act of harassment or bullying or receives a report of any such behavior must notify the building principal and file a written incident report. In addition to addressing both formal and informal complaints of bullying, school personnel are encouraged to address the issue of bullying while interacting with the student population. This is particularly relevant for both school psychologists and school counselors, as there may be opportunities to educate students and to eliminate some of these behaviors through group discussions and other counseling sessions. Through some of the one-on-one or group sessions, school support staff has the ability to reinforce more socially appropriate behaviors while teaching social and problem-solving skills.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This quantitative survey study examined the perceptions of administrators and other support staff in public middle schools across the United States with respect to their opinions about whether the current bullying prevention/treatment program being used in their school building is effective with all types of students, regardless of academic standing (particularly whether it was effective for LD students). Secondary purposes of the study included examining the perceptions of administrators and other support staff about the differences in bullying behaviors between learning disabled students and students who possess no learning issues that have resulted in an Individualized Education Program (IEP) and it also solicited feedback from administrators to determine how discipline was handled when an LD student is a victim of bullying/harassment. This chapter describes the research design, population and sample, instrument development, field testing, administration and data collection procedures, reliability/validity considerations, and data analysis procedures.

Research Design

This investigation used survey research to examine the perceptions of public middle school principals, assistant principals, school psychologists, and school counselors in the United States regarding the bullying behaviors of students who have been identified as learning disabled (LD) and students who have not been identified as having learning deficiencies that require an IEP. Additionally, the researcher attempted to gather information regarding the perceived effectiveness of anti-bullying efforts that
are currently in place in various school districts across the country, and also surveyed principals and assistant principals about their disciplinary practices following the bullying of an LD student. This study used a correlational ex post facto research design, as there was no manipulation of independent variables through random assignment of subjects to treatment groups as the subjects were already in their predetermined groups. Additionally, only one population was studied/surveyed, and the survey measured preexisting conditions (Creswell, 2009; Dimitrov, 2009).

This study attempted to address the following primary research questions:

1. Do current public middle school personnel (principals, assistant principals, school psychologists, and school counselors) in the United States feel that the current bullying prevention program in place at their school or in their district meets the needs of all students, regardless of learning and other corresponding social skills deficits that may be present with students who are on IEPs?

2. Do current public middle school personnel (principals, assistant principals, school psychologists, and school counselors) in the United States perceive that learning disabled students (on an IEP) are bullied/harassed more than the typical learner (non-IEP)?

3. When a learning disabled student is a victim of bullying/harassment, do public middle school principals and assistant principals vary in their response, and are all incidents of bullying/harassment handled the same regardless of the victim being on an IEP?
Survey research was selected so that inferences could be made from the data from the various samples to reflect elements from the larger population (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2009). Mail surveys were selected for the administrator and school counselor populations, in that when solid implementation procedures are used, response rates may reach 50% to 70% (Dillman et al., 2009). The use of an online survey with respect to school psychologists also allowed for a large number of individuals from the population to be studied across the nation in an inexpensive and rapid manner, due to its cost effectiveness, and enhanced confidentiality and security (Creswell, 2003; Dillman et al., 2009; Rea & Parker, 2005).

**Instrument**

A survey instrument was developed for the participants to answer the research questions. The survey in Appendix A was based upon the research of Harris Interactive and the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (2008) and LaRocco et al. (2007). Statements and specific questions from both surveys were combined to create the instrument for this particular study. The Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network and the three researchers from the 2007 study provided consent to use their surveys, and to have the content modified as necessary for this study.

The first portion of the survey included a questionnaire that solicited demographic information: race; gender; age; current position; years of experience in the current position; current student enrollment; location of the school district (i.e., urban, suburban, rural); and the approximate percentage of learning disabled students within the public school building.
The next three sections contained an adaptation of the Harris Interactive and LaRocco et al. (2007) instruments. The second section of the survey contained questions pertaining to public middle school personnel’s perceptions regarding the current bullying prevention programs being used in their district/school building with respect to its effectiveness with learning disabled students. The answers to these questions were used to address the first research question:

1. Do current public middle school personnel (principals, assistant principals, school psychologists, and school counselors) in the United States feel that the current bullying prevention program in place at their school or in their district meets the needs of all students, regardless of learning and other corresponding social skills deficits that may be present with students who are on IEPs?

This section of the survey contained questions regarding the training for bullying prevention, whether the current bullying prevention program contained provisions for learning disabled students, whether the current anti-bullying policy contained what the State of Ohio considers to be critical elements; and solicited additional feedback for providing a safer environment for learning disabled students.

The third section of the questionnaire contained questions pertaining to perceptions of bullying, harassment, and school climate specifically relating to learning disabled students in the school building. The answers to these questions were used to address the second research question:

2. Do current public middle school personnel (principals, assistant principals, school psychologists, and school counselors) in the United States perceive that
learning disabled students (on an IEP) are bullied/harassed more than the
typical learner (non-IEP)?

This section of the survey contained items on a five point Likert-type scale (i.e., strongly
agree to strongly disagree) and consisted of questions regarding the professionals’
perceptions regarding bullying and harassment, specifically as it relates to learning
disabled students.

The penultimate section of the survey contained questions pertaining to public
middle school principals’ and assistant principals’ perceptions regarding their response to
bullying incidents with respect to learning disabled students (school psychologists and
school counselors were not asked to complete this portion of the survey). The answers to
these questions were used to address the third research question:

3. When a learning disabled student is a victim of bullying/harassment, do public
middle school principals and assistant principals vary in their response, and are all
incidents of bullying/harassment handled the same regardless of the victim being
on an IEP?

This section of the survey contained one four-point Likert question, a checklist of a
possible response options to bullying/harassment behaviors, and an open-ended
qualitative question in which the respondents were given the opportunity to provide
specific information regarding their response to these incidents.

The final section of the survey contained questions pertaining to reports of
bullying incidents in their particular school building. Respondents were asked to provide
answers to questions regarding the investigation of allegations of bullying, the percentage
of bullying incidents that come to their attention, the name of the bullying prevention program in place in their district (if applicable), how many verified acts of bullying were recorded in recent years, and where copies of the anti-bullying policy are located within the building (if one existed).

**Population/Sample**

The targeted sample for this study consisted of public middle school principals, assistant principals, school psychologists, and school counselors (grades 6–8) across the United States. In order to obtain accessibility of these populations, the study used a method of mixed-mode delivery and return. Dillman and colleagues (2009) identified a variety of advantages for using mixed-mode survey design, particularly when it becomes difficult to achieve the desired results using one mode alone. The advantages that pertain to this particular study include lower costs (an electronic version of the survey was sent to one of the population types); improved timelines (responses from school psychologists was collected more quickly); and improved response rates and reduced nonresponse error. For this particular study, an alternative mode was used for different respondents in the same survey period. The type of mixed mode survey used in this study along with the possible implications is listed in Table 3.
Table 3

*Alternative Mixed-Mode Survey Collection and the Implications*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Motivation</th>
<th>Limitations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use alternative modes for different respondents in the same survey period</td>
<td>Improve response rates</td>
<td>Increased design costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reduce coverage and nonresponse error</td>
<td>Measurement error from mode differences that may be confounded with differences among subgroups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reduce survey costs</td>
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From *Internet, mail, and mixed-mode surveys: The tailored design method*, (p. 307) by Dillman et al., 2009, Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons, Inc. Copyright 2009 by Don Dillman.

Using a systematic random sampling technique, 450 public middle school principals/assistant principals and 450 school counselors were selected from a database to receive a mailed copy of the survey. In order to be considered for this study, participants were current members of the national organization representing their profession (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development and the American School Counseling Association). Both organizations were contacted and provided the researcher with a randomized mailing list of principals, assistant principals, and school counselors at the middle school level. Due to difficulty in obtaining consent for obtaining mailing addresses for school psychologists at a national level, states were randomly selected and contacted for consent to have the survey distributed to its members electronically. Eight state organizations (Ohio, Kentucky, Kansas, South Carolina, Illinois, New York, Missouri,
and Pennsylvania) provided consent and the survey was electronically sent to its school psychologist members.

Offering different respondents alternative survey modes does raise the question of whether people answer questions the same way in different modes. This type of mixed-mode survey may introduce measurement error because of how characteristics of different modes can influence how people respond (Dillman et al., 2009). The measurement error may be confounded with differences amongst respondents because individuals with different characteristics may respond by different modes of survey. While this type of research design does raise the question of whether the gains in coverage and response rate will offset any measurement differences that may occur, this design was necessary due to the difficulty in obtaining mailing addresses for the school psychologist population. Additionally, this possibility was placed within the delimitation section of this dissertation, as it was the researcher’s choice to implement this design.

Use of simple random sampling allowed for a more accurate representation of the sample, and therefore reduced the amount of sampling error (Weisberg, Krosnick, & Bowen, 1989). A list of principals’/assistant principals’ and school counselors’ names and mailing addresses were purchased and obtained from national organizations. School psychologists were also randomly surveyed through electronic means either via an email link or by having the survey posted on the state organizations’ webpage (states were also selected on a random basis).
Field Testing/Content Validity

To enhance the internal validity of the survey, a classical pilot study was conducted in an attempt to identify problems with the survey and related implementation procedures. A classical pilot study was selected for this research to determine if the survey was appropriate for the study and the selected populations. The data from this classical pilot study were not included in the final research study as the focus was to identify flaws in the research protocol and survey instrument and then allow for amendments before the final survey was either mailed or sent electronically to the possible respondents (Dillman et al., 2009; Nardi, 2006). The pilot study was also used to get an indication of whether individual questions appeared to be working as intended. Additionally, the use of a pilot study helped determine the content validity of the survey instrument. Content validity has been deemed a significant factor to consider when developing an instrument, as it provides the researcher with a method of understanding how well a set of items measures the complexity of a concept or variable that is being studied, as well as information regarding how well the instrument adequately measures the intended perceptions of the respondents (Nardi, 2006). The advantages of using a classical pilot study to improve the internal validity of a survey/questionnaire are listed in Table 4.
Table 4

Classical Pilot Study Procedures to Improve the Internal Validity of a Questionnaire

- Administer the questionnaire to pilot subjects in exactly the same way it will be administered in the main study.
- Ask the subjects for feedback to identify ambiguities and difficult questions.
- Record the time taken to complete the questionnaire and decide whether it is reasonable.
- Discard all unnecessary, difficult, or ambiguous questions.
- Assess whether each question gives an adequate range of responses.
- Establish that replies can be interpreted in terms of the information that is required.
- Check that all questions are answered.
- Re-word or re-scale any questions that are not answered as expected.
- Shorten, revise, and if possible, pilot again.


The pilot study in this investigation included the administration of the survey questionnaire to 29 participants. The four participant areas of middle school principal, middle school assistant principal, middle school counselor, and middle school psychologists were represented in the pilot study. The survey questionnaire (refer to Appendix A) was administered to the participants either on paper or sent as an email attachment, as the initial dissertation design was intended to have all participants complete paper surveys. Of the 29 participants selected to receive the survey, 13 individuals completed it.

All pilot study participants were told that their survey responses were for pilot study purposes and would not be included in the main study data collection; therefore critical feedback was able to be solicited regarding the survey instrument and the overall data collection process. The pilot study participants were asked to complete all facets of
the proposed final study, but were also asked to provide analysis of the instrument including: (a) questions that were ambiguous or difficult to understand/answer, (b) whether each question provided enough response options, and (c) any suggestions or recommendations on how to improve the survey. All pilot participants were also asked to identify the amount of time it required for them to complete the survey in its entirety to ensure that the final survey/questionnaire was not overly cumbersome.

**Administration/Data Collection Procedures**

Following the field testing and final approval of the survey instrument to be used in this study, the survey was mailed to 300 randomly selected middle school administrators and 300 school counselors on May 4, 2013. Prospective survey respondents received hard copies of the survey contained in Appendix A, as well as the cover letter contained in Appendix B and the participant consent form contained in Appendix C. The cover letter introduced the researcher, outlined the purpose of the research, provided an approximate time it would take to complete the survey, and provided contact information for the researcher should the respondents have any questions or concerns. A self-addressed stamped envelope was also included for survey responders to return the survey to the researcher at no cost to them. The initial survey mailing had a requested due date of May 31, 2013, and the first administration phase of the study ended at that time.

In order to increase the overall sample size of the administrator and school counselor populations, an additional 150 surveys were mailed to both populations on September 1, 2013. The second mailing contained the same survey instrument
(Appendix A), a modified cover letter in which the mailing date and due dates were changed (Appendix D), and the same participant consent form contained in Appendix C. A self-addressed stamped envelope was again included for survey responders to return the survey to the researcher at no cost to them. The second survey mailing had a requested due date of September 30, 2013.

An electronic version of the survey was distributed to school psychologists on September 1, 2013. The survey contained in Appendix A was converted into the Survey Monkey program with the assistance of programmers from the Kent State University Research and Evaluation Bureau. The link to the survey was provided to eight state organizations for school psychologists and was distributed to their membership on September 1, 2013. Dependent on the state organization, distribution of the survey was accomplished either by posting the survey link to the research section of their webpage, or by sending the link to its membership in an email via their listserv. The web-based cover letter contained in Appendix E accompanied the survey link, and again was either posted on the state organization website or attached to the mass email. Upon clicking the link to the survey, respondents then viewed the participant consent form contained in Appendix C. Once potential respondents acknowledged that they read the consent form and clicked a button that indicated this, they were permitted to complete the survey in its entirety. The second administration phase of the study ended on September 30, 2013.

Human Subjects Approval

The Kent State University Instructional Review Board considered the proposed survey and all research procedures. A human subjects letter of approval was initially
granted on January 24, 2013 (refer to Appendix F). Due to the desire to increase the sample size of the administrator and school counselor populations, as well as the difficulty in obtaining mailing addresses on a national level for school psychologists, the Instructional Review Board application was modified. The modification approval contained in Appendix G allowed the examiner to send an additional 150 hard copy surveys to administrators and school counselors, as well as send an electronic version of the survey to school psychologists via their state membership organization. This modification to the study design was approved on July 22, 2013, and is contained in Appendix G.

**Reliability/Validity**

The surveys by Harris Interactive (2008) and LaRocco et al. (2007) are from published studies; however, since both surveys were used in an adapted form for this research, additional validity and reliability measures were implemented. In regard to content validity, items were modified or added to the survey based upon the literature review contained in Chapter 2. The dissertation committee for this study also assessed the content and face validity of this instrument and any recommended changes by the committee were made to the final survey format. Additionally, the findings of the pilot study described earlier in this chapter as well as the information contained in Table 4 above were used to enhance the internal validity of the survey.

A Cronbach’s alpha was conducted to obtain a reliability coefficient to determine the internal consistency of the scales. A Cronbach’s alpha was only conducted for survey question items 14, 16, 18, and 20-2. These items were selected as they were used in the
final analysis and were quantitative items that were completed by all three participant groups (items 23 and 24 were reverse coded to ensure higher scores were positive). The results showed that the survey possessed adequate internal reliability (Cronbach $\alpha = .880$). Cronbach coefficient alpha scores above .70 are considered to be at a respectable level and are representative of strong internal consistency (Gliner & Morgan, 2000).

**Data Analysis**

A four-step process was followed in order to analyze the survey data (Creswell, 2009). First, the data were analyzed to reflect the frequency distributions and percentages describing the individuals who returned the survey. Second, descriptive analyses were conducted for the dependent variables (i.e., perceptions of bullying prevention programs with respect to LD students) and the independent variable of occupation (i.e., building administrator, school psychologist, and school counselor). Third, a Cronbach alpha statistic was run in order to determine the internal consistency of the scales (Cronbach Alpha Statistic). Lastly, inferential statistics were run and analyzed in order to answer the research questions through the use of the SPSS for Windows Program, Version 21.

The inferential statistics were conducted to test three null hypotheses. First, in the national population, there will be no relationship among the dependent variable of middle school administrator, school psychologist, and school counselor and their perceptions of bullying prevention programs with respect to LD students (that they meet the needs of all students, particularly those on an IEP). This research question was answered by using data collected in Section II of the completed surveys. Second, in the same population,
there will be no relationship between the independent variable of middle school administrator, school psychologist, and school counselor and their perceptions of whether learning disabled students (on an IEP) are bullied/harassed more than the typical learner (non-IEP). This research question was answered by using data collected in Section III of the completed surveys. Third, in the nationally surveyed population of middle school principal and assistant principals, there will be no difference between the independent variable of occupation and their perceptions of discipline with respect to incidents of LD students as victims of bullying. This research question was answered by using data collected in Section IV of the completed surveys. The level of significance (alpha level) used with the quantitative statistical measures in the study was .05, which indicated that it was unlikely that any observed differences in the means occurred by chance. By choosing an alpha level of .05, the likelihood of any significant difference in the sample means in this study could occur by chance was less than five times in 100 (Howell, 2007).

**Summary**

The purpose of this study was to obtain information about the perceptions of public middle school principals, assistant principals, school psychologists, and school counselors in the United States regarding the bullying behaviors of students who have been identified as learning disabled (LD) and students who have not been identified as having learning deficiencies that require an IEP. Secondary purposes included gathering information regarding the perceived effectiveness of anti-bullying efforts currently in place in various school districts across the country, and obtaining information from
principals and assistant principals about their disciplinary practices following the bullying of an LD student. The survey was distributed to public middle school principals, assistant principals, school psychologists, and school counselors across the United States (administrators and counselors were surveyed using a paper instrument, while school psychologists completed an electronic version of the survey). A correlational ex post facto design was used, and the survey instrument used in the study was created by combining two surveys from previously published studies. Both the Harris Interactive and the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (2008) and LaRocco et al. (2007) surveys were adapted from their original form to address the research questions in this project. Validity and reliability levels were enhanced in this study by using a pilot study and the computation of a Cronbach’s alpha (it was found to have an acceptable alpha level of .880). A detailed discussion of the results is presented in Chapter 4.
CHAPTER IV
RESULTS

This study was designed to examine the perceptions of administrators and other middle school support staff in the United States regarding the bullying behaviors of students who have been identified as learning disabled (LD) and students who have not been identified as having learning deficiencies that require an IEP. The data for this research were collected using a survey questionnaire consisting of five sections: (a) demographic information; (b) items that questioned school personnel with respect to their school/school district’s policies regarding bullying prevention programs and whether they address learning disabled students; (c) items that solicited feedback from school personnel regarding bullying, harassment, and school climate, particularly as it related to learning disabled students; (d) items asking administrators (principals and assistant principals) to clarify the response when incidents of bullying take place that involve learning disabled students; and (e) a variety of questions to assess respondents’ knowledge of reports of bullying incidents within their particular school building. In this chapter, the results of the data are presented, starting with the preliminary results obtained through a pilot study.

Pilot Study Results

Prior to the implementation of the main study, a classical pilot study was conducted to pre-test the overall research protocol and the survey instrument. The pilot study instrument (Appendix A) was distributed to 29 participants. The four participant groups of middle school principal, assistant principal, school counselor, and school
psychologist were represented in the final pilot data. Of the 29 surveys that were
distributed, 13 completed surveys were returned (and all were completed in their
entirety). The surveys were distributed to individuals within the state of Ohio via an
email, and surveys were either returned in an email attachment sent back to the examiner
or through the mail.

Pilot study survey respondents included: one building principal, four assistant
 principals, six school counselors, and two school psychologists. The average time to
complete the pilot survey was 10.3 minutes and the mode was 10. The range of time
needed by participants extended from six minutes, to two respondents who stated that
they used 20 minutes to complete the pilot survey. This was valuable information to
verify that participants in the main study would not be spending an unreasonable amount
of time to complete the survey. The average time required to complete the pilot survey
(5–10 minutes) was later included in the cover letter that was sent with either a paper
copy of the survey or that accompanied the electronic version of the survey. This letter
was sent to all main study participants, regardless of the method of delivery, to help
explain the commitment in taking part in the research study. The primary
feedback/recommendations received from the pilot study participants included the
following:

- At the beginning of Section II of the survey, one respondent was unsure
  whether “learning disabilities” was referring to specific learning disabilities or
  all students identified as requiring special education.
In question 16, two respondents suggested adding an option in which respondents could indicate if they were not using a commercial bullying prevention program that they could specify that their district had developed their own program (i.e., N/A).

One respondent stated they would have been able to provide more information, particularly on questions 21–24. The same respondent indicated that having more space to require/ask for feedback might have been helpful, particularly when forced to choose from a scale.

Finally, one respondent suggested asking for the professional thoughts of survey participants regarding why students are bullied and asking qualitatively about the perceptions of learning disabled students and bullying.

While these suggestions were all considered to be valid, ultimately no changes were made to the original survey. It was felt that no further delineation of learning disabilities was required, as the responses were thought to have been similar regardless of whether the respondent was answering the questions as if students solely had learning disabilities or if these occurred concomitant with other disabilities. Additionally, while the term ‘specific learning disability’ is currently used in the state of Ohio, the researcher did not wish to make this distinction as the survey was being distributed on a national level and other states may use a different term.

With respect to the suggestion of including an option of ‘N/A’ to question 16, the examiner felt that if districts had developed their own bullying prevention program, then they would either leave the question blank or circle the ‘no opinion/not sure’ option. This
proved to be true when examining the surveys that were returned during the research phase of the study. Some respondents even wrote either ‘N/A’ or a more detailed explanation that they were not using a commercially available bullying program. The final two suggestions from pilot study participants were related to their desire to provide additional information. While more information would have been helpful, the overall design of the study had already been determined through both the record review and methods sections of this report. It was felt that additional information would not have assisted the researcher in answering the research questions for this particular study.

**Response Rates**

Data for this study were collected in two phases. In phase one of this study, 300 surveys were mailed to randomly selected middle school administrators and 300 randomly selected middle school counselors across the United States (mailings occurred on May 4, 2013). Within this initial mailing, 8 surveys (1.3%) were returned to sender as the survey was not deliverable to the address listed, and 1 survey was returned incomplete in the self-addressed stamped envelope with a refusal to participate letter. In the first phase of the study, a total of 45 completed surveys were received from either middle school building principals or assistant principals. A total of 65 completed surveys were received from middle school counselors.

In phase two of this study, an additional 150 surveys were mailed to randomly selected middle school administrators and middle school counselors to increase the overall sample size (the second mailing occurred on September 1, 2013). For the second set of mailings, 4 surveys (1.3%) were returned to sender as the survey was not
deliverable to the address listed. In the second phase of the study, a total of 24 completed surveys were received from either middle school building principals or assistant principals. A total of 24 completed surveys were received from middle school counselors. The complete survey response rates for both the administrator population and the school counselor population are listed below in Table 5.

Table 5

*Sample Population Survey Response Rates for Administrators and Counselors*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Initial Sample Size/Target Population</th>
<th>Surveys Received by May 31, 2013</th>
<th>Revised Sample Size/Target Population</th>
<th>Surveys Received by September 30, 2013</th>
<th>Final Survey Response Rates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>43 (14.3%)</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>23 (15.3%)</td>
<td>66/450 (14.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Counselor</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>65 (21.6%)</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>26 (17.3%)</td>
<td>91/450 (20.2%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A total of 66 surveys were completed by administrators (39 building principals and 27 assistant principals) and 91 surveys were completed by school counselors. Of those completed surveys, 2 surveys completed by building principals were omitted, as the respondent indicated that they were not employed in a public middle school. One survey that was completed by a school counselor was omitted for the same reason.

Phase two of the study also included an electronic version of the survey that was sent to the school psychologist membership for eight randomly selected state organizations on September 1, 2013. Additional states were contacted; some of them did
not respond to an invitation to participate in the study while others required membership in the organization to be able to conduct research with its membership base. Some states were willing to consider the research proposal, but needed to review it through their research committee. States that provided this response were removed from consideration, as this would have delayed the research study. Actual response rates for the electronic version of the survey were not available, as the surveys were distributed either via a posting on the organization’s webpage or via a mass email sent to the membership through their listserv. Therefore, actual data with respect to blocked or inaccurate email addresses or other delivery failures were not available. A total of 231 electronic surveys were viewed by school psychologists, but 82 of the participants did not identify as being employed in a public middle school setting and did not complete the survey (one participant declined to provide consent). Therefore, there were a total of 148 surveys completed by school psychologists that were considered for the final analysis. Twenty-one of those surveys were removed from consideration to be included in the data analysis, as those involved surveys that contained missing data required for answering the research questions for this study.

The final response rates for this study included 64 middle school administrators, 90 middle school counselors, and 127 middle school psychologists. This total of 281 surveys represents the number of useable surveys for analysis.

**Demographic Data**

Demographic data about the characteristics of the sample population for this study are organized and summarized in Tables 6–22. The survey began with a question about
whether the respondent was currently employed in a public middle school setting, the
criterion for being a participant in this study. Section I of the survey, questions 2 through
11, contain the demographic data requested of the survey respondents. Demographic data
included: (a) current position; (b) race, age, and gender; (c) years of experience as an
educator and years of experience in the current position; (d) state of employment; (e)
location of the school; and (f) overall student enrollment and the total percentage of
students in the school building that are identified as learning disabled. The demographic
data for each variable were analyzed and presented in the form of frequencies and
percentages of occurrence. Additionally, relationships were assessed between occupation
and the remaining demographic data using bivariate frequency distributions (i.e., cross-
tabulation).

Race

Respondents were first asked to answer a question indicating their race and were
able to select among the following response options: White/Caucasian, Black/African
American, Asian or Pacific Islander, Native American, Mixed Racial Background, Other,
and Decline to answer. Of all the individuals who participated in the survey, the data
showed that the vast majority (89.9%) of individuals completing the survey were
Caucasian (n =251). The data also showed that 6.5% (n = 18) were Black/African
American, whereas the other racial groups were represented by a small percentage. The
only racial group that was not represented in this national sample was Native Americans.
The frequencies and percentages for the demographic variable of race are reflected in
Table 6.
Table 6

*Frequency and Percentage of Occurrence for Race*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White/Caucasian</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>89.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/African American</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian or Pacific Islander</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.04%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed Racial Background</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.07%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decline to Answer</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data were analyzed further by breaking down the information by occupation. Cross tabulation was used to determine whether there was a relationship between occupation type and race. The bivariate frequency distribution that resulted from cross tabulation was reflected in Table 7. Again, the vast majority of occupations were represented by individuals in the White/Caucasian category. While the other ethnic groups were represented (with the exception of Native Americans), not all occupations were reflected with each race. The White/Caucasian and Black/African American category were the only two race distinctions that had representatives from each occupation surveyed within the study.
Table 7

*Percentage of Occurrence for Race by Occupation*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Building Principal</th>
<th>Assistant Principal</th>
<th>School Psychologist</th>
<th>School Counselor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White/Caucasian</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>27.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/African American</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian or Pacific Islander</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>0.04%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed Racial Background</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>0.04%</td>
<td>0.04%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0.04%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decline to Answer</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>0.04%</td>
<td>0.07%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>(N)</em></td>
<td>37</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Age**

Each participant was also asked to answer a question indicating their age and was able to select among the following response options: 20–29, 30–39, 40–49, 50–59, and 60 and above. Of all the individuals who participated in the survey, the data showed that 13.9% (*n* = 39) were between the ages of 20 and 29, 31.8% (*n* = 89) were between the ages of 30 and 39, 24.6% (*n* = 69) were between the ages of 40 and 49, 20.0% (*n* = 56) were between the ages of 50 and 59, and 9.6% (*n* = 27) were age 60 and older. The majority of the individuals sampled for this study were between the ages of 30 and 59. The frequencies and percentages for the demographic variable of age are reflected in Table 8.
Table 8

*Frequency and Percentage of Occurrence for Age*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>31.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>24.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 and above</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data were analyzed further by breaking down the information by occupation. Cross tabulation was used to determine whether there was a relationship between occupation type and age. The bivariate frequency distribution that resulted from cross tabulation was reflected in Table 9. The majority of principals completing the survey were between the ages of 40 and 59 while the majority of assistant principals completing the survey were between the ages of 30 and 49. There was far more variation in the age of respondents with respect to the occupations of both school psychologist and school counselor. While the majority of respondents in those occupations were between the ages of 30 and 39, all age groups were more evenly represented.
Table 9

Percentage of Occurrence for Age by Occupation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Building Principal</th>
<th>Assistant Principal</th>
<th>School Psychologist</th>
<th>School Counselor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 and above</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N)</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gender

Respondents were also asked to answer a question indicating their gender. Of all the individuals who participated in the survey, female respondents outnumbered male respondents nearly four to one. Specifically, the data showed that 22.9% ($n = 64$) were male and 77.1% ($n = 216$) were female. The frequencies and percentages for the demographic variable of age are reflected in Table 10.

Table 10

Frequency and Percentage of Occurrence for Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>22.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>77.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The data were analyzed further by breaking down the information by occupation. Cross tabulation was used to determine whether there was a relationship between occupation type and gender. The bivariate frequency distribution that resulted from cross tabulation was reflected in Table 11. The data indicates that while both males and females were nearly evenly represented in the building principal and assistant principal occupational categories, the vast majority of respondents in both the school psychologist and school counselor categories were female. Specifically, 38.9% \((n = 109)\) of female school psychologists participated in the survey, whereas only 6.4% \((n = 18)\) were males. Similarly, 28.2% \((n = 79)\) of the school counselors were female, compared to only 3.9% \((n = 11)\) male survey participants.

Table 11

*Percentage of Occurrence for Gender by Occupation*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Building Principal</th>
<th>Assistant Principal</th>
<th>School Psychologist</th>
<th>School Counselor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
<td>28.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>((N))</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Years of Experience as an Educator**

This study also collected data about the years of experience of administrators, school counselors, and school psychologists. Specifically, respondents were asked how long they had been employed in a school setting and were given the following response
options: 1–5 years; 6–10 years; 11–15 years; 16–20 years; 21–25 years; and 26 or more years. The data showed a wide variation in the years of experience for survey respondents. The lowest category for years of experience was 16–20 years at 11.8% of all respondents ($n = 33$), whereas the greatest number of respondents were found in the 6–10 years of experience range at 21.8% of all respondents ($n = 61$). However, all six categories for years of experience were well represented in the study. The frequencies and percentages for the demographic variable of years of school experience are reflected in Table 12.

Table 12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years Employed in a School Setting</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-5 years</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>18.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>21.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15 years</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>18.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20 years</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-25 years</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 or more years</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The years of experience were analyzed further by breaking down the information by occupation. Cross tabulation was used to determine whether there was a relationship between occupation type and years of employment in a school setting. The bivariate
frequency distribution that resulted from cross tabulation was reflected in Table 13. Of the building principals that completed the survey, they overwhelmingly were more likely to have more years of experience in school settings (16 years of experience or more) than the other occupations surveyed. The majority of assistant principals possessed years of school experience in the range of 6–20 years. School psychologists, conversely, held the least amount of experience in school settings when compared to the other occupational categories, as most of them possessed between 1 and 15 years of employment in schools. Finally, school counselors displayed the greatest variation, as all categories of years of employment in school settings were well represented, and varied from 3.2% (16–20 years of employment in schools) to 8.6% (6–10 years of employment in schools).

Table 13

*Percentage of Occurrence for Years Employed in a School Setting by Occupation*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years Employed in a School Setting</th>
<th>Building Principal</th>
<th>Assistant Principal</th>
<th>School Psychologist</th>
<th>School Counselor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-5 years</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15 years</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20 years</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-25 years</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 or more years</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N)</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Years of Experience in Current Position

The survey also elicited responses in which participants were asked to specify the length of employment in their current position. Respondents were asked how long they had been employed in their current position and were given the following response options: less than one year; 1–3 years; 4–10 years; 11–15 years; and 16 years or more. The data again displayed a wide variation in the years of employment in the current position for survey respondents. The lowest category for years of employment in the current position was less than one year at 8.6% of all respondents \( (n = 24) \), whereas the greatest number of respondents (43.2%) reported that they had been employed for between 4 and 10 years in their current position \( (n = 121) \). Overall, 194 individuals (69.3%) of the individuals participating in this study had at least 4 years of experience in their current position. The frequencies and percentages for the demographic variable of age are reflected in Table 14.

Table 14

*Frequency and Percentage of Occurrence for Years of Experience in Current Position*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years Employed in Current Position</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than one year</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3 years</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>22.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-10 years</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>43.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15 years</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 or more years</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The years of experience by position were analyzed further by breaking down the information by occupation. Cross tabulation was used to determine whether there was a relationship between occupation type and years of employment in the current position. The bivariate frequency distribution that resulted from cross tabulation was reflected in Table 15. Interestingly, all four occupation categories had the highest number of respondents in the 4–10 year category, indicating that they had been in their current position for that length of time. Fourteen principal respondents (5.0% of the total sample), 15 assistant principal respondents (5.4% of the total sample), 50 school psychologist respondents (17.9% of the total sample), and 42 school counselors (15.0% of the total sample) reported 4–10 years of experience in the current position. Overall, 45% of the survey respondents ($n = 126$) had between 4 and 10 years of experience in their current position.

Table 15

Percentage of Occurrence for Years of Experience in Current Position by Occupation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years Employed in Current Position</th>
<th>Building Principal</th>
<th>Assistant Principal</th>
<th>School Psychologist</th>
<th>School Counselor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than one year</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3 years</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-10 years</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15 years</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 years or more</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N)</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
State of Employment

Respondents were also asked to specify the state in which they were employed. The survey was distributed nationally to administrators and school counselors. Eight state organizations representing school psychologists (Ohio, Kentucky, Kansas, South Carolina, Illinois, New York, Missouri, and Pennsylvania) provided consent for their members to receive the survey in an electronic format, which resulted in higher numbers for some of those states in particular. Additionally, one survey was completed by a school psychologist currently out of the country (Italy). In total, 40 of the 50 states were represented in this study. The frequencies and percentages for the demographic variable of state of employment are reflected in Table 16.

School District Location/Type of Community Served

In addition to state, respondents were also asked about the type of community they served. Response options included: in an urban or city area; in a suburban area; or in a small town or rural area. Of all the individuals who participated in the survey, the majority of respondents were employed in either a suburban or rural/small town area. Specifically, the data showed that 19.6% \((n = 55)\) of the respondents were located in an urban or city school, that 35.6% \((n = 100)\) of the respondents were located in a suburban area, and 44.8% \((n = 126)\) of the respondents were located in a small town or rural area. The frequencies and percentages for the demographic variable of school district location are reflected in Table 17.
Table 16

*Frequency and Percentage of Occurrence for State of Employment*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alabama</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alaska</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arizona</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecticut</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idaho</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kansas</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kentucky</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louisiana</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maine</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maryland</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mississippi</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missouri</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montana</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nebraska</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nevada</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Hampshire</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Jersey</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Mexico</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Carolina</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennessee</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utah</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vermont</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside the U.S.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (N)</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 17

Frequency and Percentage of Occurrence for School District Location/Community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School District Location</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In an urban or city area</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In a suburban area</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>35.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In a small town or rural area</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>44.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The demographic variable of school district location/type of community served was analyzed further by breaking down the information by occupation. Cross tabulation was used to determine whether there was a relationship between occupation type and location of the school. The bivariate frequency distribution that resulted from cross tabulation was reflected in Table 18. In three of the occupations, the majority of individuals were employed in a suburban community: within the total sample, 5.3% \((n = 15)\) of building principals, 4.3% \((n = 12)\) of assistant principals, and 14.9% \((n = 42)\) school counselors were employed in this type of location. With regards to the school psychologist population, the majority of those individuals (14.9% of the total sample) reported being employed in a rural/small town setting \((n = 70)\).
Table 18

*Percentage of Occurrence for School District Location by Occupation*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School District Location/Community Served</th>
<th>Building Principal</th>
<th>Assistant Principal</th>
<th>School Psychologist</th>
<th>School Counselor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban/City</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>11.0%</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural/Small Town</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>24.9%</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(N) 37 27 127 90

**School Enrollment**

The survey also yielded information regarding the number of students currently attending their school. Respondents were given the following response options: 1–300 students; 301–500 students; 501–700 students; 701–1000 students; 1001–1300 students; 1301–1500 students; 1501–1999 students; and 2000 or more students. Although there was some variation in the responses, the majority of respondents indicated a student enrollment in the range of 301–1000 (n = 204) for an overall percentage of 72.6% of the sample. Fewer respondents reported an enrollment of 300 or less or an enrollment that exceeded more than 1000 students. Overall, 31 individuals (11.0%) reported an enrollment lower than 300 students, whereas 46 individuals (16.4%) reported an enrollment of 1000 students or greater. The frequencies and percentages for the demographic variable of age are reflected in Table 19.
Table 19

*Frequency and Percentage of Occurrence for Student Enrollment*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Students Enrolled in Your School</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-300</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>11.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>301-500</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>19.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>501-700</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>701-1000</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>29.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1001-1300</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1301-1500</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1501-1999</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000 or more</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The school enrollment numbers were analyzed further by breaking down the information by occupation. Cross tabulation was used to determine whether there was a relationship between occupation type and the number of students in the school setting. The bivariate frequency distribution that resulted from cross tabulation was reflected in Table 20. Both building principals and assistant principals displayed the greatest concentration in the category of 701–1000 students enrolled. Specifically, 37.8% of the building principal respondents (n = 14) reported student enrollment numbers in the 701–1000 range, whereas 33.3% of the assistant principal respondents (n = 9) reported student enrollment numbers in the same category. Very few building principals and assistant principals reported student enrollments above 1000 students, and only one assistant
principal reported an enrollment above 1300 students. Within the school psychologist population, the numbers were concentrated in the student enrollment range of 301–1000; 70.9% of school psychologist responders (n = 90) indicated school buildings of this size. Similar to the building principal and assistant principal responders, the lowest numbers of student enrollment for school psychologists were in buildings that contained more than 1000 students. The pattern for school counselors was similar to that of the psychologists, as the numbers were again concentrated in the student enrollment range of 301–1000; 70.0% of school counselor responders (n = 63) indicated school buildings of this size.

Table 20

Percentage of Occurrence for Student Enrollment by Occupation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Enrollment</th>
<th>Building Principal</th>
<th>Assistant Principal</th>
<th>School Psychologist</th>
<th>School Counselor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-300</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>0.04%</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>301-500</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>501-700</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>701-1000</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>11.0%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1001-1300</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1301-1500</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>0.07%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>0.07%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1501-1999</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>0.04%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000 or more</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N)</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Percentage of Learning Disabled Students

Finally, the survey elicited responses in which participants were asked to provide, to the best of their knowledge, the percentage of total students in their school building that were identified as being learning disabled. Respondents were given the following response options: 0–5%; 6–10%; 11–15%; 16–20%; and 21% or more. Nearly half of survey respondents (44.1%) reported that between 6 and 10% of the student enrollment in their building was identified as having a learning disability (n = 124). There were also substantial reports in the categories of 11–15% (n = 72) and 0–5% (n = 48). Lower numbers of learning disabled students were reported in the categories of 16–20% (n = 29) and 21% or more (n = 7). The frequencies and percentages for the demographic variable of age are reflected in Table 21.

Table 21

*Frequency and Percentage of Occurrence for Percentage of LD Students*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of LD students</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-5%</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>17.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10%</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>44.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15%</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20%</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21% or more</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The percentage of learning disabled students was analyzed further by breaking down the information by occupation. Cross tabulation was used to determine whether there was a relationship between occupation type and the percentage of learning disabled students in the school building. The bivariate frequency distribution that resulted from cross tabulation was reflected in Table 22. Interestingly, all four occupation categories reported that between 6 and 10% of the students in their school building had been identified as learning disabled. Specifically, 5.0% \((n = 14)\) of building principals, 4.6% \((n = 13)\) of assistant principals, 22.5% \((n = 63)\) of school psychologists, and 12.1% \((n = 34)\) of school counselors reported learning disabled identification rates of between 6 and 10 percent. All four occupation categories also were similar in reporting that the next highest percentage of identified learning disabled students as being between 11 and 15%. Specifically, 4.3% \((n = 12)\) of building principals, 3.2% \((n = 9)\) of assistant principals, 10.0% \((n = 28)\) of school psychologists, and 8.2% \((n = 23)\) of school counselors reported learning disabled identification rates between 11 and 15%. 
Table 22

_Percentage of Occurrence for Percentage of LD Students by Occupation_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of LD Students</th>
<th>Building Principal</th>
<th>Assistant Principal</th>
<th>School Psychologist</th>
<th>School Counselor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-5%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>0.04%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21% or more</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>0.07%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N)</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Research Question One**

1. Do current public middle school personnel (principals, assistant principals, school psychologists, and school counselors) in the United States feel that the current bullying prevention program in place at their school or in their district meets the needs of all students, regardless of learning and other corresponding social skills deficits that may be present with students who are on IEPs?

Research question one was answered by using responses to the 13 perception statements contained in item 14 of the survey instrument. Respondents were asked to respond to a question that asked, “To what degree do you feel that each of the following components are part of your school district’s safe school or anti-bullying or harassment policy?” Responses on a Likert scale ranged from 1 = _Not Included_ to 5 = _Well Developed_. Data on perceptions were reported in terms of frequencies and percentages.
The response frequencies by percentage for the perception statements in survey item 14 are reflected in Table 23. The frequencies are broken down into three categories of responses: Combined building principal and assistant principals (administrator), school psychologists, and school counselors.

A three group one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to analyze the differences in responses to all 13 perception statements between groups. The statistical assumption of homogeneity of variance was tested using Levene’s Test of Homogeneity of Variances and was found to be tenable for the dependent variable of occupation $F(2, 271) = 1.429, p = .241$. The non-statistical assumption of the One-Way ANOVA is independence, which was met though the methods used in this study (subjects had no relationship or contact with one another). Once the 13 perception statements were combined into one variable, the results of the One-Way ANOVA indicated a significant difference between the perceptions of safe school and anti-bullying policies (dependent variable) and occupation (independent variable), $F(2, 271) = 5.938, p < .01$. As the null hypothesis was rejected in this case, multiple comparisons were run amongst the three groups to determine exactly where the differences between populations occurred. Once the Bonferroni adjustment was applied, this resulted in a new significance level of .016. Significant differences were noted between the administrator and school psychologist groups ($p < .016$). A significant difference was not observed between the administrator and school counselor groups ($p = .104$). A significant difference was not observed between the school psychologist and school counselor groups ($p = .068$).
Table 23

*Components of School District Anti-Bullying Policies Represented by Percentages*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>1: Not Included</th>
<th>2: Addressed</th>
<th>3: Not sure/No Opinion</th>
<th>4: Included</th>
<th>5: Well Developed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. A statement prohibiting harassment, intimidation, or bullying of any student on school property or school-sponsored activity</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>28.3%</td>
<td>61.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Psychologist</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>55.5%</td>
<td>32.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Counselor</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>41.9%</td>
<td>52.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. A definition of harassment, intimidation, or bullying</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>56.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Psychologist</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>47.7%</td>
<td>26.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Counselor</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>39.5%</td>
<td>48.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. A procedure for students, parents, or guardians to report prohibited incidents to teachers and school administrators</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>43.3%</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Psychologist</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>40.6%</td>
<td>28.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Counselor</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td>40.7%</td>
<td>32.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 23 (continued)

*Components of School District Anti-Bullying Policies Represented by Percentages*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4. A requirement that school personnel report prohibited incidents they witness and/or receive reports on from students to the school principal or other administrator designated by the principal</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>35.0%</td>
<td>51.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Psychologist</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>44.5%</td>
<td>26.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Counselor</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>38.8%</td>
<td>31.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. A procedure for documenting any prohibited incident that is reported</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>31.7%</td>
<td>53.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Psychologist</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
<td>38.3%</td>
<td>25.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Counselor</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>45.3%</td>
<td>34.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. A procedure for responding to and investigating any reported incident including providing intervention strategies for protecting a victim from additional harassment, intimidation or bullying, and from retaliation following a report</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>45.0%</td>
<td>41.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Psychologist</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>36.7%</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Counselor</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>38.4%</td>
<td>33.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 23 (continued)

*Components of School District Anti-Bullying Policies Represented by Percentages*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Not Included</th>
<th>Addressed</th>
<th>Not sure/No Opinion</th>
<th>Included</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7. A disciplinary procedure for any student guilty of harassment, intimidation, or bullying, that does not infringe on any student’s rights</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>36.7%</td>
<td>51.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Psychologist</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>42.2%</td>
<td>18.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Counselor</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>39.5%</td>
<td>37.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. A requirement that school administration notify parents or guardians of any student involved in a prohibited incident and provide access to any written reports pertaining to the incident</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
<td>28.3%</td>
<td>46.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Psychologist</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
<td>21.9%</td>
<td>38.3%</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Counselor</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
<td>33.7%</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. A requirement that the district administrators provide feedback to the district board of education with respect to all reported incidents</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Psychologist</td>
<td>18.0%</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td>46.9%</td>
<td>19.5%</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Counselor</td>
<td>20.9%</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
<td>45.3%</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 23 (continued)

*Components of School District Anti-Bullying Policies Represented by Percentages*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Not Included</th>
<th>Addressed</th>
<th>Not sure/ No Opinion</th>
<th>Included</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10. Learning disabilities are specifically mentioned</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>41.7%</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Psychologist</td>
<td>51.6%</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>34.4%</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Counselor</td>
<td>38.4%</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>32.6%</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Professional development (e.g., training) for school personnel is mand</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Psychologist</td>
<td>20.3%</td>
<td>19.5%</td>
<td>20.3%</td>
<td>28.1%</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Counselor</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
<td>19.8%</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
<td>20.9%</td>
<td>15.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Education programs for students are mandated</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Psychologist</td>
<td>21.9%</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
<td>26.6%</td>
<td>24.2%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Counselor</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
<td>19.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 23 (continued)

*Components of School District Anti-Bullying Policies Represented by Percentages*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Not Included</th>
<th>Addressed</th>
<th>Not sure/ No Opinion</th>
<th>Included</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13. Schools are required to notify school personnel, students and families of policy</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
<td>31.7%</td>
<td>41.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Psychologist</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>24.2%</td>
<td>40.6%</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Counselor</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
<td>38.4%</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Further analysis was conducted to determine which of the 13 statements the administrators and school psychologists differed in terms of significance. As the researcher had used ordinal rankings, a Mann-Whitney U-Test was conducted to assess whether the two independent samples of ordinal data came from the same population. Statistically significant differences were found between the occupation of administrator and school psychologist on 8 statements.

School building administrators and school psychologists were found to differ in their perceptions about Statement 1: whether a statement that prohibited harassment, intimidation, or bullying of any student on school property or a school-sponsored activity was a part of their school district’s safe school or anti-bullying policy. Significant differences were noted between the responses provided by the administrators and school psychologists, \( z = -3.37, p < .01 \). Specifically, 62% of the administrators surveyed reported that this statement was a well-developed component of the policy, while only 32% of the school psychologists agreed. A large portion of the psychologists (56%) did feel as if this statement was included within the policy, however. The mean score for administrators on Statement 1 was 4.43, compared to the school psychologists’ mean score of 4.08 (with 5 being the most desirable response).

Statement 2 also resulted in a significant difference amongst the administrator and school psychologist populations: whether a definition of harassment, intimidation, or bullying was included in the school district’s safe school or anti-bullying policy. Significant differences were noted between the responses provided by the administrators and school psychologists, \( z = -3.72, p < .01 \). The data showed that 57% of the
administrators felt that this was well developed within the policy, whereas only 27% of
the school psychologists felt the same way. A large portion of the psychologists (48%)
did feel as if this statement was included within the policy, however. The mean score for
administrators on Statement 2 was 4.35, compared to the school psychologists’ mean
score of 3.84 (with 5 being the most desirable response).

The professions of administrator and school psychologist also demonstrated a
statistically significant difference in their perceptions of Statement 4: whether the safe
school or anti-bullying policy contained a requirement that school personnel report
prohibited incidents to the school principal or other administration. Significant
differences were noted between the responses provided by the administrators and school
psychologists, $z = -3.41, p < .01$. Specifically, 52% of the administrators surveyed
reported that this statement was a well-developed component of the policy, whereas only
27% of the school psychologists agreed. The mean score for administrators on Statement
4 was 4.35, compared to the school psychologists’ mean score of 3.84 (with 5 being the
most desirable response).

These professions also did not agree on their perceptions regarding Statement 5:
whether a procedure for documenting any prohibited incident that was reported was
included in the safe schools or anti-bullying policy. A significant difference was noted
between the responses provided by the administrators and school psychologists,
$z = -3.80, p < .01$. It was found that 53% of the administrators surveyed reported that
this statement was a well-developed component of the policy, whereas only 26% of the
school psychologists felt the same. Overall, 85% of administrators felt that the
documentation procedure was either included or well developed, where school psychologists displayed a greater variation in their perceptions about this statement. The mean score for administrators on Statement 5 was 4.27, compared to the school psychologists’ mean score of 3.65 (with 5 being the most desirable response).

The professions demonstrated a statistically significant difference in their perceptions of Statement 6: whether the safe schools or anti-bullying policy contained a procedure for responding to and investigating any reported incident (including providing intervention strategies). Significant differences were noted between the responses provided by the administrators and school psychologists, \( z = -4.58, p < .01 \). Specifically, 87% of the administration felt that this provision was either included or well developed within the policy. Only 17% of school psychologists felt that this provision was well developed, and 8% of this population felt that this procedure was not included in the policy at all. The mean score for administrators on Statement 6 was 4.18, compared to the school psychologists’ mean score of 3.41 (with 5 being the most desirable response).

Differences were also found between their perceptions about disciplinary procedures for students found guilty of harassment, intimidation, or bullying (Statement 7). When asked whether this provision was included in the safe schools or anti-bullying policy, statistically significant differences were found, \( z = -4.89, p < .01 \). Again, the majority of administrators (87%) felt that these disciplinary procedures were either included or well developed within the policy. School psychologists were far more varied in their responses: only 18% felt that this procedure was well developed, 42% felt that it was included, 13% were either not sure or had no opinion, 21% felt that it was addressed,
and 6% felt that it was not included at all. The mean score for administrators on Statement 7 was 4.27, compared to the school psychologists’ mean score of 3.46 (with 5 being the most desirable response).

Statement 8 also resulted in a significant difference amongst the administrator and school psychologist populations: whether a requirement that school administration notify parents/guardians of any student involved in a prohibited incident (including access to any written reports) was included in the school district’s safe school or anti-bullying policy. Significant differences were noted between the responses provided by the administrators and school psychologists, $z = -3.01, p < .01$. Specifically, 47% of the administrators surveyed reported that this statement was a well-developed component of the policy, whereas only 16% of the school psychologists agreed. Additionally, a total of 13% of administrators felt that this provision was either not included or was simply addressed in the policy, whereas 24% of school psychologists felt that same. The mean score for administrators on Statement 8 was 4.02, compared to the school psychologists’ mean score of 3.35 (with 5 being the most desirable response).

Finally, the professions demonstrated a statistically significant difference in their perceptions of Statement 13: whether the safe schools or anti-bullying policy contained a statement requiring schools to notify school personnel, students, and families of the policy itself. Significant differences were noted between the responses provided by the administrators and school psychologists, $z = -3.60, p < .01$. Specifically, 42% of the administrators surveyed reported that this statement was a well-developed component of the policy, whereas only 13% of the school psychologists agreed. The mean score for
administrators on Statement 13 was 3.95, compared to the school psychologists’ mean score of 3.36 (with 5 being the most desirable response).

Descriptive statistical analyses in the form of mean and standard deviation were run on all of the data from each perception statement from question 14 of the survey instrument, and are reported in Table 24.

Missing data were also considered. The survey required participants to respond to each item and this resulted in some respondents who did not complete all questions in the survey. While the total number of useable surveys for this study numbered 281, a number of individuals did not complete all portions of question 14. In order to address the issue of missing data, their partial data was not included in this study. For research question one, this resulted in a total sample size of 274 individuals. Since the missing data were removed prior to the analysis of variance, the issue of missing data was not a factor in this particular study (Weisberg et al., 1989).

**Research Question Two**

2. Do current public middle school personnel (principals, assistant principals, school psychologists, and school counselors) in the United States perceive that learning disabled students (on an IEP) are bullied/harassed more than the typical learner (non-IEP)?

Research question two was answered by using responses to three perception statements contained in items 22–24 of the survey instrument. Question 22 asked respondents to provide their perceptions to a statement that read “Specifically, how safe do you think learning disabled students feel at your school?” Responses on a Likert scale
Table 24

*Descriptive Data for Components of School District Anti-Bullying Policies*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable/Component</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Statement Prohibiting Harassment on School Property or</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>.890</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>at School Events</td>
<td>Psychologist</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>.910</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Counselor</td>
<td>4.41</td>
<td>.773</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of Harassment, Intimidation, Bullying</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>4.35</td>
<td>.936</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Psychologist</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>1.048</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Counselor</td>
<td>4.26</td>
<td>.984</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedure for Reporting Bullying Incidents to School</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>1.020</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>Psychologist</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>1.114</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Counselor</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>1.206</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requirement that School Staff</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>.989</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report Acts to Principal or Administration</td>
<td>Psychologist</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>1.131</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Counselor</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>1.269</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedure for Documenting Prohibited Incidents</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>1.006</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Psychologist</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>1.161</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Counselor</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>1.184</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedure for Responding to and Investigating Reported</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>.930</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incidents</td>
<td>Psychologist</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>1.167</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Counselor</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>1.216</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disciplinary Procedures for Students Guilty of</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>1.023</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harassment</td>
<td>Psychologist</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>1.170</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Counselor</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>1.089</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Require that Administrators Notify Parents and Provide</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>1.214</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to Written Reports</td>
<td>Psychologist</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>1.201</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Counselor</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>1.215</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Require that Administrators Provide Feedback to Board</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>1.320</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of Education</td>
<td>Psychologist</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>1.155</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Counselor</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>1.205</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Disabilities are Specifically Mentioned</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>1.376</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Psychologist</td>
<td>2.01</td>
<td>1.119</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Counselor</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>1.428</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development (Training) for School</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>1.526</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personnel is Mandated</td>
<td>Psychologist</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>1.328</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Counselor</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>1.447</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Programs for Students are Mandated</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>1.425</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Psychologist</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>1.331</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Counselor</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td>1.530</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools Required to Notify School Personnel, Students,</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>1.185</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and Family of Policy</td>
<td>Psychologist</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>1.148</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Counselor</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>1.245</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ranged from 1 = *Not at all safe* to 5 = *Very safe*. Question 23 asked survey respondents to provide their perceptions to a statement that read “At your school, how often are students bullied, called names, or harassed because they are on an IEP for a learning disability?” Responses on a Likert scale ranged from 1 = *Never* to 5 = *Often*. Question 24 asked survey respondents to provide their perceptions to a statement that read “When compared to students who are not placed on an Individualized Education Program (IEP), how much more often do you feel that students who are learning disabled (and on an IEP) are bullied/harassed?” Responses on a Likert scale ranged from 1 = *Much less often* to 5 = *Much more often*. In order to run the analysis, data items on questions 23 and 24 were reverse coded to reflect that higher scores were more desirable and that the responses agreed with those from question 22. Data on perceptions were reported in terms of frequencies and percentages. The response frequencies by percentage for the perception statements in survey item 22 are reflected in Table 25. The response frequencies by percentage for the perception statements in survey item 23 are reflected in Table 26. The response frequencies by percentage for the perception statements in survey item 24 are reflected in Table 27. The frequencies are broken down into three categories of responses: Combined building principal and assistant principals (administrator), school psychologists, and school counselors.
Table 25

*Perspectives of the Safety of Learning Disabled Students Represented by Percentages*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Not At All Safe</th>
<th>Not Very Safe</th>
<th>Not sure/No Opinion</th>
<th>Safe</th>
<th>Very Safe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

22. Specifically, how safe do you think learning disabled students feel at your school?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Administrator</th>
<th>0%</th>
<th>0%</th>
<th>3.3%</th>
<th>71.7%</th>
<th>25.0%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Psychologist</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>15.1%</td>
<td>70.6%</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Counselor</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>75.9%</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 26

*Perspectives of the Bullying of Learning Disabled Students on an IEP*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Not sure/No Opinion</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

23. At your school, how often are learning disabled students bullied, called names, or harassed because they are on an IEP for a learning disability?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Administrator</th>
<th>0%</th>
<th>28.3%</th>
<th>15.0%</th>
<th>55.0%</th>
<th>1.7%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Psychologist</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>37.3%</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
<td>34.1%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Counselor</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>50.6%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 27

_Perspectives of Whether LD Students are Bullied More Than Typical Students_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Much More Often</th>
<th>More Often</th>
<th>Not sure/No Opinion</th>
<th>Less Often</th>
<th>Much Less Often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>53.3%</td>
<td>31.7%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Psychologist</td>
<td>0.08%</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>54.8%</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Counselor</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>23.0%</td>
<td>42.5%</td>
<td>31.0%</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A three group one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to analyze the differences in responses to the three perceptions in questions 22–24 between groups. The statistical assumption of homogeneity of variance was tested using Levene’s Test of Homogeneity of Variances and was found to be tenable for the dependent variable of occupation $F(2, 270) = 1.470, p = .232$. The non-statistical assumption of the One-Way ANOVA is independence, which was met though the methods used in this study (subjects had no relationship or contact with one another). Once the three perception statements were combined into one variable, the results of the One-Way ANOVA indicated a significant difference between the perceptions of bullying and harassment with respect to learning disabled students (dependent variable) and occupation (independent variable), $F(2, 270) = 9.564, p < .01$. As the null hypothesis was rejected in this case, multiple
comparisons were run amongst the three groups to determine exactly where the differences between populations occurred. Once the Bonferroni adjustment was applied, this resulted in a new significance level of .016. Significant differences were noted between the administrator and school psychologist groups ($p < .016$). A significant difference was not observed between the administrator and school counselor groups ($p = .055$). A significant difference was observed between the school psychologist and school counselor groups ($p < .016$).

Further analysis was conducted to determine in which of the three statements the populations differed in terms of significance. As the researcher had used ordinal rankings, a Mann-Whitney U-Test was conducted to assess whether the two independent samples of ordinal data came from the same population. Statistically significant differences were found between the occupation of administrator and school psychologist on both items 22 and 24 of the survey instrument. Specifically, the professions of administrators and school psychologists demonstrated a statistically significant difference in their perceptions on question 22, which measured their ratings of how safe learning disabled students felt in their school. Significant differences were noted between the responses provided by the administrators and school psychologists, $z = -3.791, p < .01$. Specifically, 25% of the administration felt that learning disabled students felt very safe within their school, whereas only 9.5% of school psychologists felt the same. Additionally, 4.8% of the school psychologists surveyed felt that learning disabled students were not very safe within their school environment. No respondents from either the administrator category or the school psychologist category felt that learning disabled
students were not at all safe. The mean score for administrators on question 22 was 4.22, compared to the school psychologists’ mean score of 3.85 (with 5 being the most desirable response).

Administrators and school psychologists also displayed a statistically significant difference on their perceptions with regards to question 24 of the survey. This question asked respondents to make comparisons between how often learning disabled students on an IEP and students not on an IEP were bullied. Significant differences were noted between the responses provided by the administrators and school psychologists, \( z = -3.876, p < .01 \). Specifically, 37% of administrators felt that learning disabled students on an IEP were actually bullied less than students not on an IEP. Conversely, nearly 29% of school psychologists felt that learning disabled students on an IEP were bullied more than those students not on an IEP. Over 50% of both populations were unsure or did not have an opinion. The mean score for administrators on question 24 was 3.32, compared to the school psychologists’ mean score of 2.86 (with 5 being the most desirable response).

With respect to the school psychologist and school counselor populations, these populations were found to differ in their perceptions regarding question 24. Again, this question asked respondents to make comparisons between how often learning disabled students on an IEP and students not on an IEP were bullied. Significant differences were noted between the responses provided by the school psychologists and school counselors, \( z = -2.590, p < .016 \). Specifically, 34% of school counselors felt that learning disabled students on an IEP were actually bullied less than students not on an IEP, whereas only
16% of school psychologists felt the same. Psychologists and counselors both had a larger percentage of individuals who felt that learning disabled IEP students were bullied more often than students not on an IEP (27% of psychologists and 23% of counselors had this perception). The mean score for school psychologists on question 24 was 2.86, compared to the school counselors’ mean score of 3.15 (with 5 being the most desirable response).

Descriptive statistical analyses in the form of mean and standard deviation were run on all of the data from each perception statement from questions 22–24 of the survey instrument, and are reported in Table 28.

Table 28

*Descriptive Data for Perspectives on Bullying Practices With Learning Disabled Students*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable/Component</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How safe do you think learning disabled students feel at your school?</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>4.22</td>
<td>.490</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Psychologist</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>.646</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Counselor</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>.618</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At your school, how often are students bullied, etc. because they are on an IEP?</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>.908</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Psychologist</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>.955</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Counselor</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>.955</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compared to students not on an IEP, how much more often are LD students bullied?</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>.725</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Psychologist</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>.678</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Counselor</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>.815</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Missing data were also considered. The survey required participants to respond to each item and this resulted in some respondents who did not complete all questions in the
survey. While the total number of useable surveys for this study numbered 281, a number of individuals did not answer one or more questions with respect to items 22–24 of the survey instrument. In order to address the issue of missing data, their partial data was not included in this study. For research question two, this resulted in a total sample size of 273 individuals. Since the missing data were removed prior to the analysis of variance, the issue of missing data was not a factor in this particular study (Weisberg et al., 1989).

**Research Question Three**

3. When a learning disabled student is a victim of bullying/harassment, do public middle school principals and assistant principals vary in their response, and are all incidents of bullying/harassment handled the same regardless of the victim being on an IEP?

Research question three is divided into two questions. The first question, (3a) “do public middle school principals vary in their response when a learning disabled student is a victim of bullying/harassment” was answered by using responses to the eight perception statements contained in item 25 of the survey instrument. School building principal and assistant principal respondents were asked to respond to a question that asked, “When an incident of student bullying/harassment is reported to you for a student who is learning disabled, to what degree do you implement the following steps?” Responses on a Likert scale ranged from 1 = *Never* to 5 = *Always*. Data on perceptions were reported in terms of frequencies and percentages. The response frequencies by percentage for the
perception statements in survey item 25 are reflected in Table 29. The frequencies are broken down into two categories of responses: building principal and assistant principals.

An unpaired independent samples $t$-test was conducted to analyze the differences in responses to the eight perception statements in question 25 of the survey between groups. This type of analysis was selected as the researcher was interested in comparing the scores between the two unpaired (independent) groups being surveyed. Once the eight perception statements were combined into one variable, the results of the independent samples $t$-test did not result in a significant difference between the perceptions of steps followed once an LD student was a victim of bullying (dependent variable) and occupation (independent variable), $t(61) = .444, p > .05$. As the null hypothesis was not rejected in this case, no further analysis was conducted for the first part of research question three (3a).

Descriptive statistical analyses in the form of mean and standard deviation were run on all of the data from each perception statement from question 25 of the survey instrument, and are reported in Table 30.
### Steps Followed When LD Students are Victims of Bullying Represented by Percentages

When an incident of bullying is reported to you for a student who is LD, to what degree do you implement the following?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Not sure/ No Opinion</th>
<th>Most of the Time</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Speak with the student perpetrator</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Speak to the student victim</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Speak to the parent of the student perpetrator</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Speak to the parent of the student victim</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Notify the Police</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Engage in disciplinary activity (e.g. suspension, expulsion)</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>30.6%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>41.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Make a note in the perpetrator’s student file</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Delegate any follow-up to other staff (assistant principal, disciplinary officer, etc.)</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 30

*Descriptive Data for Steps Followed When LD Students are Victims of Bullying*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable/Component</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Speak to Student Perpetrator</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>4.78</td>
<td>.760</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assistant Principal</td>
<td>4.92</td>
<td>.277</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speak to the Student Victim</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>4.86</td>
<td>.593</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assistant Principal</td>
<td>4.96</td>
<td>.200</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speak to the Parent of the Student Perpetrator</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>4.47</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assistant Principal</td>
<td>4.52</td>
<td>.510</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speak to the Parent of the Student Victim</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>4.47</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assistant Principal</td>
<td>4.48</td>
<td>.714</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notify the Police</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>.624</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assistant Principal</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>.866</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engage in Disciplinary Activity</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>1.157</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Suspension, etc.)</td>
<td>Assistant Principal</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>1.288</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make a Note in the Perpetrator’s Student File</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>1.298</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assistant Principal</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>1.118</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delegate Follow-Up to Other Staff</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>1.327</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assistant Principal</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>1.382</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second part of research question three (3b), “when a learning disabled student is a victim of bullying/harassment, are all incidents of bullying/harassment handled the same regardless of the victim being on an IEP,” was answered by using responses to the perception statement in question 26 from the survey instrument. School building principal and assistant principal respondents were asked to respond to a question that asked, “When bullying/harassment incidents occur in your building where the victim is a student who is identified as being learning disabled (and on an IEP), how is this situation
handled when compared to other incidents that do not involve learning disabled students?” Responses on a Likert scale ranged from 1 = *Much Different* to 5 = *The Same*. Data on perceptions were reported in terms of frequencies and percentages. The response frequencies by percentage for the perception statements in survey item 26 are reflected in Table 31. The frequencies are broken down into two categories of responses: building principal and assistant principals.

Table 31

*Responses to Bullying Incidents for LD Students Represented by Percentages*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Much Different</th>
<th>Somewhat Different</th>
<th>Not sure/No Opinion</th>
<th>About the Same</th>
<th>The Same</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>30.6%</td>
<td>58.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Principal</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>36.0%</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An unpaired independent samples *t*-test was conducted to analyze the differences in responses to the perception statement in question 26 of the survey between groups. This type of analysis was selected as the researcher was interested in comparing the scores between the two unpaired (independent) groups being surveyed. The results of the independent samples *t*-test did not result in a significant difference between the
perceptions of whether the level of response was the same once an LD student was a victim of bullying (dependent variable) and occupation (independent variable), 

\[ t(61) = -.591, p > .05. \]  

As the null hypothesis was not rejected in this case, no further analysis was conducted for the second part of research question three (3b). Descriptive statistical analyses in the form of mean and standard deviation were run on the data from question 26 of the survey instrument, and are reported in Table 32.

Table 32

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable/Component</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How are bullying situations handled with LD students?</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>4.39</td>
<td>.903</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assistant Principal</td>
<td>4.52</td>
<td>.714</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary

This chapter presented the analyses of the data obtained in this quantitative study that examined the perceptions of administrators and other middle school support staff in the United States regarding the bullying behaviors of students who have been identified as learning disabled (LD) and students who have not been identified as having learning deficiencies that require an IEP. The chapter began by reviewing the results of the pilot study, in which 29 individuals were selected as participants (13 of those individuals completed all aspects of the pilot survey and returned it). Ultimately, while some of the
pilot study participants provided suggestions for improvement, and these suggestions were considered, no changes were made to the original survey.

Once the study was completed in two phases (through a mixture of hard copy mailings and electronic survey completion), the final response rates for this study included 64 middle school administrators, 90 middle school counselors, and 127 middle school psychologists. This total of 281 surveys represented the number of useable surveys for analysis.

The survey instrument was used to collect data that were analyzed both descriptively and inferentially. The research methodology for this study followed a quantitative approach and descriptive statistics were applied where appropriate and included: frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations.

Prior to the collection of data for this study, three research questions were constructed. A three group one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to analyze the differences in responses to answer research question one: do current public middle school personnel (principals, assistant principals, school psychologists, and school counselors) in the United States feel that the current bullying prevention program in place at their school or in their district meets the needs of all students, regardless of learning and other corresponding social skills deficits that may be present with students who are on IEPs? The results of the One-Way ANOVA indicated a significant difference between the perceptions of safe school and anti-bullying policies (dependent variable) and occupation (independent variable). As the null hypothesis was rejected in this case, multiple comparisons were run amongst the three groups to determine exactly where the
differences between populations occurred. Significant differences were noted between
the administrator and school psychologist groups ($p < .016$). A significant difference was
not observed between the administrator and school counselor groups ($p = .104$). A
significant difference was not observed between the school psychologist and school
counselor groups ($p = .068$). Further analysis were conducted to determine which of the
statements the administrators and school psychologists differed in terms of significance,
and these results are reported in detail in the body of Chapter 4 of this document.

A three group one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to analyze
the differences in responses to answer research question two: do current public middle
school personnel (principals, assistant principals, school psychologists, and school
counselors) in the United States perceive that learning disabled students (on an IEP) are
bullied/harassed more than the typical learner (non-IEP)? The results of the One-Way
ANOVA indicated a significant difference indicated a significant difference between the
perceptions of bullying and harassment with respect to learning disabled students
(dependent variable) and occupation (independent variable). As the null hypothesis was
rejected in this case, multiple comparisons were run amongst the three groups to
determine exactly where the differences between populations occurred. Significant
differences were noted between the administrator and school psychologist groups ($p <
.016$). A significant difference was not observed between the administrator and school
counselor groups ($p = .055$). A significant difference was observed between the school
psychologist and school counselor groups ($p < .016$). Further analysis were conducted to
determine which of the statements the respondents differed in terms of significance with
respect to occupation, and these results are reported in detail in the body of Chapter 4 of this document.

An unpaired independent samples $t$-test was conducted to analyze the differences in responses for principals and assistant principals to answer the two-part research question three: when a learning disabled student is a victim of bullying/harassment, do public middle school principals and assistant principals vary in their response, and are all incidents of bullying/harassment handled the same regardless of the victim being on an IEP? The results of the independent samples $t$-tests did not result in a significant difference between the responses of principals and assistant principals for either part of research question three. As the null hypothesis was not rejected in this case, no further analysis was conducted for either part of research question three.
CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The intent of this study was to determine, through a survey research design, the perceptions of public school administrators, school counselors, and school psychologists with respect to the differences in bullying practices amongst learning disabled and non-learning disabled middle school students. Other purposes included surveying these professionals with respect to their perceptions of the effectiveness of current bullying prevention programs being used, as well as surveying administrators to gauge their overall response to bullying incidents that involve learning disabled students. This chapter discusses the overall findings of the study and attempts to make conclusions about the results. Furthermore, the limitations of the study, and an explanation of additional questions within the survey instrument that were not used in data analysis also are discussed.

Recommendations for future study are also discussed, and include the possible replication of this study for other subgroups of student populations and disability categories. A second recommendation is the possible development of specific bullying prevention programs that target each at-risk population or subgroup (other special education categories, LGBT students). Third, future studies should also examine the possible involvement of learning disabled students in cyber-bullying and what those implications are for school districts. Fourth, long-term data is needed to determine what the negative effects of bullying are for this particular population and whether early intervention services are needed. Finally, future research should focus on how school
and school districts collect data with respect to bullying referrals so that more analysis can take place (whether IEP’s are being followed, what interventions and follow-up are required for these individuals).

**Conclusions—Demographic Data**

The demographic data collected in this study indicates that the vast majority of survey respondents were Caucasian females. With respect to the variable of age, the majority of school principals and assistant principals were aged 40 or above. This is not surprising, as most school leaders begin their career as a teacher or hold another position in the field of education prior to transitioning to a career in administration. There was greater variability for both the school psychologist and school counselor careers with respect to the variable of age, as these individuals are more likely to be employed immediately after their undergraduate studies, and do not require years of experience in another position prior to obtaining an entry level position in the field.

The survey instrument also asked respondents to specify how long they had been employed in the field of education, and also to specify how long they had been employed in their current position. The data for each of these responses were not surprising, as the range of experience in the school setting was the same for all groups as opposed to the building principals (they had far more years of experience in a school setting). Therefore, considering the responses, public school principals were the most veteran group. The professions of school psychologist and school counselor displayed the largest variation in this area, and also showed the greatest number of professionals who could be considered novices (1–5 years of experience). With regards to the years of experience in their
current position, it was encouraging to see that many of the respondents had been in their position for a number of years, providing an extra measure of validity to the survey in that they theoretically were comfortable in their position, had valuable knowledge to provide, and understood the magnitude of all questions being asked of them.

As mentioned in Chapters 3 and 4 of this dissertation, this survey was administered to individuals in all 50 states. However, due to the mixed methods nature of data collection, school psychologists from eight states received the survey in an electronic format. Mailed surveys were randomly provided to 450 administrators and 450 school counselors in all 50 states. This resulted not only in a larger number of surveys completed overall from those eight states in particular, but also resulted in an over-representation of the school psychologist population in general. As mentioned below in the limitations for this study, therefore these results can be generalized to the population, but more to the school psychologist population than to the other professions that were surveyed.

Taken as a whole, most building principals and assistant principals are employed in either a suburban or rural setting. Conversely, the overwhelming majority of school psychologists reported being employed in a rural setting. The school counselor position displayed the greatest variation in the type of community they served. Only 55 individuals completing the survey (19.6% of the total survey respondents) reported being employed in an urban or city school. It is unclear why this location was under-represented in the overall sample, as this could be due to the random sampling, the lack of understanding of
the topic for individuals in those types of communities, or the overly hectic work
schedules of those individuals who may not have had the time to complete the survey.

The building principal and assistant principal respondents again showed a similar
profile in the district size/enrollment of the buildings they serve. Both of these
populations reported being most likely to work in a building with a school enrollment
size of 701–1,000 students. There was greater variation in the school enrollment
numbers as reported by both the school psychologists and the school counselors. School
psychologists were evenly divided amongst enrollment numbers ranging from 501–700
and 701–1,000 students. Most school counselors also reported a school building
enrollment falling within one of those two ranges. Interpreted as a whole, the great
variety of school building enrollment is likely indicative of the large variation in the
number of surveys that were completed in a variety of community settings (i.e., smaller
buildings and lower enrollment numbers in rural settings vs. larger buildings and higher
enrollment numbers in urban settings).

Finally, the survey also inquired as to the percentage of the population that was
considered to be learning disabled within the school building. This question served a
variety of purposes: it was hoped that it would encourage the respondents to begin
thinking about the topic as the survey transitioned into items that would address the
research questions, as well as gauge their knowledge of the actual percentages within
their school building. Overall, 61.2% of the respondents reported special education
eligibility rates between 0% and 10% within their school building. This was
encouraging, as recent research examining state and national trends has shown that the
average rate of specific learning disability identification falls around 5% nationally (McLeskey, Landers, Hoppey, & Williamson, 2011).

Conclusions—Research Question One

1. Do current public middle school personnel (principals, assistant principals, school psychologists, and school counselors) in the United States feel that the current bullying prevention program in place at their school or in their district meets the needs of all students, regardless of learning and other corresponding social skills deficits that may be present with students who are on IEPs?

As stated in Chapter 4 of this dissertation, school building administrators and school psychologists significantly differed in their perceptions on eight separate components and whether they were a part of the school district’s anti-bullying policy. The 13 items included in Question 14 of the survey were explicitly chosen based upon the literature review for this study. As stated in Chapter 2 of this dissertation study, the State of Ohio has identified 11 critical elements that were considered essential to a well-developed anti-harassment policy. Ten of these critical elements were ultimately included in item 14 of the survey; the only essential element not included was one that specified immunity from liability in civil suits if a report was made in good faith. It was felt that this element was unnecessary, and that this was a likely component of any existing anti-bullying policies. The researcher did survey the respondents on three additional items: whether learning disabilities were specifically mentioned in the policy, whether professional development for school personnel was mandated, and whether education programs for students were mandated. Ultimately, the responses for each of
these items were insignificant, as the responses for each displayed great variation across the response options.

These differences can be explained in a variety of ways. First, it must be considered that building administrators were attempting to portray their school building and school district in a positive light. As stated elsewhere in this report, school districts and school building principals are under increased scrutiny with respect to school safety. When responding to these questions, they may have over inflated their ratings in their desire to portray their school district’s readiness with respect to anti-bullying.

Conversely, the differences between the ratings for the two populations (principals and school psychologists) could have been due to school psychologists’ lack of knowledge of the anti-bullying policy and what specifics it contained, as there were many more school psychologists who chose the response option of not sure/no opinion for all of the items. Speaking as a school psychologist, my knowledge of school district anti-bullying policies is based solely upon my previous research into the topic. However, this is likely not the case for the majority of school psychologists in public middle schools, and their lack of exposure to these policies may have been a factor in their responding the way they did. Building principals were much less apt to choose the response option of not sure/no opinion, indicating that their knowledge base with respect to this topic may have been greater. This was particularly the case during questions that gauged the respondents’ knowledge of documentation, discipline, and follow-up with respect to incidents of bullying. Again, these are traditionally not the responsibility of school counselors or school psychologists, so these results cannot be considered surprising. School
psychologists are traditionally not involved in the discipline of students, and thus would not have any prior knowledge of what the disciplinary procedures for a school building or school district might be. Building principals were much more likely to choose the response option of well developed for most of the items, again indicating that they either had a greater knowledge of the policy, or were over-stating the extent of their district’s policy.

Taken as a whole, school psychologists likely have a greater knowledge base with respect to learning disabilities and their overall etiology and subsequent effects for those students, both academically and socially. They work with these students on a more personal level and have more specialized interactions with them, which may have caused them to answer in the manner they did. School principals and assistant principals have a far greater student population that they oversee and their job functions are such that they are not directly responsible for knowing the specific needs of each disability category for students placed on an IEP. Perhaps the results of research question one indicate that principals feel the need to protect ALL students, while school psychologists have a desire to protect specific classes of student, including the learning disabled one. A variety of completed surveys received written responses from many of the principals and assistant principals in which they stated their desire to protect all students, and not solely specific subgroups.

Alternatively, learning disabled students typically have a variety of other corresponding skills deficits in addition to being delayed academically. These issues are typically not outwardly seen by others, but can be evidenced through observing the
interactions that these students have with other typical peers. For example, learning disabled students many times will have social skills deficits and other language delays or concerns that may negatively impact their ability to effectively communicate with others. While school psychologists typically are aware of these deficits (due to knowledge of the student’s goals on their IEP), perhaps principals did not take these delays into consideration when providing their responses to the items analyzed in research question one. School psychologists’ knowledge of these delays may have also contributed to their responses, by indicating that the anti-harassment policy currently in place at their school does not effectively meet these needs or protect these students in a proper manner.

Of particular concern were the differences noted between responses for statement 6. School psychologists were far more likely to feel that proper intervention and follow-up to bullying incidents were lacking in the policy. Perhaps the differences in ratings for this particular item (and for many of the items in general) indicates that building leadership teams are more concerned with the resulting discipline and documentation to meet compliance, while school psychologists are again more concerned with meeting the social and emotional needs of students and ensuring that their needs are met. Are principals in fact more concerned with documentation, or are there so many referrals that proper follow-up is a secondary thought? Finally, are there enough school-based individuals that are specialized enough to even provide the proper intervention to these students and ensure their future safety? Regardless, it appears that principals and assistant principals primarily appear to serve as the “investigator” with respect to incidents of bullying. Their role appears to be one in which the bullying incident is
investigated and documented, while proper attention to the prevention and resulting response may be secondary or left to other school-based personnel. Perhaps more attention needs to be paid to the antecedent (what immediately precedes the incident) and the consequence or follow-up (what intervention and response takes place after the incident) if we are to truly make positive strides with respect to anti-bullying efforts.

Although the responses between school building administrators and school psychologists were not significant for an item that inquired as to whether learning disabilities were specifically mentioned within the anti-bullying policy, it is felt that this deserves some additional discussion. As stated elsewhere in this dissertation, it is hoped that anti-bullying policies are able to protect all students, regardless of race, religion, sexual orientation, disability, and so forth. Although it is not believed that there are any legal policies that require the inclusion of learning disabilities (or any disability for that matter), it is hoped that school districts do take these protected classes into consideration when developing or adopting a previously developed anti-bullying policy. Half of school psychologists and over 40% of school building administrators stated that learning disabilities were not mentioned at all within the anti-bullying policy of their district of employment (this question overwhelmingly received the highest number of not included responses for all three populations surveyed). If anything, it is hoped that those making the decisions on adopting one of these programs will consider whether it will meet the needs of all students, and not just those considered to be typical learners. This was echoed in some of the responses received, as many survey participants wrote comments
indicating that all student classes should be protected, not just learning disabilities (although this dissertation placed primary emphasis on this distinction of student).

Finally, respondents were given the option of qualitatively either adding to the response options or to clarify an answer provided within Question 14 of the survey. Very few responses were given in this section of the survey, which could be considered a positive sign in that the essential components of an effective anti-bullying and/or anti-harassment policy were indeed included within the survey. Of the responses that were received, they either clarified an answer or response, or stated that the development or adoption of the policy was still taking place.

**Conclusions—Research Question Two**

2. Do current public middle school personnel (principals, assistant principals, school psychologists, and school counselors) in the United States perceive that learning disabled students (on an IEP) are bullied/harassed more than the typical learner (non-IEP)?

As stated in Chapter 4 of this dissertation, the occupations of school administrator and school psychologist significantly differed in their responses for two out of the three survey items intended to answer this research question (items 22 and 24). With respect to item 22, nearly every school principal or assistant principal stated that learning disabled students were either safe or very safe in their school building. Conversely, nearly 20% of school psychologists felt that learning disabled students were either not very safe or provided the response option of not sure/no opinion for this particular question.
Again, the school psychologist population statistically differed the most with respect to their opinions of learning disabled students and their safety in school. This could either be due to their knowledge and expertise in working closely with this particular population, and could also be due to an increased sensitivity to the social and emotional needs of the learning disabled student. School psychologists work very closely on a day-to-day basis with students who possess a variety of learning, cognitive, social-emotional, communication, and motor deficits. Therefore, their responses could have indicated that learning disabled students are, in fact, less safe and more apt to become victims of bullying behaviors because they are an easier target for harassment. On the other hand, their responses could indicate that school psychologists feel that they are less safe due to their decreased tools with which to protect themselves from these types of behaviors. Finally, as alluded to earlier in this chapter, school psychologists may feel the need to protect this particular class of student.

Another important point is to highlight the ever changing security procedures being implemented by school districts today. In light of the consistent threat of school violence and shootings, more and more schools are implementing tighter and stricter security procedures. Schools are not as accessible as they have been in the past, and nearly every visitor must provide identification in many instances. Doors are locked, police presence is greater, and more attention is being paid to identify unfamiliar individuals in the schools. Perhaps building leaders, traditionally being housed in the school office, see these procedures as being sufficient to ensure the safety of all students, and their answers reflected these thoughts. The increased focus on improving the overall
climate and ensuring that all students feel connected on behalf of principals again may have made it difficult for them to answer the questions from the perspective of one particular class of student.

Perhaps the overall message in analyzing the responses for building administrators and school psychologists is that they viewed this question (item 22) in separate ways. School administrators may have been viewing the question as one that inquired about the overall safety of all students and the school building in general, while school psychologists were viewing the question by highlighting the population that the question was inquiring about. Many administrator respondents seemed to have difficulty in being able to distinguish that this particular study was inquiring as to a specific subgroup of student, and their responses seemed to support this distinction. School psychologists on the other hand seemed more able to answer the questions being asked from the perspective of the student with a learning disability.

Additionally, the majority of referrals with respect to bullying do not separate whether one of the students (whether bully or victim) was on an IEP for a learning disability. Therefore, principals may not have had actual data with which to indicate otherwise. Referral systems in most cases either seem to still be in development or school districts are using their own developed documentation system that does not allow for the critical analysis of data with which to determine whether specific subgroups of students are bullied or harassed more than others. This was supported by the survey responses themselves, as one qualitative question in Section V of the survey asked respondents to specify (if applicable) the specific name of the reporting system currently
in use within their school or district. Many respondents either left the question blank or stated that they were using their own developed system. Once these referral programs become more developed and allow for the critical analysis of data with which to make adequate comparisons between groups, more effective anti-bullying and anti-harassment programs can be developed and tailored to groups at greater risk for each school district. The majority of referral systems currently in place specify actual categories (harassment, insubordination, truancy, etc.), and allow one to search by student, date, and details of the incident. However, unless adequate detail was inserted into the narrative when the referral occurred, there is no way to know whether the victim was bullied due to race, disability, or other reasons. Because of this, it also must be considered that many incidents of bullying are not being reported. Therefore, many school leaders may be underestimating the prevalence rates within their district or building. Having a referral system that is all encompassing, that allows for students to provide anonymous referrals, and allows for proper response and follow-up will reduce the numbers of incidents that go unreported.

With respect to item 24 of the survey, school administrators and school psychologists again significantly differed in their opinions as to whether learning disabled students on an IEP were bullied more than non-IEP students. School psychologists were again much more likely to indicate that learning disabled students were the victims of harassment more frequently that their non-IEP peers. Additionally, a significant difference in responses was also noted between the school psychologist and school counselor occupations for this particular question. Over 30% of the administrator
and counselor responses actually indicated that learning disabled students were bullied less often than their typical non-IEP peers. However, there was the greatest variability in the school counselor responses for this particular question. While 30% of school counselors reported that learning disabled students were bullied less often, 23% of school counselors reported that learning disabled students were bullied more often. The variability in responses with this particular occupation were interesting, indicating that perhaps counselors’ knowledge of the special education population varies between individuals, that certain buildings may have less of a special education population, or that some counselors had more case-by-case knowledge of bullying incidents with whom they intervene.

In interpreting these results, the responses of school psychologists again indicate that their increased knowledge base with respect to this particular population may have resulted in the significant difference between ratings. Perhaps this knowledge of additional risk factors (such as social problem solving and overall status amongst one’s peers) may have influenced their answers, by thinking that these students were automatically at risk of being a victim of emotional abuse. As outlined in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, previous studies have examined the prevalence rates of bullying within the more restrictive special education placements. School psychologists are also explicitly familiar with these placements, and may have seen the peer-to-peer victimization first hand while working with these students. An important point to make as well is that item 24 did not make the distinction of whether bullying occurs between general education students and IEP students, or whether bullying occurs between IEP
student and a fellow IEP student. Even IEP to IEP bullying would indicate that these students are bullied more than students placed in the general education setting.

The large variation in responses with respect to the school counselor position for item 24 may indicate a varying degree of experience and exposure to the learning disabled population as a whole. Depending on the school setting, the school counselor likely is involved in a variety of tasks, including scheduling, teaching classroom lessons, and counseling students either on an individual or small group basis. Their perception with respect to the level of bullying behaviors with the learning disabled population likely is dependent on the student’s ability to be forthcoming with them and share their experiences. To a greater extent, the overall nature of the reporting of bullying behaviors largely is dictated by the victim sharing their experience, which is not always the case. This important fact is another likely reason for the significant difference in perceptions of school-based personnel with respect to the bullying and safety of learning disabled students. Administrators by nature are those that investigate the incidents of bullying. Middle school students in particular are likely more apt to fail to report these incidents, or to be honest about what really happened, particularly to an administrator in the school office out of fear of retribution. They are far more likely however, to share their experiences with either a school counselor or school psychologist in a more clinical, safe, and inviting setting in which a rapport has likely been established over time.

A variety of other implications can be discussed with respect to these results. As these are the opinions of school professionals, they should be interpreted with caution and are not indicative of actual data. As mentioned below in the recommendations for future
research, it would be helpful to know how school districts collect their data and whether
the bullying referrals indicate whether the student (either perpetrator or victim) had
special needs, was in a protected class, and was bullied based upon that fact. As
mentioned in the literature review section of this study, previous studies have surveyed
learning disabled students themselves with respect to their experiences of bullying
behaviors, but this then leads to the question of how much their responses were either
positively or negatively affected by their disability. The completed surveys for this study
seemed to indicate that many school districts and school buildings are still in the
development phase of a bullying prevention program and data collection system. Until
those systems are in place and can be more critically analyzed to make categorical
comparisons between the populations being bullied, additional interpretations are difficult
to make.

While the responses between the three occupational categories for question 23
were not significant, an important point must be made. This particular question inquired
as to whether students were bullied in particular because they were on an IEP for a
learning disability. While there was no statistical significance discovered between the
responses for the three occupations surveyed for this study, an important question arises.
As school psychologists felt that learning disabled students are less safe than their non-
IEP peers, being on an IEP itself does not appear to be the primary or sole reason for their
response. Therefore, are there other corresponding issues that are the reason for the
difference? Or are other middle school students not aware that these students are on an
IEP, but target them regardless? Finally, do these students possess physical or verbal traits that make them a target for increased bullying behaviors?

Conclusions—Research Question Three

3. When a learning disabled student is a victim of bullying/harassment, do public middle school principals and assistant principals vary in their response, and are all incidents of bullying/harassment handled the same regardless of the victim being on an IEP?

Research question three was divided into two parts: the first question addressing whether principals and assistant principals varied in their responses when a learning disabled student was a victim of bullying or harassment did not yield significant results when considering the individuals’ responses to item number 25 of the survey. These results indicate that principals and assistant principals have similar responses and implement the same level of follow-up when learning disabled students are bullied.

While the results were not significant, some further analysis can be discussed.

Based upon the data, the overwhelming majority of administrators take the following steps after an incident of bullying with respect to a learning disabled student has taken place within their school building: speak with the perpetrator, speak with the victim, speak to the parents of both the perpetrator and victim, and provide some form of documentation in the perpetrator’s student file. According to the data, the following steps are implemented on a less regular basis: notification of the police, disciplinary action for the perpetrator, and delegation of follow-up to other staff within the building. Each of these response options received far greater variability amongst the respondents.
This indicates that not only do the majority of principals and assistant principals handle the response to incidents of bullying, but that rarely are these incidents considered to be severe enough to warrant the either disciplinary action or the need to contact law enforcement. These responses also again indicate that administrators are primarily concerned with the investigation and documentation of bullying incidents. Based upon the responses received, disciplinary action and follow-up/intervention for the victim are secondary outcomes. These results, while not significant, indicate that more attention does need to be paid to the victim, and that the services of related services and other support staff (such as school psychologists and school counselors) may be underutilized.

Respondents were also given an option to provide additional information in a qualitative format to indicate any other actions that took place following an incident of bullying with regards to learning disabled students. In examining the responses that were provided, some respondents indicated that the presence of a school resource officer in the building was an additional resource available, and may also explain the lack of need or requirement to contact police. Additionally, some respondents indicated that both the perpetrator and/or victim were provided with additional counseling or social-emotional supports either during or after school. Finally, multiple respondents indicated that any disciplinary actions such as suspensions or expulsions were dependent on the level of severity of the offense, which again explains the inconsistency in the responses received for that particular item.

Of particular concern when analyzing the administrators’ responses was the lack of any form of reference to the learning disabled student’s IEP. As mentioned elsewhere
in this dissertation, learning disabled students often have a variety of concomitant weaknesses in addition to academic deficiencies (such as social skills and other communication deficits). Based upon the responses of the administrators, particularly with respect to the qualitative section of question 25 of the survey, it does not appear that the administrators consult either the IEP itself or members of the IEP team when investigating incidents of bullying with this particular population. To be fair, this item was not included as one of the follow-up steps, however, very few administrators responding to the survey referenced the IEP (and the legal implications of following that document) in any of the qualitative response options contained throughout the survey. This indicates that administrators either do not use the IEP as a factor in investigating bullying of learning disabled students, do not understand the legal implications of that document, or relegate the liability of providing the services within that document to fall on the shoulders of the specialized staff responsible for their implementation. This was certainly an unexpected finding of this study, as IEP compliance and the legal implications of following the IEP for learning disabled students (and all students with disabilities) should be paramount.

As discussed in Chapter 4 of this dissertation, the second part of research question three addressing whether principals and assistant principals handle incidents of bullying the same regardless of the victim being on an IEP did not yield significant results when considering the individuals’ responses to item number 26 of the survey. These results indicate that principals and assistant principals have similar responses and tend to handle
bullying incidents the same when a learning disabled student is the victim. While the results were not significant, some further discussion can again take place.

Just over 8% of building principals and 4% of assistant principals indicated that they treated bullying incidents with respect to learning disabled students *somewhat differently* (not one individual chose the response option of *much different*). There is a two-fold discussion that can take place due to the results not being significant. These results could on one hand be considered positive, in that all students are treated equally, not respective of any existing disability. On the other hand, the results could be concerning in that the unique rights and needs of this protected class are not accounted for, and no special consideration is given in these instances (including the legal ramifications of not consulting the student’s IEP). Discussed previously in this chapter, the likely reason for the responses of the administration perhaps indicates that is that they feel the need to protect all students, and do not specifically focus on the LD population. While there were some individuals (8% of principals and 4% of assistant principals) who indicated that the investigation was ‘*somewhat different*’ in these cases, the overwhelming majority of administrators take the same approach and do not consult the IEP of the student.

Respondents were also given the option of completing a separate question (item 27 of the survey) in which those individuals who provided the response options of either *somewhat different* or *much different* for item 26 were able to not only describe how these situations were handled, but also could clarify and describe in a qualitative manner what was done differently when learning disabled students are the victims of bullying in
their school. In examining the responses that were provided, four individuals indicated that special consideration is given in that the IEP of the learning disabled student is consulted as part of the process. Specifically, one respondent stated that the IEP is followed and consulted as part of the investigation, one respondent stated that the IEP accommodations are considered to see if they would impact the investigation or the provision of any follow-up services that needed to be provided, one respondent stated the need to review the IEP for any existing behavior plans that may be in place, and one respondent spoke about the need to follow the IEP out of respect for the legal protections that these students possess. While it was encouraging that these individuals realized the unique needs of these students and consulted the IEP to determine whether any additional steps needed to be taken, it is discouraging that more respondents did not share similar viewpoints.

With respect to these results, perhaps continuing education and training programs for principals and assistant principals could focus on additional information with respect to the special education population and their unique learning and emotional needs. As stated elsewhere in this dissertation, school building administrators should provide a leadership role in implementing any anti-bullying or anti-violence programs. Principals and other administrators must understand that they have the opportunity to become strong advocates for students with disabilities and not merely view them as a surplus population within the building and/or the district. This also applies for all students with differences (cultural differences, LGBT, other subgroups). School leaders must use culturally sensitive practices when investigating incidents of bullying and providing the proper
follow-up and response. Various subgroups (aside from students with learning disabilities) are at greater risk for being a victim of harassment in schools, and school leaders need to understand that each of these groups deserves safety, protection, and equal access and opportunity to be a valued member of the school community. Perhaps school leaders need to engage in ongoing professional development to understand the unique perspective and backgrounds of these students, which would assist them in making educational decisions that take into account the culturally sensitive needs for each of these subgroups.

While this is a generalization of the data collected for this particular study, it appears that the majority of individuals responding to the survey do not pay enough consideration to the IEP of the student. Lastly, perhaps it is not the immediate follow-up to these cases that deserves the most consideration. Conceivably, the long-term follow up may deserve the most attention. Do the bullying victims (learning disabled or not) require additional counseling, social skills instruction, or long-term intervention to assist them in coping with the experience? And are these services provided either within the context of any existing anti-bullying programs or are they provided separately through services given by school support staff?

Limitations

The first limitation with respect to this study is the ever-changing legal implications in the landscape of school bullying prevention. Due to the seemingly ever increasing acts of school violence that are outlined in the media, bullying research and its long-term effects have also changed how schools conduct their business. New cases of
school violence may continue to change public education and educators’ perceptions about school bullying and how it is addressed in the school setting. This may have resulted in a hesitancy for many recipients of the survey to complete it, and may have also resulted in a tendency for some recipients to “overrate” their school district and school building to portray them in the best light possible. Although this was an anonymous survey, it is unclear whether the respondents in this survey could truly be honest without the perceived threat of repercussion from the state, school district superintendent, and school community.

Secondly, this study examined the perceptions of educators, which may not reflect actual facts. This study did not attempt to examine how data on bullying are collected in the various states and school districts that were represented. Therefore, these self-reports may contain certain biases from the individuals being surveyed.

As outlined in Chapters 4 and 5 of this dissertation, this study was also limited in that a greater proportion of school psychologists were participants in the study due to the access to some of the participants. A greater number of school psychologists were reached (and thus completed the survey) due to the accessibility of electronic mail addresses, which resulted in a larger sample size for this sub-population. So whereas the results can be generalized to the population, this applies more to the school psychologist population within the study, rather than to the school counselor and school principal/assistant principal populations.

The use of mailed surveys with the school counselor and administrator populations also was met with some limitations. Due to the expenses involved with
materials and postage, a smaller number of individuals from these two groups were included in the study. Additionally, mail survey recipients may not be as likely to take the time to physically complete and return the entire survey, while others may have misplaced the survey altogether after receiving it.

The use of web-based surveys with the school psychologist population also produced a few limitations. Although it is not possible to know the computer literacy of the survey respondents, this factor may have been a limitation. A number of individuals began the survey, but did not proceed to completion. The web-based survey was designed to be as user-friendly as possible; however, some technical skills were required to access and complete it. There were also a variety of ways to access the web link depending on the state organization and how they distributed it to their membership base. For example, some organizations sent the link via their membership listserv, whereas others posted the link on their website in a section reserved for research requests. This may have resulted in some individuals not seeing the request (or the web link) during the limited timeframe for the data collection phase of this study.

Finally, the use of a closed question format for the majority of survey questions did not allow for the participants to expand upon their responses (except in a few cases). No attempt was made to follow up with survey respondents in order to gain additional information on their perceptions. With a few exceptions (described in more detail later in this document), the closed nature of the Likert scale did not allow for these individuals to provide clarification or justify their responses to the researcher.
**Recommendations for Future Research**

This study should be replicated on a much larger scale, on a diverse range of schools to ensure that it can in fact be generalized to the American school population. Although this particular study focused on public schools, this study could also be conducted with students from a variety of other schooling options: parochial schools, online or virtual schools, or charter schools. Additionally, if the study were conducted on a larger scale, a state-by-state analysis could be conducted to obtain between-state differences. This would also allow for the documentation of which bullying prevention programs and/or referral collection systems were in use to determine overall effectiveness.

As discussed in the literature review chapter of this dissertation, learning disabled students appear to be at greater risk for bully victimization than others. While this study specifically focused on that particular population, other subgroups of students are also likely to be at risk. These subgroups include students with emotional disturbances, Autism spectrum disorders (such as Asperger’s syndrome), students with orthopedic impairments, students with non-verbal learning disabilities, and those who are considered to be other health impaired. Future research should attempt to isolate specific disability categories (beyond the learning disabled) to determine if specific subgroups of students are predisposed to perpetration and/or victimization.

Whereas the research is still developing in this area, scholars should begin to identify strategies to alter or modify existing bullying prevention programs to meet the specific needs of students from each of these populations and reduce their risk for being
targets of bullying from their peers. At the present time, the majority of bullying prevention programs focus on the entire school population. If current bullying prevention programs are not sufficient in meeting this need, future programs could be developed and specialized for each at-risk population. Bully prevention should begin to incorporate school-based interventions for specific subgroups of bullies and victims and individual supports for chronic offenders and sufferers. Children and adolescents from each special education program should also be included in any school or district wide bullying prevention efforts, as well as any assessments that are given to assess their degree of exposure and overall involvement in bullying within their school. More research should examine whether school and district-wide bullying prevention programs are necessary, or whether schools and school districts can develop a system of collective, selected, and targeted interventions.

Similarly, future research should also address the marginalization of other subgroups, such as the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered), and whether these groups share commonalities between them that could be addressed within the bullying prevention programs being implemented. Are students being bullied because they are different, and how might a school climate that respects the diversity of all students inhibit bullying behaviors?

While this study focused primarily on bullying that occurred on school grounds and was more visible in nature, future studies should also examine the prevalence of cyber-bullying amongst learning disabled youth. Although it deviates from traditional patterns of bullying in that the bully may not be physically seen by the victim, the
harassing emails or relational aggression that can occur via social networking sites can be just as damaging to the recipient. Further research in this domain will also yield a greater understanding into how schools and school-based bullying prevention programs can address this topic with the learning disabled population within their school community.

More research is also needed to determine the long-term negative effects of bullying, particularly as it relates to the learning disabled population. A more comprehensive understanding of the role of special education in the overall etiology of bullying behaviors is also needed. If special education services share a connection with early aggressive behavior in school, then perhaps educators will need to develop programs that target early intervention with this population. While many learning disabled students primarily exhibit academic deficits, their social and emotional development needs cannot be ignored.

Finally, future research should focus on how schools are collecting their data with respect to bullying referrals. While a question in the survey instrument inquired as to the specific name of the reporting system their district was using to document incidents of bullying and harassment of students (Question 30), many respondents reported that a specific system was either not currently in use or was still in the process of being developed. If school districts do not have a system in place for reporting bullying incidents, then how can they ensure the proper discipline, follow-up, and long-term planning? Additionally, without a reporting system in which referral data can be analyzed, school districts cannot provide accurate intervention with the populations that require it the most.
Survey Instrument Questions Not Reported On

While this study used a survey instrument designed at answering the specific research questions mentioned above, some items on the instrument were not mentioned in the results section as they were either not used in the final data analysis or not commented on in earlier discussion. Ultimately, it was felt that while each of these questions held merit, they did not assist in answering the research questions for this particular study.

Within Section II of the instrument (Perspectives on Bullying Prevention Programs With Respect to Learning Disabled Students), a question was posed to respondents asking them if training was provided to staff with respect to bullying prevention programs and anti-bullying policies (Question 12) and a follow up question inquired as to who the recipients of that training were (Question 13). The intention of including these questions was to ascertain whether the individuals being surveyed were a part of any training that may exist and to understand how states and districts determine the key individuals who should be recipients of that training. Question 15 of the instrument asked respondents whether the education program for students on bullying included content with respect to student’s academic performance. While the researcher found this information valuable, ultimately it was decided not to use this question in the final analysis, as many of the respondents used the Not Sure response and this would not have provided any additional insight into answering research question one.

An additional item (Question 16) asked respondents to rate the effectiveness of the commercially available bullying prevention program being used in their district (if
Section II also included a question in which respondents were able to provide a qualitative response where they could specify specific components of that bullying prevention program that were missing with respect to the learning disabled population (Question 17). The responses to these items were not used in the final analysis as they not only did not assist in answering research question one, but also did not receive many responses as a large number of school districts appear to not be using some of these pre-existing bullying prevention programs (the overwhelming majority of individuals chose the ‘no opinion/not sure’ response option).

Finally, two survey items (Questions 18 and 19) in Section II addressed future components that respondents felt would be helpful in being able to create safer schools for learning disabled students. The majority of respondents indicated that having professional development for school personnel with respect to the harassment of the learning disabled population would be most helpful. Respondents also indicated that clear consequences for school personnel who did not intervene when they witnessed bullying acts of LD students should be implemented. Survey participants did not feel as strongly about having anti-discrimination policies explicitly protecting LD students, nor did they feel that district administration needed to take a larger role in the safety concerns for LD students. Respondents were also able to qualitatively specify in Question 19 any additional needed supports for creating safer schools for learning disabled students. The overwhelming majority of responses indicated continuing education for parents and students, so that all parties involved understand the sensitivity, awareness, and importance of school safety.
Within Section III of the instrument (Perspectives on Bullying, Harassment, and School Climate), Question 20 asked survey respondents to indicate the ability of teachers and other staff to effectively address the situation when a learning disabled student is being bullied. While helpful, this information again speaks to the possible need for additional teacher training with respect to bullying prevention and did not address research question two in any way. Similarly, Question 21 of the instrument asked respondents to rate their particular school in terms of safety for all students and adults. Again, although most respondents indicated that their school building was safe, this did not in any way address research question two (specifically addressing the safety of learning disabled students).

A final section was added to the survey (Section V) in an attempt to ascertain the participants’ knowledge of the actual topic, whether they were involved at all in the bullying efforts within their school building, and to determine whether they were providing their responses based on actual data or merely based upon their perceptions. The responses to these questions were never intended to be included in the final analysis, and addressed the following topics: the individuals responsible for receiving and investigating formal allegations of bullying; the percentage of bullying incidents that come to the attention of the respondent; the specific name of the reporting system (if applicable) being used to collect bullying referrals; the specific number of verified acts of bullying and/or harassment during the 2011–2012 academic year; the specific number of verified acts of bullying and/or harassment during the 2012–2013 school year; and a question inquiring as to the location of the school district or school building’s
anti-bullying policy. In examining the responses that were provided via the collected surveys, the majority of questions were answered by the participants in the study, with the exception of the actual numbers of verified acts of bullying for the two specified academic years. It is unclear whether this actual data does not exist, or whether this is due to the lack of a reporting system that collects specific referral data. As mentioned multiple times within this dissertation, as states, school districts, and school buildings begin to become more adept at collecting and analyzing this information, the ability to respond to these bullying incidents and provide the proper and adequate response for learning disabled students (and all students in general) will become more effective.
APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

SURVEY INSTRUMENT
Appendix A
Survey Instrument

PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN

Perceptions of Bullying Behaviors With Respect to Learning Disabled (LD) Students and the Implications on Bullying Prevention Programs and Discipline

Section I: Demographic Information –
Please answer the following questions:

1. Are you currently employed in a public middle-school setting? (Check ONE response)
   - Yes
   - No
   (If you are not employed in a public middle-school setting, please do not return this survey)

2. What is your race? (Check ONE response)
   - White/Caucasian
   - Black/African American
   - Asian or Pacific Islander
   - Native American
   - Mixed racial background
   - Other
   - Decline to answer

3. What is your gender? (Check ONE response)
   - Male
   - Female

4. What is your age? (Check ONE response)
   - 20-29
   - 30-39
   - 40-49
   - 50-59
   - 60 and above

5. How long have you been employed in a school setting? (Check ONE response)
   - 1-5 years
   - 6-10 years
6. What is your current position? (Check ONE response)
   o Building Principal
   o Assistant Principal
   o School Psychologist
   o School Counselor

7. How long have you been employed in your current position? (Check ONE response)
   o Less than 1 year
   o 1-3 years
   o 4-10 years
   o 11-15 years
   o 16+ years

8. How many students are currently enrolled in your school? (Check ONE response)
   o 1-300
   o 301-500
   o 501-700
   o 701-1000
   o 1001-1300
   o 1301-1500
   o 1501-1999
   o 2000+

9. Is your school located….? (Check ONE response)
   o In an urban or city area
   o In a suburban area
   o In a small town or rural area

10. What state are you currently employed in? ________________________________

11. To the best of your knowledge, what percentage of total students in your school
    building are identified as learning disabled? (Check ONE response)
   o 0-5%
   o 6-10%
   o 11-15%
   o 16-20%
   o 21%+
Section II: Perspectives on Bullying Prevention Programs with Respect to Learning Disabled Students

12. Does your district provide training for implementing its bullying prevention programs and bullying policies? (Check ONE response)
   o Yes
   o No (Proceed to question 14)

13. If yes, who are the primary recipients of the training? Please check all that apply.
   o Central Office Personnel
   o School Administration
   o Classroom Teachers
   o Related services professionals (e.g., school psychologists, school counselors, speech-language pathologists, social workers).
   o Non-Professional support staff (e.g., cafeteria staff, custodians, student resource officers).

14. To what degree do you feel that each of the following components are a part of your school district’s safe school or anti-bullying or harassment policy? (Please use the following scale to provide your answer to each item)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not included</td>
<td>Addressed</td>
<td>Not sure/No opinion</td>
<td>Included</td>
<td>Well developed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

_____ A statement prohibiting harassment, intimidation, or bullying of any student on school property or school-sponsored activity.

_____ A definition of harassment, intimidation, or bullying.

_____ A procedure for students, parents, or guardians to report prohibited incidents to teachers and school administrators.

_____ A requirement that school personnel report prohibited incidents they witness and/or receive reports on from students to the school principal or other administrator designated by the principal.

_____ A procedure for documenting any prohibited incident that is reported.

_____ A procedure for responding to and investigating any reported incident including providing intervention strategies for protecting a victim from additional harassment, intimidation or bullying, and from retaliation following a report.

_____ A disciplinary procedure for any student guilty of harassment, intimidation, or bullying, that does not infringe on any student’s rights.
A requirement that school administrators notify parents or guardians of any student involved in a prohibited incident and provide access to any written reports pertaining to the incident.

A requirement that the district administrators provide feedback to the district board of education with respect to all reported incidents.

Learning disabilities are specifically mentioned.

Professional development (e.g. training) for school personnel is mandated.

Education programs for students are mandated.

Schools are required to notify school personnel, students and families of policy.

- Not sure.
- Other (please describe):

15. Does your schools’ education program for students on bullying and/or harassment include specific content on bullying with respect to student’s academic performance? (Check ONE response)

- Yes
- No
- Not Sure

16. If your building/district is currently using a commercially available bullying prevention program, how effective do you feel that it has been with students who have learning problems or whether additional training may be needed for these students (social skills, etc.)? (Circle ONE response)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>No opinion/Not sure</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

17. If you rated the effectiveness of the bullying prevention program currently in use in your building/district as being either poor or fair (question 16) with regards to learning disabled students, what component do you feel is missing for this particular population? (Provide your response in the space below)

__________________________________________________________________
18. For you as an educational leader, how helpful would the following be in your efforts to create a safe environment for learning disabled students? 
(Please use the following scale to provide your answer to each item) 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not helpful</td>
<td>Somewhat helpful</td>
<td>Not sure/No opinion</td>
<td>Helpful</td>
<td>Extremely Helpful</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

_____ Having professional development for school personnel (e.g. training) that includes information on dealing with bullying/harassment of LD students in schools.  
_____ Having clear consequences for school personnel who do not intervene when they witness bullying and harassment of LD students.  
_____ Having anti-harassment and anti-discrimination policies that explicitly protect LD students.  
_____ Having the superintendent or district administration more openly address safety issues for LD students and support principals who take action on these issues. 

19. What else, if anything, would be helpful in creating safer schools for learning disabled students? 
______________________________________________________________________  
______________________________________________________________________  
______________________________________________________________________ 

Section III: Perspectives on Bullying, Harassment, and School Climate – Learning Disabled Students. School safety is an important issue for all students. Sometimes, certain students or student groups may feel less safe than other students or student groups. The next portion of the survey asks about your views and experiences regarding learning disabled (LD) students who are placed on an Individualized Education Program (IEP). 

20. Overall, how would you rate the ability of **teachers and other staff** in your school to effectively address the situation of a student being bullied or harassed due to their being on an IEP for a learning disability? (Circle ONE response) 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Not Sure/No Opinion</td>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

21. How would you rate **your school** in terms of being safe and providing a healthy learning environment for **all** students and adults? (Circle ONE response) 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Not Sure/No Opinion</td>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
22. Specifically, how safe do you think learning disabled students feel at your school? (Circle ONE response)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all safe</td>
<td>Not very safe</td>
<td>Not Sure/No Opinion</td>
<td>Safe</td>
<td>Very safe</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

23. At your school, how often are students bullied, called names, or harassed because they are on an IEP for a learning disability? (Circle ONE response)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>Not Sure/No Opinion</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Often</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

24. When compared to students who are not placed on an Individualized Education Program (IEP), how much more often do you feel that students who are learning disabled (and on an IEP) are bullied/harassed? (Circle ONE response)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Much less often</td>
<td>Less Often</td>
<td>Not Sure/No Opinion</td>
<td>More Often</td>
<td>Much More Often</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Section IV: Administration Response to Bullying Incidents with Respect to Learning Disabled Students

(To be completed by principals and assistant principals only. If you are a school psychologist or school counselor, proceed directly to Section V.)

25. When an incident of student bullying/harassment is reported to you for a student who is learning disabled, to what degree do you implement the following steps? (Please use the following scale to provide your answer to each item)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Not Sure/No Opinion</td>
<td>Most of the Time</td>
<td>Always</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

_____ Speak to the student perpetrator
_____ Speak to the student victim
_____ Speak to the parent of the student perpetrator
_____ Speak to the parent of the student victim
_____ Notify the police
_____ Engage in disciplinary activity (e.g., suspension, expulsion)
_____ Make a note in the perpetrator’s student file
_____ Delegate any follow-up to other staff (assistant principal, disciplinary officer, etc.)
26. When bullying/harassment incidents occur in your building where the victim is a student who is identified as being learning disabled (and is on an IEP), how is this situation handled when compared to other incidents that do not involve learning disabled students? (Circle ONE response)

1  2  3  4  5
Much different   Somewhat different  Not Sure/No Opinion  About the same  The Same

27. If you answered the previous question as either much different or somewhat different, briefly describe how the situation is handled. What is done differently when learning disabled students are the victims of bullying/harassment in your school? (For example: more investigation into the incident of bullying/harassment, increased parental involvement, additional student and witness interviewing, involvement of multiple staff members for corroboration).

Section V: This final section contains questions pertaining to reports of bullying incidents in your school building (to be completed by all respondents).

28. Who is officially responsible for receiving and investigating formal allegations of bullying in your school? (Check all that apply)

- Building Principal
- Assistant Principal
- School Counselor
- School Psychologist
- Classroom Teacher
- School Social Worker

29. What percentage of all bullying or harassment incidents taking place in your school come to your attention? (Check ONE response)

- 0%
- 1% - 25%
- 26% - 50%
30. What is the specific name of the reporting system that your district uses to collect referrals with respect to bullying and harassment of students?

____________________

31. How many verified acts of bullying and/or harassment were recorded on your school list for the 2011-2012 school year?

________________________________________

32. How many verified acts of bullying are recorded on your school list to date for the 2012-2013 school year?

______________________________________________________

33. Where are copies of your school district or school building’s anti-bullying policy located?

_____________________________________________________________
APPENDIX B

MAIL SURVEY INVITATION COVER LETTER ONE (MAY 2013)
Appendix B

Mail Survey Invitation Cover Letter One (May 2013)

May 4, 2013
Dear Middle School Professional:

My name is Matt Bradic and I am a doctoral candidate in the Educational Leadership K-12 program in the College of Education at Kent State University. I am currently conducting research on the bullying practices amongst learning disabled youth, the effectiveness of anti-bullying programs with this particular population, and how administration handles discipline in these instances. The survey is being sent to randomly selected principals, assistant principals, school psychologists, and school counselors at middle schools across the United States.

To date, no research has been conducted that integrates the feedback from a variety of school personnel with respect to bullying practices amongst learning disabled youth and whether anti-bullying programs address this specific population. This study will assist administrators and other support staff personnel in being able to more critically examine the climate of their school to ensure that it provides a safe environment for all students, regardless of learning issues. Additionally, through an examination of current practices, principals and support staff may be more apt to prevent future discrimination/harassment of this particular population of students.

You have been randomly chosen to participate in this research project. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to complete a survey that will take approximately 5-10 minutes of your time. Taking part in this study is voluntary and your responses will be kept confidential. If you agree to participate, you will not receive any compensation for participating in this research. However, your participation is very much appreciated because this research is intended to positively influence bullying prevention efforts and also provide recommendations for future study. Please refer to the consent form on the next page for additional information.

If you have any questions or wish to know more about this research project, you may telephone me, Matthew Bradic, at (440) 995-7821 or contact me by e-mail: mbradic@mayfieldschools.org. Additionally, my dissertation advisor’s name is Dr. Catherine Hackney, and she can be reached at (330) 672-0552. This project has been approved by Kent State University. I hope you enjoy completing the questionnaire and look forward to receiving your responses as they could provide a service to improve overall student well-being and safety in the future. I ask that you complete the survey and return it to me in the included self-addressed stamped envelope by May 31, 2013. Thanks for your assistance with my research project.

Sincerely,

Matthew C. Bradic
Doctoral Candidate
Educational Leadership, K-12

Dr. Catherine Hackney
Dissertation Advisor
Coordinator of Educational Administration

172
APPENDIX C

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM
The purpose of this study is to examine the perceptions of administrators and other support staff in Ohio public middle schools with respect to their perceptions about whether the current bullying prevention/treatment program being used in their school building is effective with all types of students, regardless of academic standing (particularly whether it is effective for LD students). Secondary purposes of the study include examining the perceptions of administrators and other support staff about the differences in bullying behaviors between learning disabled students and students who possess no learning issues that have resulted in an Individualized Education Program (IEP) and soliciting feedback from administrators to determine how discipline is handled when an LD student is a victim of bullying/harassment.

Please read the following statements carefully prior to clicking the survey weblink.

1. This study has been approved by the Kent State University Institutional Review Board.

2. This study will be conducted during the academic year of 2012-2013.

3. This survey will take approximately 5-10 minutes to complete.

4. There are no foreseeable risks of discomfort associated with this study.

5. The results of this study will be published, however, the identity of the participants will not be revealed. For the sake of confidentiality, submitted work will be anonymous. Participant names will not be known. Access to all data will be restricted to researchers participating in this study.

6. Any questions you have regarding this study may be referred to Matt Bradic at mbradic@mayfieldschools.org before or after your consent for participation.

7. You may refuse to have your project data included in this study at any time without penalty. Any information that develops during the course of the study that might influence your willingness to provide data for this study will be provided to you by the investigators.

By clicking on the link below, I am indicating that I have read the above information. I acknowledge that the nature, demands, risks, and benefits of the project have been explained to me. I knowingly assume the risks involved, and understand that I may withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation in the study at any time without penalty or loss of benefit to myself. In clicking on the acceptance hyperlink, I am not waiving any legal claims, rights, or remedies (hyperlink)
APPENDIX D

MAIL SURVEY INVITATION COVER LETTER TWO

(SEPTEMBER 2013)
Appendix D

Mail Survey Invitation Cover Letter Two (September 2013)

September 1, 2013

Dear Middle School Professional:

My name is Matt Bradic and I am a doctoral candidate in the Educational Leadership K-12 program in the College of Education at Kent State University. I am currently conducting research on the bullying practices amongst learning disabled youth, the effectiveness of anti-bullying programs with this particular population, and how administration handles discipline in these instances. The survey is being sent to randomly selected principals, assistant principals, school psychologists, and school counselors at middle schools across the United States.

To date, no research has been conducted that integrates the feedback from a variety of school personnel with respect to bullying practices amongst learning disabled youth and whether anti-bullying programs address this specific population. This study will assist administrators and other support staff personnel in being able to more critically examine the climate of their school to ensure that it provides a safe environment for all students, regardless of learning issues. Additionally, through an examination of current practices, principals and support staff may be more apt to prevent future discrimination/harassment of this particular population of students.

You have been randomly chosen to participate in this research project. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to complete a survey that will take approximately 5-10 minutes of your time. Taking part in this study is voluntary and your responses will be kept confidential. If you agree to participate, you will not receive any compensation for participating in this research. However, your participation is very much appreciated because this research is intended to positively influence bullying prevention efforts and also provide recommendations for future study. Please refer to the consent form on the next page for additional information.

If you have any questions or wish to know more about this research project, you may telephone me, Matthew Bradic, at (440) 995-7821 or contact me by e-mail: mbradic@mayfieldschools.org. Additionally, my dissertation advisor’s name is Dr. Catherine Hackney, and she can be reached at (330) 672-0552. This project has been approved by Kent State University. I hope you enjoy completing the questionnaire and look forward to receiving your responses as they could provide a service to improve overall student well-being and safety in the future. I ask that you complete the survey and return it to me in the included self-addressed stamped envelope by September 30, 2013. Thanks for your assistance with my research project.

Sincerely,

Matthew C. Bradic
Doctoral Candidate
Educational Leadership, K-12

Dr. Catherine Hackney
Dissertation Advisor
Coordinator of Educational Administration
APPENDIX E

WEB-BASED SURVEY INVITATION COVER LETTER
Appendix E

Web-Based Survey Invitation Cover Letter

September 1, 2013

Dear School Psychologist:

My name is Matt Bradic and I am a doctoral candidate in the Educational Leadership K-12 program in the College of Education at Kent State University. I am currently conducting research on the bullying practices amongst learning disabled youth, the effectiveness of anti-bullying programs with this particular population, and how administration handles discipline in these instances. The survey is being mailed to randomly selected principals, assistant principals, and school counselors at middle schools across the United States. School psychologists are also being surveyed electronically through their state organizations, and states were selected on a random basis.

To date, no research has been conducted that integrates the feedback from a variety of school personnel with respect to bullying practices amongst learning disabled youth and whether anti-bullying programs address this specific population. This study will assist administrators and other support staff personnel in being able to more critically examine the climate of their school to ensure that it provides a safe environment for all students, regardless of learning issues. Additionally, through an examination of current practices, principals and support staff may be more apt to prevent future discrimination/harassment of this particular population of students.

You have been chosen to participate in this research project. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to complete a survey that will take approximately 5-10 minutes of your time. Taking part in this study is voluntary and your responses will be kept confidential. If you agree to participate, you will not receive any compensation for participating in this research. However, your participation is very much appreciated because this research is intended to positively influence bullying prevention efforts and also provide recommendations for future study. Please refer to the consent form on the next page for additional information.

If you have any questions or wish to know more about this research project, you may telephone me, Matthew Bradic, at (440) 995-7821 or contact me by e-mail: mbradic@mayfieldschools.org. Additionally, my dissertation advisor’s name is Dr. Catherine Hackney, and she can be reached at (330) 672-0552. This project has been approved by Kent State University. I hope you enjoy completing the questionnaire and look forward to receiving your responses as they could provide a service to improve overall student well-being and safety in the future. I ask that you complete the survey by September 30, 2013. Thanks for your assistance with my research project.

Sincerely,

Matthew C. Bradic
Doctoral Candidate
Educational Leadership, K-12

Dr. Catherine Hackney
Dissertation Advisor
Coordinator of Educational Administration
APPENDIX F

HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW APPROVAL LETTER ONE
Appendix F

Human Subjects Review Approval Letter One

From: KIEHL, LAURIE [lkiehl@kent.edu]
Sent: Thursday, January 24, 2013 1:02 PM
To: Bradic, Matt
Cc: Hackney, Catherine
Subject: IRB Level I, category 2 approval for Protocol application #13-028 - please retain this email for your records

RE: Protocol #13-028 - entitled “A Survey Study of the Perceptions of Middle School Personnel with Respect to Learning Disabled Students as Victims of Bullying/Harassment”

I am pleased to inform you that the Kent State University Institutional Review Board has reviewed and approved your Application for Approval to Use Human Research Participants as Level I/Exempt research. This application was approved on January 24, 2013. Your research project involves minimal risk to human subjects and meets the criteria for the following category of exemption under federal regulations:

- Exemption 2: Research involving the use of educational tests, surveys, interviews, or observation of public behavior.

***Submission of annual review reports is not required for Level I/Exempt projects.

If any modifications are made in research design, methodology, or procedures that increase the risks to subjects or includes activities that do not fall within the approved exemption category, those modifications must be submitted to and approved by the IRB before implementation. Please contact the IRB administrator to discuss the changes and whether a new application must be submitted. It is important for you to also keep an unstamped text copy (i.e., Microsoft Word version) of your consent form for subsequent submissions.

Kent State University has a Federal Wide Assurance on file with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP); FWA Number 00001853.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me by phone at 330-672-2704 or by email at Pwashko@kent.edu.

Respectfully,
Kent State University Office of Research Compliance
224 Cartwright Hall | fax 330.672.2658

Kevin McCreary | Research Compliance Coordinator | 330.672.8058 | kmccrea1@kent.edu
Laurie Kiehl | Research Compliance Assistant | 330.672.0837 | lkiehl@kent.edu
Paulette Washko | Manager, Research Compliance | 330.672.2704 | Pwashko@kent.edu

For links to obtain general information, access forms, and complete required training, visit our website at www.kent.edu/research.
APPENDIX G

HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW APPROVAL LETTER TWO
Appendix G

Human Subjects Review Approval Letter Two

RE: IRB # 13-028 entitled “A Survey Study of the Perceptions of Middle School Personnel With Respect to Learning Disabled Students as Victims of Bullying/Harassment”

Hello,
The Kent State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed and approved your protocol amendment/change request. It is understood that the research is continuing with modifications including: Increasing participants by 150 and administering the survey electronically. The modification to this protocol was approved on July 15, 2013

*If applicable, a copy of the IRB approved consent form is attached to this email. This “stamped” copy is the consent form that you must use for your research participants. It is important for you to also keep an unstamped text copy (i.e., Microsoft Word version) of your consent form for subsequent submissions. Note that if you are conducting an online study the stamped consent form is only for record keeping purposes.

Federal regulations and Kent State University IRB policy requires that research be reviewed at intervals appropriate to the degree of risk, but not less than once per year.

HHS regulations and Kent State University Institutional Review Board guidelines require that any changes in research methodology, protocol design, or principal investigator have the prior approval of the IRB before implementation and continuation of the protocol. The IRB must also be informed of any adverse events associated with the study. The IRB further requests a final report at the conclusion of the study.

Kent State University has a Federal Wide Assurance on file with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP); FWA Number 00001853.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at 330-672-2704 or pwashko@kent.edu.

Respectfully,
Kent State University Office of Research Compliance
224 Cartwright Hall | fax 330.672.2658

Kevin McCready | Research Compliance Coordinator | 330.672.8058 | kmccread1@kent.edu
Paulette Washko | Manager, Research Compliance | 330.672.2704 | Pwashko@kent.edu

For links to obtain general information, access forms, and complete required training, visit our website at www.kent.edu/research.
REFERENCES
REFERENCES


Branwhite, T. (1994). Bullying and student distress: Beneath the tip of the iceberg. 

*Educational Psychology: An International Journal or Experimental Educational Psychology, 14, 59-71.*


