

SCHOOL VIOLENCE AND THE ROLE OF  
THE SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST

By

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this study was to determine school psychologists' perceptions of the prevalence of school violence, to determine how safe school psychologists perceive their school(s) to be, to assess school psychologists' reported experiences with student to student violence, and to evaluate school psychologists' perceived readiness to address school violence. A survey was sent to 357 Nationally Certified School Psychologists currently practicing in Minnesota and Wisconsin schools. Of the 106 respondents who participated in the study, 100% stated that they perceive physical assault with a weapon to be an act of violence, but less than half stated that they perceive less severe, nonphysical behaviors (such as teasing, name calling, etc.) to be forms of violence. However, nearly all of the respondents reported witnessing less severe forms of violence between students on their school campuses, whereas less than one third reported witnessing an assault with a weapon on their school campuses. Additionally, the majority of school psychologists surveyed felt totally prepared to address less severe,

nonphysical behaviors such as teasing and name calling, but more than half felt unprepared to address incidents of physical assault with weapons.

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## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction

Concern over school violence has been gaining momentum since the early 1970's (Morrison, Furlong, & Morrison, 1994; Poland, 1994). Most recently, the 1990's have shown a dramatic increase in juvenile violent crimes (Barras & Lyman, 2000; Callahan, 1998; Gorski & Pilotto, 1993; Mazza & Overstreet, 2000; National Association for the Education of Young Children [NAEYC], 1993; Petersen, Pietrzak, & Speaker, 1998; Schwartz, 1999). The United States Department of Justice and the National Association of Secondary School Principals both reported that a staggering three million crimes have been occurring on or near school property each year (Callahan, 1998; Elam & Rose, 1995). Also, teenagers currently experience and are the victims of crime at a higher rate than any other age group (Callahan, 1998). Elam and Rose (1995) report that students and parents identify fighting and violence as one of the biggest problems schools are currently facing. Further, the public believes that national and local school violence is increasing (Elam & Rose, 1995). It appears that students agree as approximately 160,000 students skip school daily due to the fear of violence (Callahan, 1998) and between 7% and 8% of middle and high school students miss one day of school per month due to the fear of violence (Banks, 1997; Batsche & Moore, 2000).

School psychologists nationwide and in Western Australia have been surveyed regarding their perceptions of school violence. Findings suggest that even though school psychologists do not perceive violence as a large or significantly large issue on most school campuses (Furlong, Babinski, & Poland, 1994; Furlong, Babinski, Poland, Munoz, & Boles, 1996; Griffiths, 1995), students, parents, and teachers report that school

violence is one of their biggest concerns. Further, of those school psychologists surveyed, many report that they feel ill-prepared to address school violence (Furlong et al., 1994; Furlong et al., 1996; Griffiths, 1995), which is attributed to a lack of specialized training. However, when university school psychology program directors are surveyed, they appear more confident in practicing school psychologists' readiness to address school violence as they indicate that violence prevention is typically incorporated into course work, practicums, and/or internships (Busse & Larson, 1997).

One reason for these discrepancies may be due to the lack of a universal definition of what constitutes a violent act. Past research has determined that most school psychologists have witnessed a significant amount of bullying, cursing, pushing and shoving, verbal threats, and ethnic put-downs on school campuses (Furlong, et al., 1994; Furlong, et al., 1996; Griffiths, 1995). However, they generally do not view these behaviors as violent. Instead, school psychologists have typically defined school violence in terms of severe physical threats and acts such as homicide, weapon-related threats, and stabbings (Furlong et al., 1994; Furlong et al., 1996; Larson, 1993; Morrison et al., 1994). Considering school violence in this context encourages a narrow definition, which may impact how school psychologists perceive a school's overall level of safety as well as their preparedness to address campus violence. More importantly, a narrow definition of violence may lead to a constricted view of the psychological needs of children in schools, many of whom are already afraid to attend school due to perceived threats of violence.

Given that school violence continues to be a public concern for many groups of

people including parents, students, and educators, school psychologists need to redefine their definition of violence to include all acts that may cause physical, psychological, and/or developmental harm (Furlong et al., 1994; Furlong et al., 1996; Furlong, Morrison, & Pavelski, 2000; Morrison et al., 1994). Adopting a broad definition of violence will allow all forms of violence to be recognized, which may also allow for a better understanding of the role school psychologists can play in providing all students with a safe learning environment free of physical force, inappropriate use of power, and verbal attacks.

### *Purpose of the Study*

Past studies have shown an interest in assessing school psychologists' perceptions of school violence, their experiences with school violence, and how prepared they believe they are to address school violence. It was the intent of past research (Furlong et al., 1994; Furlong et al., 1996; Griffiths, 1995; Larson, 1993) to determine how school psychologists viewed each of these variables independently as well as to assess how the variables may be related to one another. However, only a few studies considering school psychologists' perceptions, experiences, and preparedness to address school violence have been completed, and all of them are over five years old. Further, past studies suggest that school psychologists do not associate bullying, pushing, verbal threats, and harassment as forms of school violence (Furlong et al., 1994; Furlong et al., 1996); however, students report that these types of acts certainly impact their educational experience (Banks, 1997). Therefore, this study will consider school violence under a much broader definition to include all forms of physical, psychological, and emotional acts.

Thus, the purpose of this study is to revisit school psychologists' perceptions, experiences, and preparedness to address school violence and conduct an updated survey of current school psychologists on the topic of school violence. Objectives of previous studies will be addressed (Furlong et al., 1994; Furlong et al., 1996; Griffiths, 1995). However, this study will consider each of these areas under a broad, all-inclusive definition of school violence. Thus, school psychologists' perceptions of the types, amount, and severity of physically, psychologically, and emotionally violent behaviors are considered as well as how safe school psychologists perceive the schools they work in to be. Experiences with school violence are considered by determining how often and what types of physically, psychologically, and emotionally harmful acts school psychologists witness occurring between students. Finally, preparedness is addressed by considering school psychologists' perceptions of their level of readiness as well as how well trained they believe they are to address physically, psychologically, and emotionally harmful acts experienced by students.

Based upon the preceding discussion, the following research objectives are proposed:

1. To determine school psychologists' perceptions of the prevalence of school violence.
2. To determine how safe school psychologists perceive their school(s) to be.
3. To assess school psychologists' reported experiences with student to student school violence
4. To evaluate school psychologists' perceived readiness to address school violence.

### *Significance of the Study*

The significance of this study relates to the importance of understanding what types of violence are occurring in our nation's schools. Given that school violence appears to be increasing, determining the current opinions of school psychologists will put us one step closer to understanding the daily conditions of school environments. It is strongly believed that school psychologists are in a unique position to participate in violence reduction efforts due to their background in the psychological processes of people (Morrison et al., 1994). By examining school violence from a broadened definition, training programs may be better able to prepare school psychologists and to increase their confidence in their abilities to address school violence. Finally, this study also provides a framework from which further research on school violence can be developed.

### *Definition of Terms*

#### *perceptions.*

A school psychologist's interpretation of the degree of violence occurring in a school based on opinion.

#### *experiences.*

A school psychologist's estimated frequency of the number of violent events occurring in a school.

#### *perceived readiness or preparedness.*

How adequately trained a school psychologist believes he or she is to address school violence.

*school violence.*

School violence “threatens the physical, psychological, or emotional well-being of students or school staff” (National Association of School Psychologists [NASP], 1997, p. 17). School violence can be classified into one of two categories, physically aggressive acts and “less severe forms of interpersonal violence” (Furlong et al., 1994, p. 6). Physically aggressive acts tend to involve more serious types of assault with or without weapons. Less severe forms of interpersonal violence tend to involve psychologically or emotionally harmful behaviors such as verbal threats, bullying, cursing, ethnic taunting, pushing and shoving.

## CHAPTER 2

### Review of the Literature

The literature review will begin by examining the history and evolving definition of school violence. This information will then be brought together with research specific to school psychologists' perceptions of, experience with, and perceived readiness to address school violence.

#### *History of Violence Research*

From a research perspective, youth violence has been studied since the 1970's. At this time, violence was defined as a physically aggressive act (e.g., homicide, stabbings, shootings). Initially, educational professionals were not involved in these research efforts. Instead, research was conducted by professionals in institutions outside of the school setting. When violent crimes first began to appear on school campuses, the criminal justice department was called upon to find a solution to this new phenomenon (Furlong & Morrison, 2000; Furlong et al., 2000; Hyman & Perone, 1998; Morrison et al., 1994). As a result, researchers from the juvenile justice perspective were typically concerned with determining which factors contributed to the development of violent behaviors (Furlong & Morrison, 2000; Furlong et al., 2000). Even though violent crimes continued to be present on school grounds, educators were not generally involved in the efforts to study or reduce violence.

As physically aggressive violent crimes continued, public health officials believed that youth violence was too large an issue for law enforcement to solve alone (Dryfoos, 1993; Gorski & Pilotto, 1993). In the mid 1980's, Surgeon General C. Everett Koop conducted a workshop on "Violence and Public Health" (National Mental Health

Association [NMHA], 1995). From the public health perspective, professionals were interested in finding ways to reduce homicide and physically related acts of violence in our schools and communities (Furlong & Morrison, 2000; Hausman, Spivak, & Prothrow-Stith, 1995; Sosin, Koepsell, Rivara, & Mercy, 1995; Spivak, Hausman, & Prothrow-Stith, 1989). Individuals connected to the field of public health (i.e., physicians and psychologists) also continued to conduct studies to determine the risk factors (e.g., gun ownership and drug use) associated with youth violence (Kellermann et al., 1993; Kingery, Mirzaee, Pruitt, Hurley & Heuberger, 1991). Thus, educators still did not play an integral role in violence prevention efforts.

It was not until the early 1990's that the American Medical Association and the National Association of State Boards of Education joined forces and agreed that "education and health are inextricably intertwined" (Dryfoos, 1993, p. 84). As a result, schools were recognized as the best setting to implement policies and programs to reduce youth violence. In addition to involvement in violence prevention policies and interventions, educators also became interested in studying school violence and began conducting their own research. In 1992, the youth violence phenomenon became commonly referred to and labeled as "school violence" (Furlong & Morrison, 2000).

#### *Definition of School Violence*

The definition of violence has also been evolving since the 1970's. Until recently, the definition of youth/school violence was considered in terms of only physically aggressive acts such as homicide and weapon-related threats. Yet, as educational

associations across the country began to take a position on the problem of violence in our schools, the definition of what constitutes school violence has evolved to include acts such as verbal assaults, bullying, pushing and shoving, harassment, and teasing. The National Association of Pupil Services Administrators (NAPSA) believes that “a safe and secure school environment is the foundation required for effective instruction and learning” (National Association of Pupil Service Administrators [NAPSA], 1999, p. 1). Similarly, the goal of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) is “to decrease the extent of violence in all forms” (NAEYC, 1993, p. 81), and the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) “believes that students have a fundamentally and immutable right to attend school without the fear or threat of violence, weapons, or gangs” (American School Counselor Association [ASCA], 1994, p.3). Thus, it is apparent from these statements that the definition of what constitutes school violence has been expanded upon to include more than just physically aggressive acts.

The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) has committed to taking the definition even further as the organization has resolved “to help rid America’s schools of the destructive influence of violence in all its forms” (NASP, 1997, p. 17). In this sense, school violence is defined as any act which threatens the physical, psychological, or emotional safety of all students. Further, NASP contends that these threats may include, but are not limited to, “physical assaults with or without weapons, bullying, and social isolation” (NASP, 1997, p. 17).

NASP’s position on school violence carries a couple of implications for school psychologists. First, school psychologists can no longer consider school violence in

terms of strictly physically aggressive acts. Instead, all behaviors which might harm a student psychologically or emotionally must also be considered as violent. Examples of these types of behaviors include verbal assaults, harassment, bullying, teasing, etc.

Second, school psychologists must help develop a school environment that not only promotes non-violent behaviors, but reinforces the acceptance and understanding of all individuals.

As NASP has taken an interest in school violence, school psychologists have started to question the types of violence occurring in their schools. This has resulted in a handful of studies that have been conducted to determine school psychologists' perceptions of, experience with, and perceived readiness to address school violence. These issues are described below.

### *Perceptions of Violence*

Research regarding school psychologists' perceptions of violence on school campuses is limited. In 1993, Larson conducted the first known study regarding school psychologists' perceptions of school violence. In his study, 340 Wisconsin school psychologists were surveyed regarding their perceptions of whether the number of students referred for displaying aggressive behavior had increased, decreased, or remained the same over ten years. From the elementary to the high school level, Wisconsin school psychologists perceived that the number of students referred for aggressive acts had increased between 66% and 76% over ten years.

While the findings of this study appear to be significant in that they suggest that Wisconsin school psychologists' perceive aggressive behavior to be increasing, several

issues limit generalization of the results to the general population of practicing school psychologists. First, due to sampling concerns, only school psychologists from districts of fewer than 10,000 people were included in the final analysis. Thus, the findings cannot be generalized to school psychologists practicing in districts larger than 10,000 people. Further, because larger districts were not included in the sample, it is not possible to compare results across groups. Second, Larson was interested in whether aggression had increased, decreased, or remained the same over a ten year period of time. Thus, only school psychologists with ten years of experience or more as a practitioner were included in the final sample. It is unknown whether the perceptions of individuals with ten years of experience can be directly generalized to less experienced professionals with regard to whether schools are currently perceived as having a violence problem. Finally, respondents were asked to recall from memory whether the number of students referred for aggressive behavior had increased, decreased, or remained the same over a ten year period. This procedure leaves room for concern as the results of this study are based solely on the psychologists' memory of events.

Of particular concern, given NASP's most recent position on school violence, is the fact that Larson defined aggressive behavior as a "physical assault" such as hitting, shoving, and tripping. Verbal assaults and other non-physical aggressive behaviors that might be considered aggression were not included into the definition. As educational associations have expanded upon the definition of school violence to include all forms of physical, psychological, and emotional acts, research should also apply this broad definition of violence to better understand the condition of school environments. Being

the first study to look at school psychologists' perceptions of school violence, the results of this study contribute valuable insight into changes in the frequency of violence which are occurring in Wisconsin schools. However, because the Larson study only included a few of the behaviors that are currently thought to be violent, these findings do not represent an overall picture of the present school violence phenomenon.

In 1994, Furlong and colleagues also considered school psychologists' perceptions of the amount of violence present in today's schools. Participants in this study included 121 school psychologists nationwide who were NASP members. The respondents were asked to complete questions regarding their perceptions of how big a problem school violence was and the degree to which they worry about their personal safety while at work. Results indicated that less than two percent of school psychologists nationwide reported that school violence was a very big problem at their schools, approximately one third perceived their school as having a middle-size problem, and nearly two thirds stated that their school had little or no problem with school violence. In addition, the data collected revealed that over 60% of school psychologists nationwide reported worrying very little about their personal safety and nearly 75% had never thought of leaving their jobs due to safety concerns. Only 11.9% of the school psychologists surveyed worried about their safety weekly or daily. Thus, it appears that the general population of school psychologists feel safe on their school campuses as they do not perceive school violence to be a very large issue.

Unfortunately, while the results of this study included school psychologists nationwide, it is unclear if the sample was truly representative of the general population

of school psychologists. Furlong and colleagues state that surveys were received from school psychologists representing all geographic regions. However, methods used to report the results were vaguely defined. Thus, it is unclear if respondents represented all demographic areas and whether the findings may be generalizable to school psychologists across the nation. It should also be noted that an unspecified number of school psychologists completed the survey at a conference on school violence. Arguably those respondents may have a biased opinion, as they may have been more concerned about the topic of school violence than a practitioner who did not attend the conference.

Further, unlike the Larson (1993) study, the definition of what constitutes a violent act was not included as part of the Furlong et al. (1994) questionnaire, which left room for the respondent to use his or her own opinion of what should be considered a violent act when reporting their perceptions. As a result, it is unclear if each school psychologist used the same criteria when reporting on their perceptions of the degree of school violence in their schools.

In a similar study, Furlong et al. (1996) surveyed 123 school psychologists in California regarding their perceptions of how prevalent school violence against students and staff is on their campuses. Respondents were again asked to report their perceptions of how big a problem school violence was on their campus and the degree to which they worry about their personal safety at school. However, the school psychologists' perceptions of how large a problem school violence was on their campuses was unclear in the findings reported. Unlike the 1994 study, Furlong and colleagues did not provide information regarding the actual frequency of responses in this study. Instead, the

correlation between school psychologists' perceptions of school violence and experiences with school violence were examined. Findings indicated that as physically aggressive violent acts (weapon-related, property damage) against students and staff increased, school psychologists' perceived their school as having a greater problem with school violence. Likewise, as the amount of reported aggressive violence against students and staff decreased, school psychologists perceived their schools as more safe.

While the results of this study clearly indicate that school psychologists in California did not perceive their campuses to be violent unless physically aggressive acts occurred, it is unclear how large a problem school psychologists in California actually perceived school violence to be on their campuses. Results of this study concerning the degree to which respondents worry about their personal safety at work revealed that nearly 80% of school psychologists in California worry about their personal safety at work less than once a year and three quarters stated that they would not leave their position due to safety concerns. These findings are similar to the Furlong et al. (1994) study in that school psychologists generally report not worrying about their personal safety and would not leave their positions due to the fear of school violence.

The results of this study contribute valuable insight to the already existing literature. However, even though participants worked in schools representing a range of demographic characteristics, generalization of the findings to the general population of school psychologists is difficult because participants were from California only. Further, similar to the Furlong et al. (1994) study, this study also did not supply participants with a definition of violence. Therefore, participants were again left to interpret the definition of

violence based on their own opinions. As a result, it is unclear whether school psychologists uniformly agreed about what constitutes a violent act.

In 1995, Griffiths surveyed school psychologists in Western Australia regarding their perceptions of school violence. Results indicated that nearly half of the school psychologists in Western Australia perceived violence as a significant problem in their schools. Further, one third perceived violence as a mid-sized problem, and less than ten percent considered violence to be a large or very large problem. However, over 90% of school psychologists weren't concerned about their personal safety at school and most said that they worried about it less than once a year. Further, only 5.2% said that they would resign from work due to school violence. Compared to the Furlong et al. (1994) study, Western Australian school psychologists' perceptions of the prevalence of school violence appear greater than school psychologists practicing in the United States. However, school psychologists in Western Australia appear less concerned about their own personal safety relative to school psychologists in the United States. It is also important to mention that Griffiths did not provide explicit documentation as to whether respondents were presented with a definition of violence along with the questionnaire. Therefore, it is unclear whether this discrepancy is due to a difference in the construction of the survey or due to a difference in school psychologists' perceptions of what constitutes a violent act.

While the information obtained in this study provides valuable information on Western Australian school psychologists' perceptions of violence, it is not easily generalized to psychologists in the United States given that the sample was located in

Western Australia. Further, the methods used to obtain this information were vaguely defined in the documentation of the results. Thus, sampling issues including sample size and sample selection are unclear. It does seem that information was gathered by subjective means as the participants rated their perceptions of how large of a problem school violence is on a scale from very large to middle-size.

### *Experiences with Violence*

Similar to the literature on school psychologists' perceptions of school violence, few studies have been conducted examining school psychologists' actual experiences with school violence. However, other groups such as teachers, building administrators, and district administrators have been surveyed to determine the common types of violence occurring on school campuses (Petersen et al., 1998). Findings from these studies suggest that teachers' and administrators' experiences with student to student violence have significantly increased including the occurrence of pushing and shoving, sexual harassment, punching and hitting with hands, and kicking (Petersen et al., 1998). As described below, research concerning school psychologists' experiences with violence appear to yield similar results. A significant amount of emotional and psychologically harmful events, in addition to physical aggression are reportedly occurring in today's schools.

In both Furlong (Furlong et al., 1994; Furlong et al., 1996) studies, school psychologists' experiences with violence were measured using a broad definition of violence. Participants were provided with a list containing a broad continuum of violent acts, which allowed for less opinionated responses as survey participants were provided

with examples of acts that the researchers considered to be violent. This list included physically, psychologically, and emotionally harmful acts which allowed for greater consistency with NASP's (NASP, 1997) most recent position regarding school violence. Examples of the behaviors comprising the list were cursing, grabbing and shoving, pushing and kicking, verbal threats, ethnic taunting, weapon-related threats, and sexual assault. Results indicated that more than three quarters of the school psychologists surveyed reported a widespread occurrence of less severe forms of interpersonal violence such as pushing and shoving, cursing, and bullying taking place on school grounds. Further, less than one quarter of the participants witnessed more severe forms of violence such as weapon-related threats and sexual harassment occurring on their campuses. (Furlong et al., 1994; Furlong et al., 1996). Thus, it appears that school psychologists in the United States are reporting that more than just physically aggressive crimes are occurring on school campuses.

In the Furlong (Furlong et al., 1994; Furlong et al., 1996) studies, experiences with violence on school campuses were measured as they related to either students or staff. While the results from these studies provide important information to understand the overall occurrence of violence in schools, it is unclear what percentage of these incidents involved student to student violence, student to staff violence, and staff to student violence. As a result, findings cannot be generalized to the entire population of students or to the entire population of school staff. Determining the types of violence students and staff experience independently allows for a better understanding of the types of violence a school experiences as it relates strictly to students or to staff.

Griffiths' 1995 study also considered the types of violence school psychologists in Western Australia have experienced on school grounds. Over half of the school psychologists had witnessed students displaying verbal abuse, one quarter felt that physical forms of violence were a concern, and a small percentage reported that severe forms of violence (e.g., threatened or harmed with a weapon) were an issue. These findings were similar to the Furlong (Furlong et al., 1994; Furlong et al., 1996) studies in that school psychologists in Western Australia are also reporting that less severe forms of interpersonal violence are occurring more frequently on their school campuses. However, it is unclear whether respondents were asked to generate examples of the types of violence occurring in their schools or if the researchers replicated the Furlong survey (Furlong et al., 1994) and provided the participants with a broad list of violent acts and were asked to indicate which incidents they had witnessed on their campus.

Most of the violent acts reported in the Griffiths (1995) study were between students; with only ten percent of school psychologists indicating that they experienced some form of violence themselves. These findings are insightful in that they provide much needed information regarding a differentiation of the types of violence occurring specifically to students and to staff independent from each other. Therefore, it appears to be important to make the distinction between student to student violence, student to staff violence, and staff to student violence as school psychologists' opinions of their own safety cannot be generalized to the population of students.

#### *Perceived Readiness to Respond to Violence*

Information concerning school psychologists' perceived readiness to respond to

campus violence is also scant. However, the data available suggests that school psychologists generally do not feel prepared or equipped to address school violence, even though surveys of trainers suggest that they should be. In the Furlong et al. (1994) study, nearly half of the participants felt unprepared to address school violence issues. Further, nearly 90% believed that they would need special training in school violence to address this issue, and less than 15% indicated that they received such training in their training programs. Similarly, nearly half of the respondents to the Furlong et al. (1996) survey reported feeling unprepared to address violence in their schools, with only one quarter stating that they were confident in their preparedness to address school violence. Further, over three quarters stated that they had received no formal training in school emergency situations.

Findings from the Griffiths (1995) study were even more outstanding in that nearly three quarters of school psychologists in Western Australia believed that they had not received formal training in how to address school violence. This was nearly one and a half times the number of U.S. respondents who felt unprepared. Of those who did receive special training, more than three quarters attended bullying workshops while others gained knowledge and experience by participating in training programs and reading books. Thus, all of the training received occurred after the psychologists had completed their training programs.

Because the respondents across studies were not provided with a definition of what types of violence they should consider in determining their preparedness, the results of these surveys relied on school psychologists' opinions of what constitutes a violent act.

Thus, this lack of perceived readiness reported by school psychologists is most likely related to a biased perception of what types of violence they would be expected to respond to, most notably serious violent crimes. Indeed, the authors even suggest that school psychologists felt unprepared because they think that violence only entails physically violent acts (Furlong et al., 1994; Furlong et al., 1996). This makes sense as we consider these findings in relation to school psychologists' perceptions and experiences with violence.

Past studies indicate that school psychologists do not feel prepared to address school violence issues. However, it appears that many school psychology training programs provide violence prevention training. In 1997, Busse and Larson surveyed school psychology program directors nationwide about their program's level of training on school violence issues including whether the training and course work available was required or not required. Overall, nearly three quarters of school psychology program directors reported that violence prevention was covered in course work. Further, more than one third of the program directors stated that violence prevention was covered in practica and internships. However, the criteria for how school psychology program directors defined violence and violence prevention training is unclear. Because the results indicate that a significant number of programs provide violence prevention training, it appears that program directors may define violence in a broad sense to include all forms of physically, psychologically, and emotionally harmful acts.

When comparing the findings from the Busse and Larson (1997) study to the Furlong studies (Furlong et al., 1994; Furlong et al., 1996), an interesting discrepancy

presents itself. While 67% of school psychology program directors nationwide report that school violence training is incorporated into the curriculum, a large majority of practicing school psychologists state that they have not received training on school violence. The reason for this discrepancy is unknown. However, it may be due to practicing school psychologists defining school violence strictly as physically aggressive acts (i.e., homicide) rather than under a broad continuum which includes physically, psychologically, and emotionally harmful acts.

In 1993, Larson examined school psychologists' opinions regarding their level of training to deal with aggressive behaviors in students. In his study, Larson defined aggressive behavior as a physical assault such as hitting, shoving, and tripping. Results indicated that over one half of Wisconsin school psychologists regarded themselves as adequately trained to address aggressive behaviors. Further, nearly all of the school psychologists stated that they were willing to work with students displaying these types of behaviors.

While this study provided respondents with a definition of violence that included more than just serious physical crimes, it did not include other lesser forms of violence such as verbal attacks, harassment, etc. into the definition. Nonetheless, the results provide interesting information. When psychologists are provided with a definition of violence to include less severe forms of interpersonal violence, a greater number of the respondents felt that they were trained to deal with such behaviors. Thus, while school psychologists may feel ill-prepared to address violence in the forms of physically aggressive violent acts (i.e., weapon-related threats and shootings), the majority feel well

prepared to address violence in the forms of less severe types of interpersonal violence (i.e., hitting, shoving, and tripping).

As hypothesized with regard to other aspects of school violence surveys, these findings suggest that if researchers supply school psychologists with an explicit and broad definition of violence, survey responses may vary. In particular, perceptions of preparedness to address school violence may increase when less severe forms of interpersonal violence are defined as violent behaviors. Further, these findings are less discrepant relative to the opinions of school psychology trainers who report that school psychologists are adequately trained to address school violence.

### *Conclusion*

Historically, school violence has been studied and researched by law enforcement officials and individuals connected to the field of public health. Under these philosophies, it has been narrowly defined to include only physically aggressive acts such as homicide and weapon-related threats. Recently, professionals in the field of education have also become involved in researching the issue of school violence. As a result, the definition of school violence has been considered in a broader sense as educational associations (e.g., ASCA and NASP) have taken the stance that school violence includes all acts of behavior which may harm another individual physically, psychologically, or emotionally (NASP, 1997).

As educational professionals have begun to conduct research on school violence, several studies have been attempted to determine school psychologists' perceptions of school violence, experiences with school violence, and their perceived readiness to

address school violence (Furlong et al., 1994; Furlong et al., 1996; Griffiths, 1995; Larson, 1993). A review of the literature pertaining to these past studies has found that the majority of practicing school psychologists do not perceive school violence to be a very large problem on school campuses and do not feel unsafe on school grounds (Furlong et al., 1994; Furlong et al., 1996; Griffiths, 1995). Yet, over half have witnessed less severe forms of interpersonal violence (i.e., verbal threats, bullying, harassment) taking place on school grounds (Furlong et al., 1994; Furlong et al., 1996; Griffiths, 1995). Further, approximately one quarter of school psychologists have witnessed more severe forms of violence taking place on school campuses (Furlong et al., 1994; Furlong et al., 1996; Griffiths, 1995).

Similarly, past research has determined that school psychologists do not believe that they are well prepared to address violent behaviors occurring on school campuses (Furlong et al., 1994; Furlong et al., 1996; Griffiths, 1995). However, school psychology program directors state that training programs adequately prepare school psychologists to address school violence (Busse & Larson, 1997). Further, past research has determined that three quarters of school psychologists do not worry about their personal safety at school (Furlong et al., 1994; Furlong et al., 1996; Griffiths, 1995).

It appears that the reason for these discrepancies may be due to the methods used in conducting the past surveys. In particular, few of the studies reviewed provided school psychologists with a definition of violence to reference when responding to questions regarding their perceptions of violence and perceived readiness to respond to school violence. In fact, the review of the literature has established that only one study has been

conducted which provided school psychologists with an explicit definition of violence, and that definition focused on aggressive externalizing behaviors including hitting, shoving, and tripping (Larson, 1993). When this definition was used, results indicated that school psychologists perceived aggressive violent behaviors to be increasing on school campuses, and the majority stated that they felt they were well trained to address the specific behaviors outlined.

Findings from the Larson (1993) study indicate that if school psychologists are provided with an explicit definition of violence that includes examples of less severe forms of interpersonal violence, their perceptions that school violence is a significant problem are higher than the perceptions of school psychologists who are not provided with a definition of violence. Further, when given specific examples of behaviors such as hitting, shoving, and tripping, school psychologists perceive themselves as prepared to address these forms of violence.

Indeed, findings from past studies (Furlong et al., 1994; Furlong et al., 1996) suggest that when school psychologists are not given a specific definition of school violence to reference when completing the survey, they tend to consider only severe physically aggressive acts (i.e., weapon-related threats) in their responses. When this is the case, it appears that school psychologists believe that they do not have a very large problem with school violence on their campuses and further, they report that they are not prepared to address such behaviors. Given that educational associations, including NASP, have taken the position that school violence entails all forms of physically, psychologically, and emotionally harmful acts, additional research needs to be carried out

in order to address these definitions, clarify discrepancies from past research, and update the literature on school psychologists' perceptions of school violence.

An additional method to improve upon from past research includes the procedures used to measure school psychologists' experiences with school violence. Furlong et al. (1994) and Furlong et al. (1996) measured school psychologists' experiences with school violence as those incidents related to either students or staff. From these findings, it is unclear what percentage of the violent incidents reportedly occurring on school grounds involved student to student violence, student to staff violence, or staff to student violence. Griffiths (1995) study made such a distinction between student to student violence and student to staff violence. Differentiating between student to student violence and student to staff violence allows for a clearer understanding of a school's level of safety. As a result, additional research with school psychologists in the United States needs to be conducted to determine what types of violence are occurring to students independent from staff such that the findings may be generalized to the entire population of students.

Further, although past studies provide valuable information regarding school psychologists' perceptions of school violence, experiences with school violence, and perceived readiness to respond to school violence, there has not been one study conducted which can be easily generalized to the entire population of school psychologists practicing in the United States. Reasons include the lack of a representative sample as the Furlong et al. (1996) study surveyed school psychologists in California only, the Griffiths (1995) study surveyed school psychologists in Western Australia, and it is unclear if respondents to the Furlong et al. (1994) study sampled a group representative of all geographic locations. Future research should attempt to

obtain a sample representative of school psychologists. In particular, variables such as geographic location, school size, degree attained, and number of years as a practitioner should be considered as these may be differentially related to reports of school psychologists' perceptions of school violence.

## CHAPTER 3

### Methodology

This chapter will describe the individuals who participated in this study and how they were selected. Additionally, the contents of the survey instrument that was used will be discussed as well as data analysis procedures.

#### *Participants*

The participants in this study included Nationally Certified School Psychologists currently practicing in a school setting in Minnesota and Wisconsin. Names and addresses of participants were obtained from the National Association of School Psychologists National Directory. Of the 357 surveys sent, 106 were completed and returned, yielding a return rate of 32.6%.

#### *Survey Instrument*

School psychologists' perceptions of school violence were measured using a survey developed by the researcher. As shown in Appendix B, the survey consisted of 30 items. The first 14 questions required the respondents to provide demographic information including gender, ethnicity, age, highest degree attained, employment status (i.e., full-time or part-time), years of experience in position, number of schools served, grade level of school(s), ethnic makeup of the students, psychologist to student ratio, size of the school district, and community setting of the school(s).

The next four questions were related to the participants' opinions regarding the amount and severity of violence occurring in schools. Participants were asked to state whether they believed the amount and severity of school violence had decreased, remained relatively stable, or increased over the last few years.

Two questions evaluated the behaviors that the respondents viewed as violent and the behaviors that were occurring between students at their school(s). Each question required the respondents to place a check mark beside a list of 31 behaviors. Behaviors ranged in severity from physical harm with a weapon to less severe forms of interpersonal violence such as teasing and making fun of others.

One question required participants to rate how often different behaviors occurred between students at their school(s). Participants were provided with a list of 31 behaviors and were asked to rate how frequently each behavior occurred between students using a six-point Likert Scale with 1 representing hourly, 2 representing daily, 3 representing weekly, 4 representing monthly, 5 representing several times a year, and 6 representing never.

Two questions required respondents to rate how prepared and adequately trained they believed they were to address violent behaviors between students. Respondents were asked to rate how prepared they believed they were based on a three-point Likert Scale with 1 indicating totally prepared, 2 indicating adequately but not totally prepared, and 3 indicating unprepared. Further, respondents were asked to rate how adequately trained they believed they were based on a three-point Likert Scale with 1 indicating well trained, 2 indicating adequately trained, and 3 indicating untrained.

Finally, participants were asked to answer yes or no to a series of seven questions. The first five items pertained to the respondent's level of training. The final two items considered the respondent's definition of violence and whether or not their perceptions of violence had changed as a result of completing this survey.

*Procedures*

A packet was mailed to 357 Nationally Certified School Psychologists currently practicing in a school setting in Minnesota or Wisconsin. Each packet contained a cover letter, survey, and a postage paid return envelope. The participants were informed that their participation was voluntary and that they could refuse to participate at any time. They were asked to complete the survey and send the completed forms back to the researcher in the self-addressed, stamped envelope, which was coded for confidentiality. There was no follow up for those respondents who did not respond to the initial mailing.

*Data Analysis*

The data were analyzed with respect to the research objectives stated in Chapter One. The research objectives and the method of analysis are outlined below.

1. To determine school psychologists' perceptions of the prevalence of school violence.
2. To determine how safe school psychologists perceive their school(s) to be.
3. To assess school psychologists' reported experiences with student to student school violence.
4. To evaluate school psychologists' perceived readiness to address school violence.

As the survey was intended to be descriptive in nature, the data were analyzed using frequency counts and percentages. No further statistical analyses beyond descriptive data were conducted.

## CHAPTER 4

## Results

The purpose of this study was to determine school psychologists' perceptions of the prevalence of school violence, to determine how safe school psychologists perceive their schools to be, to assess school psychologists' reported experiences with student to student school violence, and to evaluate school psychologists' perceived readiness to address school violence. A survey was sent to 357 Nationally Certified School Psychologists currently practicing in Wisconsin and Minnesota. Descriptive data, response frequencies, and percentiles were used to describe the survey results.

Demographic data regarding the study's sample are outlined in Tables 1-12. Of the 357 surveys sent, 32 were undeliverable and 106 were completed and returned, yielding a return rate of 32.6%. As seen in Table 1, 68 of the respondents were female (64.2%) and 37 were male (34.9%). Respondents ranged in age from 21 to over 60 years old with the majority (74.5%) falling in the age ranges of 40-49 (34.9%) and 50-59 (39.6%) (See Table 2).

Table 1.

*Frequency and Percentage of Participants by Gender*

Gender	n	Percent
Male	37	34.9
Female	68	64.2

*Note.* Missing data existed for this item (.9%).

Table 2.

*Frequency and Percentage of Participants by Age*

Age	n	Percent
21-29 years old	11	10.4
30-39 years old	14	13.2
40-49 years old	37	34.9
50-59 years old	42	39.6
60 or older	2	1.9

Table 3.

*Frequency and Percentage of Participants by Ethnic Background*

Ethnicity	n	Percent
White/European American	104	98.1
Multicultural	1	.9

*Note.* The multicultural respondent was Caucasian Mohawk. One respondent (.9%) did not complete this item.

As seen in Table 3, a majority of the respondents (98.1%) were of European American decent. With regards to training, 56.6% of the respondents indicated that they had obtained a master's degree, 25.5% achieved a specialist's degree, and 17.0% indicated that they had received doctoral level training (Table 4). More than half of the respondents (55.7%) were employed full-time at more than one school (See Table 5) and 52.9% had 15 or more years experience as a school psychologist (See Table 6).

Table 4.

*Highest Educational Level Attained by Participants*

Educational Degree Held	n	Percent
M.A./M.S./M.Ed.	60	56.6
Ed.S.	27	25.5
Ed.D/Ph.D/Psy.D	18	17.0

*Note.* Missing data existed for this item (.9%).

Table 5.

*Employment Status of Participants*

Employment Status	n	Percent
Full time at one school	19	17.9
Full time at more than one school	59	55.7
Full time in a cooperative education center	9	8.5
Part time at one school	6	5.7
Part time at more than one school	9	8.5
Part time in a cooperative education center	0	0
Other	4	3.8

*Note.* Other category was made up of a special education director, EBD specialist, supervisor, and a psychologist on an unspecified special assignment.

Table 6.

*Number of Years Participants Have Worked as a School Psychologist*

Years	n	Percent
1-5 years	16	15.1
5-10 years	15	14.2
10-15 years	19	17.9
15-20 years	18	17.0
20-30 years	36	34.0
30-40 years	2	1.9

Eighty-one (76.4%) of the participants reported that they worked in two or more buildings (See Table 7) with 81.1% in at least one elementary school, 44.3% in at least one middle school, 13.2% in at least one junior high school, and 43.4% in at least one high school (See Table 8).

As seen in Table 9, the majority of the respondents (71.7%) indicated that they worked at schools that were predominately Caucasian with a small percentage of minority students. Nearly half of the respondents (44.3%) stated that they worked in a school setting where the ratio of school psychologists to students was one to 1000-1499 respectively (See Table 10). Nearly all respondents (94.4%) reported that there were 1000 students or more attending school in their district (See Table 11). As seen in Table 12, 37.7% stated that they worked in a suburban school district and 39.6% reported that they worked in a small town.

Table 7.

*Number of Schools Participants are Currently Serving*

Number of Schools	n	Percent
1 School	24	22.6
2 Schools	30	28.3
3 Schools	23	21.7
4 Schools	14	13.2
5 Schools	4	3.8
6 or More Schools	10	9.4

*Note.* One respondent did not complete this item (.9%).

Table 8.

*Types of School(s) Respondents are Currently Serving*

Grade Level	n	Percent
Elementary School	86	81.1
Middle School	47	44.3
Junior High School	14	13.2
Senior High School	46	43.4
Other	23	21.7

*Note.* Many respondents work in more than setting, which accounts for a total percentage greater than 100. Other category was made up of psychologists who are working in residential facilities, alternative learning programs, private and parochial schools, early childhood centers, preschools, head start programs, programs serving 18 to 21 year old special education students, as supervisors, and at special sites.

Table 9.

*Ethnic Makeup of Students at Schools Served*

Ethnicity	n	
Percent		
Caucasian	17	16.0
Primarily caucasian with a small percentage of minority students	76	71.7
Half caucasian and half minority students	5	4.7
Primarily non-caucasian with a small percent of caucasian students	5	4.7
Non-caucasian	1	.9
Multiple school types	1	.9

*Note.* One respondent marked more than one choice, which resulted in a “multiple school types” category. One respondent did not complete this item (.9%).

Table 10.

*Frequency and Percentage of School Psychologist to Student Ratio*

School Psychologist to Student Ratio	n	Percent
1:<1,000	21	19.8
1:1,000-1,499	49	44.3
1:1,5000-3,009	37	34.9
1:3,100-5,009	1	.9

Table 11.

*Size of School District*

Number of Students	n	Percent
Under 1,000	6	5.7
1,000-3,999	40	37.7
4,000-8,999	18	17.0
9,000-12,999	15	14.2
13,000-20,999	11	10.4
21,000-30,999	7	6.6
40,000-100,000	7	6.6
Over 100,000	2	1.9

Table 12.

*Community Setting of School(s)*

Setting	n	Percent
Inner city	8	7.5
Suburban	40	37.7
Urban	18	17.0
Small Town	42	39.6
Rural	21	19.8
*Other	3	2.8

*Note.* Participants were able to choose more than one setting, which accounts for a percentage greater than 100. Other refers to two individuals who work in first ring

suburbs and one individual who works in a school choice program.

*Perceptions of School Violence*

Tables 13 and 14 show school psychologists’ perceptions regarding the amount and severity of violence occurring in today’s schools. Fifty percent of all respondents stated that they believe the amount of violence occurring in schools has increased over the last few years whereas approximately 43% indicated that they believe the amount of violence occurring in schools has remained relatively stable during the last few years. In addition, 60.4% stated that they believe the severity of violence occurring in schools has increased over the last few years while 34.9% indicated that they believe the severity of violence occurring in schools has remained relatively stable over the last few years.

Table 13.

*School Psychologists’ Perceptions of the Amount of Violence Currently in Schools*

	n	
Percent		
Violence in schools has decreased in the last few years	7	6.6
Violence in schools has remained stable in the last few years	46	43.4
Violence in schools has increased in the last few years	53	50.0

Table 14.

*School Psychologists’ Perceptions of the Severity of Violence Currently in Schools*

	n	
Percent		
Severity of violence has decreased in the last few years	5	4.7

Severity of violence has remained stable in the last few years	37	34.9
Severity of violence has increased in the last few years	64	60.4

However, Table 15 suggests that 65.1% of school psychologists surveyed feel that the amount of violence occurring in their school buildings has remained stable over the last few years. Similarly, Table 16 shows that 60.4% believe that the severity of violence occurring in their schools has remained stable over the last few years.

Table 15.

*School Psychologists' Perceptions of the Amount of Violence Occurring at Their Schools*

	n	
Percent		
Violence in my school(s) has decreased over the last few years	6	5.7
Violence in my school(s) has remained stable over the last few years	69	65.1
Violence in my school(s) has increased over the last few years	31	29.2

Table 16.

*School Psychologists' Perceptions of the Severity of Violence Occurring at Their Schools*

	n	
Percent		
Severity of violence at my school(s) has decreased in the last few years	5	4.7
Severity of violence at my school(s) has remained stable the last few years	64	60.4
Severity of violence at my school(s) has increased in the last few years	37	34.9

Participants were then asked to look at a list of 31 behaviors and place check marks next to those behaviors they perceived as violent. Table 17 provides the frequency figures and percentages of their responses. One hundred percent of the respondents stated that assault with a weapon, including a gun, and assault that required medical care were violent acts. In addition, 67% considered bullying as violent. However, respondents were less likely to consider name calling and cursing (48.1%), teasing and making fun of others (31.1%), and gossiping and spreading rumors (19.8%) as acts of violence. Further, less than half (32.1%) rated social isolation of an individual or group as violent.

Table 17.

*Behaviors School Psychologists' Perceive as Violent*

Behavior	n	Percent
Bullying	71	67.0
Pushing/Shoving	99	93.4
Fist Fight	105	99.1
Assault with a Weapon (Except a Gun)	106	100.0
Threat of Assault with a Gun	101	95.3
Assault with a Gun	106	100.0
Assault with Physical Injury (Medical Care was Needed)	106	100.0
Assault with Emotional Trauma	99	93.4
Teasing/Making Fun of Others	33	31.1
Verbal Assault (Name Calling, Cursing, Etc.)	51	48.1
Verbal Threat of Intent to Harm	87	82.1

Verbal Threat of Intent to Harm with a Weapon	93	87.7
Verbal Threat to Kill Self or Others	94	88.7
Racial Slurs/Comments About Sexual Orientation	68	64.2
Gossiping/Spreading Rumors	21	19.8
Sexual Comments/Sexual Gestures	50	47.2
Intimidation/Coercion/Hostile Environment	77	72.6
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Behavior	n	Percent
<hr/>		
Sexual Harassment (Verbal Threats)	78	73.6
Sexual Harassment (Physical Threats)	89	84.0
Coerced Sexual Activity	97	91.5
Inappropriate Touch/Mock Rape	101	95.3
Attempted Rape/Rape	104	98.1
Vandalism of School Property	80	75.5
Vandalism of Personal Property	79	74.5
Purposeful Damage to Personal Property	80	75.5
Theft of School Property	58	54.7
Theft of Personal Property	59	55.7
Social Isolation of an Individual or Group	34	32.1
Deliberate Intimidation of Individual or Group	75	70.8
Use of Power to Intimidate or Cause Fear	77	72.6
Hazing as Initiation into a Group	82	77.4
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*Experiences with School Violence*

Participants were asked to look at the same list of behaviors and place check marks beside those behaviors that have occurred between students at his or her school. Results are found in Table 18. Of the respondents, 38.7% witnessed the threat of physical assault with a gun, 34.9% witnessed physical assault with a weapon other than a gun, and 45.3% witnessed physical assault where medical care was needed. The majority of respondents characterized teasing and making fun of others (98.1%), name calling and cursing (97.2%), and gossiping and spreading rumors (95.3%) as behaviors that they have witnessed between students on their school campuses. Additionally, 71.7% of the respondents stated that social isolation of an individual or group is a behavior that has occurred between students.

Table 18.

*Behaviors School Psychologists' Report Occur or Have Occurred Between Students at Their Schools*

Behavior	n	Percent
Bullying	105	99.1
Pushing/Shoving	102	96.2
Fist Fight	93	87.7
Physical Assault with a Weapon (Except a Gun)	37	34.9
Threat of Assault with a Gun	41	38.7
Assault with a Gun	8	7.5
Assault with Physical Injury (Medical Care was Needed)	48	45.3
Assault with Emotional Trauma	51	48.1
Teasing/Making Fun of Others	104	98.1

Verbal Assault (Name Calling, Cursing, Etc.)	103	97.2
Verbal Threat of Intent to Harm	96	90.6
Verbal Threat of Intent to Harm with a Weapon	64	60.4
Verbal Threat to Kill Self or Others	82	77.4
Racial Slurs/Comments About Sexual Orientation	92	86.8
Gossiping/Spreading Rumors	101	95.3
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Behavior	n	Percent
<hr/>		
Sexual Comments/Sexual Gestures	98	92.5
Intimidation/Coercion/Hostile Environment	57	53.8
Sexual Harassment (Verbal Threats)	63	59.4
Sexual Harassment (Physical Threats)	36	34.0
Coerced Sexual Activity	27	25.5
Inappropriate Touch/Mock Rape	49	46.2
Attempted Rape/Rape	19	17.9
Vandalism of School Property	89	84.0
Vandalism of Personal Property	80	75.5
Purposeful Damage to Personal Property	76	71.7
Theft of School Property	81	76.4
Theft of Personal Property	93	87.7
Social Isolation of an Individual or Group	76	71.7
Deliberate Intimidation of Individual or Group	81	76.4
Use of Power to Intimidate or Cause Fear	62	58.5
Hazing as Initiation into a Group	22	20.8
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*Note.* Missing data existed for this item (.9%).

Table 19 shows the frequency with which school psychologists witnessed behaviors occurring between students on their school campuses. The majority of respondents (91.5%) indicated that they had never witnessed an assault with a gun to occur between students. In addition, 57.5% of the respondents had never witnessed a physical assault with other types of weapons and 42.5% had never witnessed an assault where medical care was needed. However, respondents said that they witnessed the following behaviors on a daily basis: bullying (45.3%), teasing and making fun of others (38.7%), name calling and cursing (45.3%), gossiping and spreading rumors (35.8%), and social isolation of an individual or group (17.9%).

Table 19.

*Percentage of Time School Psychologists Witness Behaviors Occurring Between Students*

Behavior	Hourly	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Several Times	Never
Bullying	25.5	45.3	17.9	.9	6.6	0
Pushing/Shoving	8.5	38.7	24.5	11.3	12.3	0
Fist Fight	0	4.7	17.9	17.9	49.1	4.7
Physical Assault with a Weapon (Except a Gun)	0	0	.9	5.7	30.2	57.5
Threat of Assault with a Gun	0	.9	1.9	.9	34.0	55.7

Assault with a Gun	0	0	0	0	.9	91.5
Assault with Physical Injury (Medical Care was Needed)	0	0	2.8	4.7	41.5	42.5
Assault with Emotional Trauma	0	.9	6.6	10.4	41.5	32.1
Teasing/Making Fun of Others	47.2	38.7	2.8	2.8	4.7	0

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Behavior	Hourly	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Several Times	Never
Verbal Assault (Name Calling, Cursing, Etc.)	32.1	45.3	7.5	7.5	3.8	0
Verbal Threat of Intent to Harm	5.7	12.3	25.5	31.1	18.9	1.9
Verbal Threat of Intent to Harm with a Weapon	0	2.8	1.9	9.4	45.3	33.0
Verbal Threat to Kill Self or Others	0	.9	6.6	14.2	55.7	17.0
Racial Slurs/Comments About Sexual Orientation	6.6	21.7	17.0	16.0	27.4	5.7
Gossiping/Spreading	27.4	35.8	15.1	9.4	5.7	1.9

Rumors						
Sexual Comments/	10.4	22.6	20.8	12.3	25.5	2.8
Sexual Gestures						
Intimidation/Coercion/	1.9	8.5	7.5	21.7	31.1	21.7
Hostile Environment						
Sexual Harassment	0	7.5	14.2	12.3	35.8	23.6
(Verbal Threats)						
Sexual Harassment	0	3.8	4.7	13.2	30.2	40.6
(Physical Threats)						
<hr/>						
Behavior	Hourly	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Several Times	
Never						
<hr/>						
Coerced Sexual	0	0	2.8	6.6	20.8	63.2
Activity						
Inappropriate Touch/	0	1.9	1.9	13.2	40.6	36.8
Mock Rape						
Attempted Rape/	0	0	.9	0	15.1	77.4
Rape						
Vandalism of School	1.9	3.8	9.4	17.9	54.7	6.6
Property						
Vandalism of Personal	1.9	4.7	13.2	20.8	43.4	9.4
Property						
Purposeful Damage to	.9	3.8	13.2	21.7	38.7	15.1

Personal Property						
Theft of School Property	.9	2.8	9.4	11.3	57.5	10.4
Theft of Personal Property	1.9	4.7	11.3	24.5	45.3	7.5
Social Isolation of an Individual or Group	5.7	17.9	22.6	17.9	21.7	9.4
Deliberate Intimidation of Individual or Group	3.8	9.4	24.5	18.9	27.4	11.3

Behavior	Hourly	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Several Times	Never
Use of Power to Intimidate or Cause Fear	1.9	11.3	7.5	24.5	25.5	22.6
Hazing as Initiation into a Group	0	0	4.7	1.9	17.0	67.0

*Note.* Percentages representing the complete sample are used. Missing data existed for some items.

*Perceived Readiness to Address School Violence*

Participants were asked to rate how prepared they believed they were to address violent behaviors between students on school campuses. Respondents were asked to rate items using a three-point Likert Scale, ranging from totally prepared to unprepared. Table 20 provides the percentages of their ratings. Half of the respondents (50.9%) indicated that they felt unprepared to address incidents of physical assault with a gun between students and over a third (36.8%) stated that they felt unprepared to address physical assault with other types of weapons between students. However, the majority indicated that they felt totally prepared to address issues of teasing and making fun of others (75.5%), name calling and cursing (72.6%), and gossiping and spreading rumors (62.3%). In addition, 50.9% reported that they felt totally prepared to address incidents of social isolation between students.

Table 20.

*How Prepared School Psychologists Believe they are to Address Violent Behaviors*

Behavior	Totally Prepared	Adequately Prepared	Unprepared
Threats of Physical Assault	40.6	56.6	1.9
Bullying	52.8	45.3	.9
Shoving/Hitting/Fist Fights	39.6	54.7	4.7
Physical Assault with a Knife/Razor	13.2	48.1	36.8
Physical Assault with a Gun	10.4	36.8	50.9
Teasing	75.5	22.6	.9
Verbal Assault (Name Calling, Cursing)	72.6	25.5	.9
Verbal Threat to Harm	57.5	41.5	0
Verbal Threat to Kill Self or Others	48.1	47.2	2.8
Verbal Abuse Regarding Race/Sexual Orientation	48.1	49.1	1.9
Gossiping/Spreading Rumors	62.3	33.0	2.8
Sexual Harassment (Verbal Threats)	64.2	34.9	0
Sexual Harassment (Physical Threats)	46.2	50.9	1.9
Coerced Sexual Activity	23.6	58.5	15.1
Rape	16.0	44.3	36.8
Vandalism of School Property	50.9	40.6	6.6
Theft of School Property	50.9	39.6	7.5

Vandalism of Personal Property	52.8	39.6	5.7
Behavior	Totally Prepared	Adequately Prepared	Unprepared
Theft of Personal Property	50.0	42.5	5.7
Social Exclusion	50.9	43.4	4.7
Social Intimidation	44.3	50.9	3.8
Hazing	17.9	53.8	26.4

*Note.* Percentages representing the complete sample are used. Missing data existed for some items.

In Table 21, data examined how well trained school psychologists reported that they were to address violent behaviors occurring between students. Results showed that half of the participants reported feeling untrained to address issues of physical assault with a gun (58.5%) and with other types of weapons (49.1%). Respondents rated themselves as well trained to address behaviors such as bullying (40.6%), teasing and making fun of others (56.6%), name calling and cursing (55.7%), gossiping and spreading rumors (47.2%), and social exclusion of individuals or groups (44.3%).

Table 21.

*How Well Trained School Psychologists Believe they are to Address Violent Behaviors*

Behavior	Well Trained	Adequately Trained	Untrained
Threats of Physical Assault	36.8	50.9	9.4
Bullying	40.6	53.8	3.8
Shoving/Hitting/Fist Fights	39.6	45.3	11.3

Physical Assault with a Knife/Razor	11.3	35.8	49.1
Behavior	Well Trained	Adequately Trained	Untrained
Physical Assault with a Gun	7.5	30.2	58.5
Teasing	56.6	40.6	.9
Verbal Assault (Name Calling, Cursing)	55.7	40.6	1.9
Verbal Threat to Harm	47.2	45.3	5.7
Verbal Threat to Kill Self or Others	44.3	43.4	8.5
Verbal Abuse Regarding Race/Sexual Orientation	37.7	50.0	10.4
Gossiping/Spreading Rumors	47.2	44.3	6.6
Sexual Harassment (Verbal Threats)	44.3	46.2	7.5
Sexual Harassment (Physical Threats)	35.8	50.9	11.3
Coerced Sexual Activity	16.0	48.1	33.0
Rape	10.4	35.8	50.0
Vandalism of School Property	30.2	49.1	17.9
Theft of School Property	29.2	49.1	18.9
Vandalism of Personal Property	29.2	52.8	15.1
Theft of Personal Property	30.2	50.9	16.0
Social Exclusion	44.3	45.3	8.5
Social Intimidation	41.5	47.2	9.4
Hazing	14.2	39.6	44.3

*Note.* Percentages representing the complete sample are used. Missing data existed for some items.

Participants were asked if they received violence prevention and intervention training through their school psychology program, through continuing education activities pursued after completing their college program, or through their school district. In addition, participants were asked whether they believed they were adequately trained in violence prevention and intervention techniques or if they felt they needed additional training in these areas. Results are found in Table 22. Most respondents reported that they had received violence prevention and intervention training through continuing education activities outside of their college program (91.5%) or through their school district (78.3%) rather than through their school psychology training program (19.8%). Further, 55.7% of the respondents believed that they were adequately trained in violence prevention and intervention techniques; however, 77.4% felt that additional training would be useful.

Table 22.

*School Psychologists' Perceptions of Violence Prevention Training*

	Yes	No
Received violence prevention training in program (n=106)	19.8	80.2
Received violence prevention training after program (n=106)	91.5	8.5
Received violence prevention training through district (n=106)	78.3	21.7
I believe I am adequately trained in violence prevention (n=106)	55.7	44.3
I believe I need additional violence prevention training (n=103)	77.4	19.8

*Note.* Percentage of respondents answering yes or no.

*School Psychologists' Definition of School Violence*

Participants were given NASP's definition of school violence and asked if their perception of what constitutes a violent act had changed based on the definition.

Additionally, participants were asked if they would respond differently to the survey based on this definition. Table 23 shows that 60.4% of the respondents did not change their perception of what constitutes violence given NASP's position and 77.4% indicated that they would not respond differently to the survey if they were given the chance.

Table 23.

*School Psychologists' Perceptions Regarding the Definition of School Violence*

	Yes	No
Given NASP's definition of school violence, has your perception of what constitutes a violent act increased (n=104)	37.7	60.4
Would you respond differently to this survey given NASP's definition of school violence (n=105)	21.7	77.4

*Note.* Percentage of respondents answering yes or no.

*Summary*

The results of this chapter will now be summarized in terms of the research objectives outlined in Chapter One.

1. To determine school psychologists' perceptions of the prevalence of school violence.

Overall, half of the school psychologists surveyed perceive violence to have

increased in schools over the past few years whereas the other half perceive school violence to have remained stable or decreased over the past few years. Further, the majority of school psychologists surveyed perceive the severity of violence to have increased over the past few years. In addition, 100% of the respondents indicated that they perceive assault with weapons and assaults that require medical care as violence. However, less than half stated that they perceive teasing and making fun of others (31.1%), name calling and cursing (48.1%), gossiping and spreading rumors (19.8%), and social isolation of an individual or group (32.1%) as violence.

2. To determine how safe school psychologists' perceive their school to be.

It was determined that 65.1% of school psychologists currently practicing in Minnesota and Wisconsin schools perceive that the amount of violence occurring in their school(s) has remained stable over the past few years. Similarly, 60.4% of the respondents to the survey believe that the severity of violence at their school(s) has remained stable over the last few years.

3. To assess school psychologists' reported experiences with student to student school violence.

Less than half of the respondents indicated that the following behaviors have occurred between students on their school campuses: threat of assault with a gun (38.7%), physical assault with a weapon other than a gun (34.9%), and physical assault where medical care was needed (45.3%). Nearly all of the respondents indicated that the following behaviors have occurred between students on their school campuses: teasing and making fun of others (98.1%), name calling and cursing (97.2%), and gossiping and spreading rumors (95.3%). Further, 71.7% stated that social isolation of an individual or

group has occurred between students on their school campuses. When considering the percentage of time school psychologists witnessed these behaviors to occur, the majority indicated that they had never witnessed the following behaviors on their campuses: assault with a gun (91.5%), assault with a weapon other than a gun (57.5%), or assault where medical care was needed (42.5%). However, approximately one third reported that the following less severe behaviors have occurred on their campuses on a daily basis: bullying (45.3%), teasing and making fun of others (38.7%), name calling and cursing (45.3%), and gossiping and spreading rumors (35.8%). Further, 17.9% reported social isolation of an individual or group to occur on a daily basis.

4. To evaluate school psychologists' perceived readiness to address school violence.

It was determined that more than half of the respondents rated themselves as totally prepared to address teasing and making fun of others (75.5%), name calling and cursing (72.6%), gossiping and spreading rumors (62.3%), and social isolation of an individual or group (50.9%). More than half of the respondents felt unprepared to address assault with a gun between students (50.9%) and over a third stated that they felt unprepared to address physical assault between students with weapons other than a gun (36.8%). Further, many of the respondents reported that they felt well trained to address less severe forms of interpersonal violence: bullying (40.6%), teasing and making fun of others (56.6%), name calling and cursing (55.7%), gossiping and spreading rumors (47.2%), and social exclusion of an individual or group (44.3%). However, the majority stated that they felt untrained to address physical assault with a gun (58.5%) or physical assault with a weapon other than a gun (49.1%). Half of the respondents to the current

survey stated that they were adequately trained in the area of violence prevention and intervention (55.7%); however, over three quarters reported that they could benefit from additional training in this area (77.4%). Further, most of the participants stated that they received violence prevention and intervention training through continuing education activities (91.5%) and their school districts (78.3%). Less than one quarter reported that their school psychology training program provided violence prevention and intervention training (19.8%).

## CHAPTER 5

### Discussion

This chapter will briefly review the purpose, methodological procedures, and findings of the study. The results will then be considered as they compare to previous research. This will be followed by a detailed examination of the limitations inherent to the study as well as suggestions for future research.

#### *Purpose of the Study*

This study is a replication of past research. It was conducted to update the literature regarding school psychologists' perceptions, experiences, and perceived preparedness to address school violence. The purpose of this study was to determine school psychologists' perceptions of the prevalence of school violence, to determine how safe school psychologists perceive their school(s) to be, to assess school psychologists' experiences with student to student violence, and to consider how prepared school psychologists perceive themselves to be to address school violence.

#### *Methodological Procedures*

Data for this investigation was collected via a survey sent to 357 Nationally Certified School Psychologists currently practicing in Minnesota and Wisconsin schools. The participating sample consisted of 106 school psychologists, 37 male and 68 female. Descriptive statistics including frequency counts and percentages were used to analyze the data.

#### *Major Findings*

To determine school psychologists' perceptions of violence, the survey asked participants to rate whether they believed the amount of violence and severity of violence

occurring in schools has increased, remained relatively stable, or decreased over the past few years. The majority of respondents stated that they believe the amount of violence and severity of violence occurring in schools has increased over the last few years. The survey further required participants to look at a list of behaviors ranging in severity from physically aggressive acts to less severe forms of interpersonal violence and identify the behaviors that they considered constituted violence. All respondents identified assault with weapons and assault that required medical care as violence. Less than half considered less severe forms of interpersonal violence such as teasing and making fun of others, name calling and cursing, gossiping and spreading rumors, and social isolation of an individual or group as violence. Based on these findings, it appears that school psychologists continue to perceive school violence in terms of physically aggressive acts and do not consider less severe behaviors as violent. In addition, one could infer from these findings that physically aggressive crimes are increasing in our nation's schools.

To determine how safe school psychologists perceived the school(s) they worked in to be, the survey asked participants to rate whether they believed that the amount of violence and severity of violence occurring in their school(s) has increased, remained relatively stable, or decreased over the past few years. More than half of the respondents stated that the amount of violence and severity of violence occurring at their own school(s) has remained relatively stable over the last few years. As respondents to the current study indicated that they perceived violence to be increasing in schools nationwide, one would assume that they would also report that the amount and severity of violence occurring at their own schools has also increased over the last few years. However, respondents to the current survey reported that the amount of school violence

and severity of school violence has remained relatively stable at their schools. Therefore, school psychologists may be basing their perceptions of school violence on an outside influence, such as the shootings at Columbine High School.

Respondents were then asked to report upon their experiences of student to student violence occurring at their school(s). This section of the survey replicated the list of behaviors ranging in severity from physically aggressive acts to less severe forms of interpersonal violence and asked respondents to identify the behaviors that they have observed between students at their school(s). Less than half of the respondents reported that they witnessed physically aggressive acts between students; however, the majority had witnessed less severe forms of interpersonal violence between students. While the majority of respondents only witnessed physically aggressive acts to occur several times per year, they witnessed less severe forms of interpersonal violence on an hourly or daily basis. Based on these findings, it seems that school psychologists in Minnesota and Wisconsin do not view their schools as violent because they only witness behaviors that they perceive to be violent (i.e., physical assault) several times per year. If school psychologists viewed less severe, nonphysical behaviors that they see on an hourly or daily basis (i.e., teasing and name calling) as forms of violence, they might perceive school violence to have increased on their campuses over the last few years.

To determine how prepared school psychologists believed they were to address violence between students, the participants were again provided with a list of behaviors ranging in severity and were asked to rate whether they were totally prepared, adequately but not totally prepared, or unprepared to address each of the behaviors. Respondents indicated that they were least prepared to address physically aggressive behaviors such as

assault with a gun and most prepared to address less severe behaviors such as teasing and name calling.

Respondents were then asked to rate how well trained they believed they were to address violence between students. Based on the same list of behaviors, participants were asked to rate whether they were well trained, adequately trained, or untrained to address each of the behaviors. Most of the respondents indicated that they were well trained or adequately trained to address less severe behaviors and untrained to address physically aggressive behaviors.

Finally, respondents were asked to comment on their graduate and post graduate training. Half stated that they were adequately trained in violence prevention and intervention techniques and the majority indicated that they received their training post graduate school.

It appears that school psychologists do not view themselves as well trained to address school violence because they perceive it in terms of physically aggressive acts. However, if school psychologists viewed behaviors such as name calling and social isolation as forms of violence, they might perceive themselves as better trained to address school violence issues. Further, it seems that if school psychologists perceived less severe, nonphysical behaviors as forms of violence, they would report that they received violence prevention and intervention training in their school psychology program.

### *Critical Analysis*

Findings from past studies (Furlong et al., 1994; Furlong et al., 1996) suggest that school psychologists do not believe that they have a very large problem with school violence on their campuses. Initially, it was this researcher's belief that school

psychologists participating in past studies did not view school violence as a large problem because they tended to consider only physically aggressive acts (i.e., weapon-related threats) in their responses to past surveys. Therefore, the current study set out to improve upon past research by expanding the survey to include a wide range of behaviors that might harm an individual physically, psychologically, or emotionally.

Despite these efforts, the current study found that the majority of school psychologists continue to believe that while school violence appears to be increasing in schools nationwide, the amount of violence and severity of violence occurring on their own school campuses has remained relatively stable over the last few years. Based on the findings, it would appear that school psychologists continue to perceive violence as physically aggressive acts and do not tend to consider less severe forms of interpersonal violence such as teasing, name calling, gossiping, and social isolation as violent. In addition, the majority of school psychologists continue to perceive themselves as prepared to address less severe forms of violent behaviors occurring between students at their schools but feel unprepared to address more severe forms of violence between students. The most significant difference noted in the current study, compared to past research, was that the majority of school psychologists perceived bullying as an act of violence whereas in past studies they tended to view it as similar to teasing and name calling and not as an act of violence.

Findings from the current study suggest that even when provided with a more comprehensive list of behaviors that might be considered forms of violence, school psychologists still do not view less severe, nonphysical behaviors as violence. Nearly all respondents to the current survey reported that they had witnessed teasing, name calling,

and gossiping between students on their campuses and more than three quarters stated that they had witnessed teasing and name calling to occur between students on an hourly or daily basis. However, less than half of the respondents stated that they perceived name calling as an act of violence and less than one third stated that they perceived teasing and making fun of others, gossiping and spreading rumors, and social isolation of an individual or group as acts of violence. If school psychologists do not perceive these behaviors as forms of violence, what do they perceive them as? Understanding the behaviors school psychologists consider to be violent is important as current research suggests that students who have been subjected to less severe forms of interpersonal violence may be retaliating against their perpetrator(s) with physical aggression (Bowman, 2001; Dunn, 2001; Dupper & Meyer-Adams, 2002; Hazler & Carney, 2000; Vossekuil, Reddy, Fein, Borum, & Modzeleski, 2000).

Data from the current study suggests that nearly three quarters of school psychologists in Minnesota and Wisconsin schools considered bullying as an act of violence. Yet, less than half considered verbal assault (e.g., name calling) and less than one third considered teasing and making fun of others, gossiping and spreading rumors, and social isolation of an individual or group as acts of violence. This finding leads one to question how respondents to the survey defined bullying and how these definitions compare to the literature on bullying. A review of the literature on bullying resulted in multiple definitions to include physically and psychologically harmful behaviors such as hitting, teasing, social isolation, harassment, verbal assault, etc. (Dunn, 2001; Dupper & Meyer-Adams, 2002; Peterson & Skiba, 2001). While the majority of respondents to the current study stated that they perceived bullying as a form of school violence, the

majority did not perceive the behaviors that make up bullying such as teasing, name calling, and social isolation as acts of violence. Therefore, it appears that there is a discrepancy in the current study regarding the definition of bullying; there is not an overall consensus regarding the behaviors that constitute bullying.

Finally, the majority of respondents to the current study stated that they did not receive training in violence prevention and intervention in their graduate school psychology training program. However, nearly all school psychologists who participated in the current study stated that they were well trained or adequately trained to address behaviors such as bullying, teasing, verbal assault (e.g., name calling), gossiping and spreading rumors, and social exclusion of an individual or group. Perhaps if school psychologists perceived less severe forms of interpersonal violence such as teasing and name calling as acts of violence, they would perceive themselves as better trained and prepared to address school violence.

#### *Limitations of the Study*

One of the biggest limitations to the current study was the low response rate among potential participants. Conditions that could have contributed to the low response rate include the length of the survey and the lack of follow up with those individuals who did not respond to the initial survey. If a similar study were conducted, this researcher would suggest that a shorter survey be constructed and individuals who do not respond be contacted again.

A second limitation to this study was that the sample was not representative of school psychologists nationwide. Caucasian individuals age 40 and older who work primarily in small towns and suburbs were over represented. Due to the limited sample

size and inaccurate representation of the general population of school psychologists, the results of this study cannot be generalized to school psychologists nationwide. Future studies should aim to reach a national sample of school psychologists so that the information obtained may be applied to all school psychologists practicing in a school setting.

A third limitation to this study was that participants were not provided with a definition of violence to reference when completing the survey. Findings from past studies suggest that when school psychologists are not given a specific definition of school violence, they tend to consider only physically aggressive acts. Perhaps some respondents were aware of NASP's position on school violence while others were not aware and as a result, affected the findings of the current study. Therefore, future research should provide school psychologists with NASP's definition of school violence so that all participants use the same criteria when reporting their perceptions.

#### *Suggestions for Future Research*

This study generates many questions to be answered in future research. It would be beneficial to conduct a similar study targeting a more nationally representative sample so that the findings may be generalized to the entire population of school psychologists practicing in a school setting.

Additionally, future studies might consider targeting more recent school psychology graduates to determine how their perceptions, experiences, and preparedness to address school violence compares to older school psychologists' perceptions. Over three quarters of the respondents to the current study were 40 years of age or older. Indeed, the issue of school violence was not as big an issue when this population of

psychologists were in their school psychology training programs. As a result, they did not receive the amount of training in violence prevention and intervention as school psychologists who have recently graduated. Determining more recent school psychologists' perceptions of school violence might eliminate the discrepancy found in this study that while the majority of school psychologists' perceive bullying as an act of violence, most do not consider behaviors that make up bullying such as teasing, name calling, and social isolation to be violent.

Finally, future research should obtain data on school psychologists' experiences with student to student school violence in a more objective way. For example, school psychologists could be provided with a comprehensive list of behaviors and be asked to keep track of student behaviors for one week by placing tally marks next to those behaviors that they witness occurring between students. Past research has found that individuals who have been subjected to less severe forms of violence such as bullying have been found to retaliate against their perpetrator(s) and other students with physical aggression. This finding is concerning as approximately three quarters of respondents to the current study stated that they had witnessed less severe forms of interpersonal violence including bullying, verbal assault, and teasing to occur between students on at least a daily basis. Having a better understanding of the types of behaviors that are occurring between students on school campuses and the frequency in which these behaviors are occurring could provide school psychologists with useful information in determining effective violence prevention and intervention strategies.

### *Conclusion*

The present study examined school psychologists' perceptions, experiences, and

preparedness to address school violence. Results indicated that school psychologists currently practicing in Minnesota and Wisconsin schools perceive school violence to be increasing in our nation's schools yet report that violence occurring at their own schools has remained relatively stable over the last few years. Further, respondents to the survey perceive school violence primarily as physically aggressive acts and do not view less severe forms of interpersonal violence such as teasing, name calling, and social isolation as violent.

Findings from the current study suggest that while the majority of school psychologists' believe that they are not adequately trained or prepared to address violent behaviors, they are underestimating their abilities. The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) defines violence as any act that harms an individual physically, psychologically, or emotionally. Further, researchers have defined bullying as any act of interpersonal violence or physical violence. Based on these definitions, the current study has found that school psychologists are at least adequately prepared to address many acts of violence that occur on a regular basis such as teasing, name calling, gossiping, threatening, and social exclusion of an individual or group. However, it appears that school psychologists believe that they are not adequately trained or prepared to address school violence, because they define violence as only including severe acts of physical aggression. As the current literature is beginning to support the view that school violence includes less severe behaviors (such as teasing and name calling) and more severe behaviors (such as assault with weapons), future research should stop emphasizing violence with guns and focus on changing attitudes about the behaviors that comprise school violence.

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April 16, 2001

Dear Sir or Madam:

Nationally Certified School Psychologists currently practicing in Minnesota and Wisconsin schools have been selected to participate in a survey regarding school violence. While the survey looks long, completion of this survey should take approximately 15 minutes. I realize that this is a busy time of year for all involved and would like to thank you in advance for your assistance.

Your responses will be used to determine the types of violence that are occurring between students and how prepared and trained school psychologists believe they are to address these behaviors.

The completion of the survey implies voluntary participation in this study. No identifying information will be used and confidentiality is strictly guaranteed. You have the right to refuse to participate and may withdraw from participation at any time during the study.

I have enclosed an envelope for your convenience in returning your completed survey. If you have any questions or concerns, you can call me at (651) 227-2353, email me at [rarrow11@aol.com](mailto:rarrow11@aol.com), or contact my research advisor Dr. Denise Maricle at (715) 232-2229. I thank you in advance for your prompt cooperation in gathering this information.

NOTE: Questions or concerns about participation in the research or subsequent complaints should be addressed first to the researcher or research advisor and second to Dr. Ted Knous, Chair, UW-Stout Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research, 11 HH, UW-Stout, Menomonie, WI, 54751, phone (715) 232-1126.

Sincerely,

Renee G. Arrowood  
University of Wisconsin-Stout  
Graduate Student – School Psychology

## SURVEY OF SCHOOL VIOLENCE

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**What is your gender?**

- Male
- Female

**How do you identify yourself?**

*(Check only **ONE** choice)*

- American Indian (Native American)
- Asian American (Cambodian, Chinese, East Indian, Japanese, Korean, Laotian, Philipino, Vietnamese...)
- Black/African American
- Chicano, Hispanic, Latino, Mexican, Mexican American
- Pacific Islander
- White/European American
- Other (specify \_\_\_\_\_)
- Multicultural (specify \_\_\_\_\_)

**What is your age?**

- 21-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-59
- 60 – older

**What is your highest degree attained?**

- MA, MS, M.Ed
- Ed.S
- Ed.D/Ph.D/PsyD

**Which of the following best describes the university that you were trained at?**

- A major state university
- A branch of a major state university
- A medium to small sized state university or state college
- A private university or college

**Which of the following best describes your current employment status?**

- Full time school psychologist at one school site
- Full time school psychologist at more than one school site
- Full time school psychologist in a cooperative education center (e.g., CESA, BOCES, etc.)
- Part time school psychologist at one school site
- Part time school psychologist at more than one school site
- Part time school psychologist in a cooperative education center (e.g., CESA, BOCES, etc.)
- Other (specify \_\_\_\_\_)

**How many years have you worked as a school psychologist?**

- 1-5 years
- 5-10 years
- 10-15 years
- 15-20 years
- 20-30 years
- 30-40 years
- Over 40 years

**How many schools are you currently serving?**

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6+

**Which of the following best describes the school(s) in which you are working?**

*(Check ALL that apply if you work at more than one school and please specify percentage of time spent at each school)*

- Elementary School \_\_\_\_\_%
- Middle School \_\_\_\_\_%
- Junior High School \_\_\_\_\_%
- Senior High School \_\_\_\_\_%
- Other (specify \_\_\_\_\_)

**Which of the following best describes the ethnic makeup of the students in your school(s)? Please list by percentages the ethnic breakdown of your school population.**

- Caucasian

- Primarily Caucasian with a small population of minority students  
 \_\_\_% Asian \_\_\_% Black \_\_\_% Hispanic \_\_\_% Native American  
 Other populations (specify \_\_\_\_\_)

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- 50% Caucasian and 50% minority students  
 \_\_\_% Asian \_\_\_% Black \_\_\_% Hispanic \_\_\_% Native American  
 Other populations (specify \_\_\_\_\_)
- Primarily Non-Caucasian with a small population of Caucasian students  
 \_\_\_% Asian \_\_\_% Black \_\_\_% Hispanic \_\_\_% Native American  
 Other populations (specify \_\_\_\_\_)
- Non-Caucasian  
 \_\_\_% Asian \_\_\_% Black \_\_\_% Hispanic \_\_\_% Native American  
 Other populations (specify \_\_\_\_\_)

**What are the age/grade levels of the population of students that you serve?**

*(Check ALL that apply)*

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Early Childhood (age birth to 5 years) | <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <sup>th</sup> grade  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Kindergarten                           | <input type="checkbox"/> 7 <sup>th</sup> grade  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <sup>st</sup> grade                  | <input type="checkbox"/> 8 <sup>th</sup> grade  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <sup>nd</sup> grade                  | <input type="checkbox"/> 9 <sup>th</sup> grade  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <sup>rd</sup> grade                  | <input type="checkbox"/> 10 <sup>th</sup> grade |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <sup>th</sup> grade                  | <input type="checkbox"/> 11 <sup>th</sup> grade |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <sup>th</sup> grade                  | <input type="checkbox"/> 12 <sup>th</sup> grade |

**What is the school psychologist to student ratio in your district?**

- < 1/1,000
- 1/1,000 – 1,499
- 1/1,500 – 3,099
- 1/3,100 – 5,099
- 1/5,100 – 7,499
- >1/7,500
- Other (specify \_\_\_\_\_)

**What is the size of your current school district?**

- Under 1,000
- 1,000-3,999
- 4,000-8,999
- 9,000-12,999
- 13,000-20,999
- 21,000-30,999
- 31,000-39,999
- 40,000-100,000
- Over 100,000

**Which of the following best describes the community setting of the school(s) that you are practicing in?**

*(Check ALL that apply if you are practicing in more than one school)*

- Inner city
- Suburban
- Urban
- Small town
- Rural
- Other (specify \_\_\_\_\_)

+++++

**The amount of violence in schools in the last few years has**

- Decreased
- Remained relatively stable
- Increased

**The severity of violence in schools in the last few years has**

- Decreased
- Remained relatively stable
- Increased

**The amount of violence in my school(s) during the last few years has**

- Decreased
- Remained relatively stable
- Increased

**The severity of violence in my school(s) during the last few years has**

- Decreased
- Remained relatively stable
- Increased

**In your opinion, which of the following behaviors constitutes a violent act?**

*(Check ALL that apply)*

- Bullying (being mean, intimidating others)
- Physical assault (pushing, shoving, grabbing, kicking, tripping)
- Physical assault (fist fight)
- Physical assault with weapon other than a gun (rock, pipe, knife, razor, glass)
- Threat of physical assault with a gun
- Physical assault with a gun (shooting)
- Assault in which medical care was needed for physical injury
- Assault in which psychological care was need for emotional trauma
  
- Teasing or making fun of others
- Verbal assault (saying bad words, cursing at, calling names)
- Verbal threat of intent to harm
- Verbal threat of intent to harm with a weapon
- Verbal threat of intent to kill self or others
- Verbal assault (racial slurs, comments about sexual orientation)

- Gossiping or spreading rumors about someone's behavior or activities
- Sexual harassment (sexual comments or sexual gestures)
- Sexual harassment (intimidation, coercion or creating a hostile environment)
- Sexual harassment (verbal threats)
- Sexual harassment (physical threats)
- Sexual harassment (coerced sexual activity)
- Sexual assault (inappropriate touch, mock rape)
- Sexual assault (attempted rape or rape)
  
- Vandalism of school property (graffiti, destruction of property)
- Vandalism of personal property (graffiti, destruction of property)
- Purposeful damage to personal property
- Theft of school property
- Theft of personal property
  
- Deliberate social isolation of individual or group of individuals
- Deliberate intimidation of individual or group of individuals
- Improper use of power to intimidate or create fear in individual or group of individuals
- Hazing of members as initiation into specific group

**Which of the following behaviors have occurred or do occur between students in your school(s)?**

*(Check ALL that apply)*

- Bullying (being mean, intimidating others)
- Physical assault (pushing, shoving, grabbing, kicking, tripping)
- Physical assault (fist fight)
- Physical assault with weapon other than a gun (rock, pipe, knife, razor, glass)
- Threat of physical assault with a gun
- Physical assault with a gun (shooting)
- Assault in which medical care was needed for physical injury
- Assault in which psychological care was need for emotional trauma
  
- Teasing or making fun of others
- Verbal assault (saying bad words, cursing at, calling names)
- Verbal threat of intent to harm
- Verbal threat of intent to harm with a weapon
- Verbal threat of intent to kill self or others
- Verbal assault (racial slurs, comments about sexual orientation)
- Gossiping or spreading rumors about someone's behavior or activities
- Sexual harassment (sexual comments or sexual gestures)
- Sexual harassment (intimidation, coercion or creating a hostile environment)
- Sexual harassment (verbal threats)
- Sexual harassment (physical threats)
- Sexual harassment (coerced sexual activity)

- Sexual assault (inappropriate touch, mock rape)
- Sexual assault (attempted rape or rape)
  
- Vandalism of school property (graffiti, destruction of property)
- Vandalism of personal property (graffiti, destruction of property)
- Purposeful damage to personal property
- Theft of school property
- Theft of personal property
  
- Deliberate social isolation of individual or group of individuals
- Deliberate intimidation of individual or group of individuals
- Improper use of power to intimidate or create fear in individual or group of individuals
- Hazing of members as initiation into specific group

**Using the following scale, please circle how frequently these behaviors occur between students in your school(s)?**

1 (Hourly) 2 (Daily) 3 (Weekly) 4 (Monthly) 5 (Several times per year) 6 (Never)

Bullying (being mean, intimidating others)

1 2 3 4 5 6

Physical assault (pushing, shoving, grabbing, kicking, tripping)

1 2 3 4 5 6

Physical assault (fist fight)

1 2 3 4 5 6

Physical assault with weapon other than a gun (rock, pipe, knife, razor, glass)

1 2 3 4 5 6

Threat of physical assault with a gun

1 2 3 4 5 6

Physical assault with a gun (shooting)

1 2 3 4 5 6

Assault in which medical care was needed for physical injury

1 2 3 4 5 6

1 (Hourly) 2 (Daily) 3 (Weekly) 4 (Monthly) 5 (Several times per year) 6 (Never)

Assault in which psychological care was need for emotional trauma

1 2 3 4 5 6

Teasing or making fun of others

1 2 3 4 5 6

Verbal assault (saying bad words, cursing at, calling names)

1 2 3 4 5 6

Verbal threat of intent to harm

1 2 3 4 5 6

Verbal threat of intent to harm with a weapon

1 2 3 4 5 6

Verbal threat of intent to kill self or others

1 2 3 4 5 6

Verbal assault (racial slurs, comments about sexual orientation)

1 2 3 4 5 6

Gossiping or spreading rumors about someone's behavior or activities

1 2 3 4 5 6

Sexual harassment (sexual comments or sexual gestures)

1 2 3 4 5 6

Sexual harassment (intimidation, coercion or creating a hostile environment)

1 2 3 4 5 6

Sexual harassment (verbal threats)

1 2 3 4 5 6

Sexual harassment (physical threats)

1 2 3 4 5 6

Sexual harassment (coerced sexual activity)

1 2 3 4 5 6

Sexual assault (inappropriate touch, mock rape)

1 2 3 4 5 6

1 (Hourly) 2 (Daily) 3 (Weekly) 4 (Monthly) 5 (Several times per year) 6 (Never)

Sexual assault (attempted rape or rape)

1 2 3 4 5 6

Vandalism of school property (graffiti, destruction of property)

1 2 3 4 5 6

Vandalism of personal property (graffiti, destruction of property)

1 2 3 4 5 6

Purposeful damage to personal property

1 2 3 4 5 6

Theft of school property

1 2 3 4 5 6

Theft of personal property

1 2 3 4 5 6

Deliberate social isolation of individual or group of individuals

1 2 3 4 5 6

Deliberate intimidation of individual or group of individuals

1 2 3 4 5 6

Improper use of power to intimidate or create fear in individual or group of individuals

1 2 3 4 5 6

Hazing of members as initiation into specific group

1 2 3 4 5 6

**Using the following scale, please circle how prepared you believe you are to deal with the following issues between students?**

1 (Totally Prepared)    2 (Adequately, but not totally prepared)    3 (Unprepared)

**Physical aggression**

Threats of physical assault	1	2	3
Bullying	1	2	3
Physical assault (shoving, hitting, fist fights)	1	2	3
Physical assault with a weapon (knife, razor)	1	2	3
Physical assault with a gun	1	2	3

**Verbal aggression**

Teasing	1	2	3
Verbal Assault (name calling, cursing)	1	2	3
Verbal Threat to harm	1	2	3
Verbal Threat to kill self or others	1	2	3
Verbal Abuse regarding race or sexual orientation	1	2	3
Gossip and rumor	1	2	3

**Sexual Harassment**

Verbal comments	1	2	3
Physical threats	1	2	3
Coerced activity	1	2	3
Rape	1	2	3

**Vandalism and Theft**

Vandalism of school property		1	2	3
Theft of school property	1	2	3	
Vandalism of personal property		1	2	3
Theft of personal property		1	2	3

**Interpersonal Relationships**

Social exclusion		1	2	3
Social intimidation		1	2	3
Hazing		1	2	3

**Using the following scale, please circle how adequately trained you think you are to deal with the following issues between students?**

1 (Well trained)                      2 (Adequately trained)                      3 (Untrained)

**Physical aggression**

Threats of physical assault		1	2	3
Bullying		1	2	3
Physical assault (shoving, hitting, fist fights)		1	2	3
Physical assault with a weapon (knife, razor)		1	2	3
Physical assault with a gun		1	2	3

**Verbal aggression**

Teasing		1	2	3
Verbal Assault (name calling, cursing)		1	2	3
Verbal Threat to harm		1	2	3
Verbal Threat to kill self or others		1	2	3
Verbal Abuse regarding race or sexual orientation		1	2	3
Gossip and rumor		1	2	3

**Sexual Harassment**

Verbal comments		1	2	3
Physical threats		1	2	3
Coerced activity		1	2	3
Rape		1	2	3

**Vandalism and Theft**

Vandalism of school property		1	2	3
Theft of school property	1	2	3	
Vandalism of personal property		1	2	3
Theft of personal property		1	2	3

**Interpersonal Relationships**

Social exclusion		1	2	3
Social intimidation		1	2	3
Hazing		1	2	3

**I received training in violence prevention and intervention in my School Psychology training program.**

- Yes
- No

**I obtained training in violence prevention and intervention through continuing education activities after formally completing my School Psychology training.**

- Yes

- No

**I received training in violence prevention, intervention, and crisis management through my school district.**

- Yes
- No

**I feel that I am adequately trained in violence prevention, intervention, and crisis management.**

- Yes
- No

**I believe I need additional training in violence prevention, intervention and crisis management.**

- Yes
- No

**The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) supports the view that school violence is any act which threatens the physical, psychological, or emotional well being of any individual. Given NASP's definition of school violence, has your perception of what constitutes a violent act changed?**

- No, my perception of what should be considered school violence has stayed the same.
- Yes, my perception of what should be considered school violence has increased.
- Yes, my perception of what should be considered school violence has decreased.

**Given NASP's definition of violence, and the opportunity, would you respond differently to these survey questions regarding the amount of violence occurring in your school(s)?**

- No
- Yes

If yes, how? \_\_\_\_\_

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