Theses and Dissertations

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# Bullying prevention and social justice: recommendations for teachers

Anna Grigorian-Routon

Pepperdine University

Graduate School of Education and Psychology

BULLYING PREVENTION AND SOCIAL JUSTICE: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR

TEACHERS

A clinical dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Psychology

by

Anna Grigorian-Routon

June, 2021

Anat Cohen, PhD – Dissertation Chairperson

This clinical dissertation, written by

Anna Grigorian-Routon

under the guidance of a Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PSYCHOLOGY

Doctoral Committee:

Anat Cohen, PhD, Chairperson

Robert deMayo, PhD

Anett Abrahamian Assilian, PsyD

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# DEDICATION

To all the children who have been ridiculed for their "ethnic" lunches, have been asked their "real name," and have been told to "go back to your country."

*also*

To my Tatik, who chose to abandon her dissertation to raise her children, and, many decades later, made my own dissertation defense possible.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The saying goes, "It takes a village . . .," but, in this case, it took a metropolis.

First, I would like to express my deep appreciation to my dissertation chairperson, Dr. Anat Cohen, without whom I would never have been able to reach this point in my doctoral education. From the first day of our meeting, under the most difficult life circumstances for me, you have advised, guided, and supported me. You have provided mentorship and you have believed in me. You pushed me when I needed the momentum and helped me apply the brakes when I needed to slow down. Thank you for your dedication to my professional and personal growth and development. Thank you for everything.

I would also like to express my gratitude to my dissertation committee members, Dr. Robert deMayo and Dr. Anett Abrahamian Assilian. Your input, support, and encouragement throughout this process have been invaluable.

I would like to thank my mother, Sofia, who provided the first tuition payment and my father, Igor, who refused to allow me to quit after the personal tragedies in the first months of the program. My "Babulya," Natalia, for holding space for this dream for me. My "Tatik," Hasmik, and my maternal uncle, Armen, for countless hours babysitting my daughter so I could go to school, see clients, and go on interviews. My paternal uncle, Suren, who has always been an example of academic and personal excellence for me. My sister, Mariam, who has been a second mother to my girls in many ways and who has been an unwavering, unconditional, and positive force in my life since the day she was born. My mother, father, and brother-in-law—Mischa, Ron, and Jon—for opening their hearts, and very often their home, to me in a way that a daughter-in-law dare not dream. My friends who have been understanding when I have forgotten to answer messages, check in, or show up to events because I have been wrapped up in writing.

CBU/OPS and especially my colleagues-turned-friends whose encouragement, patience, help, and support have been a true blessing.

Finally, I cannot overstate the depth of gratitude that I owe my husband, Ryan, and our two amazing girls, Sophia and Natalia. For the better part of a decade, you have shared me with the PsyD program. You have endured dinners alone, missed events, cancelled plans, and have sacrificed precious time together. You have stood by me. You have encouraged me. You have pushed me. You have given me stuffed animals to take to work so I "don't get sad." Ryan, you have earned this doctorate as much as I have. You have walked with me through the most difficult of times and have served as my compass. Sophie and Natalie, you are the reason I've worked so hard—"Girls can do amazing things!"

# VITA

## EDUCATION

**Pepperdine University, Graduate School of Education and Psychology**     *Expected:* May, 2020
Los Angeles, CA
*Doctor of Psychology in Clinical Psychology*
**Dissertation title:** *Bullying and Social Justice: Recommendations for Teachers*
**Committee Members:** Anat Cohen, Ph.D., Robert deMayo, Ph.D., Anett Abrahamian Assilian, Psy.D.
**Clinical Competence Examination:** Pass
**APA-Accredited Internship:** Completed

**California Baptist University**     May, 2008
Riverside, CA
*Master of Science in Counseling Psychology*

**University of California, Riverside**     August, 2005
Riverside, CA
*Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and Anthropology*

## DOCTORAL CLINICAL TRAINING EXPERIENCE

**The Help Group**     August 2018 – August 2019
Supervisors: Priscilla Barajas, PhD, Lidia Michel, PsyD, Alisa Dennis, PhD, Rachel Kavanaugh, PsyD
Sherman Oaks, CA
*Pre-Doctoral Intern*
- Provided weekly individual and family counseling to five clients (ages 9 to 13) attending The Help Group's Summit View School (non-public school serving students with learning differences)

    - Presenting diagnoses of clients included: attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), autism spectrum disorder (ASD), depression, anxiety, family conflict, trauma (i.e., physical abuse, domestic violence exposure)
    - Client racial/ethnic backgrounds included: Iranian-American, Jewish/Israeli, and White/Caucasian
    - Collaborated with teachers and administrative staff to implement social-emotional treatment plans in the milieu to support client's academic progress
    - Created client's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) social-emotional goals, evaluated clients' present level of social-emotional functioning, and assessed progress on previous goals
    - Participated in weekly clinical team meetings with clinical staff focused on sharing therapy techniques/ tools and case presentations
    - Participated in IEP meetings to provide progress reports on clients' social-emotional functioning and created

- Maintained detailed client files on Welligent- Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD)
- Developed a curriculum for and co-led a social skills group for 6 clients (ages 9 to 11 years) attending The Help Group's Summit View School
- Developed a curriculum for and co-led a group for parents of children with ADHD and ASD focused on mindfulness in parenting practices and discipline
- Provided in-home and outpatient psychotherapy to two male clients (ages 8 and 16)

- - Presenting diagnoses of clients were: attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), autism spectrum disorder (ASD), and trauma (i.e., physical abuse, domestic violence exposure), and depression and anxiety
  - Client racial/ethnic backgrounds were: African American and Latino
  - Provided parent guidance and engaged parents/caregivers in treatment to support effective family functioning
  - Consulted and collaborated with teachers implement social-emotional treatment plans in the milieu to support clients' social functioning
  - Maintained detailed client files on Welligent
- Conducted comprehensive psychological assessments for children and adolescents, wrote integrated reports, and provided dynamic feedback to families and other health care providers

  - Psychological assessments included but were not limited to: Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule-2 (ADOS-2, Observation Only); Beery-Buktenica Test of Visual-Motor Integration (VMI); Child and Adolescent Memory Profile (ChAMP); Children's Apperception Test (CAT); Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals (CELF-V); Conners Continuous Performance Test (CPT-3); Delis-Kaplan Executive Function System (D-KEFS); Gray Oral Reading Test (GORT-5); Grooved Pegboard Test; Mullen Scales of Early Learning; Nelson-Denny Reading Test; NEPSY-II; Sentence Completion Test; Test of Written Language (TOWL-4); Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale (WAIS-IV); Wechsler Individual Achievement Testing (WIAT-III); Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC-V); Woodcock-Johnson IV Tests of Academic Achievement (WJ-IV); Various behavior checklists; Various self-reports of personality
- Attended weekly didactic trainings on a wide range of topics (e.g., Psychodynamic approach to teamwork, group therapy, family therapy)
- Conducted a survey on student perception of teacher efficacy in bullying prevention at Summit View School and analyzed and presented results, offering practical suggestions to teachers and administrative staff
- Collaborated with Training Department Director to write APA self-study for site visit
- Collaborated with Practicum Training Coordinator to conduct interviews of practicum applicants
- Provided supervision to practicum student offering feedback and evaluation

**Insight Collective**                                                                     August 2017 – July 2018
Supervisors: Oren Boxer, PhD, Krista Greenfield, PsyD
Pasadena, CA
*Extern*
- Administered, scored and interpret neuropsychological and psychoeducational assessments for children, adolescents, and young adults (ages 4 to 20)
- Collaborated on identifying appropriate evidence-based assessment tools including but not limited to the following: A Developmental Psychological Assessment- Second Edition (NEPSY-II), Behavior Assessment System for Children-Second Edition (BASC-2), Behavior Rating Inventory Scale of Executive Functioning (BRIEF), California Verbal Learning Test (CVLT-C), Conners Continuous Performance Test- Third Edition (CPT-3), Delis-Kaplan Executive Function Scale (D-KEFS), Feifer Assessment of Reading (FAR)/Feifer Assessment of Math (FAM), Grooved Pegboard Test, Rey-Osterrieth Complex Figure Test (RCFT), Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale-Fourth Edition (WAIS-IV), Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Fifth Edition (WISC-V), and Wechsler Individual Achievement Test-Third Edition (WIAT-III)
- Wrote thorough psychological assessment reports

- Participated in parent/child clinical interviews and feedback sessions
- Attended weekly didactic trainings on a wide range of topics (e.g., Speech pathology, Learning Disorder Assessment)
- Attended weekly supervision/consultation meetings and presented detailed assessment case conceptualizations

**Pepperdine University Community Counseling Center**              September 2015 – June 2018
Supervisors: Anat Cohen, PhD, Anett Abrahamian Assilian, PsyD
Encino, CA
*Extern*

- Provided weekly psychotherapy to individuals, couples, and families of a variety of ages (ages 9 to 60-years old), from diverse cultural backgrounds, and with a range of presenting problems (i.e., anxiety, adjustment disorder, depression, PTSD, and relational problems) at a community mental health setting
- Administered, score and interpret clinic outcome measures (i.e., Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9), Outcome Questionnaire (OQ), Youth Outcome Questionnaire (YOQ; Parent and Youth Self-Report), and Working Alliance Inventory-Short Version (WAI-S) to monitor and assess for symptomatology
- Conducted psychotherapy and community outreach at school-based sites including elementary and middle school settings
- Maintained on-call duties for clients with clinical emergencies
- Attended monthly didactic trainings on a wide range of topics (i.e., mindful parenting and sex therapy)

**The Help Group**                                                August 2016 – June 2017
Supervisor: Talya Stein, PsyD
Sherman Oaks, CA
*Extern*

- Provided weekly individual and group psychotherapy to children (ages 10 to 15) with special needs related to autism spectrum disorder, learning disabilities, and cognitive delays in a non-public school setting
- Assessed progress toward treatment goals for clients after each session, amending goals when necessary
- Participated in IEP meetings to provide progress reports on clients' social-emotional functioning
- Consulted with school faculty, staff, and administration in order to coordinate treatment for clients
- Attended bi-monthly didactic trainings on a wide range of topics (i.e., positive psychology and Sand-Tray therapy)
- Developed and presented a bullying prevention psychoeducational program for middle school students under the guidance of Clinical Director, Dr. Mary Bauman

**Pepperdine University/Boys Hope Girls Hope**                     April 2017 – May 2017
Supervisor: Susan Himelstein, PhD, Allison Vargas, PsyD
Culver City, CA
*Extern*

- Administered, scored, and interpreted psychoeducational assessment to determine program eligibility for a 14-year-old student utilizing Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Fifth Edition (WISC-V), Wide Range Achievement Test- Fourth Edition (WRAT-4), Berry-Buktenica Developmental Test of Visual-Motor Integration-Sixth Edition (BEERY VMI-6), Millon Adolescent Clinical Inventory (MACI), Roberts Apperception Test for Children- Second Edition (Roberts-2), and Child Sentence Completion

- Wrote an integrated psychological assessment report with feedback and recommendations for program admission
- Attended didactic training seminars on administration, scoring, and interpretation of tests utilized

## MASTER'S LEVEL CLINICAL TRAINING EXPERIENCE

**California Baptist University Counseling Center**                    July 2006 – December 2011
Supervisor: Alan McThomas, PhD
Riverside, CA
*Trainee/Intern*

- Provided psychotherapy to college-age individuals as well as clients from the community including children, adults, couples, and families of a variety of ages (ages 3 to 65-years old), from diverse cultural backgrounds, and with a range of presenting problems (i.e., depression, adjustment disorder, eating disorders, bipolar disorder, addiction recovery, and sexual trauma) at a university counseling/community mental health setting
- Administered, scored, and interpreted psychodiagnostic measures (i.e., Beck Depression Inventory, Beck Anxiety Inventory, and Myers-Briggs Personality Inventory-II) to screen for and monitor client symptomatology
- Facilitated support group for sexual assault survivors
- Developed curriculum for a women's process group
- Provided annual crisis-response training for Resident Advisors
- Presented guest lectures to community college undergraduate psychology students
- Conducted community outreach by providing lectures at UC Riverside, and organizing toy drives for through the Toys for Tots Foundation
- Maintained on-call duties for clients with clinical emergencies
- Coordinated internal social programs for developing a strong working relationship between therapists

**Riverside Unified School District**                    September 2009 – June 2011
Supervisor: John Pedersen, PhD
Riverside, CA
*Intern*

- Provided school-based therapeutic behavioral services to middle and high school students with high-risk behaviors and a variety of presenting problems (i.e., ODD, CD, ADHD, Anxiety, and Mood Disorders)
- Provided weekly social skills group interventions to middle school children with ASD
- Attended bi-monthly didactic trainings on play therapy, childhood social anxiety, Inland-Empire gang culture, law and ethics, and parenting children with ASD and ADHD

## TEACHING EXPERIENCE

**California Baptist University**                    July 2012 – Present
Online and Professional Studies–Behavioral Sciences Department
Riverside, CA
*Assistant Professor of Psychology*

- Provide online and hybrid instruction to traditional and non-traditional student populations at the undergraduate and graduate levels, teaching Psychology (General Psychology; History and Systems of Psychology; Lifespan Development; Cognitive Psychology; Abnormal Psychology), Sociology (Marriage and the Family), Behavioral Sciences (Foundational Skills for Behavioral Sciences; Epistemology and Worldview), and Marriage and Family Therapy (Professional Practice

Seminar; MFT Counseling Techniques; HIV/AIDS Counseling; Addictions Counseling) courses, in addition to maintaining weekly contact with online students via Blackboard Discussion Boards, WebEx, and video announcements as well as weekly office hours

- Develop synchronous and asynchronous courses for undergraduate (General Psychology; History and Systems of Psychology) and graduate (Professional Practice Seminar; Human Communication in Group Process; Standard of Care Approaches for Evaluating and Treating Externalizing Disorders) level instruction by all faculty
- Serve as faculty lead for undergraduate (General Psychology; History and Systems of Psychology) and graduate (Professional Practice Seminar; Human Communication in Group Process; Standard of Care Approaches for Evaluating and Treating Externalizing Disorders; Community Mental Health Counseling; Psychodiagnostics; MFT Counseling: Child and Adolescent) courses
- Create and maintain an APA Publications Manual video tutorial used in all Behavioral Sciences and Psychology courses

**California Baptist University**                                              June 2011 – June 2012
Online and Professional Studies–Behavioral Sciences Department
Riverside, CA
*Adjunct Instructor*
- Provided online and hybrid instruction to traditional and non-traditional undergraduate students, teaching Psychology (General Psychology; History and Systems of Psychology; Lifespan Development; Testing and Measurements) and Behavioral Sciences (Foundational Skills for Behavioral Sciences I & II) courses
- Developed undergraduate-level Testing and Measurements course used by all of the Online and Professional Studies–Behavioral Sciences faculty between September 2011 and December 2012, including selecting the course focus, developing deliverables, assignments, and syllabus, and conducting a periodic evaluation of the course
- Developed undergraduate-level History and Systems of Psychology course currently used by all of the Online and Professional Studies–Behavioral Sciences faculty, including selecting the course focus, developing deliverables, assignments, and syllabus, and conducting a periodic evaluation of the course

**California Baptist University**                                              May 2011 – June 2011
Behavioral Sciences Department–Master of Science in Counseling Psychology Program
Riverside, CA
*Teaching Assistant to Mischa Routon, MS, Law and Ethics*
- Taught a discussion section consisting of 23 graduate students
- Assisted students in applying legal and ethical principles to case-studies
- Assisted in the preparation of weekly class material
- Collected and commented on student written assignments
- Responsible for facilitating class tasks and leading class discussion in professor's absence

**California Baptist University**                                              January 2011 – April 2011
Behavioral Sciences Department- Master of Science in Counseling Psychology Program
Riverside, CA
*Teaching Assistant to Gary Collins, PhD, Advanced Psychopathology*
- Taught a discussion section consisting of 20 graduate students
- Assisted students in conceptualizing and diagnosing clients based on DSM-IV-TR casebook vignettes
- Developed and presented a lecture on DSM IV-TR based diagnosis of childhood disorders
- Assisted in the preparation of weekly class material

- Collected and commented on student written exams

**California Baptist University**                    January 2009 – April 2009
Behavioral Sciences Department
Riverside, CA
*Teaching Assistant to Beverly Sale, PsyD and Marylin Moore, MA, Lifespan Development*
- Developed and presented lectures on research methods in behavioral sciences and early adulthood
- Assisted professor in multimedia presentation of weekly class lectures in hybrid and on-ground format
- Collected and graded student essays, assignments, and exams
- Maintained a recordkeeping system for student attendance and grades

**California Baptist University**                    September 2007 – April 2009
Behavioral Sciences Department
Riverside, CA
*Teaching Assistant to Ken Pearce, PhD, Survey of the Behavioral Sciences*
- Developed and presented lectures on lifespan development, genetics, and the field of Anthropology
- Facilitated class tasks in professor's absence
- Collected and graded student essays, assignments, and exams
- Developed and implemented a recordkeeping system for student attendance and grades

## RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

**Pepperdine University–Department of Psychology**                    April 2015 – Present
*Dissertation Group Member*, Anat Cohen, PhD, Chair
- Preliminary Oral Examination completed in September of 2016 on the following dissertation topic:
  *Bullying prevention and social justice: Integration of principles into a resource for teachers*

**UC Riverside–Department of Psychology**                    September 2003 – June 2005
*Research Assistant*, Social Development laboratory, Ross Parke, PhD
- Coded for themes in child behavior and family dynamics from video data

## PUBLICATIONS

Knabb, J., & **Grigorian-Routon, A.** (2014). The role of experiential avoidance in the relationship between faith maturity, religious coping, and psychological adjustment among Christian university students. *Mental Health, Religion & Culture*, *17*(5), 458-469.

Knabb, J., Pelletier, J., & **Grigorian-Routon, A.** (2014). Towards a psychological understanding of servanthood: An empirical investigation of the relationship between orthodox beliefs, experiential avoidance, and self-sacrificial behaviors among Christians at a religiously-affiliated university. *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, *42*(3), 269-283.

## PRESENTATIONS

Grigorian-Routon, A. (2021). *Basics of Play Therapy*. Presented at Glendale Unified School District, Glendale, CA (via Zoom). In-service training for GUSD Intern Academy on play therapy interventions and adapting them to telehealth, with a focus on Sand-Tray and sand play therapy.

Grigorian-Routon, A., & Chmiel, L. (2020). *Making the season bright: Strategies for coping with COVID restrictions*. Presented at Glendale Unified School District, Glendale, CA (via Facebook Live). A presentation created for GUSD Mental Health Forum for parents. Presentation focusing on impact of SARS-CoV-2 pandemic on children during the winter holidays, providing suggestions for developmentally-based parenting interventions.

Grigorian-Routon, A. (2019). *Strategies for Bullying Prevention*. Presented at The Help Group's Summit View School, Sherman Oaks, CA. Elective project targeting teachers and administrators already implementing Olweus Bullying Prevention Program. Presentation summarized survey data regarding student and teacher perceptions of teacher efficacy in addressing bullying on campus. Presentation also provided practical suggestions for application of survey data.

Grigorian-Routon, A., & Boussard, L. (2017). *Anxiety: What college women need to know*. Presented at UC Riverside, Riverside, CA. Outreach project targeting college-age sorority women. Presentation provided practical information about anxiety and stress management.

Grigorian-Routon, A., & Boussard, L. (2017). *Bullying: What Parents Need to Know and How They Can Help*. Presented at Lanai Road Elementary School, Encino, CA. Community outreach project targeting parents of local elementary school students. Provides psychoeducation about the definition, prevalence and effects of bullying in schools, suggesting ways for parents to discuss bullying with their children.

Grigorian-Routon, A. (2017). *Join the Resistance and Stand Up to Bullying*. Presented at Portolla Middle School, Tarzana, CA. Annual community outreach project targeting local middle school students. Provides psychoeducation about the prevalence and effects of bullying in schools, suggesting ways for students to get involved to stop its occurrence.

Grigorian-Routon, A., Cabrera, M., & Zaky, P. (2017). *Mindful Parenting Workshop*. Presented at Alfred Bernhard Nobel Middle School, Northridge, CA. Community outreach project targeting parents of local middle school students. Provides psychoeducation about the role of mindfulness in parenting.

Grigorian-Routon, A. (2016). *Join the Resistance Against Bullying*. Presented at Village Glen school (The Help Group), Sherman Oaks, CA. Program developed to target middle school students with Autism Spectrum Disorder, ADHD, learning disabilities, and cognitive delays.

Grigorian-Routon, A., & Varvaryan, A. (2016). *Join the Resistance and Stand Up to Bullying*. Presented at Portolla Middle School, Tarzana, CA. Annual community outreach project targeting local middle school students. Provides psychoeducation about the prevalence and effects of bullying in schools, suggesting ways for students to get involved to stop its occurrence.

Perales, P., Missler, D., **Grigorian-Routon, A.**, & Mustafoglu, D. (2015). *Stand Up To Bullying: The Anti-Bullying Campaign*. Presented at Portola Middle School, Tarzana, CA. Community outreach project targeting local middle school students. Provides psychoeducation about the prevalence and effects of bullying in schools, suggesting ways for students to get involved to stop its occurrence.

Grigorian-Routon, A. (2015). *Developing research skills*. Presented online. Question and answer format presentation targeted Pepperdine University GSEP Master's level students interested in research.

Grigorian-Routon, A. (2011). *Diagnosis of disorders occurring in childhood and adolescence*. Presented at California Baptist University, Riverside, CA. Lecture targeting graduate students in the Master of Science in Counseling Psychology program. Presentation included an overview of DSM-IV-

TR diagnoses, their criteria, and focused on the presentation of ASD and ADHD symptoms as observed in school and home settings.

Grigorian, A. (2010). *Emotional eating: Why we do it and how to stop*. Presented at UC Riverside Wellness Center's Live Wise, Live Well workshop series, Riverside, CA. Presentation targeted UC Riverside students, faculty, and staff. Presentation provided psychoeducation about overeating and provided techniques and resources that can be implemented to help.

Grigorian, A. (2009). *Recognizing the signs of an eating disorder and how to help*. Presented at UC Riverside, Riverside, CA. Outreach project targeted college-age sorority women. Presentation provided psychoeducation about eating disorders, their symptoms, and ways for preventing them, as well as resources for referrals for people who need help.

Grigorian, A. (2009). *Research methods utilized in the behavioral sciences*. Presented at California Baptist University, Riverside, CA. Lecture targeting undergraduate students. Lecture provided an overview of how research is conducted in the fields of Psychology and Sociology, as well as providing a more detailed explanation of the experimental method.

Grigorian, A. (2009). *Early adulthood: Developmental tasks and unique challenges*. Presented at California Baptist University, Riverside, CA. Lecture targeting undergraduate students. Lecture focused on defining early adulthood as a discrete developmental stage, provided an overview of challenges that young adults face after college and how to navigate these.

Grigorian, A. (2008). *Lifespan development: The first years*. Presented at California Baptist University, Riverside, CA. Lecture targeting undergraduate students. Lecture presented human development in the first 5 years of life from a physiological, psychological, and social perspective.

Grigorian, A. (2008). *Understanding the basics of genetics*. Presented at California Baptist University, Riverside, CA. Lecture targeting undergraduate students. Lecture provided an overview of fundamental concepts in genetic science, focusing on the laws of inheritance in the human genome.

Grigorian, A. (2007). *The study of Anthropology*. Presented at California Baptist University, Riverside, CA. Lecture targeting undergraduate students. Lecture provided an overview of the field of Anthropology, presenting information about the four branches of study, main theories, and key people in the history of the discipline.

## CONFERENCE AND PANEL PARTICIPATION

**Competency Based Supervision: Enhancing Competence**                                    May 2016
**Pepperdine University–Workshop**
Culver City, CA
*Student Panel Participant*

**Supervision and Training: Transformation to a Communitarian Competence Culture**     March 2016
**CPA Division II–Education and Training Conference**
Culver City, CA
*Registration Assistant* and *Small-Group Participant*

## LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

**Armenian American Mental Health Association**                    August 2020 – Present
Glendale, CA
*Board Advisor*
- Provide support and guidance to members of the board
- Collaborate on execution of outreach projects, execution of conferences, and working to raise mental health awareness in the Armenian community

**Pepperdine University Community Counseling Center**        September 2016 – June 2018
Encino, CA
*Peer Consultant*
- Provide weekly peer consultation with two first-year doctoral students to assist with case management and development of diagnostic and conceptualization skills; management of clinical crises when needed
- Review first-year students' clinical writing such as case notes, intake reports, and integration of symptom measures in conceptualization of cases
- Audit clinical charts to ensure paperwork is completed in a time-efficient and accurate manner
- Provide support and consultation regarding professional development and career planning
- Attend weekly supervision-of-supervision in order to enhance consultation skills

**American Psychological Association Division 12**                    May 2016 – May 2017
Continuing Education Subcommittee
*Student Representative*
- Collaborate with committee members to identify topics and presenters for continuing education webinars
- Maintain contact list for disseminating information about upcoming webinars
- Send out informational emails on a bi-weekly basis to promote registration for upcoming webinars
- Responsible for securing presenters for webinar on clinical supervision skills

**Pepperdine University Community Counseling Center**      September 2015 – August 2018
Encino, CA
*Outreach Program Coordinator*
- Re-develop and maintain existing anti-bullying campaign to enhance its appeal to a middle school population expanding campaign from a one-day presentation to include a follow up activity at the end of the school year
- Develop workshop for parents on the role of mindfulness in parenting
- Develop bullying prevention informational seminar for parents of elementary school students
- Coordinate with Portolla Middle School contact person to approve, schedule, and execute campaign
- Responsible for training therapists who will participate as presenters in the campaign

**UC Riverside–Sigma Kappa Sorority, Theta Epsilon Chapter**   November 2006 – June 2014
Riverside, CA
*Alumna Sorority Advisor*
- Provided guidance on risk management, scholarship, finances, philanthropic endeavors, recruitment, and calendar and activity planning to sorority women of diverse backgrounds
- Responsible for responding to crisis situations involving sorority women
- Fostered an environment of diversity by promoting activities that fostered mutual respect
- Facilitated leadership training seminars for chapter officers

ABSTRACT

Though bullying was once considered a "rite of passage," in recent years experts have begun to re-conceptualize bullying as an imbalance of power between the bully and the victim and to recognize the deleterious mental health outcomes that are often the result of having experienced or having participated in bullying. This phenomenon is also coming to be viewed more broadly as a human rights violation as it creates and perpetuates barriers for specific student populations to equal access to education. Historically, teachers have been among the most outspoken advocates of social justice issues and are on the front lines of addressing social inequality. However, those in the field of psychology have also taken steps to advocate for human rights and members of its professional organization have adopted the aspirational goal of acting as agents of social change. Nevertheless, there continues to be a dearth of research into the relationship between the promotion of social justice and bullying prevention, particularly as it relates to the role of psychologists within the school system who serve in a consultative capacity to teachers. Inspired by an existing bullying prevention module for teachers, the goal of the present study was to develop bullying prevention recommendations for educators that incorporate academic literature-informed social justice considerations.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

**Historical Background of Bullying**

Bullying is a nationwide problem and its prevention requires analysis, education, and recognition. Though leaders in the United States as well as a growing number of countries across the globe are becoming more aware of and sensitive to the impact of bullying, especially as it relates to the well-being of children (Chrysanthou & Vasilakis, 2019; Rapplye & Komatsu, 2020), the phenomenon is not a new occurrence. Allanson et al. (2015) provided a historical overview of bullying and noted this type of interpersonal aggression has been present throughout recorded history with examples found even in the Bible (e.g., the stories of David and Goliath, Moses, and Bartimaeus). The authors drew parallels between Herbert Spencer's term "survival of the fittest" and social Darwinism and specifically proposed that "survival of the fittest" is used as a justification for forming a competitive hierarchy and argued that competition for resources and power fuels bullying behavior (Allanson et al., 2015). This idea supports the view that bullying prevention is a matter of social justice in light of victims having unequal access to educational resources (Kenny et al., 2009).

Bullying appeared as a topic in the academic literature as early as the 19th century (Burk, 1897), though it was not until the death of a soldier in 1862 as a result of what would now be recognized as systematic bullying that the term was specifically and publicly used by *The Times* in its reporting of the story (Allanson et al., 2015). In the article, bullying behavior was defined as being focused on a target rather than being representative of the general nature of the perpetrator's character (Koo, 2007). Historically, bullying has been considered a normative and expected experience for school-age children (Arseneault et al., 2010). It has been viewed as commonplace or even a "rite of passage" (Hertzog, 2011), supporting the idea that "boys will be

boys". Such a worldview was common in the Greco-Roman antiquity period, wherein negative experiences with peers were given little thought in adulthood (Laes, 2019); was evident in the attitude of school authorities toward the death of a UK student in 1885 as a result of bullying (Koo, 2007); and persisted through the middle of the 20th century. Research interest increased in the topic of peer-to-peer aggression driven largely by Dan Olweus in response to a Swedish phenomenon consisting of physical bullying termed "mobbing" in the 1960s and 1970s (Harris & Petrie, 2003).

**Current Views and Approaches**

Over the last half century, a more nuanced understanding of the complex construct of bullying has emerged (Koo, 2007; Olweus, 1978, 1994; Smith & Brain, 2000), leading to a broadening of the definition from a simple developmentally-normative conflict to a multifaceted social interaction involving an imbalance of power between the victim and the perpetrator (Gladden et al., 2014; Olweus et al., 1999). Research has led to an expansion of the definition of bullying (Besag, 1989; Koo, 2007; Lagerspetz et al., 1988; Olweus, 1978; Remboldt, 1994a, 1994b; Smith & Brain, 2000), describing it as a stressful experience that can have lifelong mental health consequences. The widened definition also places importance on the repetitive nature of the conflict and the intent to inflict harm, as well as several different manifestations of bullying behavior, including physical, verbal, emotional, and, most recently, cyberbullying (Brank et al., 2012). Working from the broadened view of bullying and recognizing it as a significant problem rather than just an ordinary and expected part of childhood, researchers have examined the impact of experiencing bullying on victims. Findings indicate there are negative mental health repercussions, including depression, poor self-esteem, increased suicidal behaviors, and conduct problems (Arseneault et al., 2010; Brunstein et al., 2007; Lemstra et al.,

2012; Rosen et al., 2012), both for the perpetrators and victims of bullying (Arseneault et al., 2010).

A number of prevention initiatives and programs have been created to address the impact of bullying (Ttofi & Farrington, 2011). One such initiative, developed in Finland, is the Kiusaamista Vastaan (KiVa) antibullying program, which relies on classroom discussions and group work, role-playing, parent involvement, and media to achieve its goals (Ttofi & Farrington, 2011). Another program, developed in Turkey, is the Empathy Training Program, which emphasizes small-group work and psychoeducation (Salmivalli & Poskiparta, 2012). One program developed in the United States in 1997 is the Bully-Proofing Your School program (Garrity et al., 1997), which includes a focus on the power of a "caring majority"(p.2) to enact change and support bullying prevention efforts. Most well-known among these programs is the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP; Olweus, 1993). The OBPP, an extensively researched and widely adapted (Bauer et al., 2007; Limber, 2011) program, stresses, among other points, the need for whole-school involvement in the prevention of bullying (Olweus & Limber, 2010) and, to that end, involves active engagement on the part of teachers.

What these programs have in common is the need for teacher participation in bullying prevention efforts, especially in order to protect the rights of students (Greene, 2006). Frequent targets of bullying are, in effect, denied equal access to resources (e.g., opportunities for learning), resulting in an infringement of children's rights (Sercombe & Donnelly, 2013). Thus, when considering the fact that victims are often bullied because of diversity factors (e.g., ethnicity, sexual orientation, physical and mental disabilities), bullying prevention becomes a matter of social justice (Kenny et al., 2009).

**Defining the Problem**

As more emphasis is placed on social justice as a framework for developing interventions for bullying and psychologists are called to act as advocates, bullying has gained more attention in the context of social inequality. Specifically, the American Psychological Association (APA, 2004) has encouraged psychologists to look at bullying in terms of a social justice problem and to become involved in creating programs to address its occurrence. As such, Cacali (2018) conducted a critical review of the literature framing bullying prevention as a form of social justice, and argued that social justice is a key consideration that is missing from existing prevention programs. Cacali made several recommendations for future research, emphasizing the role of psychologists as agents of change. Specifically, she suggested researchers need to examine the negative impact of bullying on specific groups of students and called for the development of hypotheses about the underlying reasons some groups are targeted more frequently. Cacali also suggested the creation of bullying prevention programs that include addressing social justice as a component, as well as tasked researchers with exploring the role of psychologists in addressing social justice issues, particularly in designing and implementing these programs. Finally, Cacali urged future researchers to address the question of whether cyberbullying is a social justice issue in and of itself. Overall, Cacali suggested teaching about and integrating social justice into school programs may reduce the imbalance of power among student populations as a means to ultimately reduce bullying and highlighted the role psychologists may be able to play in doing so. To that end, the current study, inspired by Graham's (2013) bullying module for teachers, which is offered as educational information on the APA website, was designed as a critical review of the literature in response to the recommendations made by Cacali (2018) with the goal being to offer recommendations on

bullying prevention for teachers. Specifically, it was the aim of the author to provide guidance on including social justice as a consideration in understanding bullying and bullying prevention.

**Chapter 2: Review of Literature**

**Definition of Bullying**

In the last 5 decades, researchers have placed greater emphasis on more accurately defining peer-to-peer aggression and have expanded the definition of bullying (Besag, 1989; Koo, 2007; Lagerspetz et al., 1988; Olweus, 1978; Remboldt, 1994a, 1994b; Smith & Brain, 2000), describing it as a stressful experience that can have lifelong mental health repercussions, including depression, poor self-esteem, increased suicidal behaviors, and conduct problems (Arseneault et al., 2010; Brunstein et al., 2007; Lemstra et al., 2012; Rosen et al., 2012), both for the perpetrators and victims of bullying (Arseneault et al., 2010). Broadly, bullying is defined within the literature as any unwanted aggressive behavior by another youth or group of youth who are not siblings or current dating partners that involves an observed or perceived power imbalance (Gladden et al., 2014). Bullying is also described as involving physical, verbal, and relational components (Olweus, 2001), requiring the act to occur repeatedly and without provocation in order to be defined as such (Greene, 2006). However, in seeking to define the nature of bullying behaviors, it is necessary to understand them in their own context, independent from teasing and isolated acts of aggression. Such a distinction is vital because bullying behaviors are frequently conflated with teasing, especially in media reports (Mills & Carwile, 2009). Keltner et al. (2001) conducted an overview of existing research on the topic of teasing and proposed teasing serves a social function (e.g., play, facilitating humor, flirting). They suggested that though both bullying and teasing may include verbal taunting, embarrassing, or otherwise provoking another person, teasing is accompanied by indicators that imply the interaction is intended to be playful, rather than hurtful. This definition of teasing indicates both the perpetrator of the teasing and the recipient are "in on the joke" and are willing participants in

the interaction. Mills and Carwile (2009) further explored the concept of teasing and differentiated between playful and aggressive teasing behaviors. The authors proposed the latter becomes bullying when the aggression is combined with power. Conflation of teasing and bullying is problematic because it allows bullying to be misunderstood and dismissed as "just teasing," resulting in victims failing to receive help.

Moreover, researchers have suggested parents can be unclear about the definition of bullying (Sawyer et al., 2011), presenting a barrier to their ability to advocate for their children and participate in bullying prevention efforts. Thus, another important distinction in clarifying bullying is differentiating among rude, mean, and bullying behaviors (Whitson, 2014). Rude behavior is typically defined as spontaneous or unplanned inconsiderate action that is not necessarily intended to inflict harm, whereas mean behavior is similar but does carry the intention of hurting someone either physically (e.g., pushing) or otherwise (e.g., name-calling, excluding; Whitson, 2014). Though teasing typically conjures images of verbal confrontations and has historically been defined as such in the academic literature (Keltner et al., 2001), bullying behavior is much more broad, encompassing decidedly negative activity that is not only intentional and planned, but also repeated and based on an imbalance of power (Olweus, 1978, 1993, 2001).

Bullying behaviors manifest in many forms and were initially described in terms of direct behaviors consisting of physical acts of aggression intended to harm another person (e.g., hitting, shoving, kicking, having property stolen) and verbal aggression perpetuated through the use of language (e.g., verbal taunting, name-calling; Olweus, 1993, 2001; J. Wang et al., 2009). Research has shown boys are more likely to be involved in physical and verbal bullying, though aggression between peers is not limited only to these two types of behaviors, and girls are more

likely to be involved in relational bullying, characterized by exclusion from activities, rumor-spreading, and malicious gossip (Carbone-Lopez et al., 2010; Iossi Silva et al., 2013). Further, with the ubiquitous use of wireless technology and the adoption of social media as a means of communication, another form of bullying has emerged. Cyber-based bullying (Smith et al., 2006) represents aggression perpetrated through the use of technology, the internet, and social media (e.g., posting hurtful messages via social media, creating derogatory websites, sending malicious text messages and images).

Interestingly, students, teachers, and researchers appear to define bullying differently, with students favoring a more inclusive definition and categorizing even a single profoundly hurtful incident as bullying (Cheng et al., 2011; Lee, 2006; Maunder et al., 2010; Mishna et al., 2005; Monks & Smith, 2006; Naylor et al., 2006; Purcell, 2012), whereas teacher and researchers largely rely on the Olweus (1993) definition. Such a discrepancy indicates the existing research and interventions may not fully capture students' perspectives on bullying and may benefit from a more phenomenological approach. Though exploring meaning-making was beyond the scope of the current academic effort, young people's views on the topic should be included when conceptualizing future research and considering interventions.

**Prevalence of Bullying**

Current national estimates of the prevalence of bullying indicate 20.2% of students between the ages of 12 and 18 years old report first-hand experiences of bullying (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2019). This number represents a reduction from a 2014 survey in which the bullying rate for similarly aged students was estimated at 28% (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2014), and may be a result of the many bullying prevention programs and initiatives implemented in schools since data began to be collected in

2005 (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). A closer look reveals the reported types of bullying included name-calling and insults (13%); spreading rumors or lies (13%); hitting, slapping, shoving, or kicking (5%); and purposeful exclusion (5%; NCES, 2019). Notably, male students reported higher instances of physical bullying than did female students (6% vs. 4%), whereas female students reported higher rates of relational bullying, such as rumor-spreading (18% vs. 9%) and exclusion (7% vs. 4%; NCES, 2019). Additionally, female students reported bullying as occurring more frequently in the school setting than did their male counterparts (24% vs. 17%). Per the NCES (2019), bullied students reported the incidents most often took place in the hallway or stairwell areas (43%), in the classroom (42%), in the cafeteria (27%), outdoors on school grounds (22%), in the bathroom (12%), and on school-provided transportation (8%). Further, 15% of students reported being bullied online or by text. An earlier study revealed one in four students had either been cyberbullied themselves or knew someone who had been (Aricak et al., 2008), and more recently Brochado et al. (2016) reported rates of being victims of this type of bullying vary from 1.0% to 61.1%. These variances may be explained by Selkie et al. (2016), who found there is little consensus in the definition and the reported rates of cyberbullying, making it difficult to establish a true estimate of its prevalence.

Research has shown some children are at a greater risk for victimization. Kuykendall (2012) found children new to a community, children with disabilities and mental health disorders, and children belonging to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) community report more experiences with bullying than do other children. The author also indicated children with differences in cultural background, language, or customs are especially vulnerable (Kuykendall, 2012). Victimization targeting specific, stigmatized identities (i.e., biased-based bullying) is particularly impactful (Russell et al., 2012) and understanding the most

frequently reported reasons for all types of bullying can help drive intervention efforts. According to the NCES (2019), appearance, race/ethnicity, gender, disability, religion, and sexual orientation are the most commonly reported as targets for bullying. Though studies have shown racial and ethnic groups are equally as likely to experience bullying, children belonging to minority groups have reported experiencing race or bias-based bullying at greater rates going back as far as 1991 (Boulton, 1995; Mooney et al., 1991; C. Wang et al., 2016). In the United States, Asian students (first- and second-generation) have identified factors such as language, appearance, and immigrant status as reasons for being bullied (Qin et al., 2008) and Sikh American students have reported victimization by peers because of their head coverings contributing to the perception of these students as foreigners (Atwal & Wang, 2019). Looking more specifically at immigration in 11 countries, Walsh et al. (2016) discovered bullying victimization was the highest among first-generation American girls (18.1%) and immigrant school composition was associated with physical fighting and bullying for immigrant and nonimmigrant students.

Further, research indicates LGBTQ youth are at an increased risk for peer victimization (Gayles & Garofalo, 2012). Results of a 2013 National School Climate survey indicated LGBT students reported being verbally (74.1%), physically (36.2%), and electronically (49.9%) victimized based on their sexual orientation (Kosciw et al., 2014). More recently, results of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) 2019 High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey indicated gay and lesbian students were most likely to report experiencing bullying (37.3%) when compared to their heterosexual counterparts. Additionally, Lessard (2020) found 68% of adolescents reported being victimized because of their sexual orientation and 63% because of their gender typicality (i.e., to what extent they strayed from traditional expressions of

gender). The same study showed that of the adolescents surveyed, 27% reported experiencing bullying based on their religious affiliation.

What these data illustrate is that race/ethnicity, LGBTQ identity, religion, and immigration/acculturation factors may play a role in school bullying within the United States, and the underlying reasons for bullying victimization are directly related to the marginalization of certain groups of children and adolescents.

**Effects of Bullying**

The lifelong, serious, and negative effects of bullying, both for perpetrators and victims, are well established in the academic literature (e.g., Arseneault et al., 2010; Espelage & Holt, 2012; Halpern et al., 2015; Holt et al., 2015; Masiello & Schroeder, 2014; Ttofi et al., 2012; Zych et al., 2015). Based on the findings of a panel convened by the CDC in response to increasing evidence of a link between bullying and suicidal behavior, Hertz et al. (2013) framed bullying as a public health issue, and other researchers have suggested bullying affects not only the victims, but also the perpetrators (Ttofi et al., 2012; Wolke & Lereya, 2015).

Victims of bullying are more likely than those who are not bullied to perform poorly academically, have few friends, and have a negative view of school (Eisenberg et al., 2003; Nansel et al., 2004; O'Brennan et al., 2009). They are more likely to miss school (Nakamoto & Schwartz, 2009), which is directly related to school achievement. Bullying victims are also more likely to report feelings of low self-esteem, loneliness, and isolation (Fekkes et al., 2006; Hawker & Boulton, 2000); experience psychosomatic problems and sleeping problems (e.g., Gini & Pozzoli, 2009; van Geel et al., 2015); and report mental health problems, especially depression, anxiety, and psychotic symptoms (Juvonen & Graham, 2014; Ttofi et al., 2011; van Dam et al., 2012). There is also significant evidence in the literature to indicate victims of bullying are at an

increased risk of suicidality (Holt et al., 2015; Klomek et al., 2007); Espelage and Holt (2012) found victims of bullying were 2.4 times more likely to report suicidal ideation and 3.3 times more likely to report having attempted suicide. Additionally, experiencing bullying during childhood is predictive of depression as an adult (Farrington et al., 2011; Ttofi et al., 2011).

Perpetrators of bullying are also at an increased risk for problems in adolescence and adulthood. Ttofi et al. (2011) identified bullying perpetration as a risk factor for criminal behavior and psychotic symptoms, and Sigurdson et al. (2014) found aggression toward others during adolescence was associated with increased tobacco use and lower job performance in adulthood. Furthermore, according to the CDC (2015), those who bully are at an increased risk for substance use, academic problems, and violent behavior in adolescence and later in life. Klomek et al.'s (2007) findings corroborated the relationship between childhood bullying perpetration and criminality and psychotic symptoms later in life, as they showed more frequent bullying behavior leads to increased risk. The authors also demonstrated a similar compounding effect for psychotic symptoms in adulthood, indicating these symptoms are more strongly associated with a greater degree of bullying perpetration in adolescence (Klomek et al., 2007).

Thus, in light of the association of bullying with negative outcomes across domains of life, the problem can be viewed as an adverse childhood experience (ACE; U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2017) and there is evidence that both bullying victims and perpetrators are more likely to have experienced adversity in childhood (Reisen et al., 2019). In combination with other adverse experiences (e.g., abuse, household challenges, and neglect), bullying and peer victimization are associated with significant negative outcomes such as substance use, disengagement from school (Afifi et al., 2020; Baiden et al., 2020; Petruccelli et al., 2019), and decreased mental and psychological well-being and relational problems (deLara,

2019). Because of the far-reaching nature of the effects of bullying, it is especially important to identify meaningful and effective strategies to combat its occurrence. Further, as family and home-life related problems are found to be contributors to bullying and can be much more difficult to address within schools, where bullying interactions are most prevalent, it is especially important that teachers and administrators have the knowledge, support, and training to intervene effectively.

**Bullying Prevention**

Because the understanding of bullying has evolved to frame the problem as significant and pervasive, research in the last several decades has contained a focus on evaluating the many bullying prevention programs in use throughout the United States as well as in Europe and Australia (Evans et al., 2014; Gaffney et al., 2019). Findings are mixed, with Gaffney et al. (2019) suggesting these programs decrease school bullying perpetration by 19%–20% and decrease school bullying victimization by 15%–16%, whereas results of an earlier meta-analysis of controlled trials of bullying intervention in the United States, Finland, Canada, Australia, Germany, England, Turkey, China, and Norway indicated 45% of the studies showed no significant changes in bullying behavior and 30% showed no decrease in victimization (Evans et al., 2014). The location of each study in the meta-analysis appeared to be a factor in that the findings indicated programs outside of the United States were more effective. Evans et al. (2014) suggested the difference was related to the homogeneous makeup of the student body in non-U.S. samples. Indeed, the unique cultural makeup of schools in the United States must be taken into account when choosing and implementing bullying prevention programs given the impact of diversity factors on predicting who is likely to be victimized. Thus, rather than focusing on the execution of full programs, it may be valuable to look at individual components that contribute to

program effectiveness. Unfortunately, there is a dearth of research systematically evaluating specific program elements that could drive decision making in response to bullying in U.S. schools.

Ttofi and Farrington (2011) conducted a meta-analysis in which they investigated components of effective strategies for reducing bullying behavior in schools. The researchers identified the presence of parent and teacher training, the use of classroom disciplinary methods (e.g., strict rules for handling bullying), the implementation of a whole-school anti-bullying policy, and the use of instructional videos as necessary elements for effective anti-bullying programs (Ttofi & Farrington, 2011). Ttofi and Farrington also discovered program duration (i.e., number of days and months) and intensity (i.e., number of hours) were related to effectiveness. When considered together, the findings indicate effective programs must be both intensive and extensive in order to achieve the desired outcome.

Furthermore, Ttofi and Farrington (2011) reported bullying prevention programs are more effective with children over the age of 11 years, potentially because older children possess better cognitive abilities, engage in less impulsive behavior, and are better able to make rational decisions (pp. 46-47). Other researchers have found bullying increases in childhood and peaks during early or middle adolescence (i.e., Grades 6–10; Nocentini et al., 2013). Thus, it follows that programs should be implemented at the middle school and high school levels to capitalize on the demonstrated effectiveness for older children, but also because this is the age when bullying behavior peaks and children are more able to cognitively engage with the programs. Initial bullying behavior is usually based on gender, trait aggression, or a need for social dominance, though bullying increases the most over time among students who are competing for social dominance (Nocentini et al., 2013).

When considering bullying as a problem rooted in social dynamics, it is possible to use the same framework in seeking a solution. To that end, Ttofi and Farrington (2011) suggested effective bullying prevention programs are based on social learning theories in which prosocial behavior is rewarded and bullying is discouraged or punished (p. 47). This finding was recently echoed by Karatas and Ozturk (2020) in their evaluation of a social-cognitive theory based anti-bullying program.

Social dynamics may also play a role in the mobilization of bystanders in bullying prevention and intervention efforts. A bystander is an "individual who lacks participation in bullying scenarios as either the bully or victim. The bystander may actively intervene to stop the bully, encourage the bully to continue, or view bullying passively" (J. R. Polanin et al., 2012, p. 49). J. R. Polanin et al. (2012) measured the effectiveness of school-based programs with a focus on bystander intervention behavior and findings indicated bystander intervention programs, which typically focus on increasing prosocial behavior, resulted in greater reductions in bullying. However, prosocial behavior is complex and research has demonstrated the intervention programs did not have an effect on empathy for the victim (J. R. Polanin et al., 2012). Other researchers have hypothesized that social capital, self-esteem, and anxiety may all play a role in more active intervention on the part of bystanders (Evans & Smokowski, 2015; L. N. Jenkins & Frederick, 2017; Takami & Haruno, 2019). Interestingly, social capital was only associated with increased prosocial behavior in some cases, whereas lower rates of self-esteem were associated with an increased likelihood of intervention by bystanders (Evans & Smokowski, 2015). Researchers have also suggested programs are more effective when they explicitly target bystanders' attitudes and behaviors, and when there is ample teacher and adult support (J. R. Polanin et al., 2012). Overall, however, research on the impact of bullying prevention programs

on bystanders is still limited, and future bullying prevention programs should target bystanders, as it appears bystander behavior has a positive impact on bullying cessation.

Another element of prevention programs, bystander intervention, was examined by J. R. Polanin et al. (2012), who discovered through their meta-analytic research of bullying prevention that bystander-focused programs are effective at reducing bullying in schools. Their findings showed bullying should be addressed as a "group process" (J. R. Polanin et al., 2012, p. 61) and frameworks must emphasize and focus on changes to the school climate that target the reduction of bystander behavior. The authors recommended that leaders of school systems provide students with the opportunity to practice bystander intervention through role-plays and consistently encourage students to adopt prosocial bystander behaviors and provide students with ample adult and administrative support (J. R. Polanin et al., 2012). A more recent evaluation of anti-bullying programs identified modules that appeared to be common to programs deemed most effective in reducing rates of bullying: the professional development of teachers, support for consistent and accurate implementation of the program, a school-wide anti-bullying policy, the integration of anti-bullying curriculum, and the involvement of families and the community (Rawlings & Stoddard, 2019). The emphasis on teacher development and support stands out in that it echoes Haataja et al.'s (2014) finding that higher implementation fidelity is related to reductions in reports of bullying. School leaders and teachers are thus an integral part of the success of bullying prevention programs, but can themselves only be successful if they are operating within a conducive school environment.

**The Role of Schools and Teachers in Bullying Prevention**

Given that bullying incidents typically take place on school grounds (NCES, 2019), school systems play an important role in implementing bullying prevention programs. School-

wide enactment of change, however, is complex and school administrators and teachers must be willing and able to commit the necessary time and resources to the creation and implementation of bullying prevention programs. An important limitation to the application of research findings is that it may be more challenging to design effective bullying prevention programs in the United States because of the heterogeneity of the population (Evans et al., 2014) and the implementation of existing programs (e.g., OBPP) is complicated by a lack of funding and resources. According to Evans et al. (2014), effective programs cost several thousand dollars and schools in lower socioeconomic communities may not have the resources necessary to implement an effective bullying prevention program. Thus, it is necessary to identify elements of programs that would be most effective and efficient for school leaders to implement.

A meta-analytic review of studies on the effectiveness of school-based prevention programs on reducing bullying behaviors demonstrated that when programs included improved playground supervision, classroom management, disciplinary action, classroom rules, school conferences, and a whole-school anti-bullying policy, there was a decrease in bullying behavior (Ttofi & Farrington, 2011). Of these factors, playground supervision was shown to have the greatest impact on the reduction of bullying. Ttofi and Farrington (2011) suggested "hot spots" (i.e., areas where bullying occurs frequently due to a lack of supervision) can be identified and eliminated through the reorganization of playgrounds as a relatively inexpensive, yet effective, intervention strategy. Additionally, firm disciplinary action (e.g., serious talks with bullies, sending bullies to the principal, physical proximity to teachers during recess, depriving bullies of privileges) has been shown to contribute to significant declines in bullying and victimization (Ttofi & Farrington, 2011).

Because of the unique role teachers play in the lives of children, teachers are frequently the first to be informed about bullying incidents (Wachs et al., 2019), and teachers' attitudes toward bullying influence student behaviors. A review of the KiVa program showed that when students began to view their teachers as less approving of bullying behaviors, victimization of students decreased (Saarento et al., 2015). Lorion et al. (2004) emphasized that teacher involvement is linked with a decrease in bullying/violent behaviors, which supports that teachers can have a greater impact on bullying prevention than general school policy. Additionally, results of a French study of over 18,000 students showed there were fewer incidences of bullying when positive student–teacher relationships were part of the school climate (Richard et al., 2012), and results of a 2010 study by RasKauskas et al. indicated student–teacher relationships can be a predictor of bullying behaviors. This is consistent with earlier findings from the United States that showed teacher involvement is the preferred method of intervention in bullying prevention according to middle school students (Crothers et al., 2006). Crothers et al. (2006) focused specifically on student preferences because a gap in the literature and program implementation was found when it came to the consideration of student preference in bullying prevention programs. The unique contribution of Crothers et al. in providing a new perspective on the traditional approach of school-wide systemic change and peer-to-peer intervention thus encourages teachers to be active agents in creating an anti-bullying environment both in and out of the classroom.

The effects of teacher involvement in creating a bully-free classroom environment were studied in fourth to sixth grades in Finland (Veenstra et al., 2014). Though results of the study are limited in their generalizability to a U.S. population due to the likely homogeneity of the sample (i.e., schools in mainland Finland), the study nevertheless presents a compelling case for

considering student evaluations of teacher efficacy in communicating and enforcing anti-bullying attitudes. Veenstra et al. (2014) found the lowest levels of bullying occurred when teachers were perceived by students to be highly effective in combating bullying while having to exert little effort to do so. Moreover, teachers' perceptions of their own competence increased the likelihood of their intervention in bullying incidents, and, by extension, they were more likely to be effective (DeLuca et al., 2019) in these efforts. The consistent and systemic intervention in bullying incidents in and of itself appears to influence student attitudes toward the acceptability of the victimization of peers (Campaert et al., 2017). That is to say, when students see their teachers are consistent in responding to bullying, they are less likely to view it as a harmless practice and are therefore less likely to engage in acts of bullying.

When considered in the context of the Crothers et al. (2006) study, which pointed to the value students place on the role of teachers in preventing bullying, Veenstra et al.'s (2014) findings further underscore the importance of teachers in bullying prevention efforts. It is therefore imperative that bullying prevention programs also focus on the role of teachers in the efforts to reduce bullying behavior in schools. To do this, however, teachers need support, education, and tools. To that end, Graham (2013) created a module for teachers with a specific focus on the topic of bullying. Graham's bullying module is based on the researcher's earlier work, the focus of which was to dispel myths about bullying and to offer intervention strategies for teachers (Graham, 2010). The current bullying module (Graham, 2013), which is made available through the APA website, has been expanded to provide more direct communication of the information to teachers. The module includes an introduction providing information about outcomes and definitions of bullying, and goes on to set forth 11 sections; nine sections with information about bullying that are intended for use by teachers and two sections providing

references. The nine sections address (a) peer harassment, (b) do's and don'ts, (c) explanation and evidence, (d) myths about bullying, (e) what can be done about bullying and its negative effects, (f) profiles of early adolescents, (g) intervention strategies, (h) frequently asked questions (FAQs), and (i) when does bullying intervention work. The module offers teachers a foundational understanding of bullying as a phenomenon and how to intervene, with the goal being to increase their ability to implement bullying prevention programs more effectively. Though the information contained in the module is instrumental in efforts to reduce bullying in schools, it does not include a consideration of bullying from a human rights perspective. Stated differently, recommendations to teachers would benefit from presenting bullying as a social justice issue given the APA's stance on viewing it as such.

**Principles of Social Justice**

The idea of social justice is rooted in philosophical discourse and has, in recent history, become part of our collective vernacular. Though what it means to have a just society has been a source of discussion since Plato posed the question more than 2 centuries ago, "social justice" as a discrete term was introduced only in the 19th century (Jackson, 2005). Despite the many studies on the topic and their many definitions of the term, there appears to be a lack of consensus regarding a unified definition. One often-cited definition of social justice identifies its goals as the,

> full and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs. . . . a world in which the distribution of resources is equitable and ecologically sustainable, and all members are physically and psychologically safe and secure, recognized, and treated with respect. (Bell, 1997, p. 1)

Similarly, Schraad-Tischler et al. (2017) offered a definition of social justice focused on "guaranteeing each individual genuinely equal opportunities for self-realization through the targeted investment in the development of individual 'capabilities'" (p. 80), emphasizing individual empowerment to pursue self-determined goals in life and engagement in society. It is important to note that equality is distinct from equity in that the former is a construct that has come to mean sameness (e.g., all students have an equal opportunity to sit at the front of the class), whereas the latter focuses on allocating the resources needed to reach an equal outcome (e.g., a student with poor eyesight sits at the front of the class to see as well as students with normative eyesight). This is related to the idea of distribution of, or access to, resources in that the means of obtaining what is necessary are unequal in society. Though Bell (1997) and Schraad-Tischler et al. (2017) targeted equality of access and participation in their conceptualizations, fairness, and specifically the goal of treating people equally and impartially, has also been proposed as part of the definition of social justice (Vasquez, 2012).

Further, the idea of fairness is relevant when defining access to basic needs in the context of social justice and the empowerment of those who are most disadvantaged. Proponents of social change have used the term social resources to describe economic goods and their distribution (Kenny et al., 2009), but have also argued that social justice is a broader concept involving resources that are non-economic in nature, such as self-esteem, resilience, and other protective factors (Kenny et al., 2009). Thus, social justice is also viewed as a way of ensuring every member of society has an equal opportunity to acquire psychological goods, an idea that plays a vital role in justice-oriented professions. Expanding the concept of psychological goods, Nieto and Bode (2018) defined social justice as "a philosophy, an approach, and actions that embody treating all people with fairness, respect, dignity, and generosity" (p. 8). They also

argued that every person deserves the opportunity to reach their full potential; to access the goods, services, and cultural capital of the society within which they live; and to be able to uphold and maintain the unique culture and traditions of the group to which they belong and with which they identify. Their definition echoes Schraad-Tischler et al.'s (2017) ideas of self-realization and determining one's own course in life, bringing to the forefront the importance of large-scale social change for oppressed and underrepresented populations. North (2008) further proposed that the recognition of people be a part of the definition of social justice work, meaning all people deserve to be treated with dignity, which raises the issue of respect for diversity.

Researchers in the field of education have long focused on integrating social justice into teaching and have worked to establish frameworks and parameters for the application of social justice principles to educational practices. For example, Sturman's (1997) approach to social justice in education emphasized equity in the distribution of both material and non-material goods, and, more recently, Lynch and Baker (2005) proposed the redistribution of material and social goods, the expansion of access to education, and the need to examine the impact of equity on widely-accepted approaches to cultural diversity in the school environment as a means of creating a more just educational context. North (2008) proposed a dynamic model of interconnected social justice principles composed of the redistribution of goods and recognition of diversity, macro- and microeconomic considerations in determining policy, and finding the balance between in-depth knowledge and practical action in the meaningful application of social justice. Finally, Spitzman and Balconi (2019) proposed applying the four goals of anti-bias education (i.e., identity, diversity, justice, and action) to teaching practices.

Researchers in the field of psychology have also explored how to apply social justice to the work of practitioners and though some agreement exists regarding the definition of social

justice and its components within the field of psychology (Fondacaro & Weinberg, 2002; Fouad et al., 2006; Kenny et al., 2009; Prilleltensky, 1997; Swenson, 1998), there remains a general lack of consensus regarding an operational definition specifically for psychologists (Thrift & Sugarman, 2019). Academic research is only recently catching up in proposing guiding frameworks and addressing the practical applications of social justice principles for the field, and the emphasis has been predominantly on school psychology. For example, Shriberg and Clinton (2016) identified several applications of social justice by psychologists within the school setting: a commitment to cultural diversity, focusing on children's rights, expanding access to resources, providing education about democracy and human rights, working toward non-discriminatory practice, and advocacy. Additionally, K. V. Jenkins et al. (2018), in examining how practitioners defined and implemented social justice, found definitions of social justice commonly related to equity, access to resources, advocacy, awareness, and empathy. They further identified areas of practical application of social justice as efforts to educate teachers and administrators and efforts to implement interventions while accounting for barriers, such as those within the school who may oppose the work.

These definitions add to the discourse and reflect a growing debate and effort to clarify the role of individuals in maintaining justice in society. Although it seems the academic literature approaches defining social justice and establishing basic principles for implementation somewhat differently, most definitions share common themes related to equity, access, rights, participation, and diversity (Shriberg et al., 2008; Shriberg et al., 2011). These can serve as basic principles for guiding the integration of social justice into applied work, particularly for psychologists, who are called on by the APA to "advance psychology as a science and profession and as a means of promoting health, education and human welfare" (APA, 2008, p. 1).

**Bullying as a Social Justice Issue**

Though bullying may have always been in existence, it is no longer viewed as a "rite of passage" and human rights advocates have denounced bullying behaviors (Brewer & Harlin, 2008). The United Nations (1948), in its charter, indicates, "Education shall be directed to the full development of human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms" (Article 26:2), which calls for school leaders to engage in efforts to ensure the protection and enforcement of students' human rights (Greene, 2006). From this perspective, bullying is viewed as a direct violation of a student's civil liberties, and it is therefore the responsibility of school leaders to address the behavior (Greene, 2006). Unfortunately, though there is a significant body of literature on the effectiveness of bullying prevention programs, inquiry into the relationship between bullying prevention and social justice is rather limited.

Conceptualizing bullying as a social justice issue is, thus, inherent to the development of an understanding of barriers to equal educational resources. The APA's (2008) view of social justice includes considerations of the opportunity to reach one's full potential, which is reflected in the stance that children must feel safe in order to maximize their learning at school (see also Bosworth et al., 2009). That is, when children are unable to learn due to a lack of safety in the school environment, they are denied the opportunity to reach their full potential. The APA further offers the idea that a school climate that is "supportive, organized, and predictable" (as cited in Bosworth et al., 2009, p. 231) can be a benefit to all students, race, sex, ethnicity, or other demographic characteristics notwithstanding, suggesting that when children are taught to value social justice early, within-classroom disparities decrease and positive school climate increases.

Within this context, researchers have begun to focus on bullying prevention programs both in and out of the United States, and though several decades of research have demonstrated that bullying affects development and has lasting mental health effects, there is growing recognition that it is not only a developmental and mental health problem, but an ethical issue as well. Experiencing bullying infringes on the rights inherent to all people, including, in this case, children (Sercombe & Donnelly, 2013). Specifically, the imbalance of power between the bully and victim proves to be an example of oppression in society (M. Polanin & Vera, 2013).

More specifically, M. Polanin and Vera (2013) looked at the relationships among bullying, social justice, and culture-based intolerance and recommended that professionals focus on working with students on building awareness and understanding of injustice, as well as fostering openness and understanding among cultures. When students combine perceived power with biased attitudes toward individuals from a different cultural group, this can be viewed as cultural bullying, a form of identity-based bullying. Children are indirectly taught messages of intolerance (e.g., homophobia, racism) when they either participate in or are witnesses to bullying. These experiences reinforce the idea that "certain groups in society possess power based on inherent characteristics" (M. Polanin & Vera, 2013, p. 305). The exclusion of or the bullying of some children based on their race, religion, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic status represents a form of injustice. To that end, M. Polanin and Vera suggested reducing prejudice by way of strengthening relationships between students will result in a reduction of bullying behaviors. They further recommended embedding multicultural themes and discussions of bullying into the curriculum.

Social justice is based on the notion that every person has a right to be safe and secure within their society (M. Polanin & Vera, 2013). However, students who are bullied at school no

longer feel safe within their school community, which is a direct violation of their right to social justice. Halpern et al. (2015) argued professionals have a moral responsibility to protect children in the school system from being bullied. The researchers claimed,

> case and state law establish that society holds special responsibility for harm done to prisoners when inadequate supervision and other shortages fail to prevent harm. We believe that society has this same fiduciary obligation to children, an obligation created through a combination of conscription and dependency. (Halpern et al., 2015, p. 26)

Furthermore, the authors suggested school leaders have an inherent moral responsibility to protect children's well-being, to protect them from harm, and to provide a space where children can develop a sense of self-respect.

These efforts, however, are undermined when there is a lack of equal access to the curriculum. Access is diminished, among other ways, when students miss a portion of class time or miss entire school days. Students who are bullied are more likely than are non-victimized students to miss school (Nakamoto & Schwartz, 2009), which ultimately results in less access to education in addition to the psychological and emotional sequelae of experiencing bullying. Moreover, public schools often use suspensions as a means of responding to student behavioral issues (Losen, 2011), a category that includes bullying. When considered in the context of the significant body of research demonstrating students of color are more frequently (U.S. Department of Education, 2018) and more disproportionately (Gibson et al., 2019; Okonofua & Eberhardt, 2015; Skiba et al., 2011) punished for misbehavior at school, it stands to reason that this group of students would be disproportionately affected by removal from the classroom in response to potential accusations of bullying. Thus, when applying a social justice lens to the

issue of bullying, the question of equity is not only a matter of protecting victims, but also a matter of fair and equal treatment of suspected perpetrators.

As stated previously, Greene (2006) took a human rights approach to bullying and bullying prevention. A human rights perspective addresses both bias-based bullying behavior along with bullying that is not otherwise motivated. Bias-based bullying can be defined as attacks that are motivated by a victim's membership in a legally protected class, and harassment toward a protected class is considered to be a civil rights violation. Greene also argued that if school leaders adopted a human rights framework, bullying prevention programs would be more effective. This is consistent with Olweus's explanation that it is a child's fundamental right to feel safe at school and every child should be spared the humiliation of being victimized or bullied (Olweus, 2001). Many times children are bullied because of their race, sexual orientation, disability, or religion, which is a violation of their human rights. According to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the education of a child should be directed to "the development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms" (UN General Assembly, 1989, as cited in Greene, 2006, p. 70). Bullying causes unjust harm or distress, and therefore there is little doubt that the child's welfare is being threatened in a way that violates the protections stated in the Convention. Ultimately, this indicates bullying can be conceptualized as a social justice issue and there is a need for additional research on the types of effective bullying prevention programs that incorporate this conceptualization of bullying into prevention efforts.

**Teachers as Agents of Change**

One field in which the idea of social change is already being integrated is education. As early as 1997, Sturman offered a definition of social justice in education as involving

distribution, and curriculum justice, as well as highlighting the need to focus on elements, which go beyond material goods, that contribute to equity.

As the individuals most involved in the lives of students, teachers bear an important responsibility to uphold relevant laws and policies to protect students. At the local level, in responding to this mandate as well as in response to the increased national attention to social justice issues, teacher training programs have begun to incorporate a more deliberate focus on integrating multicultural literature into the curriculum, helping students develop cultural sensitivity, and intervening in peer-to-peer aggression from a culturally responsive perspective (e.g., Kelly & Brooks, 2009; Pantić & Florian, 2015; Vavrus, 2002). At the governmental level, the U.S. Department of Education has anti-discrimination policies in place related to race/ethnicity (i.e., Title VI) and sex (i.e., Title IX). However, the majority of education-related policies are enacted at the state level (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). For example, Section 32250 of the Education Code of the State of California recognizes the need to address crime and violence in schools (California Department of Education, 2021). Through the efforts of nonprofit organizations such as Rethinking Schools (Levine & Au, 2013) and Teaching for Change (2015), both of which focus on changing the classroom environment to create equity and multiculturally responsive schools, addressing social issues in the school setting has remained a primary focus. Further, Landorf et al. (2007) called for global awareness in teaching in order to help students develop respect for and understanding of differences, whether they are cultural, gender-based, or related to physical or cognitive ability. Efforts to focus on social justice issues in schools, specifically by teachers, are of great importance to the protection of students' human and civil rights (Greene, 2006). Cornell and Limber (2015) suggested that though nationwide efforts to stop bullying in schools must be viewed as a response to the violation of civil rights,

this does not encompass all victimized students as the approach excludes those who do not fit into legally protected categories (e.g., students from certain ethnic and cultural groups, students with disabilities, etc.). Thus, they recommended a more inclusive conceptualization and methodology to the way in which bullying is addressed in schools, putting the responsibility on teachers and school officials to intervene and protect all students. There is agreement within the literature that teachers are on the front lines of addressing bullying (Gorsek & Cunningham, 2014) given that the majority of the instances of bullying experienced by students take place in the school setting. Additionally, earlier research by Olweus highlighted the important role that the teachers and administrators, as a whole, play in bullying prevention (Olweus, 1993; Olweus et al., 1999).

Teachers appear to be one of the most powerful allies for targeted students against victimization. When framing social justice as a matter of equal access to resources, teachers are mandated to protect students who are frequently targets of bullying due to diversity factors such as race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and ability (Kenny et al., 2009). Hawkins (2014) presented the protection of students as a pedagogical approach that focuses on social justice, social responsibility, and social inclusion in teaching at the preschool level in Australia. Hawkins examined teaching strategies centered around the appreciation of "Difference, Diversity, and Human Dignity (the Three Ds)" (Hawkins, 2014, p. 723), suggesting children at even such a young age "developed capabilities of critical reflection and capacities to participate in profound discussions that challenged assumptions on issues of physical appearance, gender, colour, ethnicity, socio-economic status, and ability" (p. 734).

Furthermore, Pantić and Florian (2015) conceptualized teachers as agents of inclusion and a critical force in providing equal resources to all students. The authors advocated for the

inclusion of social justice principles in teacher training and suggested a model to accomplish this goal that consists of,

> 1) a sense of purpose, that is, a commitment to social justice; 2) competence in an inclusive pedagogical approach, including working, developing teachers as agents of inclusion and social justice collaboratively with others; 3) autonomy understanding and making use of one's power, and positioning in relation to other relevant actors, e.g. understanding how actors can collectively transform situations of exclusion or underachievement of some learners; and 4) reflexivity, a capacity to systematically evaluate their own practices and institutional settings. (pp. 346-347)

In proposing this model, Pantić and Florian argued teachers must take an active role in generating an inclusive educational system, rather than acting as mere enforcers of policies.

This proposed shift in philosophy represents a potential means of addressing the recommendations found within McDonald's (2005) study that involved comparing two teacher training programs, examining the integration of social justice in the programs, and defining opportunities for the development of related conceptual and practical tools. Though the study was limited in focus to two programs only, McDonald's finding that teacher training programs "more fully integrated concepts related to social justice than they did practices" (p. 432) supports the need for more direct intervention strategies, something Pantić and Florian (2015) included in their recommendation that teachers collaborate with other agents of change to focus on social justice as an integral component of teaching. It is a reasonable conclusion that such collaboration would include psychologists, who also have a professional mandate to serve as agents of social change.

**Psychologists as Agents of Change**

Psychologists are natural allies to teachers in promoting equality and justice as they have been called upon in the academic literature to expand their work to include outreach, advocacy, and prevention (Albee, 2000), as well as to work with larger systems, such as schools (Santiago-Rivera et al., 2006; Speight & Vera, 2004; Vera et al., 2009). However, to date, research has predominantly focused on the role of mental health professionals in the fields of counseling psychology, school psychology, and social work in advocating for social justice issues (Crethar & Winterowd, 2012; Hage et al., 2007; Motulsky et al., 2014; Swenson, 1998), and frameworks for integrating advocacy into graduate education and training have been proposed (e.g., Fassinger & O'Brien, 2000; Mallinckrodt et al., 2014) for these branches of the field. Few such inquiries have been made specifically into the ways in which clinical psychologists can contribute to the effort and the role of clinical psychologists as agents of change remains a relatively new, and unclear, concept.

Over 2 decades ago, Meara et al. (1996) emphasized the role of clinical psychologists in prevention and underscored their ability to provide opportunities for disempowered individuals. The prevention efforts of psychologists are rooted in identifying and addressing "causes of causes" (Prilleltensky & Nelson, 1997, as cited in Hage et al., 2007, p. 500), with the aspirational goal of reducing the negative impact on those who are marginalized or oppressed in society (Hage et al., 2007). Work related to prevention has long been part of regular professional activity for psychologists and can serve as a foundation for formulating an approach to social justice advocacy.

Hailes et al. (2021) proposed ethical guidelines for social justice work in the field of psychology as a means of providing an expanded discussion of the APA ethical principle of

"justice." The authors proposed three domains of justice work—interactional, distributive, and procedural—based on ideas originally established within the fields of social and organizational psychology. Interactional justice applies to interpersonal dynamics, calling on psychologists to reflect on and be aware of relational power dynamics, work to reduce their impact, and focus on using strength-based approaches to empower those with whom they work. Distributive justice emphasizes the needs of those who are typically underrepresented in clinical and research work (e.g., non-White, non-middle class populations) and the need to contribute energy and resources to prevention efforts (e.g., advocating for better mental health policies). Finally, procedural justice focuses on change at the macro level, meaning the point of intervention is the process of engaging with large-scale systems that affect people's lives. The latter two dimensions act as an impetus and a call to action for clinical psychologists engaging in prevention work related to bullying and social justice. Distributive justice work includes focusing on the priorities of marginalized communities and contributing to preventative efforts. By engaging in this type of work, psychologists are clearly called to address the needs of the groups that are most harmed by the effects of bullying, typically groups of people who lack power and resources. The means of doing so are addressed in Hailes et al.'s (2021) procedural justice guideline that urges engagement with various external systems (e.g., schools) on the behalf of those who are oppressed.

Hailes et al.'s (2021) guidelines help clarify clinical psychologists' role in social justice advocacy and lend support to their engagement and collaboration with teachers in bullying prevention efforts. Though the module proposed by Graham (2013) provides valuable and practical information for use by teachers, it does not directly and specifically conceptualize social justice in the context of bullying prevention efforts. The author in the current study drew

inspiration from Graham's (2013) module to make a unique contribution to the field by framing bullying prevention as a form of social justice. In applying commonly identified principles of social justice in developing suggestions for teachers, the author also acted on the challenge to clinical psychologists to engage in advocacy, outreach, and prevention efforts.

**Chapter 3: Review and the Creation of Recommendations**

**Overview**

The primary goal of this academic effort was to create recommendations for teachers for addressing bullying by drawing inspiration from Graham's (2013) module for teachers. In developing these recommendations, this author took under consideration Hailes et al.'s (2021) guidelines for social justice advocacy for psychologists and Cacali's (2018) conceptualization of bullying as a social justice issue and resulting recommendations. To that end, outlined in this chapter are the methods used by the author to review and analyze the relevant literature on bullying, bullying prevention, and social justice. This chapter contains details of the process of obtaining and choosing the literature for review and the process and approach to the creation of recommendations based on the analysis.

**Identification of Literature**

The literature reviewed pertained to the topic of bullying as a whole (i.e., definition, prevalence, and effects/outcomes), bullying prevention, social justice principles, and agents of social change (specifically teachers and psychologists). Literature relevant to these topics was identified through comprehensive searches using EBSCOhost, WorldCat, and Google Scholar to access specific databases pertaining to the fields of psychology, education, and social sciences/humanities. Databases used included PsycINFO, PsycArticles, Education Research Complete, Academic Search Premier, and Education Resources Information Center (ERIC). Further, the author used online informational resources to fully capture the breadth of knowledge on bullying prevalence and statistics. The search for these resources was limited to well-established and academically rigorous sources consisting of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the NCES, stopbullying.gov, the United Nations, the U.S. Department of Education,

and the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. Key terms and phrases used in the searches included bullying, bullying prevention, school systems, agents of change, clinical psychology, teachers, and social justice. Additional terms, including victimization, social work, school psychology, education, prevention programs, and resources, were used to broaden the search criteria, whereas terms including United States, cyberbullying, and descriptions of victims based on research conducted previously (e.g., LGBTQ, immigrant, minority, etc.) were used to narrow down searches that were too broad in order to gain a more nuanced picture of the prevalence of bullying as it occurs in the United States. In an effort to identify additional resources germane to the current academic effort, the author further consulted the reference pages of relevant articles and book chapters. The literature search focused primarily on studies published within the last 10–12 years. However, key studies, such as meta-analyses on bullying prevention and studies using or reviewing the OBPP and other prevention programs, that were published over 12 years ago were also included in light of their significant contributions to creating a multifaceted understanding of bullying and bullying prevention.

**Creation of Recommendations**

Upon completion of the critical analysis of the academic literature identified, the author set out to identify areas of congruence between the fundamental and effective approaches to bullying prevention as they related to the role of teachers, and fundamental social justice principles as they related to bullying prevention. First, commonly accepted and evidence-based principles of bullying prevention were distilled from the academic literature, noting any specific approaches and best practices mentioned or recommended in the findings. Focus was placed on the role of teachers in establishing and maintaining bullying prevention programs. Next, the social justice-related literature was reviewed with the goal of identifying guiding principles for

social justice work and its application to the fields of education and psychology. In doing so, the definitions and fundamental principles of social justice were compared, with several common themes emerging. Finally, the author selected established bullying prevention approaches that can serve to address identified themes of human rights. Specifically, diversity, participation in the educational setting, and equity/access, with the latter being addressed via practical considerations that have been demonstrated in the academic literature to improve the effectiveness of bullying prevention programs, were identified as relevant to bullying prevention. These areas of convergence served as the basis for developing the recommendations and bridging best practices in bullying prevention and the needs of the most frequently targeted populations as a means of increasing equity and access in the educational setting.

**Chapter 4: Recommendations for Teachers**

**Overview**

A large body of literature exists related to effective approaches to bullying prevention (e.g., Evans et al., 2014; Gaffney et al., 2019; Stagg & Sheridan, 2010; Trip et al., 2015). Programs such as the OBPP and KiVa have been evaluated and analyzed to identify the components that provide the most impact on the reduction of bullying in schools. Bullying nevertheless continues to be a significant problem in U.S. schools, with as many as one out of every five students reporting having experienced bullying (NCES, 2019). Students who have been victims of bullying typically represent marginalized populations within the context of their school community. Thus, given the role of power differences in bullying, the implications of victimization on social dynamics must be addressed.

Recognizing the need for equity in education, teachers have long been advocates for social justice within the school setting by finding ways to promote equity and a multicultural perspective in the classroom (Calder, 2000; Cunningham & Enriquez, 2013; Kelly & Brooks, 2009; Landorf et al., 2007; Pantić & Florian, 2015; Vavrus, 2002). More recently, psychologists have begun to answer the call to advocacy, with school and counseling psychologists starting to partner with educators to address social inequity (e.g., Kim et al., 2017). Clinical psychologists are, in some respects, newer to advocacy work. With their role in addressing social justice issues being rather undefined to date, space exists for academic efforts to bridge the gap between clinical work and advocating for marginalized people. Indeed, the APA has called on psychologists to view bullying as an infringement on human rights and to use their expertise to address the issue (APA, 2004, 2008).

Addressing bullying from this perspective requires framing it as not only an adverse life experience, but also as a justice-related issue based on its undue, unfair, and unequal impact on children who are part of oppressed and underrepresented populations. Cacali (2018) argued that social justice is a key consideration missing from the existing bullying prevention programs and emphasized the role of psychologists as agents of change, suggesting integrating social justice education into school programs as a means of reducing bullying. In framing bullying prevention as a matter of social justice and when considered in light of the ethical guidelines for social justice work proposed by Hailes et al. (2021), psychologists have the opportunity to apply their knowledge and experience when working with teachers to reduce bullying on campus. To that end, following Cacali's (2018) recommendations that bullying prevention programs should integrate principles of social justice, and inspired by the module Graham (2013) created for educators on the topic of bullying, recommendations are made herein for teachers on addressing bullying prevention when viewing the phenomenon as a social justice issue.

In beginning to develop recommendations, this author conducted an analysis of the literature related to the best and most effective practices in bullying prevention. Several broad principles of effective bullying prevention and reduction emerged when findings were compared across studies. Ttofi and Farrington's (2011) meta-analysis of 89 studies revealed strict rules for handling bullying within the context of classroom discipline were correlated with a reduction in instances of bullying. They also found the intensity and length of implemented programs were effective in lowering the number of bullying instances in schools, and a whole-school policy helped to reduce bullying. The latter, when considered in conjunction with Rawlings and Stoddard's (2019) conclusion based on their review of 19 programs that bullying prevention must involve not only school-wide but family and community interventions, points to the

importance of a multifaceted approach. Additionally, Rawlings and Stoddard highlighted the need to include student-focused programs that teach prosocial behavior, an approach that echoes Ttofi and Farrington's (2011) finding regarding the effectiveness of rewarding prosocial behavior. Further support for focusing on prosocial behavior was provided by Karatas and Ozturk (2020), who suggested the use of social-cognitive theory as the basis of effective bullying prevention.

Programs targeting student attitudes and behaviors are most effective when they do so with teachers' support and dedicated involvement. However, teachers require support themselves and Cho (2018) highlighted the challenges teachers face in social justice teaching. Cho noted the need for teachers to resolve conflicts between critical and relational literacy, as well as overcome obstacles to integrating social justice into their curriculum. Thus, by extension, teachers cannot be expected to implement anti-bullying curricula without having the necessary training. The need for teacher professional development in order to improve bullying prevention was highlighted by Haataja et al. (2014) when they stressed the importance of implementing programs reliably as designed, something that is only possible when teachers continue to refine their skills and knowledge regarding the programs and their concepts. This was more recently underscored by Rawlings and Stoddard's (2019) analysis of programs in which they noted bullying prevention programs were generally more effective after teacher professional development.

Addressing bullying as a matter of social justice requires the application of social justice principles to bullying prevention efforts. Unfortunately, a single, unifying framework for defining and applying social justice principles by advocates of change has yet to be developed and validated within the academic literature. However, leaders of academic programs, public health organizations, and advocacy groups have conceptualized this work via several overarching

ideas: equity, access, diversity, participation, and human rights. In fact, when analyzing the definitions, however distinctive, that appear as part of the scholarly discourse, the same general areas of focus stand out. Most academic definitions, as a matter of course, address questions of equity/access (i.e., addressing issues of equality of access to goods, services, and resources), participation (i.e., participation in processes and decisions affecting life), human rights (i.e., safeguarding and guaranteeing inalienable freedoms), and diversity (i.e., respect for inherent differences).

Most prominently, issues related to equity and access are addressed in the conceptualizations of social justice offered within the various studies used in this review. For example, Bell's (1997) definition of social justice highlights that a goal of social justice is the "distribution of resources [which] is equitable" (p. 1). Equity implies everyone in society must not only have the same opportunities (i.e., equality), but must have access to resources that match their needs (i.e., equity), which may be greater or lesser depending on life circumstances. Nieto and Bode (2018) further opined that every member of society must be given the opportunity to access society's goods, services, and cultural capital. It can therefore be deduced that interruptions in education as a result of bullying victimization or disproportionately harsh discipline are unequally experienced by members of underrepresented groups.

Another common aspect of many social justice definitions is the focus on human rights, which are the set of norms related to the treatment of individuals and groups on the basis of ethical principles regarding what constitutes fundamental elements necessary to lead a satisfactory life (United Nations, 1948). This emphasis is evident in Bell's (1997) definition wherein a vision of a just society includes the physical safety of all members. Human rights, however, are not limited only to this domain and include a broader conceptualization

encompassing the right to recognition and to equal protection of all people under the law (United

Nations, 1948). To that point, Nieto and Bode (2018) highlighted "treating all people with . . .

respect, dignity" (p. 8) and underscored that all people deserve the right to strive to reach their

full potential. Definitions of social justice also highlight the importance of diversity, a

particularly poignant consideration within the United States given the multicultural makeup of its

population and the inherent conflict between its ideals of "liberty and justice for all" and ongoing

challenges with implementing social justice. Bell (1997), North (2008), and Nieto and Bode

(2018) called for the recognition and treatment of all members of society with dignity and

respect. The latter emphasized the need for people to be able to maintain their culture and unique

traditions (Nieto & Bode, 2018). Finally, though less frequently part of explicit definitions, a

nevertheless important element is the participation of people in the systems and processes,

policies, and matters that affect their lives. Schraad-Tischler et al. (2017) called for the

participation of all individuals in "society more broadly" (p. 80) and Bell (1997), 20 years

earlier, advocated for the "full and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually

shaped to meet their needs" (p. 1).

Considered together in the context of what it means to live in a just society, each of these

themes represents a basic principle—the need for all people to feel valued, recognized, and

included and to be able to live a life that is representative of their cultural and individual

uniqueness, in addition to the need for all members of a community, be it large (e.g., the United

States) or small (e.g., a middle school), to have equitable access to all of the resources necessary

for their well-being. Thus, when looking at bullying as a social justice issue, these principles can

be translated into a framework guiding the recommendations given to those working on

prevention efforts. In doing so, the following organizational framework has been adopted by the

author: Key elements of bullying prevention are grouped together in addressing human rights, diversity, and participation, as well as including recommendations for the implementation of general best practices in bullying prevention as a means of tackling equity/access to resources, specifically, educational opportunities.

## Social Justice-Based Bullying Prevention Recommendations for Teachers

### *Human Rights*

The issue of human rights is addressed in Greene's (2006) assertion that bullying is a violation of civil liberties. That is, bullying is an infringement on the rights of the victim. In framing bullying as a social justice issue and approaching prevention from a justice perspective, consideration must be given to the preservation of the freedoms to which all members of society (i.e., students) are entitled. Doing so involves the recognition of the inherent injustice embedded in bullying and focused efforts to eradicate its occurrence. These efforts are not solely the responsibility of governmental policy or social activism at large, but can, and should, be carried out at the school and even the classroom level. Based on what has been shown to be effective in the academic literature, the following recommendations are made for educators as a means to promote and preserve human rights as part of their efforts to reduce bullying.

**Bullying Prevention Must Include Building an Awareness and Understanding of Injustice.** Given that bullying involves an imbalance of power between the bully and the victim and because targets of bullying are typically those from marginalized populations, in-school bullying can be viewed as a recapitulation of oppression in society (M. Polanin & Vera, 2013). Moreover, bullying is a form of violation of children's rights in that the feeling of safety and the avoidance of "repeated and intentional humiliation implied in bullying" (Olweus, 1999, p. 21) are a given, and to deprive children of these due to experiences of bullying is an injustice. To the

extent that bullying is a violation of human rights, bullying prevention efforts must reflect an orientation toward social justice. Pantić and Florian's (2015) model of the integration of social justice into teacher training included teachers making a commitment to social justice. The authors also called on teachers to develop an understanding of their unique role in preventing bullying as agents of social change. To that end, teachers should expand bullying prevention efforts to include framing bullying as socially unjust and working toward raising awareness of injustice (Nganga, 2015), as well as helping students gain an understanding of the inherent dignity of every classmate as a human being. Educators should teach students to understand and recognize intergroup bias, which can be a valuable step in decreasing stereotyping and prejudice (Bigler & Wright, 2014) and can result in fewer incidents of identity-based bullying. Teachers should use the classroom setting and the curriculum to foster critical discussions of power, privilege, and racism (Escayg, 2019), as well as other "isms" (e.g., heterosexism, classism, ableism, etc.), as a means of helping even young students become aware of the impact of these "isms" on groups of people in society in general and in the school setting in particular. One way of doing this is by choosing materials (e.g., books, articles, etc.) that focus on race, privilege, class structure, and oppression throughout history or highlighting these themes in the texts already adopted into the curriculum.

**Approaches to Bullying Prevention Should Include Promoting Prosocial Behavior.** Prosocial behavior is a range of actions taken with the intent of benefiting others (Batson, 2012). This implies those who engage in prosocial behaviors value the welfare and needs, and by extension, the rights, of others. Thus, when viewing bullying prevention in the context of the protection of children's rights, the promotion of prosocial behavior becomes a key aspect of social justice. Especially when implemented as part of a whole-school approach to bullying

prevention (Rawlings & Stoddard, 2019), rewarding prosocial behavior can not only help reduce rates of bullying (Karatas & Ozturk, 2020; Ttofi & Farrington, 2011), it can also encourage a focus on the welfare of others within the student body, building the basis for a more just school climate. In keeping with Pantić and Florian's (2015) model that called for competence in an inclusive approach to teaching, teachers should be trained to foster prosocial behavior in students. Programs and resources available for teacher training include the Collaborative for Academic and Social-Emotional Learning Safe and Sound Guide (www.casel.org), the Institute of Education Sciences' What Works Clearing House (www.ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc /findwhatworks.aspx), and the Canadian Best Practices Portal (www.cbpp-pcpe.phac-aspc.gc.ca/interventions; as cited in Hymel et al., 2015). Teachers should also be provided with tools and resources that can facilitate prosocial behavior while redirecting and discouraging unwanted (i.e., not prosocial) behavior. These resources can take the form of whole-school programs focusing on personal character (e.g., Character Counts [charactercounts.org]), programs focusing on teaching social-emotional skills (e.g., Hero program [Mesurado et al., 2019]), or the materials necessary for the implementation of "kindness week" during which students are encouraged to complete acts of kindness toward others.

### *Diversity*

The United States is unique in the multicultural composition of its population and diversity is part of the fabric of its society. However, historically, these characteristics have been the source of oppression and marginalization of some subsections of the population. In advocating for a just society, it is necessary to take into consideration the role of diversity in social dynamics. This is especially true when addressing multifaceted issues such as bullying. M. Polanin and Vera (2013) posited that experiencing, participating in, or even witnessing bullying

on the basis of innate characteristics (e.g., race, ethnicity, disability, etc.) reinforces the acceptance of the marginalization of people according to group membership, establishing bullying as a form of social injustice. Thus, a focus on teaching appreciation for diversity is necessary as a means of reducing the prejudice and bias associated with bullying.

**Educators Should Encourage Understanding and Appreciation of Diversity.** When relationships between students are strengthened, there is a resulting reduction in prejudicial attitudes (M. Polanin & Vera, 2013). Tadmor et al. (2012) proposed that multicultural experiences increase social tolerance and can thereby result in a decrease in prejudice and bias toward others. With a reduction in prejudice there is thus less basis for singling out peers, as bullying tends to be based on "otherness" and perceived power differences inherent in group affiliation. Therefore, in order to facilitate students' appreciation of diversity and as a result reduce bullying, teachers should actively facilitate the exposure of students to a global, multicultural society. This effort can include incorporating multiple perspectives in the classroom as a way of promoting an understanding of different worldviews and values, as well as encouraging critical analyses of students' own cultural experiences. For example, educators can use reading lists and assignments to increase student awareness of different cultures and sensitivity toward ethnic and religious groups (Newstreet et al., 2018) by highlighting customs, traditions, and histories; incorporating global topics and issues; and connecting students' lived cultural experiences with the curriculum (Tichnor-Wagner et al., 2016).

**Educators Should Foster an Atmosphere of Inclusivity and Representation in the Classroom.** Researchers have pointed to the benefits of diversity, inclusion, and cultural awareness on interpersonal relationships (Ruggs & Hebl, 2012). That is, when diverse viewpoints are presented and students are exposed to the contributions of people from diverse

backgrounds, they are more likely to develop positive interpersonal relationships. This can translate to improvements in bullying prevention efforts in that students who are more appreciative of individual differences and are more aligned with one another are less likely to hold prejudicial attitudes (M. Polanin & Vera, 2013) and, it stands to reason, are less likely to engage in bullying behavior. Thus, teachers are in a unique position to reduce the likelihood of bullying through their teaching methods by demonstrating the implicit valuing of diversity in their classroom (Hymel et al., 2015). Therefore, beyond simply exposing students to various cultures, teachers should also actively construct a classroom environment that does more than pay lip service to the idea of inclusion. Educators must demonstrate that they value the rich tapestry of diversity in all its forms (e.g., racial, ethnic, sexual, gender, ability-based, etc.) by intentionally including the perspectives, contributions, experiences, and histories of people who represent marginalized voices. Teachers can structure curricula to be more inclusive by highlighting the contributions of non-Western societies and thinkers (Reinhard, 2014) by selecting, for example, authors who are queer or assigning books that include LGBTQ+ characters and covering historical events from non-Western perspectives.

*Participation*

Marginalization is defined by the lack of the participation of the very people who are affected by the policies and systems of which they are a part. Marginalized groups are socially excluded and the term can be equated to inequality in power dynamics (Causadias & Umaña-Taylor, 2018). In that power dynamics are a hallmark of bullying (M. Polanin & Vera, 2013), when considering the integration of social justice into bullying prevention, efforts must involve those who are most affected by the anti-bullying policies. Rather than implementing top-down policies, school leaders and teachers would do well to engage in collaborative approaches to

bullying prevention and involve the victims and the bullies, as well as the families of students and the school community at large. Developing an understanding of the impact of bullying on certain groups of students and eliciting ideas for the resolution of problems from concerned individuals and groups can have an empowering effect in addition to providing community-specific solutions.

**Bullying Prevention Efforts Should Include Students.** Though research has indicated working individually with bullies and victims does not increase the effectiveness of bullying prevention programs (Ttofi & Farrington, 2011), student involvement in developing and implementing bullying prevention policies is nevertheless important to program success. One reason is research indicates students define bullying more broadly, preferring a definition that is less restrictive in its conceptualization of what qualifies as bullying (e.g., even one incident may be considered bullying; Cheng et al., 2011; Lee, 2006; Maunder et al., 2010; Mishna et al., 2005; Monks & Smith, 2006; Naylor et al., 2006; Purcell, 2012). Thus, in order to achieve the goal of increasing the participation in the system of those students who are affected the most, it is necessary to consider their perspectives. This is especially true when viewed in light of the knowledge that victims of bullying are students who are already more likely to be marginalized because of their identity (e.g., ethnicity, socioeconomic status, immigration status, ability, etc.). Teachers and administrators should, in determining how to implement bullying prevention programs, consider creating focus groups and using student surveys to first assess the students' needs. Specifically, students who have been victims of bullying should be given an opportunity to voice their opinions as a means of increasing their participation in the system. Once a program has been implemented, students should be involved in the evaluation of its effectiveness as well through the use of surveys, opportunities for classroom-based and individual discussions, and

focus groups. Middle and high school teachers can also consider encouraging and supporting the use of student-led groups to address bullying prevention, which, by engaging younger students early on and drawing in older students to act as returning mentors (Shriberg et al., 2017), may help give students a "seat at the table" in the fight against bullying.

**Bullying Prevention Efforts Should Include Families and the Community.** When thinking about justice, an important consideration is the representation of those who are affected by policies to ensure marginalized communities are not harmed or disproportionately affected by the policies intended to help them. When bullying prevention is framed as a social justice issue, the participation of not only the students, but also the families and communities, in program development and implementation is a key factor. Cacali (2018) recommended that to integrate social justice in bullying prevention efforts, a needs assessment be conducted in various communities in order to develop responsive and targeted bullying prevention programs specific to the school's needs and the needs of the community within which the school operates. Similarly, researchers have called for school leaders to collaborate with families and communities in addressing and resolving bullying problems (Hornby, 2016; Rawlings & Stoddard, 2019; C. Wang et al., 2016). Actively engaging those within the child's microsystem (e.g., parents, caregivers, community members) can lead to more effective implementation of bullying prevention programs in that programs with wider support are more likely to be carried out across settings. Collaboration with the broader community also takes into consideration what works in their particular context given the community's resources and needs, thereby ensuring bullying prevention programs are applicable and appropriate for the population in question (Hornby, 2016), especially in light of the development of many programs outside of the United States. Teachers therefore require training in community engagement and are encouraged to view

bullying victims, bystanders, and perpetrators in the context of their community. For example, mentoring of bullying victims, bystanders, and perpetrators by members of the school community through affinity groups (Nurenberg, 2014) or specialists (Hornby, 2016) can be used by teachers to increase representation in the process of bullying prevention. Teachers and school administrators can also support community and family involvement by ensuring, through informational events held at the school, parents and community members have the knowledge they need to identify the signs of bullying and can help their children avoid being victimized or victimizing others (Hornby, 2016).

### *Practical Considerations to Increase Equity/Access to Education*

Each of the previous sections addressed issues related to process and relational dynamics between students as a means of reducing bullying using social justice as a guidepost. These recommendations, however, do not, in and of themselves, address the inequity of access to educational opportunities, which is considered a fundamental right (Li, 2017). Because inequity of opportunity can be related to experiences of bullying or unequal punishment for engaging in bullying, a more direct focus on implementing evidence-based strategies for the reduction of bullying is necessary to create equity in education. Teachers are encouraged to intervene to stop bullying and work to prevent it as a means of reducing the loss of in-classroom time both for students who are victims of bullying and may be absent from class due to fear of bullying and for students who may be suspended or taken out of class as a punishment for victimizing others.

**Bullying Prevention Programs Should be Implemented on a School-Wide Basis and Should be Long-Lasting and Intensive.** Research shows that when a whole-school approach to bullying prevention is applied, there is a greater reduction in incidents of bullying (Rawlings & Stoddard, 2019; Ttofi & Farrington, 2011). There is also evidence that programs should be long-

lasting and intensive to produce an effect on bullying (Ttofi & Farrington, 2011). Thus,

educators should implement anti-bullying programs that are applicable to the entire student body

(rather than only focusing on students involved in bullying incidents) and should choose

programs that are implemented over multiple sessions (rather than a single meeting) and use

multiple components (e.g., videos, discussions, etc.). Teachers, specifically, should strive to be

active participants in the programs and to implement them with fidelity, despite the challenges

(e.g., lack of time, desire to focus on subject matter, etc.) inherent in carrying them out on a day-

to-day basis. In doing so, teachers can enhance their theoretical and practical understanding of

the negative impact of bullying on access to educational opportunities and work to better their

intervention skills as a means of improving their efficacy in program implementation.

**Teachers Should Take an Active Role in Bullying Prevention by Establishing Firm**

**Classroom Policies and Consistently Responding to Bullying Incidents.** More so than

individual bullying prevention programs, teachers' role in bullying prevention has been linked to

decreases in rates of bullying. Positive student–teacher relationships have been linked to a

reduction in bullying (Richard et al., 2012) and students have reported that their preferred

method of addressing bullying incidents is teacher intervention (Crothers et al., 2006). Further,

research indicates bullying incidents tend to be lowest when students perceive teachers to be

highly effective and skilled in their ability to address bullying (Veenstra et al., 2014), and the

effectiveness of bullying prevention efforts is increased when teachers view themselves as

competent in this arena (DeLuca et al., 2019). Therefore, teachers are an integral part of bullying

prevention. When rates of bullying decrease, students who are victimized (most often students

from marginalized and oppressed populations) are afforded equal opportunities to access the

curriculum because they are more likely to feel safe and engaged and less likely to skip school or

drop out altogether. In reducing bullying within their classrooms and schools, teachers are, therefore, promoting social justice in the process. In order to be able to actively intervene and to establish the necessary policies within their domain, teachers must seek professional development, as it has been shown to improve bullying prevention efforts (Haataja et al., 2014; Rawlings & Stoddard, 2019). Teachers should also implement classroom policies such as punishments/deprivation of privileges, serious talks with bullies, sending bullies to the principal, and requiring that bullies stay near playground supervisors or teachers during break times. Care should be taken to avoid removing victims or perpetrators from the classroom for prolonged periods of time in order to investigate bullying situations or to administer sanctions, as this would result in having the opposite effect of equitable access to education for the bullies and the victims, particularly as the latter tend to be students from protected groups (e.g., LGBTQ+ students, students of color, immigrants, etc.).

**School "Hot Spots" Should be Identified and Supervision of These Areas Increased.** Research into how students conceptualize and negotiate physical spaces at school indicates some areas are associated with certain groups of students based on identity or affinity (e.g., nationality, ethnicity, religion, etc.; Tupper, 2008). In one study, results showed that when a number of Mormon students chose sets of lockers near one another, that space became known as the "Mormon hallway" (Tupper, 2008, p. 1078) among the students at the school. Research also indicates that in areas where students commonly congregate and where visibility or supervision are low (e.g., playgrounds, hallways, locker rooms, sitting areas), bullying happens most frequently (Ttofi & Farrington, 2011). Thus, owing to the fact that bullying is frequently identity-based, having spaces at school that are associated with specific groups of students based on an inherent characteristic introduces concerns of power dynamics and injustice into the

equation. Stated differently, if bullying in a space known for "belonging" to a particular identity (e.g., LGBTQ+ students) happens more frequently, it stands to reason that those students are targeted disproportionately based on their identity, which is a clear infringement on their rights and therefore a violation of social justice principles. Educators have a responsibility to intervene not only from a bullying prevention perspective but in recognizing the marginalization of a particular group of students as well. This can take the form of increasing supervision of these spaces by teachers on duty during breaks and before and after school. When these "hot spots" are reorganized (e.g., for interactions to be more visible) and more supervision is made available, there is a decrease in instances of bullying (Ttofi & Farrington, 2011). Therefore, teachers should work to identify and eliminate unmonitored spaces where bullying happens at their schools and act as a more visible presence, thus eliminating opportunities for bullying to occur.

## Chapter 5: Discussion

**Summary**

Bullying has been a part of the social dynamics between children since antiquity (Laes, 2019). Historically, the view of this type of peer-to-peer conflict has been that it is simply a part of childhood (Arseneault et al., 2010) and even a rite of passage (Hertzog, 2011). Framing the phenomenon as such has resulted in society turning a blind eye to the negative effects on those having experienced bullying, and the term began to be used in the context within which it is known today only as recently as the 19th century (Allanson et al., 2015). Even then, bullying was part of a "boys will be boys" narrative that dominated the discourse through the middle of the 20th century. It was not until the 1960s and 1970s, when Dan Olweus (1978) wrote about the phenomenon of "mobbing" in Sweden, that public perception began to shift and bullying began to gain international attention as a negative experience of childhood.

Since that time, the definition of bullying has been expanded in the academic literature, broadening from an expected, normative conflict in childhood to a complex interpersonal dynamic that involves an imbalance of power between the victim and the perpetrator (Gladden et al., 2014; Olweus et al., 1999), and highlighting the repetitive nature of bullying as well as the intent to inflict harm. The widened definition also includes viewing bullying as an ACE (Petruccelli et al., 2019) with lifelong mental health and interpersonal consequences (e.g., Afifi et al., 2020; Baiden et al., 2020; Lemstra et al., 2012), as well as identifying several manifestations of bullying behavior, including physical, verbal, emotional, and cyberbullying (Brank et al., 2012).

Prevalence studies have indicated 20.2% of students between the ages of 12 and 18 years old have experienced bullying (NCES, 2019) and research has demonstrated differences in

cultural background, language, and customs result in a greater risk for victimization (Kuykendall, 2012), with children reporting their race/ethnicity, gender, disability, religion, and sexual orientation (i.e., belonging to a minority group in school) marking them as targets for bullying (NCES, 2019). This indicates bullying victimization may be related to the marginalization of certain groups that are similarly oppressed within society at large.

In response to the problem of bullying, a number of prevention programs have been created (Ttofi & Farrington, 2011) and a commonality is their emphasis on teacher participation in bullying prevention efforts (Greene, 2006). Research has also indicated teacher involvement is impactful in the reduction of bullying (e.g., Lorion et al., 2004; Saarento et al., 2015), suggesting teachers act as an "invisible hand" in children's peer relationships (Farmer et al., 2011, p. 247) and have a significant role to play in bullying prevention efforts. Teacher involvement is especially important to protect the rights of students, who, when they are frequent targets of bullying, avoid school and are effectively denied equal access to opportunities for learning. Additionally, given the fact that bullying victims are often targeted because of diversity factors (e.g., ethnicity, sexual orientation, physical and mental disabilities), prevention becomes a matter of social justice (Kenny et al., 2009).

Educators have started to integrate social justice considerations into their work by teaching for social justice (Kraft, 2007) by incorporating social consciousness and action toward social change into the curriculum. Though newer to social advocacy, those in the field of psychology are now recognizing the need to address the rights of children and equity of access to resources and more emphasis is being placed on social justice as a framework for developing bullying prevention interventions, with psychologists being encouraged to act as advocates in this effort (APA, 2004). To that end, in a critical review of the literature, Cacali (2018) framed

bullying prevention as a form of social justice and recommended that bullying prevention

programs include an intentional focus on justice. However, it is an important consideration that

"social justice" lacks a single, unified definition, with different researchers operationally

defining the term based on the scope of their work.

   With such diversity in definition, the concept of social justice becomes more nebulous

when it is applied to agents of social change, particularly psychologists and teachers, and the role

the former have in supporting the latter with respect to designing and implementing bullying

prevention. With the intention of bridging the work psychologists and educators are doing

toward enacting social change, this author took inspiration from the module on bullying created

for teachers by Graham (2013) and proposed recommendations for teachers on how to approach

bullying prevention from a social justice perspective. Thus, this dissertation reflects a

preliminary effort to find commonalities among widely-accepted bullying prevention practices

and social justice principles. Academic literature on best practices in bullying prevention and

principles of social justice was critically reviewed and analyzed and recommendations were

made based on the following: ways in which teachers can reduce or prevent bullying and how

they can do so while promoting social change. Despite a lack of a unified definition of social

justice, in examining the varied approaches to explaining what social justice is, several common

ideas emerged, including equity/access to resources and goods, the preservation of human rights,

respect for diversity, and participation in social systems (Bell, 1997; Nieto & Bode, 2018; North,

2008; Schraad-Tischler et al., 2017; Spitzman & Balconi, 2019; Sturman, 1997). These were

used by the author to structure the recommendations for teachers, with best practices in bullying

prevention being reconceptualized as addressing the preservation of human rights, promoting

respect and appreciation for diversity, encouraging participation in the school system's bullying

prevention efforts, and involving practical approaches to increasing equity/access to educational opportunities.

The human rights-related recommendations are based on the idea that bullying is an infringement on the rights of the victims. To that end, when approaching bullying prevention as a social justice issue, the preservation of the freedoms to which all members of society are entitled becomes a key factor. Thus, the recommendations for teachers are intended to promote and preserve the human rights of students in the process of the reduction of bullying and include (a) ensuring bullying prevention efforts include helping students build an awareness and understanding of injustice, and (b) working toward promoting prosocial behavior as part of bullying prevention approaches. Given the diversity of the United States, the country's history of the oppression of minority populations, and the tendency of bullying to be identity-based, teachers have an important role in promoting the appreciation of diversity as a matter of social justice, especially when it comes to bullying prevention. Recommendations for teachers on encouraging appreciation for diversity include (a) encouraging the understanding and appreciation of diversity through exposing students to different cultures and perspectives from around the world, and (b) fostering an atmosphere of inclusivity and representation in the classroom as a means of demonstrating their commitment to diversity. Further, when considering the integration of social justice into bullying prevention, efforts must involve those who are most affected by bullying and would therefore most benefit from anti-bullying policies. This consideration is important in light of the historical marginalization of people who lack power and privilege. As marginalized populations are most frequently targets of bullying, prevention efforts must focus on including them in the process. Thus, it is recommended that teachers engage students, families, and the community in bullying prevention as a means of empowering those

who are most vulnerable. Finally, in order to increase equity and access to educational opportunities, given the documented fact that victims of bullying frequently drop out, skip school, or are otherwise unable to focus on their education, teachers are encouraged to put into practice strategies that have been shown to be effective in bullying prevention and reduction. These include (a) helping to implement long-lasting and intensive school-wide bullying prevention programs, (b) developing and implementing firm classroom policies for addressing bullying behaviors, and (c) actively identifying areas on school grounds (e.g., particular sitting areas) where bullying is frequent and working to increase the supervision of these spaces to reduce the potential for bullying. By implementing these recommendations, teachers have the opportunity to act on the many calls in the academic literature for educators to use their unique voice and role in the lives of children to not only reduce bullying behaviors, but to also promote social justice at their schools.

**Limitations**

In considering the recommendations presented within this dissertation, several key limitations must be noted. First, though the author included suggestions for the effective prevention and mediation of bullying, the aim of this academic effort was predominantly to provide information. Though some examples of interventions were given, they served an illustrative purpose and it was beyond the scope of this dissertation to provide specific interventions that can be implemented by teachers. To develop such interventions, an extensive review of literature on the topic of effective bullying prevention and social justice-informed interventions would be required with an additional validation and evaluation process thereafter. Doing so would significantly contribute to the body of literature and would answer the call by McDonald (2005) for teacher training programs, which tend to emphasize theory over practical

considerations, to provide more direct intervention strategies. Additionally, the recommendations herein do not constitute a training module for teachers and no specific guidelines for the implementation of these recommendations were provided by the author. It is the opinion of the author that teachers would benefit from professional development in the form of a workshop or webinar designed to help with the application of the recommendations included in this dissertation.

Moreover, given the dearth of research on the effectiveness of bullying prevention programs in the United States, the information used in developing the recommendations does not have a consistently established generalizability to a U.S. student population. More research is necessary to evaluate the effectiveness of programs used by other countries when they are used in the United States. A similar limitation is related to the populations who served as the subjects in the studies used in developing the recommendations. Though the recommendations are intended to be used by all teachers, the underlying research studies used population samples of different ages, rendering the findings limited in their applicability.

Although the recommendations reflect a broad approach to the information provided, the focus is specifically on the classroom and teachers, and, much more narrowly, on administration, rather than the whole school (i.e., administration, personnel, counselors, and volunteers). The constraint is that the recommendation is in conflict with the "school-wide approach" that has been found to be effective in the implementation of bullying prevention programs. By focusing on only one part of the school system, teachers, full systemic change is limited at best and the author recognizes the importance of and need for future research to focus on applying the principles discussed herein in developing novel school-wide programs with a specific emphasis on social justice.

Another drawback to the recommendations is that they do not address cyberbullying. The current literature review covered studies that may or may not have included cyberbullying in the operational definition and may not have examined it specifically. In that cyberbullying is a relatively new consideration in the discourse on bullying prevention, this area of research is in its infancy. Nevertheless, the internet is frequently used to perpetuate racist attitudes and hate (Bliuc et al., 2018) and social media platforms can serve as a source of intimidation, harassment, and bullying, particularly among youth. Thus, given the current racially-charged sociopolitical environment, it is more important than ever that cyberbullying be addressed in future research, with particular attention paid to how it fits within a social justice framework.

Similarly, the recommendations made within this dissertation focus primarily on framing bullying as a social justice issue as it relates to victims of bullying. What is not addressed, but is nevertheless equally important, is the impact of bullying prevention efforts on those students who are accused of bullying. That is to say, when considering that students of color are more likely to be punished for misbehavior (Gibson et al., 2019; Okonofua & Eberhardt, 2015; Skiba et al., 2011; U.S. Department of Education, 2018), it becomes necessary to direct social justice focused work toward this population of students as well. However, given the lack of academic research specifically on the racial disparities between groups of students who are accused of bullying and the types of punishments they receive, it is premature to make any bullying prevention recommendation for teachers. Such recommendations will need to address how bullying prevention efforts can work with the perpetrators of bullying from a human rights perspective. More research is necessary to explore this domain before specific social justice principles can be applied and recommendations made for justice-informed interventions aimed at reducing bullying behavior.

Last, in calling for teachers to integrate social justice principles into their teaching as a means of reducing bullying in schools, the author recognizes that student–teacher relationships are not immune from the impact of issues related to racial disparities, privilege, prejudice, and bias. Although important, a discussion of the complex effect of these dynamics on teachers' efforts to teach for social justice was, nevertheless, beyond the scope of this dissertation. Teachers' willingness to recognize and address their own privilege, internalized biases, systemic problems, and attitudes is pertinent to the implementation of the recommendations made within this dissertation. Future researchers should explore how teachers' levels of commitment to social justice affect the implementation of justice-informed bullying prevention programs.

**Recommendations**

Though the intent within this academic effort was to begin to integrate bullying prevention and social justice in the form of recommendations for teachers, future researchers should approach the analysis of literature with even greater rigor in order to expose more areas of commonality. One way of doing so would be to use the systematic review (SR) methodology, a more sophisticated and stringent approach to conducting a literature review. The SR is highly structured, rigorous, and transparent in its approach to identifying and analyzing academic literature (Littell et al., 2008). Employing the SR methodology to the concepts at the center of this dissertation would result in a clearly reproducible methodology that can inform clinical and practical decision making and practice in bullying prevention (Gaugh et al., 2017). A more extensive critical review of the literature on bullying prevention and social justice would also result in further identifying ways in which psychologists can help teachers be more effective in advocating for social change through bullying prevention efforts.

Furthermore, the review of literature revealed the phenomenon of cyberbullying is yet to be extensively explored, particularly with regard to how it may relate to social justice. Definitions are generally broad, emphasizing the harmful intent of the act and the use of technology to perpetrate it (Hinduja & Patchin, 2015; Smith et al., 2008), and most point to the unique nature of this type of bullying. With society's dependence on technology and social media, especially during the current COVID-19 global pandemic, developing an understanding of cyberbullying in and of itself is imperative. As children's reliance on connecting with one another via technological means increases, the impact of bullying that takes place online is especially important to examine given the prevalence of cyber racism (Bliuc et al., 2018). Future researchers should focus on establishing a clear definition of cyberbullying and using that definition to study its prevalence and impact and should work to examine cyberbullying from a social justice perspective. Further, the body of knowledge would benefit from research looking into specific prevention strategies for bullying of this nature to integrate a human rights point of view in developing interventions.

Additionally, in recognizing the limitation of this academic effort to make recommendations for working with perpetrators of bullying while addressing potential underlying race and ethnicity-related factors, this author recommends future researchers focus on identifying possible disparities in who is implicated in bullying and whether interventions, including the punishments used, are equal. As discussed earlier, there is a body of research that indicates some student populations are disproportionately punished for misbehavior (Gibson et al., 2019; Okonfua & Eberhardt, 2015; Skiba et al., 2011) and it would not be a surprising finding that these groups are also disproportionately accused of bullying based on the documented perception of children of color as more threatening (Dow, 2016; Ferguson, 2000;

Morris, 2005; Pascoe, 2007). If these groups of students are more frequently accused of and punished for bullying using suspensions, they are facing unequal treatment based on race. Researchers should focus their efforts on identifying ways to address this inequality in bullying prevention programs.

Finally, as previously mentioned, this author made recommendations using examples of interventions for the purposes of exposition, but stopped short of creating a full-scale training program for teachers complete with social justice-informed bullying prevention interventions that can be readily implemented. Haataja et al. (2014) and Rawlings and Stoddard (2019) emphasized the role of teacher training in the effective implementation of bullying prevention programs, and, to that end, developing teacher training programs is a necessary endeavor. Future researchers should focus on identifying specific interventions that are validated in the social justice and bullying prevention literature and using these as part of creating such a training program. A program aimed at training teachers would be an extension of the current academic effort and should focus on updating teachers on the current state of research on the topics of bullying and social justice, offering recommendations for integrating social justice teaching into bullying prevention work, and providing specific interventions for how to carry out the recommendations. It would also be prudent to have the programs evaluated by bullying prevention and education experts in the field to establish the practicality of implementing these interventions in a real-world setting.

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APPENDIX A

IRB Approval Notice

# PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY

## Graduate & Professional Schools Institutional Review Board

February 22, 2021

Protocol #: **22221**

Project Title: Bullying Prevention and Social Justice: Recommendations for Teachers

Dear Anna:

Thank you for submitting a "GPS IRB Non-Human Subjects Notification Form" for *Bullying Prevention and Social Justice: Recommendations for Teachers* project to Pepperdine University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) for review. The IRB has reviewed your submitted form and all ancillary materials. Upon review, the IRB has determined that the above titled project meets the requirements for *non-human subject research* under the federal regulations 45 CFR 46.101 that govern the protection of human subjects.

Your research must be conducted according to the form that was submitted to the IRB. If changes to the approved project occur, you will be required to submit *either* a new "GPS IRB Non-Human Subjects Notification Form" or an IRB application via the eProtocol system (httpw://irb.pepperdine.edu) to the Institutional Review Board.

A goal of the IRB is to prevent negative occurrences during any research study. However, despite our best intent, unforeseen circumstances or events may arise during the research. If an unexpected situation or adverse event happens during your investigation, please notify the IRB as soon as possible. We will ask for a complete explanation of the event and your response. Other actions also may be required depending on the nature of the event. Details regarding the timeframe in which adverse events must be reported to the IRB and documenting the adverse event can be found in the *Pepperdine University Protection of Human Participants in Research: Policies and Procedures Manual* at https://community.pepperdine.edu/irb/policies/.

Please refer to the protocol number denoted above in all further communication or correspondence related to this approval.

On behalf of the IRB, we wish you success in this scholarly pursuit.

Sincerely,

Institutional Review Board (IRB)
Pepperdine University


cc:     Mrs. Katy Carr, Assistant Provost for Research
        Dr. Judy Ho, Graduate School of Education and Psychology IRB Chair