Rosemary Papa  *Editor*

# School Violence in International Contexts

## Perspectives from Educational Leaders Without Borders

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# Foreword

*Fears are educated into us, and can, if we wish, be educated out.*
—Karl Augustus Menninger

In light of the devastating violence in schools and universities worldwide, the war on knowledge development in secular education is increasing at an alarming rate. This book offers an international perspective on violence from both K-12 to tertiary levels, students, parents, teachers, staff, school principals and research scholars in a desire to understand the contextual issues surrounding school violence and its impacts on the field of education across various cultural, economic, and political forces. This book is a collaboration among scholars and practitioners from the organization Educational Leaders Without Borders (Papa & English, 2018). See www.educationalleaderswithoutborders.com.

The examples from historical to future perspectives and contexts of the complexity with which school children have and are dealing, various international authors offer perspectives on knowledge generation when surrounded by fear and violence: protection of students, school safety measures, and the challenges the school leader must face with potential perpetrators, while framing future strategies to address multinational fear mongering that aims to reduce knowledge generation to develop an informed citizenry. The World Health Organization's Violence Prevention Alliance (WHO, 2018), through the *World Report on Violence and Health* (WRVH), defines violence as:

> The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation (WHO, 2018, p. 1).

The WHO (2018) uses four typologies to further clarify and classify violence: '*Interpersonal violence* broken down into *acquaintance* and *stranger* violence and includes youth violence; assault by strangers; violence related to property crimes; and violence in workplaces and other institutions' and *Collective violence* meaning 'violence committed by larger groups of individuals and can be subdivided into social, political and economic violence.' (WHO, 2018, p. 1).

Violence and fear are equal partners for those who seek this power. These shooters seek fame and vengeance driven by their sense of victimization and/or righteousness. Violence on knowledge generation is characterized by country politics of jingoism, nationalism, religious righteousness, support of so-called fake news, all of which are hallmarks of the first quarter of the twenty-first-century geopolitical realm. Fear and violence do not support a democratic norm for a common good education for its citizens. Notably apparent with the assault on free public education is the economic global reality. Public schools intended to serve students and help them develop into an ideal citizenry through a cultural lens connected to political aims may now choose to only educate 'us' versus 'them', leading to resource-poor public schools under the neoliberal (English & Papa, 2018) umbrella as consumers. The voracious appetites for new markets by corporate forces driven by bottom lines have not displayed conscience towards any country's citizenship. Corporate interests worldwide along a spectrum benefit arms dealers, as people are 'forced to purchase *safety supports'* to keep schools safe from the violent political forces that feed war. Schools in numerous countries must now act as a 'prison-military' fortress for the *protection* of students.

Fox (2018) described gun massacres in the USA as an outlier to other countries in the world, far exceeding all others with public mass shootings. Hoffman (2006) contended that following 9/11, the growing threats from Christian White supremacists, anti-abortion supporters, to militant environmentalists have been affected with little internal scrutiny, given the external war on terrorism.

Trump's presidency extols protection of economic arms sales as more important than democratic common good citizenship: consider the Saudi killing of Jamal Khashoggi. Trump cited two reasons: the 'Kingdom's influence over oil prices [stating], if we abandon Saudi it would be a terrible mistake…not going to destroy the economy of our country over Khashoggi by giving up arms deals to Saudi Arabia' (Gaouette & Collins, 2018, p. 4).

Americans own nearly half (48%) of the estimated 6.5 million civilian-owned guns in the world (Fox, 2018). Fox noted the devastating reality for US citizens:

> The number of firearms available to American civilians is estimated at around 310 million, according to a 2009 National Institute of Justice (NIJ) report… India is home to the second-largest civilian firearm stockpile, estimated at 46 million… The most updated estimates—now more than a decade old—place the worldwide civilian gun cache at around 650 million. According to Switzerland-based Small Arms Survey, the number of civilian guns has most likely risen since 2007. Firearm production continues to proliferate worldwide, outweighing the effects that gun destruction might have (Fox, 2018, pp. 4–6).

Another study by Lankford and the University of Alabama (Lankford, 2016) noted that while the USA makes up less than 5% of the world's population, it faces 31% of all mass global shootings. Between 1966 and 2012, in a comparison of mass shootings, the USA tops the list at 90, the Philippines at 18, Russia at 15, Yemen at 11, and France at 10. And, in higher-income countries, the USA show a more than 25% higher rate of gun-related homicides.

In the USA, fame-seeking school shooters who describe themselves as victims seeking vengeance and/or fame is a critically important element to be understood.

According to research from Lankford and Madfis (2017), contagious behavior and the need to copy-cat other shooters in choosing to seek fame has been found to persuade shooters, predominately White males. Lankford and Madfis proposed to those doing media coverage to not grant fame-seeking shooters publication of their names and pictures as their

> Prior research has shown that many mass shooters have explicitly admitted they want fame and have directly reached out to media organizations to get it. These fame-seeking offenders are particularly dangerous because they kill and wound significantly more victims than other active shooters, they often compete for attention by attempting to maximize victim fatalities, and they can inspire contagion and copycat effects. However, if the media changes how they cover mass shooters, they may be able to deny many offenders the attention they seek and deter some future perpetrators from attacking. (Lankford & Madfis, 2017, p. 1)

Further described by Cox and Rich (2018), "Billions are being spent to protect children from school shootings" (Cox & Rich, 2018, p. 1). Cox and Rich wonder if this is working, beyond trying to bring peace of mind to school administrators and parents? Their research showed that school security is now a $2.7-billion-dollar industry; a conservative estimate.

A survey sent to schools that had endured shootings since 2012 found that out "of the 79 schools contacted, 34 provided answers, including Sandy Hook Elementary" (p. 2). Cox and Rich (2018) referred to a federally funded Johns Hopkins University 2016 study that concluded there was limited information on research found in the literature on both short- and long-term effectiveness of technology-focused school safety. Additionally, in *The Washington Post* story, Cox and Rich noted:

> Much of what can be done to prevent harm is beyond any school's control because, in a country with more guns—nearly 400 million—than people, children are at risk of being shot no matter where they are. A 2016 study in the American Journal of Medicine found that, among high-income nations, 91 percent of children younger than 15 who were killed by gunfire lived in the United States (Cox & Rich, 2018, p. 6).

## Research of Fear Mongering Activism

From hate crimes, anti-Semitism, pro-White supremacy, and jingoistic nationalism, another player in the mix of fear leading to violence, according to Silberman, Higgins and Dweck (2005), is religion. They identify "religion as a double-edged sword that can both encourage and discourage world change, and can facilitate both violent and peaceful activism" (p. 1).

> Unfortunately, intensive activism in the name of religion has also been demonstrated in numerous historical and recent acts of violence, wars, and terrorism across the world (Hoffman, 1993; Juergensmeyer, 2003; Kimball, 2002) such as the Crusades, the Inquisition, the conflicts between Jews and Muslims in the Middle East, Hindus and Muslims in India, Catholics and Protestants in Ireland, Christians and Muslims in the former Yugoslavia, East Timor, Lebanon, Russia, and many countries in Africa, such as Nigeria, the global activism of the al Qaeda network, and the killing of physicians and nurses by Christian anti-abortion

groups (Appleby, 2000; Carroll, 2001; Fox, 2002; Huntington, 2003; Silberman, this issue, Silberman et al., 2005, p. 763)

Nationalism and jingoism create a cultural divide between humans: an 'us' versus 'them' attitude supported by the sense of feeling as a victim and rationalizing this stance into a fear that must have an outcome trigger. Religions that offer stories of peace and violence are often the undergirding source of this fear. The recent Tree of Life synagogue killing of 11 people is the "worst anti-Semitic in recent U.S. history…[cited] US media said he had shouted, *All Jews must die* as he carried out the attack" (BBC, 2018, pp. 1, 4).

## Research of Violent and Peaceful Activism

Silberman et al. (2005) posed the question, 'how can the *same* religion (e.g., Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, or Judaism) support both the goals of status quo and world change, and both violent and peaceful activism as means to achieve them' (p. 769).

> On a more emotional-psychological level, one of the most important motivations seemed to be the simplification of the meaning of life—a life in which good and evil, victims and oppressors, were clearly defined, and martyrdom provided escape from life's dilemmas and difficulties. Other goals on the emotional-psychological level included expression of rage, as well as the achievement of status, glamour, fame; a sense of identity, pride and strength; friendship and community; adventures and fun. (Silberman et al., 2005, pp. 773–774)

> Religious violence and terrorism have been described by leading experts within the academic world and beyond as particularly destructive and dangerous to modern civilization and the entire world (e.g., Ganor, 2005; Hoffman, 1993; Kimball, 2002). The fact that this millennium has started with religions demonstrating their destructive potential in facilitating conflicts and terrorism across the world (e.g., Juergensmeyer, 2003; Silberman et al., 2005) is not going to make it a unique millennium. Hopefully, through the collaborative efforts of researchers, political and religious leaders and communities, this millennium will become a special and memorable one by revealing the unique potential of religions to facilitate conflict resolution and world peace. (Silberman et al., 2005, p. 780)

## Reasons in Support of Peace…For Our Children

Why is there a lack of research on weapons of destruction in the USA? Given the upswing in the US economy, 'in protection of school children', lack of research can rest with the lobbying efforts of the NRA (National Rifle Association) stranglehold on politicians. Even those in the medical field are bullied to be quiet and not publish research on gun victims. Sellers, for *The Washington Post* (2018), reported that from a group of 22 medical doctor researchers, of which 82% are "passionate firearm owners" (p. 2), they experienced the wrath of the NRA:

> Many medical professionals believe gun violence should be addressed in the same way as car or food safety, but the NRA has long argued for blocking research of guns as a public health issue. The gun-safety and sporting group evolved into a powerful pro-firearms lobby and encouraged Congress to pass the Dickey Amendment in 1996, effectively cutting funding for gun violence research at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (Sellers, 2018, p. 2)

A white paper recommending 'a public health approach' to firearms-related violence was written by these 22 medical doctors. The stance taken was to say that those in the medical field have a responsibility to speak out; immediately, were in the 'sights' of the NRA. As Sellers (2018) reported, the "NRA retaliated, first with an editorial and then with a Nov. 7 tweet, mocking '*self-important* doctors who dared enter the debate' (p. 2).

## Considerations

In a sweeping review by *The Washington Post* (Rich, & Cox, 2018), more than 4.1 million students endured at least one lockdown in the 2017–2018 school year alone. Their stated 'first-of-its-kind analysis' reviewed 20,000 news stories and data from school districts in 31 of the country's largest cities. All school leaders should be alarmed for the encroaching reactions required to deal with school violence.

As a former school principal and chief school administrator, this author notes that serving children and their families begins with keeping children safe while in the principal's care during the school day. As a principal, one is called to make overly cautious calls to protect the safety of students. Principals cannot know the child as well as the parent(s), therefore protection becomes paramount to ensure their safety while at school. In a safe school environment, students trust and learn to achieve their dreams. These days render some principals and school researchers with the harsh reality of protecting and serving in a caring and loving place called school. Chart 1 is taken from the keywords the authors identified in the chapters of this book.

The ELWB scholars in sharing their specific experiences and research on school violence end each chapter with recommendations for consideration in the hope that pieces from their schools may be helpful for those reading this book. The tone of the book is in the form of shared experiences of research and practices that provide insights for consideration along the political, cultural, and economic spectrum. The authors are all ELWBers, Educational Leaders Without Borders, willing to share their stories: focused on their local communities to serve and protect, keeping an eye on the expanding world. They all are seeking ways to understand school violence and support students, principals, teachers, and staff in the school with the primary purpose: protect and keep safe children in schools around the world. In their chapters are their pleas for educators to consider: find peace so children can go to school without fear of violence.

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## A Few Considerations from International ELWB Scholars

**Chapter 1**: *In Iraq…Shared experiences from two Iraqi scholars offer insights for educators worldwide on the relationship between religion, war, and terror*. It's far beyond time that we begin looking more closely outside our own borders and examine violence in schools in other countries to more fully understand where we fair in this worldwide tragedy. This chapter begins that long trek by probing into school settings in a war-torn region of Iraq, which deals daily with terrorism. Herein can be found two personal accounts on their feelings, perceptions, and experiences in Iraq in terms of religion, war, and terror. Through these depictions, qualitative information can be gleaned. Each shares through their particular lenses personal thoughts and ideas, percepts and concepts, feelings and emotions, and ideas and information on these three areas. Their writing purposefully touches on aspects of historic, religious, military, and economic reality surrounding violence in Iraq, including in the educational setting. The hope is that these portrayals will facilitate in better educating worldwide audiences, including international higher educators and leaders, pre-K-12 school teachers, administrators, parents, and students. [Authors Dr. Daniel W. Eadens, Dr. Danielle M. Eadens, K. Bashar, & Dr. Malik Ryadh]

**Chapter 2**: *In Nigeria, a deep-seated entity that is divided along the lines of political, ethnic and religious violence… Violent crimes are fraught with very difficult socio-economic and political problems that are deeply rooted in sectionalism, politics and religion.* Violence in every respect is wont to cripple every developmental stride in Nigeria. She is still hopelessly sinking in the valley of despair. Northeast Nigeria has created fears in parents and students towards school attendance. The conscription of young boys and girls into Boko Haram and turning them to suicide bombers leaves room for terrorism to continue and strengthen its existence in Nigeria. This portends great danger for the growth of the economy as investors will be unwilling to invest in Nigeria. [Authors Dr. Ntasiobi C. N. Igu, Dr. Francisca N. Ogba, Alex Ekwueme Federal University, Ndufu Alike, Ebonyi State, Nigeria]

**Chapter 3**: *In the very eye of the storm in the divided city of Jerusalem…East Jerusalem principals and their staffs should be helped to cope with the continual state of crisis.* The right of the Palestinian population to a properly functioning education system should override any political motives. Bureaucratic and practical solutions should be found to ease the daily journeys of students and staff through the security fence. [Authors Dr. Khalid Arar, Al-Qasemi Academic College of Education, and Dr. Asmahan Massry-Herzallah, The Center for Academic Studies and The Hebrew University of Jerusalem]

**Chapter 4**: *In Nigeria, parents, churches, and government and non-governmental organizations should collectively join hands with school authorities in the fight against school-based violence and other social vices.* In addressing this hydra-headed monster called violence in secondary schools, all hands must be on deck to promote safety and prevention mechanisms to curb the menace, since it has attracted the attention of every stakeholder, the public, politicians, educators, and even social groups.[Authors Dr. Francisca N. Ogba, Dr. Alex-Ekwueme and Dr. Ntasiobi C. N. Igu, Federal University, Ndufu-Alike Ikwo, Ebonyi State, Nigeria]

**Chapter 5**: *The murder of an Arab high school principal on the eve of the opening of the school year, was unprecedented and 'rocked the education system' in general and Arab society in Israel in particular, leaving the school to face this terrible tragedy.* This chapter discusses tools and strategies for conflict resolution and violence stemming from racial-ethnic conflicts, etc. to impart social skills and pro-social behaviors, to train leaders to prevent and cope with violence. And, community programs are needed to relate to and moderate gangs and bullies: police community programs, support groups in churches and mosques, including physical defense strategies such as structural changes in communal buildings, guarding, and metal detectors, etc. [Authors Dr. Khalid Arar, Al-Qasemi Academic College of Education, Eman Arar, Ph.D. student in Tel-Aviv University, and Samar Haj-Yehia, Teacher of Hebrew language, Amal High School]

**Chapter 6**: *In Greece… An investigation of aggression and belligerence in Greek primary and secondary schools found from the literature revealed that the phenomenon of school aggression has not yet grown in Greece to the extent that exists in developed countries of the West (Vavetsi & Sousamidou, 2013).* Relevant educational legislative framework (Ministry Decision No. 105657/2002) states that

teachers can help prevent school violence by working with their pupils, teaching them to respect the personality of their fellow human beings, and thus cultivate and inspire democratic behavior (Article 36). However, the research data mentioned above revealed a significant percentage of teachers are indifferent to the antisocial attitudes of their pupils. [Authors Dr. Evangeloula Papadatou and Dr. Anna Saiti, Harokopio University, Athens, Greece]

**Chapter 7**: *Neoliberal logic plays a role in school violence in México*. Bullying' provides a common understanding about certain behaviors, attitudes, dispositions, and actions. However, a bullying discourse camouflages structural bias and violence around class, race, and gender. Ignoring structural bias can place Mexican school-children, youth, and young adults in peril. [Author Dr. Marta Sánchez, University of North Carolina Wilmington]

**Chapter 8**: *Bullying and mental health illustrates the serious effects of child-hood bullying on health, resulting in substantial costs for individuals, their families, and their communities*. To solve this complex public health issue, it will take the combined efforts of teachers, principals, families, and others working with youth to create positive solutions. There is limited information on the physical damages of bullying; however, existing evidence illustrates the biological effects of bullying on sleep disturbances, gastrointestinal concerns, and headaches. Complicating this issue is the fact that much of the research on bullying is mostly descriptive and fails to fully address the multitude of contextual factors that operate differently across the diverse groups of youth. In order to have positive outcomes for any bullying, preventative program in the United States or in other countries will require a research agenda that is a multifaceted effort by the country, federal and state governments and agencies, communities, schools and families, health care institutions, media, and social media. [Authors Violet Cox-Wingo & Sandra Poirier, Social Worker & Middle Tennessee State University].

## A Few Considerations from US ELWB Scholars

**Chapter 9**: *In the USA…Question the role of news media and social media, both in terms of creating a context for school rampage shootings as well as sensationalizing and normalizing*. More interdisciplinary research is needed in restoring and maintaining an educational environment that encourages trust, safety, and a sense of belonging among students, staff, families, etc. More research is needed to understand the long-term effects of corporatization and consumerism on the identity development of school-aged youth. [Author Dr. Eileen S. Johnson, Oakland University, Michigan]

**Chapter 10**: *In the USA…Security is a sacred trust for schooling, fundamental to learning, and is tied to communities' educational values, such as access, equity, and achievement for students as well as their families*. What do local records and media reveal about the school's history and image? How connected is the school to

community businesses, churches and other social agencies, or government bodies? [Author Dr. Jane Clark Lindle, Clemson University, South Carolina]

**Chapter 11**: *In Texas…A random sample of 300 Texas public high school principals recommends preparation programs throughout the state should include the NIMS (National Incident Management System) standards related to education as part of their curricula*. The various private industry response trainings, such as *ALICE*, *Intruderology*, *Standard Response Protocol*, *Defender*, or *Crisis Go trainings*, that are offered are emerging and should be considered by high school principals as a resource to train their staff or supplement the trainings that are so often conducted by local law enforcement. [Authors Dr. J. Kenneth Young, Dr. Sean Walker, Principal, Dr. Sandra Harris, Lamar University, Texas]

**Chapter 12**: *In Arizona…The American school system has endured countless tragedies with regard to school violence*. However, compiling data, sharing strategies, and collaborating with stakeholders might provide us opportunities to move forward and eventually end school violence. Recommendations include: increase lockdown drills separate from fire drills; install additional ornamental fencing along the perimeter of each campus with self-closing gates that are equipped with panic bars; install high-definition cameras on each site that also provide motion detection on entry points and vulnerable areas on campus; provide staff with panic buttons; provide a single-entry point with ballistic glass; provide access to mental health services; and create a culture and climate on campus where students feel respected, and bullying, harassment, and isolation are eliminated. [C. Lawrence Jagodzinski, High School Principal]

**Chapter 13**: *In North Carolina…Explore the availability of alternative settings for students in need of mental health support* and, the inclusion of fulltime law enforcement presence in our schools. [Author Dr. Dixie Friend Abernathy, Wayland H. Cato, Jr. School of Education, Queens University of Charlotte, North Carolina]

**Chapter 14**: *In the USA… Liability by school districts in school shootings* from parents, survivors, loved ones and others sought monetary damages through the judicial process. These individuals sought compensation for medical expenses and other damages, such as pain and suffering. These cases have been litigated in both State and Federal Courts based on numerous legal theories. The most common litigation in Federal Courts has revolved around the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment of the US Constitution. State Court litigation has primarily been brought under tort laws of the state, specifically focusing on the school being negligent in carrying out its duties to protect the students. This chapter discusses the legal parameters now placed on school district liability. [Author M. David Alexander, Virginia Tech]

**Chapter 15**: *A father's perspective on school shootings in the USA. Fear has become weaponized, steamrolling over truth, encouraging people to embrace quick, viscerally pleasing fixes rather than seeking harder, longer-term solutions that require patience, humility, and courage*. Yet there is hope. Within these pages, you'll get a glimpse of it. You'll see that not all cultures respond to fear with more fear. Some understand the nature of hate—that it cannot be solved with more hate. [Author Mr. Zachary Jernigan, a dad to a son, Arizona]

The pain and hopelessness that is inflicted in today's world of greed and politics ensuring there is a disenfranchised impoverished group of citizens worldwide is an economic, political and social perspective ELWB scholars stand together in opposition to. Hatred toward race, women, poverty, the LGBTQ+ community, the aged, special needs people, etc. lies on the floor of humanity that demands education to hold the light higher and brighter in pursuit of peace and happiness. ELWB scholars do not support the criminalizing of schools.

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# Contents

# About the Authors

**Dixie Friend Abernathy** is Assistant Professor of Education at Queens University of Charlotte and Director of the Master of Arts in Educational Leadership program. A 31-year veteran educator, Dr. Abernathy has served as a public school classroom teacher, an Assistant Principal at both the elementary and secondary levels, a Principal at both the elementary and secondary levels, and as an Assistant Superintendent of elementary and secondary schools for the ninth largest school system in North Carolina. During the 1992 school year, Dr. Abernathy was recognized as the North Carolina Teacher of the Year. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in education from Wake Forest University, a Master of Arts in school administration from Winthrop University, and a Doctorate in educational leadership from East Carolina University. Her research interests include school violence prevention, school leadership efficacy, reflective growth in leaders and teachers, and student engagement in online learning.

**M. David Alexander** received his Ed.D. in educational administration from Indiana University in 1969. His dissertation was selected by the Committee on Educational Finance, National Education Association, for outstanding contributions to the field of educational finance.He joined Virginia Tech in 1972 after having taught at Western Kentucky University. Dr. Alexander was a math teacher, coach and school board member in the public schools of Kentucky and Virginia. Dr. Alexander's honors include School of Education International Outreach Award (2009), Virginia Tech Alumni International Outreach Award (2009), the College of Education's Distinguished Service Award, and Phi Beta Delta, Honor Society for International Scholars for his contribution to International Education. In 2007, he received the Marion A. McGhehey Award in recognition of outstanding service in the field of education law, and in 2014 the Living Legend Award, National Council of Professors of Educational Administrators (NCPEA). He is co-author of five books, one of which, *American Public School Law* (2019), currently in the ninth edition, co-authored with Kern Alexander, is a leading graduate textbook in the graduate education. Another also co-authored with Kern Alexander is *The Law of Schools, Students and Teacher in a Nutshell* (2018), sixth edition, a popular book for

practitioners who have legal questions. He also coauthored *The Challenges to School Policing* for the Education Law Association. Alexander has written numerous research reports and articles, many of which have been presented at regional, national, and international meetings. Dr. Alexander has had four Fulbright-Hays grants funded for study abroad and has been the principal investigator on numerous other grants. Dr. Alexander has been a member of the Education Law Association (ELA – formerly NOLPE) since 1965. Board of Directors (1982–1985), Vice-President (2005), President-Elect (2006), and President (2007). Dr. Alexander is a fellow of the Royal Society of Arts (London).His research interests are school law, school finance, policy studies and international comparative education.

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**Khalid Arar, PhD**  specializes in research on policy analysis in education, including higher education. He has conducted studies in the Middle East, Europe, and North America and in many cross-national contexts. His research focuses broadly on the issues of equity and diversity in education and higher education. His recent published works include: "Arab women in management and leadership" (2013, Palgrave); "Higher Education among the Palestinian Minority in Israel" (2016, Palgrave, with Kussai Haj-Yehia); and he has edited six books on higher education, multicultural education, and educational leadership. His forthcoming edited books include: *Migrants, Refugees and Global Challenges in Higher Education* (Peter Lang Publishing, with Kussai-Hej-Yehia; David Roose, & Yasar Kondakci) and *Education, Immigration and Migration: Policy, Leadership and Praxis for a Changing World* (Emerald Publishing, with Jeffrey Brooks & Ira Bogotch).

**K. Bashar**  is a Private Arabic Linguist located in Virginia, USA. Bashar was born and raised in Iraq, where he earned his bachelor's degree. After this, he became a translator. Since that time, he immigrated to the USA under political asylum laws, because he legitimately feared for his life, earned US citizenship, and is currently a very productive citizen.

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# Part I
# ELWB Scholars International Perspectives

# Chapter 1
# Religion, War, and Terror: Insights and Safety Lessons for Educators

**Daniel W. Eadens, Danielle M. Eadens, K. Bashar, and Malik Ryadh**

**Abstract**  It is far beyond time that we begin looking more closely outside our own borders and examine violence in schools in other countries to more fully understand where we fair in this worldwide tragedy. This chapter begins that long trek by probing into school settings in a war-torn region of Iraq, which deals daily with terrorism. Herein can be found two personal accounts about their feeling, perceptions, and experiences in Iraq regarding religion, war, and terror. Through these depictions of their experiences, qualitative information can be gleaned. Each shares through their particular lenses, personal thoughts and ideas, percepts and concepts, feelings and emotions, and ideas and information from Iraq about these three areas. Their writing purposefully touches on aspects of historic, religious, military, and economic reality surrounding violence in Iraq, including in the education setting. The hope is that from these portrayals will facilitate in better educating worldwide audiences including international higher educators and leaders, Pre-K–12 school teachers, administrators, parents, and students. Maturing understanding on religion, war, and terror, by exposing hidden violence in schools abroad, may also help leaders frame future strategies to alter multinational fear increasing collective knowledge. An informed citizenry is after all ideal. Like this section of the text alludes, the war on knowledge development in non-/secular education is increasing at an alarming rate, and that is why the very first step to begin to contemplate how to best prevent violence is to more fully comprehend it from diverse lenses and varied perspectives.

**Keywords**  War · Religion · Terror · Schools · Safety · Violence · International · Iraq

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## Introduction

CNN studied G7 countries (the USA, Canada, Japan, Germany, Italy, France, the UK) from January 2009 to May 2018 using media reports, Gun Violence Archive and Northwestern Institute on Complex Systems, and international local media reports for their *Number of School Shootings in the US Compared with Select Countries* report by Grabow and Rose (2018, May 21, para. 1). CNN quantified that "the US has had 57 times as many school shootings as the other major industrialized nations combined" and "School shootings are a reality in America, an average of one a week just this year alone"(para. 1), and they found "288 school shootings in the US since January 1, 2009" (para. 1). Even broadening their search to some other countries, regarding frequency of attacks, "the US still leads the way" (Grabow & Rose, 2018, para. 3). It is no wonder this is a reality based on the fact that we probably own more personal guns per capita than any other country in the world. Although dated and not every country readily had available data, Chalabi's 2007 survey showed that "With less than 5% of the world's population, the United States is home to roughly 35–50% of the world's civilian-owned guns, heavily skewing the global geography of firearms and any relative comparison" (para. 3) and the USA "has the highest gun ownership rate in the world—an average of 88 per 100 people. That puts it first in the world for gun ownership—and even the number two country, Yemen, has significantly fewer—54.8 per 100 people" (2012, para. 3).

Cox, Rich, Chiu, Muyskens, and Ulmanu from The Washington Post (2018) have an updated database of school shooting, and they claim that "more than 220,000 students have experienced gun violence at school since Columbine" (para. 4) which happened back in 1999. It can be traumatizing to be involved or exposed to this kind of deadly violence. According to this same article in *The Washington Post*, they have:

> spent the past year determining how many children have been exposed to gun violence during school hours since the Columbine High massacre in 1999. Beyond the dead and wounded, children who witness the violence or cower behind locked doors to hide from it can be profoundly traumatized. The federal government does not track school shootings, so The Post pieced together its numbers from news articles, open-source databases, law enforcement reports and calls to schools and police departments. The children impacted grew with each round of reporting: from 135,000 students in at least 164 primary and secondary schools to more than 187,000 on 193 campuses. Since March 2018, The Post has taken a closer look at states with fewer local news sources and searched more deeply for less visible public suicides and accidents that led to injury. The count now stands at more than 220,000 children at 225 schools. The Post has found that at least 143 children, educators and other people have been killed in assaults, and another 289 have been injured. In 2018 alone, there have already been 25 shootings—the highest number during any year since at least 1999. (para. 1)

While the US numbers are staggering, gun violence in schools in other countries does occur, but it doesn't seem to have been studied as much.

As humans, of course we all have a basic need for safety and security. Long ago, Maslow (1943) theorized humans' needs of physiological, safety, social belonging,

esteem, self-actualization, and transcendence. Many educational institutions focus on academics without first considering safety and security needs on campus, physical, and psychological needs. To that end, we desire to better understand what most prevents safety and security, namely, in this research, violence. There are a myriad of issues surrounding violence, especially these days within the educational setting itself. We know students are unable to effectively deeply learn material if they are very afraid and severely stressed, and they remain in their reptilian brain stem of fight, freeze, or flight. When the stress hormone cortisol is released, it can inhibit or limit memory retrieval and perceptual learning (Dinse, Kattenstroth, Lenz, Tegenthoff, & Wolf, 2017). Higher-order thinking is most probable under threat-free, nurturing, and caring school climates that enhance socio-emotional learning (Goleman, 1995; McGiboney, 2016). However, due to the rapid graphic media coverage today, it tends to feel as if devastating school shootings are increasing and are deadlier than ever before. McCormick's (2006) article unpacked religious violence and challenges of terrorism, morally responding to threats, and justified war perspectives, and Winfield's book *Modernity, Religion, and the War on Terror* takes a deeper dive into the origin of violent terrorism. Winfield's book pushes readers to understand modernity and explains the war on terror and terrorism itself (2007):

> Is "the war on terrorism" really a war…Certainly "the war on terrorism" is not a war in any conventional sense. It does involve armed conflict between nations as well as civil warfare within others whenever the "terrorists" enlist governments in their support or directly fight for political power. Yet, the conflict equally extends beyond battlefields and national frontiers. To pursue shadowy conspirators who commit criminal outrages against civilians without using any territorial base, what must be undertaken are international police actions, rather than military campaigns. And with the "terrorist enemy" enlisting new recruits from populations dispersed across the globe, victory can hardly be imagined without the mobilization of noncoercive resources, both secular and religious…Terrorists all perpetrate inexcusable crimes against humanity by expressly targeting civilians for kidnap, torture, and murder, and by putting whole non-combatant populations under fear of indiscriminate attack. Terrorists may claim that no other options are possible against the evils they combat, either because they are too weak to confront military targets, or because they lack the mass support to wage non-violent protests, boycotts, general strikes, and political campaigns, or because they face regimes so pervasively oppressive as to preclude any peaceful mass actions. These arguments cannot hide the truth that terrorism is a deliberate strategy undertaken because its perpetrators decide to trample upon the human rights of civilians and make indiscriminate murder the means to their ends. (p. 1)

## Complex Problems

Terrorism and gun violence are problems receiving tremendous media coverage these days, such as previously noted by CNN and *The Washington Post* to name only a couple, and are on the minds of citizens, parents, students, and district and building school officials. Dinkes, Kemp, and Baum (2009) said physical assault and verbal abuse on faculty and staff are of real concern as well. From 1927 to 2007, school

shootings seemed to remain relatively steady with random spikes. In fact, Thompson (2014) found that:

> Between 1997 and 2012, ten boys have killed 73 students, parents, and teachers, and wounded 99 more, in the nine most well publicized school shootings. Previously unknown places such as Pearl, Mississippi (1997); West Paducah, Kentucky (1997); Jonesboro, Arkansas (1998); Springfield, Oregon (1998); Littleton, Colorado (1999); Santee, California (2001); Red Lake, Minnesota (2005); and Chardon, Ohio (2012). (p. 210)

A noticeable increase occurred from then until 2013 and again remains steady but higher than in previous decades. Thompson (2014) also attempted to explain a possible reason behind the reason for the violence. He argued that:

> The theory and practice of Progressive education—the dominant educational philosophy in America's schools—is the root cause of the intellectual and moral chaos that defines our education system….that our schools are teaching toxic ideas that have created a generation of morally-mutant teenage killers—modern day Frankensteins if you will—who are targeting and attacking the principal source of their frustration, anger, and hatred… suggesting that America's teenage school shooters and bombers represent only the most dramatic and heinous symptoms of an infectious intellectual disease that is destroying the minds and souls of America's children. (p. 211)

If this were true, then what would explain school violence in other countries? How would gun violence in other countries then be explained? Thompson found similarities in recent high school graduate boys. He found:

> First, that students are poorly educated; second, that they hated their high school experience; third, that they are unwilling to make moral judgments; and finally, that they have inflated opinions of their level of knowledge and they are not open to criticism. The result is an often-explosive mixture of ignorance, resentment, nihilism, and narcissism. (2014, p. 211)

Often shooters are influenced by, to name only a few, interest in weapons, guns, bombs, death ideation, and/or depression (Leary, Kowalski, Smith, & Phillips, 2003), and Emery (2018) claims that from January 1, 2018, to Valentine's Day 2018, there were already 18 shootings on school campuses in the USA; 7 involved injuries and there were 5 deaths. Most of us probably recall the horrific scenes from media about the recent shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. Terrorizing violence on campus sometimes sparks subsequent staged walkouts and protests (Emery, 2018). That shooting originated much recent national debate about the role of mental health, romantic and social rejection, and bullying which we know are a few themes associated with severe violence, on and off campus (Emery, 2018). Allen, Kern, Vella-Brodrick, Hattie, and Waters's (2018) more recent study of individual and social level factors that influence school belonging found ten themes that influence school belonging at the student level during adolescence, and the average association between each of these themes and school belonging was meta-analytically examined across 51 studies ($N = 67,378$), resulting in understanding that teacher support and positive personal characteristics were the strongest predictors of school belonging (p. 1).

## Purposeful Understanding for Educators

It is far beyond time that we begin looking more closely outside our own borders and examine violence in schools in other countries to more fully understand where we fair in this worldwide tragedy. This chapter begins that long trek by probing into school settings in a war-torn region of Iraq, which deals daily with terrorism. Herein can be found two personal accounts about their feeling, perceptions, and experiences in Iraq regarding religion, war, and terror.

Through these depictions of their experiences, qualitative information can be gleaned. Each shares through their particular lenses, personal thoughts and ideas, percepts and concepts, feelings and emotions, and ideas and information from Iraq about these three areas. Their writing purposefully touches on aspects of historic, religious, military, and economic reality surrounding violence in Iraq, including in the educational setting. The hope is that from these portrayals will facilitate in better educating worldwide audiences including international higher educators and leaders, Pre-K–12 school teachers, administrators, parents, and students.

Maturing understanding on religion, war, terror, and exposing hidden violence in schools abroad may also help leaders frame future strategies to alter multinational fear in addition to increasing collective knowledge. An informed citizenry is after all ideal. Like this section of the text alludes, the war on knowledge development in non-/secular education is increasing at an alarming rate, and that is why the very first step to begin to contemplate how to best prevent violence is to more fully comprehend it from diverse lenses and varied perspectives.

Lately, there has been amplified study surrounding domestic terrorism, violence, and school safety. Is violence turning toward schools and students? What about abroad? How prevalent is violence in schools oversees? Do they have similar, less, or far more issues than we do here in the USA? Is it safe anywhere? Will it ever be completely safe? These are questions that are not unique to the USA. Eadens, Labat, Papa, Eadens, and Labat (2016) highlighted that:

> In July of 2013, the terrorist group Boko Haram murdered 42 pupils at a secondary boarding school in Nigeria (McElroy, 2013). [And] Since the Columbine shooting in 1999, there have been at least forty documented similar events of student-initiated homicidal violence in other countries. (Bondü, Cornell, & Scheithauer, 2011)

## Violence and the Interface of Religion, War, and Terror

One such country, Iraq, has dealt with the worst types of violence for years. The following sections are those real-world perspectives directly from the lens of two of the co-authors, respectively, again, comments about religion, war, and terror.

Mr. Bashar K., one of the co-authors, is a translator who was born, raised, and educated through Bachelor's Degree in Iraq and has since immigrated to the USA under political asylum laws because he legitimately feared for his life. Bashar is

currently a very productive US citizen. His real identity is being withheld for his safety and security. When directly asked about religion, war, and terror as it relates to the country of his birth through young adult life, this is an edited version of what he said:

*In His Words: Iraq is considered one of the most diverse countries in the Middle-East. However, Iraq has two major ethnicities: Arabs, the majority of the population comprise 75–80%, and Kurds which comprise 15–20%. It also consists of other smaller nationalities such as Yazidis, Turkmen, and others (The World Factbook: Iraq, 2018). Kurds are concentrated in the north of the country, especially in Erbil, Sulaymaniyah, and Dahuk in addition, many Kurds live in Diyala, Mosul, Kirkuk, Baghdad, and other provinces but with no official number of them.*

*Turkmans are considered to be among the most prominent ethnic minorities who complain of unequal rights. According to Turkmen estimates, they are about four million people. However, other estimates say they are no more than two million. None of these estimates are valid in the absence of a census. Most of the Turkmen live in Kirkuk and some other areas of Northern Iraq. Turkmen generally object to all official statistics adopted until now, and they have not been in fact, and always aim to determine their percentage as a fixed rate. However, this does not change for the total population of 2%, while they grow much more.*

*In addition to the ethnicities, there are many religions in Iraq. Islam is the major religion in Iraq and currently comprises about 90% of the entire Iraqi population. There are two branches of Islam in Iraq at present: Sunni and the Twelver Shi'a, discussed below. Both Shia and Sunni Muslims follow the same Quran, pray five times daily, and follow almost the exact same religious practices. The difference between Sunni and Shia Muslims tends to mainly be political more than anything else, explained later.*

*Shia are the larger branch of Islam in Iraq that constitutes about 56% of the Iraqi population. They mainly reside in the south and the middle of Iraq and small Shia communities reside in the north, such as Kirkuk province, and Talla'af districts in Mosul and Samara'. However, many Shia were prosecuted when the Islamic State of Iraq and Levant (ISIS) invaded Mosul province in 2014. Shia suffered a severe hardship during Saddam Hussein's regime because of Shia implicit support to Iran during Iraq-Iran war in the 1980's. Shia believe that the right successor of prophet Mohammad is Imam Ali Bin Abi-Talib and his sons and grandsons. For this reason they are called the Twelver Shia. It is because they believe that the successors should be the twelve Imams according the prophet's will. Some of the twelve Imams are buried in Iraq in different cities which made those cities, holy cities, including Najaf, Karbala, Samara', and Kadhimiyyah in Baghdad.*

*Sunni Muslims are the vast minority. They mainly reside in many neighborhoods in Baghdad, west and the north of Iraq, and some areas in the south including Basra province near Kuwait. Sunnis in Iraq are from three different branches. Shafi'I and Hanbali are from different Sunni schools. Sunnis and Shia are much more similar than different, except Sunni Muslims believe that the four successors of prophet Muhammad; Abu-Bakir Alsiddiq, Umar Bin Alkhattab, Uthman Bin Affan, and Ali*

*Bin Abi Talib are legitimate. Yet Shia believe that the first three caliphs became successors by force and they are not legitimate.*

*Besides Islam, there are other religious groups in different areas of Iraq, such as Yazidis, Christians, Shabak, Sabi'I, and others. The followers of any religion in Iraq tend to live in the same areas with their own groups. That is why a lot of Iraqis are not familiar with the beliefs and practices of other religions because they tend to be isolated. As a man that was born and grew in a Shia City in Karbala, it is not usual to see the followers of other religions in this holy city for many reasons. Some Muslims believe that the followers of some religions are unclean, therefore, they are not welcomed in certain Muslim holy cities. In addition, the followers of minority religions are afraid of leaving their groups for safety reasons.*

*It is really sad that Iraqi people are not educated about the different religions and about such a beautiful mosaic. Iraq as a conservative country, does not welcome the idea of diversity in many cities. However, in recent years, marching every year to Karbala from all over Iraq, in the memory of Imam Hussein's death, has opened the people mentality and many minorities from other religions participate in a march which has a positive impact on people accepting other minorities other than Muslims.*

*I remember growing up in a conservative city, Karbala, where I used to hear very unfortunate things about other religions not being true religions, sometimes demonize such religions, and consider them as an impure. I still remember a clerk giving a lecture to the public during Ramadan calling Sabi'is as unclean men that Muslims should wash their hands if they shake with any Sabi'i person. Such mentality urged me to question many things in my religion, which was one of the reasons that made me a liberal man rejecting demonizing or falsifying the beliefs of others. I believe any person should have the full freedom to follow any religion, as long as it makes him/her happy in life.*

*Yazidis, or Azidis, are a group of Kurdish-speaking minority that live in northern Iraq who follow the Yazidism religion. There is a controversy about the Yazidism origin, some opinions claim that Yazidism started during the Adam and Eve era. Another opinion claims that Yazidism is a mixture of old religions and another opinion claim that it is a deviated version of Islam that is rejected and condemned by Muslims due to the claim that Yazidis worship the devil. Yazidis are the victims of many massacres throughout history. Most massacres against Yazidis were carried out by Muslims started by the Fatwa of Ahmad Bin Hanbal because of the claim that they are not believers and for the claim that they worship the devil. Throughout history, Yazidis were attacked about 72 times, most of the attacks carried by Ottoman Empire for different reasons. However, the most atrocious massacre and attack was carried out by ISIS (the Islamic state of Iraq and Syria) in 2014 when ISIS invaded Mosul province in Northern Iraq. Yazidis live isolated in Sinjar area in Mosul. Such isolation allowed many others to not know them and believe rumors that they worship devils. Iraqis need to be educated about other religious and minorities and teach Iraqis that such diversity is not a bad thing, on the contrary, it is beautiful social fabric of the Iraqi society.*

*Unfortunately, schools' curriculums only teach Islam without any regards to the other religions despite those religions are much older than Islam. I believe that the traditional mentality of the governments that rules Iraq and Muslim societies are the main reasons of the massacres against other religions and minorities throughout history in Iraqi. The Iraqi government needs to amend curricula and educate students in their early age of the coexistence of other religions and such coexistence is a beautiful thing that reflects human nature of differences in mind and beliefs.*

*I was born in the early 80's and raised in Iraq during the Iraq-Iran war. I still remember the aircraft's loud sound flying over our heads as kids during that war. My memory is still very fresh to remember the Dessert Storm war. It is very stressful and hard for a child to understand why there is a war. I was old enough to feel extremely concerned for my father to be called to mandatory service and the fear of losing him the same way I lost three uncles of mine during the two wars. The years of the 1990's was extremely difficult for all Iraqis because of the economic blockade, Saddam's brutality, and the continuous sense of wars. I was no exception. As part of the hardship as a child, I had to work long hours with my family in the farm just to put some food on the table. However, growing up in a country that always was a war zone, did not affect me in a negative way, but enabled me to be strong enough to find my own way in life. I always had a feeling the years of hardship would end one day for some reason. Right before the Operation Iraqi freedom war, I had a sense that things would be better.*

*I can remember clearly telling my friend at the University of Babylon that I am happy that Saddam will be out of power soon and Iraq finally will be liberal and an open country. I never imagined that terrorism will have a place in Iraq simply because I know that Iraqi people are very passionate and hospitable people and will not allow terrorists in the country. It was an extremely stressful time after 2003 after seeing tens and hundreds of innocent people getting killed on the daily basis. I saw children losing their parents, women who have no jobs with many children that lost their husbands beg in the street and many other sad stories. Furthermore, and probably the most negative things that occurred in Iraq after the 2003 war is the sectarianism and the control of religious figures on the political situations in Iraq, where all kind of crimes can be seen on the daily basis.*

*It is extremely difficult to see a beautiful rich country like Iraq get destroyed by Islamic political parties. I believe that the United States made a mistake by allowing the Islamic parties to take over politics in Iraq, but I understand that at the end, it is the Iraqi people's decision to vote for such parties since there is no alternative. As a reaction to terrorism and the sectarianism that was at its peak in 2005, I decided to work as a linguist with the US military in Iraq trying to make a difference by participating in fighting terrorism, but my life was influenced in a negative way because I did not feel safe to walk freely in the streets. I was a target for Shia and Sunni terrorist. However, I felt really good that I had a role, even if it was very simple to fight terrorism in all of its kinds.*

*The period that followed the war in 2003 can be considered as one of the most significant eras in Iraq's history. Iraq changed drastically during this period where many variables emerged which changed the Iraqi society and people in one way or*

*another. As it is well-known that Iraq went through an oppressive regime from 1979 to 2003, which resulted of creating suppressed society that affected the psyche of the Iraqi people negatively. The sudden and complete freedom that was granted to the Iraqi people after 2003 caused a trauma and analogical thinking of the Iraqi people.*

*I can make an analogy to that thing, it is as if making someone who was lost in a desert for days, drink a large amount of cold fresh water that might cause the death of this person. Iraq suffered a lot because of the complete freedom of the suppressed society. It is clear that after 2003, many changes occurred in the Iraqi political and social systems which resulted in violence, sectarianism, and chaos.*

*In the 1970's and 1980's, education in Iraq was one of the best educational systems in Middle East region. The illiteracy in Iraq at the time was almost zero. However, Saddam's regime was the main reason of the deterioration of the education system in Iraq until this day. Saddam Hussein tried to use schools as propaganda for his own regime benefits. It is very clear that Saddam tried to brainwash society by educating generations to be loyal to his regime.*

*I remember very well when I was in the elementary school, students were forced on every Thursday in cold and hot weathers to witness raising the flag followed by chanting for Saddam and the Ba'ath party. Many students did not understand what they were saying, but they were forced to memorize some poetry that praises the regime. Saddam ordered violence into schools, and every Iraqi remember when he ordered teachers to use the stick to punish non-obedient students. I remember that teachers where showing off about their quality of sticks they used to punish students for many reasons. In addition, Saddam forced millions of students to take classes on weapons, AK-47 guns, and mandatory money donating for the Ba'ath party. They practiced violence during Ba'ath's regime, caused traumas to many Iraqi students, which resulted in many students decided to quit their education, despite the fact that it was mandatory, which raised the percentage of illiteracy in Iraq. Also, Ba'ath regime forced teachers in one way or another to take a bribe because teacher's salaries were the lowest among many other professions. Wars in Iraq have a major impact on people in Iraqi, especially children. I believe that using violence in schools in Saddam's era created a generation of people that tend to be violent and this can be seen very clearly in the era that followed 2003 where violence is one of the prominent features of the Iraqi society.*

*The education after 2003 was different. The educational system in Iraq underwent some reforms that tried to mimic the systems in democratic countries. Human rights classes became popular in Iraqi universities and schools which played a role in educating people about how important human rights were. Also, teachers were not allowed to use violence against students in schools at that time. However, the heritage of Saddam's era could not be erased right away. There were many incidents of using violence against students in Iraq, which in some instances led to the death of some students, due to excessive beating. What I found very interesting was that the violence became in the opposite direction, which I call the reverse violence where students used violence against their teachers. I believe the reason for the latter phenomenon was due to the weakness of the government control and the wide spread of tribalism mentality, where students from stronger tribes used violence*

*against their teachers and got away with it, as long as his tribe protected him. Iraqi educational system needs a full reform in its contents and should educate students and teacher of civil behaviors and mutual respect, rather than violence.*

*In conclusion, Iraq is one of the most diverse countries in the Middle East region with its minorities and religions. The people of a certain religion in Iraq tend to be isolated from others which caused many misunderstandings and reinforced myths about them. Many massacres and crimes against minorities resulted from the mis-understanding and myths about those minorities. Wars and long history of violence affected the Iraqi mentality. Iraqis need to be educated about the benefits of differ-ences, accepting other beliefs and minorities, and such differences do not threaten the fabric of the Iraqi society. But, the opposite, it should enrich the fabric of the society. I believe the current Iraqi government needs to do a reform in schools' cur-ricula in order to raise generations that accepts others and consider humans as the main value in life, not a certain religion or ethnicity because the current curriculum promotes the opposite.* (K. Bashar, personal communication, December 17, 2018)

## The Plight of Children Due to Religion, War, and Terror

Professor Malik Ryadh one of the co-authors, is a professional who currently lives in Iraq and works in a local university as a faculty member. Like Bashar K., Professor Malik Ryadh's real identity is being withheld for his safety and security.

*In His Words: The word Iraq is derived from the Sumerian word Uruk and is a very famous city in the Sumerian civilization. The Iraqi-Iranian war (1980–1988) was the worst time the Iraqi people lived. I was 10 years old when the Iraq-Iranian war started. The Iraqi people did not believe in all the reasons of that war. Life in Iraq before 1980 was very nice and Iraq was developing in all aspects of life: education, health, military,* etc. *but when the war started, everything in Iraq changed. It affected social life in Iraq and new and strange human behaviors appeared in the society; social celebrations stopped, travel abroad also stopped because Saddam Hussein's regime stopped all kinds of travels abroad. All students who failed for 2 years in the secondary school stage went to war by force. Thousands of students were killed in the Iraq-Iranian war (1980–1988).*

*Religion in Iraq plays a very important role in social life. Different people in Iraq (of different religions) respect and perform religious occasions and events. In fact, there are very different people living in Iraq. They have lived in Iraq for thousands of years. Arabs and Kurds represent most of the Iraqi people. In Iraq, the most recent population is 37,000,000 living within 18 provinces:*

*Shea Iraqi (Arab) Muslims:*

*1. Basrah province ▶The capital is Basrah city (2665,00 people)*
*2. Maysan province ▶ The capital is Umarah city (1059,00 people)*
*3. Thi Qar province ▶ The capital is Al Nasiriya city (1,979,000 people)*
*4. Al Muthanna province ▶ The capital is Al Samawah city (775,000 people)*

*5. Al Qadissiyah province ► The capital is Al Diwaniyah city (1,320,000 people)*
*6. Najaf province ► The capital is Najaf city (1,389,000 people)*
*7. Karbala province ► The capital city is Karbala city (1,220,000 people)*
*8. Wasit province ► The capital is Kut city (1,360,000 people)*
*9. Babil province ► The capital is Hila city (1.931,000 people)*
*10. Diyala province ► The capital is Ba'aqubah city (1,548,000 people).*

*Note: There are many Sunni Iraqi (Arab and Kurd) Muslims living in different parts of Diyala province.*

*11. Baghdad province ► The capital is Baghdad city (7,665,000 people). It is the political capital of Federal Iraq.*

*Note: There are so many Sunni Iraqi (Arab) Muslims living in different parts of Baghdad province.*

*Note: There are few Sunni Iraqi (Arab) Muslims living in all different parts of the Shea Iraqi (Arab) Muslim areas (mentioned above).*

*Sunni Iraqi (Arab) Muslims:*

*1. Al Anbar province ► The capital is Al Ramadi city (1,661,000 people)*
*2. Salahuddin province ► The capital is Tikrit city (1,509,000 people).*

*Note: There are many Shea Iraqi (Arab) Muslims living in some parts of Salahuddin province.*

*3. Nineveh province ► The capital is Mosul city (3,500,000 people).*

*Note: There are few Shea Iraqi (Arab) Muslims living in some parts (especially, towns) in Nineveh province.*

*Note: There are many Shea Iraqi (Arab) Muslims living in different parts of the Sunni Iraq (Arab) areas (mentioned above)*

*Kurdistan, the North of Iraq (Mostly Sunni Kurd Muslims), about 95% of the Kurd population*

*1. Erbil province ► The capital is Erbil city (1,712,000 people). It is the political capital of Kurdistan (Iraq).*
*2. Dohuk province ► The capital is Dohuk city (1,218,000 people)*
*3. Sulaymaniyah province ► The capital is Sulaymaniyah city (1,937,000 people)*

*Note: Very few Kurds are Shea Kurd Muslims, about 3% of the Kurd population.*

*Note: In Kurdistan (Iraq), I mean in these three provinces, there are some other nationalities that are similar to Kurds and they have other religions. Most of them are Sunni Muslims.*

*The Last Province is Kirkuk ► The City of Oil. It is Al-Ta'amim province ► The capital is Kirkuk city. Iraqi (Arabs) and Kurds live together in this province. Most of its people are Muslims, Sunni Muslims ► (1,515,000 people). There are deadly struggles between Iraqi (Arabs) and Kurds in this province.*

*Shea Islam and Sunni Islam are not two separate religions. They represent only one religion ► Islamic religion. But, directly after Prophet Mohammed died, Muslims did not agree on who would replace the Prophet religiously and politically. So Muslims were divided into two groups: Muslims who chose Abo-Bakir to replace the Prophet, Sunni Muslims. Other Muslims, who insisted that Ali Bin Abi Taled (The Prophet cousin) must replace the Prophet Mohammed, Shea Muslims*

*The educational system in Iraq. It is graded as: 1—Primary School Stage: 6 grades (6 years to 12 years old). 2—Intermediate School Stage: 3 grades (13 years to 15 years old). 3—Preparatory School Stage: 3 grades (16 years to 18 years old). Before 2003, there were not private schools in Iraq. All schools in Iraq were public schools (governmental schools), but after 2003, many established private schools of different stages including primary and secondary schools. Iraq has not been ready for private sections, especially in education and higher education so, Iraqi students, who are attending private schools and private universities, think that because they pay study fees, they must receive certificates and degrees (and also high marks). This causes so many problems in Iraq. So many students bring weapons with them to schools and because they belong to different tribes, they fight each other but most fights are between students and teachers. Many teachers are being killed or injured because students and their fathers and relatives are attacking the school and capturing teachers and shooting the teachers. Today, in Diyala province (in Ba'aqubah city), a student's father attacked his son's school (a secondary school) with a gun and killed three teachers. The reason is that the student was given used textbooks, he wanted new books.*

*The Iraqi society is a tribal society. The tribe has its strong and dangerous effect on the individual. Primary school students and secondary school students have the following two differences: First, they have different tribes (the tribe has a strong effect on the student), and second, they have different ecumenical backgrounds. Most Iraqis are very poor. Their sons and daughters can only attend public schools. About 85% of Iraqi students (primary school students and secondary school students) are from very poor families so they attend public schools. Only 15% of Iraqi students (primary school students and secondary school students) are from very rich families and are able to attend private schools. In the countryside (in all Iraqi cities), some families do not send their daughters to school at all, or they stop their learning at 12 years old. Some Iraqi families in the countryside have their daughters married at 15, 16, and 17 years old.*

*After 2003, a new social class of the society appeared. Corrupt officials and contractors appeared: they own millions of U.S. dollars. Before 2003, these people were very rich. Their sons bring weapons, pistols, and guns. They drive U.S. expensive cars and their sons attend private schools and private universities. They are scaring teachers and university professors. This is one of thousands of factors that have destroyed the Iraqi educational system in all its stages: primary, intermediate, secondary, and higher education (colleges and universities).*

*In each province in Iraq, there are two political authorities. (1) the council of the province (they are the representatives of the people of the province; and (2) the governorate authority. They are both stealing millions of U.S. dollars every day. The*

*people of the province live in an extremely poor state. Teachers at primary, interme-diate, secondary schools, and university professors at colleges must treat the sons and daughters of those bad and corruptive men, in a different way, otherwise, the teachers and university professors will be killed.*

*Effects from Technology. After 2003, most schools and colleges only give students certificates and degrees without any scientific values. Why is because students in Iraq, since 2003, had strong and dangerous shocks because they received modern technology at one time: (1) the Internet, (2) mobiles, and, (3) satellites. These three technologies are misused by most students in Iraq. The Iraqi society was not ready to receive these three technologies directly and at one time. All students (of all ages) use these three technologies badly. They became strange people, they do not respect their teachers, they bring attacking bombs, pistols, and knives to schools and colleges. They are losing their nationality belonging.*

*Regarding Private Education, before 2003, there were not private schools (no private primary schools, no private intermediate schools, and no private secondary schools). All schools in Iraq were public schools. The government own and runs all schools in Iraq. Also before 2003, there was no private higher education (colleges and universities). Yes, before 2003, there were a few private university colleges, but this was false information, they were actually owned by the government. Saddam Hussein's regime established very few university colleges and called them Private university colleges. These are: Al Mansour university college (in Baghdad), Al Rafidain university college (in Baghdad), Al Ma'amoun university college (in Baghdad), and Shat al Arab university college (in Basrah). There were supposedly private university colleges before 2003, but in fact, they were indeed owned by the government. The sons and daughters of the members of Saddam Hussein regime were the ones who attended those private-government college universities.*

*After 2003: The Iraqi politicians who came from Iran, Syria, Britain, America, and Northern Europe to establish the new Iraq political regime, stole those university colleges and made them into trading centers for collecting millions of U.S. dollars from students who only attended these private university colleges for receiving degrees without any level of scientific values. These private university colleges are only for graduate literate people (engineers, teachers, lawyers, physicians, etc.).*

*The new class of Iraqi politicians established and still establishing thousands of private university colleges and universities in all parts of Iraq. These were really not colleges or universities, they were trading centers for collecting millions of U.S. dollars every year and graduating false engineers, false teachers, false lawyers, false experts in history, biology, chemistry, physics, mathematics, and nursing. So, the Iraqi educational system is completely destroyed after 2003, because the new Iraqi politicians who have foreign nationalities, just want to steal billions of U.S. dollars.*

*Regarding the Educational System in Iraq, of course, Iran has its strong and dangerous effective plans on destroying the educational system in Iraq because Iran has direct controls on the new Iraqi political regime. Iran wants to destroy everything in Iraq including education, industry, agriculture, military, health, justice, and police. Students who received low marks at final secondary stage (the sixth secondary stage) in either literary branch or scientific branch.*

*After intermediate school stage, students start studying at the preparatory school stage (fourth grade, fifth grade, and sixth grade) in one of two branches: Either literary branch or scientific branch. The literary branch, or the scientific branch, starts at the fourth grade, students study three grades: literary or scientific. The examinations of the final year at the preparatory school (or sometimes called secondary school) is run by the Ministry of Education for all Iraqi schools. It is called The Ministerial Secondary Examinations: Literary and Scientific. For me, I got 96% final average in the Ministerial examinations in the early 90's (Literary branch), and immediately was accepted into the University of Baghdad. The students who received very low marks in the ministerial examinations, applied for private Universities in Iraq. These private universities just take fees and treat students as trading products. University teachers working in private universities do not use any scientific values in teaching in private universities and they know very well that the administrations of these private universities always change marks depending on the position of the student's father in government or society.*

*Other students will absolutely pass in all university examinations and then graduate without any scientific value at all, mainly because the private colleges and universities in Iraq are trading colleges and universities, they only aim at collecting millions of U.S. dollars every year from the students as study fees, and let the country go to hell. All Iraqi students who are studying at private colleges and universities know this whole truth, so they never study, never respect university teachers, but they do some of the monthly examinations and buy graduation research. If one of the university teachers tries to punish a student, the student at once calls his father, and his father calls his tribe president. So, the university teachers mostly do not try to punish any student. This is what is happening in public universities. The intermediate school and the preparatory school are together called Secondary school, if they are done in the same building school. This school could be called a Secondary School, but it does not matter.* (M. Ryadh, personal communication, October 1, 2018)

## Conclusion

It seems that if we are to achieve peace and harmony, since violence sometimes inspires harsher violence and copycat acts, clearly stopping school violence and increasing mental health and wellness work are needed across the globe. The world can no longer afford to sit idly by and allow these senseless tragedies from occurring. Although most of us would like to unilaterally end poverty and human suffering and eliminate violence and terrorism, until there is a utopian society, there may never be a method of elimination. However, we must keep trying, and the steps in that direction are part of the important journey toward safety and security. We hope that new and effective solutions are forthcoming; soon, our safe existence depends on it.

## Solutions and Recommendations for Consideration

Educators need to have a paradigm shift and realize violence is more than shootings on campus. Campus crises could include:

- Physical assault
- Serious illness or injury of students
- Unexpected student deaths
- Suicide attempts
- Mental health crises
- Weapons at school
- Cyber breaches
- Natural disasters
- School shootings

While all of these are critical issues on campus, educators strive to eliminate or reduce them. As seen above, violence on and off campuses realistically can occur anywhere, not just K–12 or university levels but in the USA, Iraq, or any country. In fact, school shootings, mass murders, bombings on campus, and violent crimes with guns could occur at any school at any time. The first documented school shooting in the USA was in 1764, and nine were killed and two injured. We have come a long way since that time. Or have we?

Every year, more than 30,000 Americans die as a result of gun violence. Researchers conservatively estimate that gun violence costs the American economy at least $229 billion annually, including $8.6 billion in direct expenses such as emergency care and prison costs (Follman, Lurie, Lee, & West, 2015). Closer to home today, what can be done? Thompson (2014) said policy-makers:

> simply do not know what to do, and…. As a result, barbed wire, metal detectors, armed guards, closed-circuit television monitors linked to local police stations, bomb-sniffing dogs, strip searches, psychological profiling and drugging of students by school officials, and anti-bullying programs are common features of today's government schools. (p. 211)

Many state governments have encouraged state departments of education leaders to offer immediate school safety action plans as a response to recent devastating school shootings. Some of the seemingly more effective and comprehensive school safety action plans appear to have two main components. Increasing school security and working more closely with local law enforcement, restricting unauthorized school access, and hardening school buildings is together, one of the two main overall approaches.

To name a few, below are some commonsense hardening and softening strategies effectively used currently by many schools throughout the USA (Simon, 2013), although millions of dollars are being used to fortify schools that could be used to provide more say to day concerns about bullying and improving communities. We will actually never know how many school shootings were, and are, thwarted (Junod, 2014) by these techniques, but the key is to prevent horrendous violence in advance and make schools safer from within and from without.

## Hardening Strategies

1. Bio-Kiosk parent sign-in systems and identification badges for everyone on campus.
2. Electronic door keypads and buzz-in door openers for faculty, staff, and administration.
3. Secure entry systems at entry point and/or monitored metal detectors.
4. Fencing and securing entry vestibules and allowing police to store rifles on campus.
5. Monitor parking lots and school front entrances, encourage police parking in the front parking lots while they are writing reports.
6. Automatic emergency school-wide door locking systems and panic buttons.
7. Trained armed school marshals and/or creating school district police departments.
8. Hiring and training more school resource officers as active shooter liaisons.
9. Encouraging law enforcement partnerships and offer space for active shooter trainings.
10. Law enforcement on campus for their mentorship programs, walk-throughs, and staffings.
11. Law enforcement free lunch, office space, and audio/video monitoring access.
12. Concealed weapons permit holders are allowed to carry weapons on campus.
13. Plastic hinge-styled physical door locks mounted on inside door hinges.
14. Eliminating outside windows and/or adding bullet- and shatter-proof glass.
15. Video feed high-definition cameras, motion sensors, and indoor and outdoor lights placed in hallways adn outside the buidling.
16. Risk assessments, active shooter policy development, and active shooter insurance.
17. Clear bag and clear backpack for events and/or school policies.
18. Improve communications systems with law enforcement for timely response.
19. Add *see something, say something* threat and incident reporting apps and phone lines.

## Softening Strategies

1. Nurture caring relationships: students, parents, teachers, counselors, and administrators.
2. Comprehensive threat identification, prevention, and assessment programs.
3. Early identification of students who are in-crisis and/or at-risk.
4. Provide individual, group, parent, family, and crisis counseling.
5. Increase and consolidate district-wide mental health services and resources.
6. Mental and behavioral triage teams and trauma-informed relationships building methods.
7. Train and hire more licensed mental and behavioral health counselors.
8. Increase and consolidate district-wide behavioral health services and resources.
9. Increase crisis intervention and assessment options.
10. Identify guidance counselor misuse and overtasking.

11. Hire testing personnel to relieve counselors from academic testing duties.
12. Provide mental and behavioral first-aid trainings.
13. Train student assistants and coordinate liaisons of peer interventionists.
14. Increase parent visits and connect families with community paper and online resources.
15. Action teams with an administrator, counselor, teacher, nurse, and psychologist.
16. Confidential crisis Hotline 24/7 connected to a live counselor or administrator.
17. Statewide monitored threat or attack reporting systems connected with response resources.
18. Confidential threat reporting apps that are screenshot, video, and picture receive capable.
19. Improve coordinated planning before, during, and after emergencies, incidents, and disasters.

Insurance is very important because while state laws mostly exempt schools from liability, torts of negligence vary from state to state. Costs after a shooting are absorbent and can include building repairs and/or demolitions, legal fees, litigation expenses, medical expenses, trauma counseling, media consultants, and accountants to handle charitable contributions. Sandy Hook school building was demolished, and Parkland High sought replacement funding due to the emotions surrounding the tragic loss of life and traumatic injuries. Emotional costs can be far higher. From where does this needed money come?

Some state legislatures are now beginning to allocate grant funds to school districts toward school safety, and many school boards are frantically applying for these grants and searching in other areas for funding to retrofit and supplement their schools. Some officials, that are elected, use these fear tactics as easy ways to gain votes to remain in office or get elected, then actually do not follow through so funding never actually materializes.

For example, in the wake of "February's Parkland high school massacre, a Republican bill introduced mere weeks before is now gaining significant traction… It just passed the House" (GovTrack.us, 2018). The bill is H.R. 4909: STOP School Violence Act of 2018. STOP is an acronym for Student, Teachers, and Officers Preventing (STOP) School Violence. It could yield as much as 50 million annually to:

- Schools to develop "threat assessment systems" in line with recommendations from the FBI and Secret Services, in hopes of stopping such would-be killers before they commit acts of violence.
- Anonymous reporting systems to be implemented for use by students, teachers, or others to contact law enforcement about potential threats.
- Improving school security through the use of technologies and increased personnel.
- None of the money in the bill would be used to arm teachers, the most controversial gun-related provision proposed in the wake of the shooting, one endorsed by President Trump (GovTrack.us, 2018).

This could potentially help "law enforcement to teachers to students—improved abilities to potentially stop these tragedies from occurring in the first place" (GovTrack.us, 2018).

A seemingly endless variety of strategies have been tried and are still being used to prevent violence. Many districts are also adding active shooter insurance (McGowan Program Administrators, n.d.). Yet despite millions spent on mechanical best efforts and fixes, active shooter drills, strides in mental health care and awareness, threat assessment teams, and even extensive and savvy active shooter insurance policies, still violent acts of mass shootings, mass killings, and attempts continue to horrify us all.

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# Chapter 2
# Managing Education for Curbing the Spread of Violence in Nigeria: Implications for Schools' Growth and National Development

**Ntasiobi C. N. Igu and Francisca N. Ogba**

**Abstract**  This article, drawing its content from literature and media information (local and international), has analyzed the causes, manifestations, and challenges of violence in Nigeria from a sociological perspective. Without a doubt, the paper noted that the incidence of violence is making schools' growth and national development somewhat difficult as the environment of the community of schools has become well infested with different forms of violence whose effects have been seen not only in the severity of aggressiveness among school children but also in their high disposition to the use of dangerous weapons during quarrels. The paper noted with concern that violence has caused learning to be compromised as fear, anxiety, brain drain, absenteeism, and school dropout have been on the increase. Based on the above background, the authors made some recommendations which among others include establishing and strengthening guidance and counseling unit in schools to provide counseling services to pupils.

**Keywords**  Managing · Education · Curbing · Violence · Nigeria · School growth and national development

## Introduction

On a global scale, violence has become one of the greatest challenges to human security and peace building. The Global Peace Index 2018 report indicates that peace has deteriorated by 0.27% in the last 1 year chronicling in succession 4 years

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of deterioration. Revealing further, the report states that tensions, conflicts, and violent crises emerging over the past 10 years have somewhat remained unresolved, hence the sustained decline in global levels of peacefulness. Indeed, violence has and continues to shape so much of human history that one cannot but be worried as human security today, globally and particularly in Nigeria, is gradually being decimated and human existence subject to the experience in the state of nature where and when life was not only short but brutish and ugly (Hobes, 1651 in Appadorai, 1975).

Nigeria recently has become one of the most violent-prone countries in Africa principally because of her complicated networks of ethnic, cultural, and political diversities, coupled with a history of protracted years of mistrust. Anukpa (2009) had quipped that Nigeria is a deeply seated entity that is divided along the lines of political, ethnic, and religious violence. This view is in line with Alimba and Awodoyin (2008) in their description of the depth of violence in Nigeria, asserting that violent crimes are fraught with very difficult socioeconomic and political problems that are deeply rooted in sectionalism, politics, and religion. Violence in every respect is wont to cripple every developmental stride in Nigeria, hemming her tight to the point of reference that 57 years after her independence, she is still hopelessly sinking in the valley of despair (Okorie, 2017).

## Retrospective Review of Violent Manifestations in Nigeria

The causes of violence in Nigeria cannot be well understood without a critical look at the two major areas that have contributed significantly in shaping her story line. These are colonialism and military intervention. These two prong factors have so worked assiduously to the point that the history of this political entity called Nigeria cannot be complete without their mention. In the first instance, the country presently called Nigeria historically existed as independent ethnic political entity until the invasion by the European colonial masters in the nineteenth centuries. Those traditional ethnic kingdoms like the Ibos, Hausas, and Yorubas were firmly established and peacefully administered by governments who were appointed or selected by the people themselves. One distinguishing feature of those governments was that they were highly democratic and everyone had a sense of belonging (Onyefuru, 2008). However, the emergence of colonialism in Africa changed the whole episode as the continent became balkanized.

Sequel to the scramble for Africa by the Europeans, the components of the present-day Nigeria were ceded to Britain. The British colonial overlords, in their quest to have firm control over their loots (from the scramble for Africa), lopsidedly created an incongruous entity from those already existing and well-defined ethnic kingdoms. Suffice it to note that this British singular action laid the foundation for the marriage of strange bedfellows that produced through a terrific birth pain an offspring called Nigeria. Lending credence to the above, Ikelegbe (2005) documented that the Nigeria-colonial state, which the British set up, emerged

from conquest, subjugation, and domination. In other words, the people of Nigeria were compelled to be Nigerians; hence they did not have any role to play in it for a very long time. In 1914, the Northern and Southern protectorates were arbitrarily amalgamated by Sir Frederick Lugard who was the first Governor of Nigeria as a corporate entity (Bisi, 1982; Okwudiba, 1980). This forceful amalgamation as expressed by Ocho (2005) weaved in a lot of problems into the political and educational system of a supposedly one united nation state but with different beliefs and values. It is worth noting that no attempt was made even at the point of amalgamation to create a Nigerian state that is cohesive and ready to carry everybody along. It therefore was and still remains an alien contraption whose existence is hinged on a utopian construction of "one Nigeria" (Nwankwo, 1992).

The consequences of that great mistake heralded the volcanic eruption of violence in the relationships of the unrelated amalgamated component units which has undoubtedly shaped the history of violence that has continued, as a specter, to haunt the people of Nigeria as it has broken into pieces their paths of harmonious coexistence, leaving them with a checkered history of violence (Onyefuru, 2008). It is no wonder that barely 7 years after independence, the supposed united Nigerian state was plunged into a gruesome civil war that lasted for 3 years—from 1967 to 1970. There is no gain saying the fact that the civil war provided an enabling environment that not only nurtured but fanned the embers of violent criminal activities (Igu, 2011).

Saheed and Alofun (2010) affirm that since the 1999 transition to civilian rule in Nigeria, there has been a skyrocketed increase in the number of conflicts and violent attacks in diverse manifestations and tendencies in such areas as murder, rape, kidnapping, sea piracy, armed robbery, cultism, bullying, militancy, and terrorism especially as unleashed by the Boko Haram sect and, most recently, the wanton killings by the Fulani herdsmen (Anyim, 2012).

The escalation of violent crimes in Nigeria can be attributable to the proliferation of arms and ammunition in the hands of private individuals (Nnoli, 2003). This was made known by Okiro (2005) in his lament that the proliferation of small arms also contributes to a culture of violence and a cycle that is difficult to break and manage. The recent happenings in the polity support this view point. The reality of the uncontrollable spate of violence has made Nigeria to be labeled as one of the most insecure nations of the world. The hard economic times coupled with the deteriorating standard of education, unemployment, and unemployability due to lack of relevant acquisition of entrepreneurial skills account for the deepening insecurity and violence in the country.

In furtherance to the above, unpredictable political atmosphere and lack of progressive management of the economy have resulted in galloping inflation and concentration of wealth in the hands of a select few in positions of public authority (Anyim, 2012). This situation fueled the sense of hopelessness and depression among the masses.

Significantly, the indices of violence documented by researchers (Emeh, 2011; Igbo, 2007; Ugwuoke, 2010) prevalent in the country such as high death rates, unemployment, corruption, gross indiscipline among politicians, kidnapping, transborder crime, poor wages, poor living conditions, urban culture shocks, and poor quality of

management have manifested deep crisis in the education, healthcare delivery, transportation, housing, and employment sectors. Most alarming and terrifying is the present escalation of violent crimes and the barbarity, lethality, and trauma the perpetrators unleash on the hapless citizenry across the country. Notable in this regard are the rising incidents of armed robbery, assassination, and ransom-driven kidnapping which are now ravaging the polity. So far, the prevalent increasing waves of violent crimes in Nigeria have questioned the political will on the part of the government and the capability of the law enforcement agencies in containing the challenges. In the past, armed robbers used to operate only in the night; but today, they operate both at night and day, attacking homes, schools, offices, banks, shops, restaurants, and churches to rob, rape, maim, and kill. They attack banks with dynamites, strike at filling stations, and swoop on victims at traffic jams. Similarly, rape, sea piracy, and cultism have taken sharp and increasing dimension in recent times.

In the second instance, the incursion of the military into the governance of Nigeria provided another very fertile ground for the germination of the seemingly intractable seeds of violent conflicts that manifest intermittently in different forms and shapes. Military rule in Nigeria spanned a period of more than 30 years when put together. The first military coup in Nigeria took place on January 15, 1966 (Ademoyega, 1981), when a section of the Nigerian military staged a coup d'état that forcefully brought to an end a duly elected civilian administration. The coup plotters immediately suspended the constitution and enacted decrees with which they ruled. Barely 6 months after that first coup, precisely on July 30, 1966, a counter coup by another section of the Nigerian military was staged against the state. It is worthy of mention that the remote and immediate causes of the 30-month civil war in Nigeria were the 1966 coups (Ademoyega, 1981). Although the civil war was principally fought to preserve the unity and corporate existence of Nigeria, the effect of the two coups in deepening the roots of mistrust, suspicion, hatred, and bitterness among the three major tribes (Ibo in the east, Hausa in the north, and Yoruba in the west) is not debatable. To date, the psyche of every Nigerian is cut deep in the consciousness that Nigerians are not and will never be one Nigeria. The military gave civilian administration another chance in 1979 but only to brazenly return to power in 1983 through another coup d'état.

Unfortunately, as noted by Onyefuru (2008), the truncation of that civilian administration was headed by General Muhammadu Buhari who is currently the president of Nigeria. From 1983, the military hung unto power until 1999. Ogunsanya (2014) noted that the over 30 years of military misrule in Nigeria bequeathed her with the following legacies:

> The application of force and violence in demanding for ones right and resolving issues. The use of non-peaceful demonstrations and strikes by workers as the only language understood by employers for bringing about rapid resolution to industrial disputes. The use of arbitrariness in decision making process and demonstration of autocratic tendencies in the language, attitudes and behaviours of our leaders. The subordination of our institutions and establishments to the supremacy of our leaders. Entrenchment of the culture of impunity. Institutionalization of corruption. Widening of the gap between those who have and those who do not have. (p. 1)

## Causes of Violence in Nigeria

The ripple effects of colonization and the long years of military aberration have formed the premise on which the causes of violence in Nigeria stand on and thrive. The authors believe there are five primary causes for violence which are noted below.

### *Poor Economy and High Rate of Unemployment*

The escalating state of violence in Nigeria has been incessantly linked to the poor state of the economy which has led to high level of youth unemployment. The country's dwindling economy has also been marred by corruption which is evidenced in the mismanagement of public funds by the leaders who held unto power for decades and only succeeded in drowning Nigeria in the murky waters of bad leadership. The widespread levels of unemployment in Nigeria have brought about frustration, anger, hostility, and restiveness among the youths making them highly susceptible to violence. The few job opportunities and empowerment initiatives when created are usually hijacked and given to the privileged few, while those who have nobody to speak for them or are not connected to the powers that be are left with nothing, and the majority of the youths who get involved in restiveness are the poor, uneducated, and unemployed ones. Take the case of Independent People of Biafra, Niger Delta militants, and the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra; thousands of their members are unemployed youths who have lost hope in the future of Nigeria (Igu & Ogba, 2013). According to statistics, Nigeria's unemployment rate is above the subregion's average that increased to 23.9% in 2011 compared to 21.1% in 2010 and 19.7% in 2009 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2012). Unemployment, underemployment, and unemployability rates have been on the increase in Nigeria among the youths who constitute 60% of the country's population, and since they are idle and frustrated, they easily ventilate their anger on the society at any slightest provocation through violent activities and behaviors.

### *Lack of Equality and Justice*

Nigeria is a rich country with an alarming number of poverty-stricken people. The country's vast natural resources and oil wealth are controlled by the political class. While political office holders earn better salaries and allowances, teachers and other civil servants are paid a meager salary which is usually delayed, sometimes for months. More also, the government imposes obnoxious taxes on citizens, and yet the infrastructural deficit in the country is depressing: intra- and interstate roads are extremely poor, power supply is a mirage, public healthcare is at the verge of

collapse, and fuel/gas scarcity is incessant, among others. Inequality and injustice in Nigeria have instigated provocations and aggressiveness that have led to violence on many occasions. No wonder it has become a potent instrument in Nigeria for seeking equality and justice (Babawale, 2007).

## *Religious Sentiments*

Support from literature highlights the importance of religion which cannot be over-emphasized in the affairs of mankind. For instance, Ellis and Haar (2007) describe religion as an emerging political language whose pattern of interaction cannot be ignored in the study of African politics. In another angle, but supportively aligned, Kukah (1993) observes that the process of political bargaining in Nigeria appears to increasingly embody the factor of religion. Igu and Ogba (2013) pushed this further in their affirmation that religion and ethnic identities play significant roles in elections, appointments, employment, and even admission into public institutions in Nigeria. A commonly observed feature of Nigerians is their overwhelming obsession about religion which equally is defined along ethnic identities. Thick clouds of religious and ethnic sentiments have caused violence in many instances and have brought global attention and scrutiny to Nigeria. Religious violence in its diverse manifestations in Nigeria is most frequently expressed through the interactions between Muslims and Christians. A scholarly overview of the incidents of religious conflicts in Nigeria presents a near seamless connection that walked through the independence era to the present.

The unending controversies that greet interpretations of secular issues that have religious underpinnings leave no one in doubt that there is a clear sharp divide between the two religious groups. The recent attempt by President Buhari to secure Islamic loan for the country sparked off heated debates between the Christians and the Muslims (Ebenezer, 2017). This kind or even more heated argument was equally the experience in 1986 under the administration General Babangida when he attempted to admit Nigeria into the organization of Islamic Conference. The truth, as affirmed by Olojo (2016), remains that a common thread of fundamentalism runs through these two religious sects and over the decades has often given way to militant expressions on both sides of the religious divide in Nigeria. On a comparative basis, while Islam has gained a wider reputation for militancy and physical violence over religious issues, Christianity pitched its tent on self-defense as the reason for employing violence to protect themselves and defend their faith (Falola, 1998; Olojo, 2016).

The Boko Haram insurgency as espoused by Owoh and Onwe (2013) is another angle to religious violence in Nigeria. Boko Haram is an Islamic fundamentalist organization that has transformed into a dreaded terrorist group based in the northeast zone of Nigeria. It propagates a version of Islam that not only forbids interac-

tion with the Western world but is also against the traditional Muslim establishment and the government of Nigeria (Chinwokwu, 2014). The activities of Boko Haram account for the majority of violent fatalities experienced in Nigeria.

Statistical data available from Nigeria Watch (2017) report on violence showed that the security forces fighting Boko Haram were killed in 40% of incidents (90 out of 221) that resulted in 45% of the total number of casualties (1282 out of 2829).The report further showed in detail the states mainly affected by the crisis to include Borno State (with 2567 victims in 187 fatal incidents), followed by Adamawa (165 deaths in 19 incidents), Yobe (85 deaths in 10 incidents), and Kano (4 deaths in 1 incident), and the number of displaced persons are not even included. The menace of Boko Haram has left in Nigerians spine chilling waves of fear and frustration.

## *Political Violence*

Nigeria is a long-standing victim of political violence because politics has remained a "do or die" affair as it has proved to be the easiest means of ascension to the class of the haves. Aver, Nnorom, and Targba (2013) posit that Nigeria over time has been in the news for the very ugly reason of the unprecedented spate of political violence. This is principally because morality is grossly absent in Nigerian politics as the Machiavelli principle of the end justifies the means is in most part the rule of the game. Igu and Ogba (2013) aver that inordinate desire for power is a major consequence of political violence and armed conflict. The above description vividly fits Nigeria because without fear of contradiction, political violence has negated peaceful coexistence, law, and order and has brought untold hardship and pain on the innocent citizens. In addition to security concerns, political violence has militated against the consolidation of democracy and social coexistence. In further description, Howell (2004) adds that political violence has negatively impacted on the social and economic well-being of the nation by creating imbalances in social relations in schools.

Political violence occurs during election periods which cover the electioneering campaign, voting, counting of ballots, and post-election periods. The incidence of electoral violence in Nigeria has manifested in the killing, maiming, arson, and wanton destruction of lives and properties whose financial values cannot be easily quantified or estimated. The havoc which political violence has wrecked in Nigeria is better imagined than described. More often than not, some politicians, in their desperation to win at all costs, recruit, train, and arm their thugs to harass, intimidate, and manhandle their perceived political enemies/opponents. The culture of violence associated with the electioneering process has somewhat influenced the political behaviors of many Nigerians as voter apathy is always clearly demonstrated in the low turnout of voters during elections.

## *Communal Violence*

Human progress cannot be dissociated from immigration and the inter-mixing of different groups to form new groups. However, the cause of this process is hardly peaceful as it challenges the existing order which more often than not results in violent clashes. Nigeria's experiences have profoundly demonstrated this. The communal conflicts in Nigeria which have incessantly become more violent and more widespread are giving global concern because of the number of lives and properties that are lost on each account.

Nigeria Watch (2017) documents that communal violence has left 1149 people dead in 100 incidents across the country in the year 2017 due to disputes that were triggered by chieftaincy matters, cattle rustling, as well as land-, market-, or boundary-related issues. Ebonyi, Cross River, Benue, Akwa Ibom, Adamawa, Plateau, and Taraba States are the worst hit in land communal clashes. In another angle, Benue and Plateau States have had terrible nightmares in the hands of Fulani herdsmen. Clashes between herders and farmers in these States in the past few months have resulted in death tolls numbering in thousands with properties worth billions of naira destroyed.

Summarily, Fig. 2.1 as captured by Nigerian Watch 2017 report shows the degree of the various causes of violence in Nigeria.
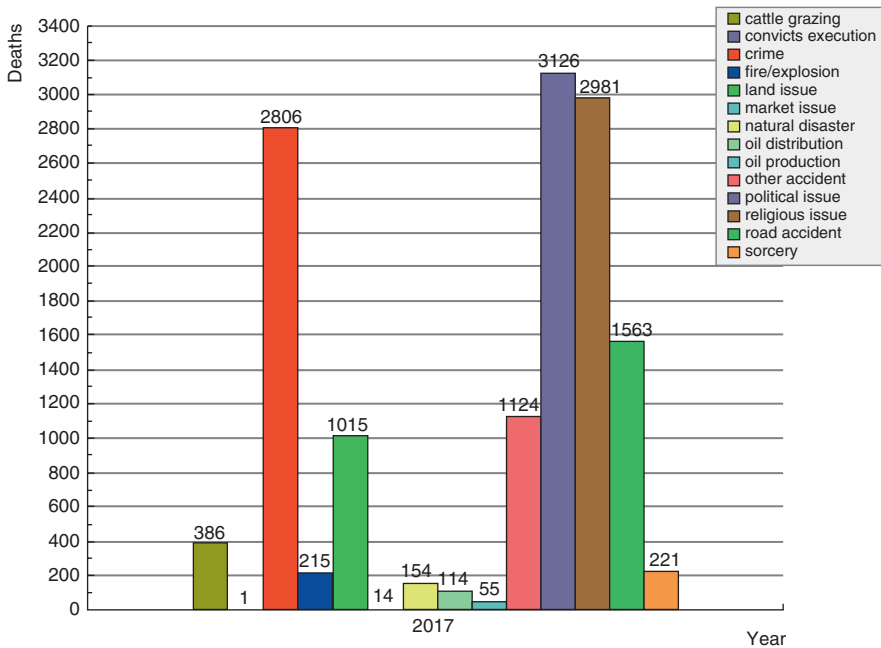


**Fig. 2.1** Major causes of violence in Nigeria for 2017. Source: Nigeria Watch (2017)

## Implications of Violence on Schools

Drawing from the above discourse, the manifestation of violence in communities of schools has serious implications especially in the primary school which is the foundational level of education in Nigeria. Uchendu (1997) documents that one of the greatest influences of man is his environment. In essence, children who are brought up in violent-infested environments will likely behave more violently. The experiences within the Nigerian context resonate with this assertion. For example, according to Mgbeke (2017), it is a common sight in primary schools these days to see children who are very aggressive, fighting at the slightest provocation with the use of very dangerous weapons like stones, bottles, knives, cutlasses, etc., and hate speeches during altercations have become increasingly an issue. It is heart rending to hear such words as "you are an imbecile, infidel, and idiot," among others. Adiaso and Igwe (2016) comment that another dangerous trend is the observed formation of groups as children now move in groups according to their ethnic, religious, and parents' political inclinations. This indeed portends great danger for the future of Nigeria because when the children who are supposed to be the leaders of tomorrow are sharply divided along ethnic, religious, and political lines, it raises serious doubts as to the kind of leaders the children will grow up to be. Violence can have severe implications on children development as it can destroy their self-confidence and ability to grow into well-adjusted adults. In the same vein, teachers are not left out in the challenges of violence as Adiaso and Igwe (2016) further noted that teachers' disciplinary actions for most times have been misconstrued along ethnic and religious sentiments which have often resulted in their being attacked during communal clashes. Chinwokwu (2014) had earlier asserted that many school children in the northeast have been displaced and forced out of school and many teachers have left their work places for fear of attack by the Boko Harams and the Fulani herdsmen. Overall, Owoh and Onwe (2013) lament that the worst implication of violence is its high tendency to compromise learning as it increases brain drain and causes fear, anxiety, and absenteeism as well as high dropout rate in schools.

## The Role of Education in Curbing the Spread of Violence

The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) describes education as an instrument par excellence for national development. It is the key for achieving the culture of peace and nonviolence which is the premise of fundamental human rights—equity, justice, respect, and dignity for all. Education for (Okeke, 2004; Ololube, Onyekwere, Kpolovie, & Agabi, 2012) is a societal instrument for improving the lots of human beings through transmitting basic knowledge, including values, norms, skills, and culture to the members of a given society. From the above views, education can make a nation become whatever it desires. A critical look at Nigeria shows that the above beautiful qualifications of education end on paper as opposed to what is on

ground. Nigeria regrettably has failed to tap the potentials of education to enthrone the culture of peace, love, justice, equity, and equality, hence the high spate of insecurity and violence in the society. The killings and maiming by the Boko Harams, the Fulani Herdsmen, kidnappers, human traffickers, communal wars, and other vices in the society that have culminated into violence simply indicate high levels of pervading ignorance and insensitivity to the rights of others which is a sign of a failed education process. For education to address the challenges of violence and insecurity in Nigeria, Ocho (2005) advocates the following measures:

## *Revitalizing the Educational System*

The ability of a society to develop depends on the quality of education available to its citizens. In line with the above, it is not wrong to postulate that the mind is the seat of thought and action. Education determines what and how one thinks, and these determine how one acts and relates to people. Although several reforms had been carried out in the educational sector, none has been able to achieve the goals of Nigeria's education particularly that of unity. A major explanation for this is that education like other sectors of the economy has been a victim of incessant change of government and lack of commitment in the implementation of educational policies. Revitalization of the educational system requires good government that is committed to the implementation of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) which is almost failing like its predecessor, the Universal Primary Education. Ocho (2005) maintained that should the UBE become a reality, and most of our adult population is able to read, write, and partake in political discussions and debates, a political revolution would have been set in motion to free Nigeria from bad leadership and economic bankruptcy.

## *Improved Funding of Education*

One of the major challenges of the educational sector is underfunding which has created a lot of tensions across all the levels of education in Nigeria. Poor funding has affected the supply of human and material resources in the schools. Poor funding has equally affected the maintenance of the few available infrastructural facilities, and this has left schools in deplorable conditions. It is pitiable that until now, Nigerian government has not been able to reach the 26% of annual national budget benchmark as stipulated by UNESCO for countries' funding of education (Echono, 2018). The best key to engineering the educational sector at all levels in Nigeria is improved funding. Ukeje (1991) states that:

> The issue of educational financing is clearly the central pivot. This is so because the vital issues of the nature, quantity, quality and efficacy of the educational system largely depend on the level, appropriateness and management of the financial provisions. (p. 39)

It is also important to raise the issue of accountability which is a sign of good management. Ijaiya (2004) notes that accountability is poor among school heads, teachers, students, and managers. The quality assurance mechanisms of schools at all levels of primary, secondary, and tertiary should be strengthened and made functional. There should be a policy guideline in the establishment of quality assurance unit in all schools.

## *Re-inclusion of History in the Curriculum*

The removal of history in the curriculum of secondary education in Nigeria is a great misnomer. The effect of the removal is that Nigerian youths do not know their country's history. History as a subject should be reintroduced in the curriculum to help students get to know about their past and their present and to shape their future relationships.

## Conclusions

The spate of violence in Nigeria has been at astronomical increase with death tolls and wanton destruction multiplying at each passing day. The government is meddling with cases of violence in areas they feel their opponents are mostly affected, but where it affects them, they act. The former Head of State General Sani Abacha once stated that any insurgence of violence that lasts for more than 24 h, the government is aware of it. This explains the fact that government is not doing what is expected of her as rule of law is always played down on.

Taking hindsight on the address presented at the 2018 Annual Conference of Nigerian Bar Association held in Abuja by the incumbent president Muhammed Buhari (*Nnochiri*, 2018), he stated that:

> The rule of law must be subject to the supremacy of the national security and national interest (para. 6) …, where national security and public interest are threatened or there is a likely hood of their being threatened, the individual rights of those allegedly responsible
> must take second place, in favour of the greater good of the society. (Nnochiri, 2018, para. 6 and 7)

This simply means anarchy in disguise, if rule of law should be made to play a second fiddle. The government should know that life is sacrosanct and, as such, should make policies that will hem in the issue of violence to its barest minimum. Education is very important as it will help redirect the thoughts and behaviors of the individuals in the society. The mind as the engine is the seat of thought and action; education determines what and how one thinks, and this determines how one acts and relates to people around him.

## Recommendations for Consideration

Based on the implications of violence on schools, the following recommendations are hereby suggested:

1. Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) should introduce peace education in the primary school curriculum to help the pupils imbibe the culture of peaceful coexistence from a tender age.
2. NERDC should reintroduce history in the primary school curriculum to enable pupils to understand their historical backgrounds which will help to guard them against any inducement to violence.
3. School authorities should establish and strengthen guidance and counseling units to provide counseling services such as awareness creation efforts on violence prevention to pupils.
4. School authorities should create opportunities for pupils to freely report cases of violence against them.

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# Chapter 3
# The Challenge of School Leadership in a War Zone: A Palestinian School in East Jerusalem

Khalid Arar and Asmahan Massry-Herzallah

**Abstract** This chapter presents a case study investigating the challenges facing a Palestinian school in the very eye of the storm in the divided city of Jerusalem. This is therefore a rich ethnographic case study of a Palestinian school in East Jerusalem where the principal finds himself defending his staff and students in encounters with Israeli soldiers at the checkpoints on their way to school. The reality in the city radiates onto teachers' and students' functioning and the school's educational climate. To clarify the way in which the school copes with their daily conflict experiences, we conducted a qualitative study, interviewing key figures in the school in depth and performing observations within and outside the school walls. This enabled us to paint an accurate portrait of the school. The chapter closes with several conclusions concerning the school's coping strategies within a conflict zone.

**Keywords** Challenges · School leadership · Jerusalem · Palestine · Curriculum

## Introduction

One of the catastrophic results of the 1948 war was the formation of the phenomenon of Arab refugees who fled from the former mandate territories of Palestine as a result of the establishment of the State of Israel. The second stage of war in 1967 led to Israel's occupation of the western bank of the Jordan River and the formation of what became known as Greater Jerusalem, encompassing both Arab and Jewish neighborhoods with a native and immigrant Jewish population and also a large native Muslim Arab population numbering approximately 320,000 persons and a smaller Christian population. Since then Jerusalem has functioned as a divided city,

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with clear distinctions between the Western part of the city that functions as Israel's official capital and the Eastern Arab part of the city considered to be conquered territory by the United Nations.

A total of 109,481 Palestinian school students study in Jerusalem (The Association for Civil Rights in Israel, 2017). Today, education in East Jerusalem is provided by four different authorities: the Jerusalem Education Administration—a joint body of the Jerusalem municipality—and the Israeli Ministry of Education, which runs 50 public schools in East Jerusalem. In the academic year 2016/2017 in East Jerusalem, 43,479 students studied in official state Arab education, 46,875 students studied in recognized but unofficial Arab education, and 20,127 students studied in private education (Tatarski & Maimon, 2017). The unofficial or private East Jerusalem schools are administered by the Islamic Waqf of Jordan, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) for Palestinian refugees, or the private sector (Al Jazeera, 2012). As can be seen from this complex structure, the education services for Palestinian children in East Jerusalem constitute the focal point of a daily struggle in a state of confused policies concerning the precarious status of East Jerusalem and its population.

The divided city of Jerusalem is continually troubled by violent clashes between Jewish Israelis and Palestinian Arabs; Jerusalem represents the very essence of the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. This is the reality in which Palestinian schools function, some of them encompassed by walls, while many of their teachers and students are forced to pass through checkpoints on their way to school.

This chapter describes a rich ethnographic case study of a Palestinian school in East Jerusalem where the principal finds himself defending his staff and students in encounters with Israeli soldiers at the checkpoints on their way to school and even sometimes in the school (Arar & Masry-Herzallah, forthcoming). The reality in the city radiates onto the students' functioning and the school's educational climate. Moreover, a shooting incident occurred within the school that left the staff and students with post-traumatic symptoms and serious tension, and there are still incidents of physical violence in the school's immediate external environment.

## Theoretical Underpinning

### Divided Cities: The Unique Context

Contested or divided cities have become a recognized global phenomenon. A divided area is an area in which there is a significant polarization between different communities living in that area. The polarization may be on a national, ethnic, or other basis. The study of these divided areas is especially relevant for the case of Jerusalem in any permanent settlement of the Israel-Palestine dispute, although it appears at first sight that Jerusalem is a unique case. In principle, a contested city is a single city that becomes complex as a result of a political, ethnic, racial,

ideological, or cultural dispute between two separate entities (Bollens, 1998). Some cities that were contested in the past have now been united such as Berlin. Other cities have remained dissected such as Belfast. In some contested cities, communities are divided by physical barriers, such as Nicosia (Bollens, 2002) or Jerusalem (Auga, Hasson, Nasrallah, & Stetter, 2005). Other cities are divided without any walls or physical barriers such as Johannesburg. There appears to be a spectrum of possibilities to describe the world's cities ranging from homogenous and united cities through separation, segregation, and splitting to divided cities (Khamaisi, 1996). The main issue for the municipal government in a polarized city is how to form an ideology that can direct interaction between the obviously competing ideologies of different populations: cities may be divided between social groups based on ethnic, religious, or linguistic differences and on several socioeconomic criteria (Kliot & Mansfeld, 1997). This type of separation can be seen in South Africa under the apartheid regime, where laws segregating populations by race and skin color dissected the cities. Divided cities that separate alternative and directly opposed cultures reflect violent political disputes and become sites of significant tension (Nassrallah, 2003).

Of course, contested cities are characterized by ethno-political disputes that may create particular complexity for their residents, influencing their daily lives, social identity, education, and interpersonal relations (McGlynn, Niens, Cairns, & Hewstone, 2004). This complexity is especially experienced by educational leaders, who find that they constantly need to consider the substance of their roles and also their duty to promote and educate their children while acting under conflicting political religious, ideological, ethnic, and pedagogic expectations of their environment (Nir, 2011). Below, we shall show how the divided reality of the city influences the education system of East Jerusalem.

## *The Education System in Jerusalem: An Arena of Resistance*

The issue of Jerusalem is an international issue, embracing different religions, cultures, and peoples. The population is varied including Jews and Arabs; secular, religious, and ultraorthodox Jews; Christians of many denominations; and Muslims. All the different populations live side by side, in a mosaic of neighborhoods, ethnic groups, and lifestyles unlike any other city in the world. This reality contains many possibilities and equally many risks. It is a multifaceted city, and its different demographic, political, and economic dimensions are interwoven in the sociocultural, environmental, and technological aspects of the city and shape the city and its population, a dynamic that often erupts into legal and even physical conflict.

As noted above East Jerusalem was occupied by Israel in the 1967 war, leading to the unification of West and East Jerusalem, the widening of the city boundaries, and forcing the inhabitants of East Jerusalem to become residents of the united city, so that they became embroiled in a national, geographic, and demographic struggle (Cohen, 2007). In 1967, there were 70,000 Arab residents in the united city (in

comparison to 197,000 Jews) constituting 26.5% of the city's population. Today East Jerusalem is home to around 320,000 residents (to which should be added approximately 50,000 illegal residents) constituting approximately 37% of the city's population and approximately 20% of the Arab population of Israel. About 120,000 of the Arabs of East Jerusalem live outside the security fence set up in 2002 (Koren, 2017).

After the unification of the city, the partitions that divided the West from the East of the city were taken down quickly to determine a united reality. The cement walls were taken down, and roads and infrastructure that had been detached for 19 years (since 1948) were reconnected. Israeli law and administration were applied to the entire city, and the Jordanian kingdom lost its control of the city. The Palestinian Arab residents of the city received the status of permanent residents of the city but not Israeli citizenship. However, at the beginning of the second millennium, the city entered a new phase with the decision of the government to erect a security fence, demarking Greater Jerusalem to include the settlements surrounding it, while detaching the city from certain Palestinian areas (Cohen, 2007). In total eight Palestinian neighborhoods in the municipal area of Jerusalem were cut off, including approximately 80,000 residents, permanent residents holding Israeli identity cards. They remain an impoverished population cut off from and neglected by all basic municipal services such as garbage collection and infrastructure development to which they are entitled as residents of the city and have to pass through barriers and checkpoints whenever they wish to enter their city (Klein, 2005; Tatarski & Maimon, 2017).

From 1967 until today, the Jewish majority fears that change in the demographic balance between Jews and Arabs may mean that they may lose control of the city (Choshen, 2008). On 28 June, 1967—Jerusalem Unification Day—two cities, two cultures, two nations, and two peoples who were enemies became one united city. Serious economic, social, cultural, and physical gaps are evident today between the different sections of the city (Ramon & Lehres, 2014; Tatarski & Maimon, 2017).

In education, as in most life domains, the unification of the city caused a drastic change. The city's education system is the largest, most diverse, and cumbersome system in Israel. After 1967, the issue of education was one of the few issues on which there was a consensus: East Jerusalem children would receive an education equal to that given to all Israeli children (Cheshin, Hutman, & Melamed, 1999). In order to attain this goal, the Israeli authorities needed to adapt the East Jerusalem education system to all the aspects of the Arab education system in Israel: administrative, educational, and pedagogic, and the existing Jerusalem municipality was required to establish an entire education administration system for East Jerusalem. Until that time the Jordanian education system had supplied government services from Amman. The Jordanian education department directly administered both construction and learning programs and teacher appointment and provided supervision and examinations for East Jerusalem so that there had never been an independent Jordanian education administration for that part of the city (Choshen, 2008; Worgen, 2011).

Geopolitical changes were therefore accompanied by changes in the East Jerusalem education system. In the academic year 1966/1967, 21,896 students studied in East Jerusalem schools, 58% of them studied in the Jordanian government schools, and another 42% studied in private education networks including church schools, Islamic religion institutes' schools, schools run by UNWRA and other social agencies, and nonreligious private schools. In recent years, this system has coped with a serious lack of classrooms and high rates of dropout while enduring strong pressures from the Israeli Ministry of Education and the Ministry for Jerusalem Affairs to enforce the Israeli learning programs on the Palestinian community in the city (Tatarski & Maimon, 2017). In 2017, the number of all students in education throughout Jerusalem amounted to 64,300 (25%) in state and state religious schools, in the Arab education system (including the education system in East Jerusalem) 111,600 (36%), and in the Ultra-Orthodox Jewish education system 103,700 (39%) (Ibid., 2017). Yet it is important to note that only 39.4% of all Palestinian students in East Jerusalem are registered in the official state education system, 42% are studying in recognized but unofficial schools, and their number is actually larger than the number registered in the official state education system.

Most of the students who graduate from the Arab education system do not speak Hebrew at an appropriate level. This is because many East Jerusalem institutions do not study Hebrew since the students are not interested in learning this language for political reasons. Moreover, the Hebrew language is taught at a low level because many of the teachers who are teaching it were never trained to do so. The lack of mastery of Hebrew harms the access of the East Jerusalem schools' graduates when they wish to integrate within the Israeli employment market, and sometimes they are forced to fill jobs that do not match their skills. It also impedes their ability to enter Israeli universities. On the other hand, the detachment of Jerusalem from the Palestinian Authority territories, due to the security fence, makes it difficult for school graduates from East Jerusalem to enter higher education institutions there. More than 20% of the girls and boys studying in grades 9 and 10 in East Jerusalem drop out of school to go to work, largely due to the fact that 83% of East Jerusalem children live under the poverty line (Weinberg, 2018).

As noted, the status of the East Jerusalem education system was one of the less controversial subjects at the end of the Six-Day War in 1967, and there was even agreement that Jordan as a foreign state would no longer manage this system and that the system should immediately pass to Israeli administration and embrace Israeli learning programs. However, until today the situation remains unsettled and unsatisfactory (Ramon & Lehres, 2014; Ronen, 2017).

The Israeli government has attempted to detach the East Jerusalem children from their national Arab values, to weaken their connection with the West Bank, and to encourage them to assimilate historical perceptions that would match the Zionist narrative. In protest against this plan, Palestinians argued that the adoption of the Israeli learning program would block the possibility of higher education and employment in the Arab world which does not recognize Israeli certificates (Cohen, 2007). Another source of resistance to Israeli education control came from the private schools. On the eve of the 1967 war, approximately 42% of the East Jerusalem

school age children studied in private schools, which were supervised by the Jordanian government. Many of these schools were owned by religious bodies, the Muslim Wakhef, other Muslim institutions, Christian churches, and UNWRA. On the eve of the new school year 1967–1968, the Israeli Ministry of Education sent a demand to these schools to replace their textbooks which contained anti-Israeli materials with Israeli textbooks, but the private schools ignored this demand (Choshen, 2011). They also refused to cooperate with the initiative to integrate them formally within the Israeli education system and in fact completely ignored its application (Ronen, 2017).

## *Limitations Applied by the State of Israel to the East Jerusalem Education System*

In that period, the state and the municipality encountered resistance by the East Jerusalem population, who refused to act according to Israeli law, regarding students' school attendance and the subjection of the schools to government registration and municipal supervision. Moreover, these schools refused to adopt the Israeli learning program, as demanded by the Ministry of Education and preferred to adopt the Palestinian Authority learning program, which replaced the Jordanian curricula. Israel did not use force to apply its learning programs in East Jerusalem, understanding that coercion is not always effective and could even increase the resistance. Thus, for example, if criminal sanctions were employed against parents to force them to send their children to school, this step might even produce violent protests against the municipality. They understood that social order is based on interaction and not on obedience. One-sided enforcement cannot fill the gaps formed by noncooperation, so that, for example, it is very difficult to enforce regular professional consultation, professional mentoring, reportage, etc. (Ronen, 2017).

Israel argues that it acts in East Jerusalem within the frame of its right according to international law and often avoids taking different steps for fear of international criticism for altering the status quo. These considerations led the state to avoid enforcing the Supervision of Schools Act, 1969 on the schools in East Jerusalem, an act under which private schools can be closed (Ronen, 2017). Thus, constrictions dictate policy toward the formal education system in East Jerusalem. The occupation laws, which according to the opinion of international law apply to East Jerusalem, stipulate that Israel cannot in general alter the Palestinian learning program. The use of this program is even supported as a substantive component of the right to education—anchored in an Israeli government law as amended in 2003, which stipulates the right of children to be educated in their own culture. Permitting the teaching of the Palestinian learning program is therefore an expression of the substantive rule of law, in line with international human rights law (Ronen, 2017).

Nevertheless, as part of the events for the 50th year of annexation of East Jerusalem, the Israeli government decided to give high priority to the acceleration

of transition to the Israeli learning program in East Jerusalem, arguing that a Palestinian tawjihi (matriculation) certificate does not qualify the students for Israeli universities. The state also claims that an Israeli matriculation certificate would increase employment possibilities for East Jerusalem graduates and improve their economic status (Tatarski & Maimon, 2017). But underlying this honorable pretension lie powerful political motives, which see the present situation whereby approximately 95% of East Jerusalem students study the Palestinian Authority curricula as undermining Israeli dominion. Thus, in 2016, the Ministry of Education launched a program aimed at encouraging East Jerusalem schools to transfer students' studies to the Israeli learning program by awarding additional teaching hours for the formal and informal education system and providing equipment in exchange for accelerated Israelization (Kashti & Hasson, 2016).

Sadly, it is noted that children and youth are arrested almost every day by Israeli police and soldiers for stone-throwing. The B'Tselem report (2017) records a difficult situation whereby, over recent years, thousands of Palestinian youth living in the city have been interrogated for long hours and imprisoned in detention cells under hard conditions. This entire process is undergone in complete isolation, without the presence of an adult to protect them, to explain what is liable to happen to them and to assist them. This process often has long-term consequences for these young people. They are considered by the law enforcement authorities as part of a hostile population and treated in a way that they would not treat other sectors of Israeli population. The B'Tselem report (2017) indicates that from January 2014 till the end of August 2016, 1737 youth from East Jerusalem, aged 12–17, were arrested. Approximately 70% of them were held in detention until a charge sheet was presented against them, and they were released on bail or under restricting conditions in contradiction to the terms of international declarations. This status quo highlights the strength of violence that the law enforcement institutions apply to Palestinian youth in Jerusalem. The dispute and this control system are most forcefully expressed in the climate that prevails in East Jerusalem schools.

## The Research Context

The study was conducted in Palestinian Arab Muslim schools located in East Jerusalem.

Case study research was employed (Marshall & Rossman, 2012) to clarify the daily challenges facing schools functioning in the conflict zone of East Jerusalem. The study is based on qualitative analysis of 18 in-depth interviews with East Jerusalem school principals and teachers conducted during 2018.

**The Research Tool**  Semi-structured in-depth interviews offered a unique opportunity to examine the school staffs' daily challenges. Interviews were conducted in Arabic by the second author of this article. The interviews lasted from 1.5 to 2 h, held at the interviewee's chosen location and time. The objective of the study was

explained, and anonymity was promised in any research reports. Participation was consensual; the principals were able to terminate the interview at will. Initially they were asked to talk about their professional challenges without the researcher's interference, and then they were asked more specific questions aimed at exposing their perceptions of their role, their dilemmas, conflicts that they faced, and the way they coped with them.

**The Research Sample** We selected the schools for the study according to our familiarity with the schools as academics accompanying their educational work. The interviews were conducted with a comfort sample of 18 educators from state high schools for Muslim students in East Jerusalem. Interviewees included seven male and three female principals from mainstream schools including one male principal from a special education school and one male and seven female teachers. It is noted that state schools in East Jerusalem are single-sex schools (Table 3.1).

The narratives of the principals and teachers were transcribed in Arabic and analyzed according to a holistic approach that relates to the whole narrative, so that some parts of the text are interpreted by other parts of the narrative. This analysis identifies central themes in the data, searching for recurrent experiences, feelings, and attitudes, in order to code, reduce, and connect different categories into central themes. The coding was guided by the principles of "comparative analysis" (Strauss

**Table 3.1** Characteristics of the research population[a]

| No. | Name | Gender | Age | Type of school |
|-----|------|--------|-----|----------------|
| *Principals (N = 10)* | | | | |
| 1 | Ahmed | Male | 50 | Senior high |
| 2 | Adaam | Male | 40 | Junior high |
| 3 | Adnan | Male | 45 | Special education high |
| 4 | Ali | Male | 57 | Senior high |
| 5 | Hassan | Male | 45 | Junior high |
| 6 | Mona | Female | 52 | Junior high |
| 7 | Muhamed | Male | 48 | Junior high |
| 8 | Rana | Female | 45 | Junior high |
| 9 | Riad | Male | 35 | Senior high |
| 10 | Sanaa | Female | 39 | Junior high |
| *Teachers (N = 8)* | | | | |
| 1 | Amal | Female | 28 | Senior high |
| 2 | Amina | Female | 44 | Senior high |
| 3 | Aya | Female | 38 | Senior high |
| 4 | Islam | Female | 25 | Senior high |
| 5 | Hadil | Female | 44 | Junior high |
| 6 | Mahmoud | Male | 25 | Junior high |
| 7 | Noha | Female | 48 | Junior high |
| 8 | Rasha | Female | 40 | Senior high |

[a]Note: All names are fictitious names

& Corbin, 1990), which includes the comparison of any coded elements in terms of emergent categories and subcategories. In order to increase trustworthiness and reliability of the research findings, the analysis was strengthened by structured analysis and by peer review of the interviews by each of the authors (Marshall & Rossman, 2012). It is hoped that the systematic data collection procedure employed in this study contributes to the credibility and authenticity of the data (Rajendran, 2001). Although the findings and conclusions of this qualitative study are not directly generalizable to other similar contexts, they still offer a firsthand rich and authentic picture of the challenges to education in a contested city, and the reader is invited to discern to what extent these findings are relevant to similar contexts in other countries.

## Findings

The above-described data analysis yielded three main themes: (1) education in a divided city, intervention of school stakeholders, hybridization, lack of direction, and legitimization; (2) life separated by the fence, daily transit to the school and encounter with police and army hostility at the checkpoints; and (3) the school as a violent struggling arena.

## *Education in a Divided City*

Ahmed, who has 15 years' experience as the principal of a boys' high school, explained something of the complexity of the annexation of East Jerusalem and its effect on the children's education. His school is situated at the entrance to its neighborhood approximately 200 m from the main road. The socioeconomic status of the neighborhood is low, so are students' achievements and violent incidents sometimes erupt. This was part of his narrative:

> As a resident of Jerusalem, I see education in the city on two levels. Firstly, the division between Jewish and Arab education, and between the two populations based on a continuous dispute influences the entire life system. On the second level there are also different education systems within the Jewish and Arab education systems. If I relate to the education system in East Jerusalem, that is divided into different streams, private education including the church schools, the schools of the Islamic Wakhef and UNWRA, formal Israeli education etc., these systems are conducted in total separation and almost every stream is a completely independent body.

Addam, a boys' junior high school principal with 10 years' experience in management also spoke about the complexity of the education system:

> Education in a split city means that there are two education systems for two peoples, the two sides of the city are separated. This divided city as one which contains barriers, a security fence, necessitating entry permits. It's a city of conflict, disagreement, dispute. I see a city

cut in half and without any consensus between the educational approaches in both sides of
the city. There is a political dispute so there are two learning programs, for us the Palestinians
and for the Israeli Jews, in addition to foreign programs in private and church schools.
Education with Palestinian values and narrative contrasts and clashes with Zionist values
and education. … and we principals are lost and do not know how to cope with this
situation.

Thus too, Hadil, the computer teacher in a girls' junior high school with 23 years'
teaching experience, explained how the school's context affected her:

I was born in Jerusalem, my studies from elementary to high school were in a private
Christian school. I have a bachelor's degree in computers from a Palestinian university and
today I am a state school teacher under the Israeli Ministry of Education with Palestinian
students, and teaching a Palestinian curriculum … in practice, education in a city like
Jerusalem is not easy to understand and it's difficult to define its goals or identity. As a
teacher, I understand that I am Palestinian but on the other hand I also believe that I have to
come to terms with the fact that I live in a controlled city and so I work under conditions of
uncertainty. What should I educate for? To whom do we belong? What graduate should we
aim to produce?

In this same context, Amal and Amina, both Arabic teachers in a girls' high
school, noted:

Educating in a divided city such as Jerusalem is a sort of hybrid activity, although we are
employed by the Jerusalem municipality which is actually the occupying administration,
we teach according to the Palestinian learning program, although we have no access to the
Palestinian Authority apart from their learning program and we as the teacher need to know
how to act in such a reality.

Islam, a sciences teacher, who had worked for 3 years in a girls' high school,
stressed the unique nature of the education system in which he worked:

Education in a divided city like Jerusalem means working in a state of uncertainty, there is
no clear policy. As a teacher I feel that I am lost. More specifically I oscillate between two
different spaces simultaneously, a space in which I try to educate for a Palestinian identity
and yet also a second space of Israeli reality with its rules and regulations which I am
obliged to fulfil … and here there is a clash between the Israeli domination of the education
system and the Palestinian dominion.

Mahmoud, an English teacher for the past 4 years in a boys' junior high school,
described his experience of this reality:

In this split city there is no policy or goals for your education work, no defined identity or
values. I continuously ask myself who I am and according to which values I should educate
my students! what should be my self-perception as a teacher? To whom should I be com-
mitted? Do we have a vision and what is it? And more … to my regret I live in fear and
confusion, a sort of oblivion.

The interviewees continually emphasized the political tension prevalent in
Jerusalem and its implications on the shaping of education in the city, highlighting
the issue of the Palestinian learning program used in the education system in East
Jerusalem since the Oslo Accords as a replacement for the Jordanian learning pro-
gram. They also noted the struggle of Palestinian society that expects the schools to
maintain its identity and culture, in the face of the Jerusalem municipality's recent

dictation to transfer to the Israeli learning program. In addition, the fact that the decisive majority of the educators in Jerusalem are employed by the Ministry of Education and the Jerusalem municipality means that they are committed to accepting the Israeli policies concerning their activities to obey the rules and regulations and to teach the required learning programs and contents.

Moreover, the government's control over the learning programs is applied not only by coercion to adopt the Israeli learning program in the state education system in East Jerusalem but also through the East Jerusalem education administration's censorship and regulation of the Palestinian learning programs, in some cases leading to the breach of the right to culture-appropriate education and the right for Palestinian students to maintain their identity. Thus, it seems that the principals and teachers in East Jerusalem are trapped at the crossroads of clashing intentions and policies and are forced to cope with a policy of accelerated Israelization (Masry-Herzallah & Razin, 2014) in contradiction to the strong resistance of the students' parents. This conflict was expressed by one of the principals (Hassan) as follows:

> This trend is not at all simple, as a principal I cannot intervene in this at all, but to my regret the superintendent puts tremendous pressure on me to do this [adopt the Israeli learning program]. On the other hand, the parents' committee recently threatened our school that if we agree to this it will lead to a lot of problems and violence in the neighborhood. Some parents come to the school to check the issue in various ways, and they think that I am involved in promoting this step and warn me against it. After checking the issue, I find that the parents' committee sent a warning letter to the parents in a very sharp language, in addition there is a campaign by the Palestinian Ministry of Education against this move. This whole situation negatively influences the school climate for both teachers and students.

The interviewees' words describe a reality in which the principal's and teachers' work is overshadowed by resistance of different types in this divided city. They are subject to pressure to accept government learning programs and to pressures from parents and the local community echoing their own desire to maintain Palestinian identity. These opposing ideologies, policies, and values constitute a challenge to educational leaders. The next emergent theme relates to another significant factor that hinders the principals' and teachers' ability to further their educational work: the establishment of the security fence that divides the city and the road blocks manned by uniformed police and soldiers in different parts of the city.

## *Living in the Shadow of the Security Fence and Passing Through Checkpoints*

The construction of the partition security fence in different Palestinian neighborhoods in East Jerusalem and in the south and north of the city cuts off and slices through Palestinian neighborhoods so that they belong to two different jurisdictions: the Jerusalem municipality and Area C of the Palestinian Authority territories as designated in the Oslo Accords. This fence has created a situation in which the neighborhoods are divided and the transition of vehicles and pedestrians becomes

delayed in queues passing through Israeli army and police checkpoints. This is a complicated reality for school principals and teachers as described by Mona, the principal of a girls' junior high school that serves students living on both sides of the fence. Her school is at the entrance to its neighborhood and close to the checkpoint:

> The issue of the partition fence and the students who come from the other side of the fence is a very complex issue. The Jerusalem municipality has undertaken to provide transportation for these students, yet one of the problems is that the collection of the girls begins at 6:00 a.m. in order to collect them all and to pass through the checkpoints with no problems. In some cases, there is a problem at the checkpoint and I as the principal have to go there and solve it. It's important to note that sometimes there are clashes between the girls and the soldiers and I need to intervene and involve the municipality and security forces to solve it.

Adnan, the principal of a special education school, whose students are all brought to the school with special transportation from the municipality, also talked about the difficulties involved:

> The school transportation that passes through the fence mean that I cannot plan the day before I begin it. First, I arrive at the school and check out the area and then I think how to proceed. We always begin the day with late arrivals. I have to arrive early about 7:00 a.m. in order to follow what is happening with the transportation, whether there are problems at the checkpoints and the fence that delay their arrival. School administration in the east of the city is very difficult particularly for special education children who often have a problem to pass through as planned. There are always circumstances and events that make it difficult to plan our education and pedagogy and so we as principals are continually have to douse fires and find it difficult to get to the pedagogy … it's important to note that before I managed this school I worked in a special education school in the west of the city and all these problems did not exist for the principal there.

The partition fence and the checkpoints also have implications for the teachers' and principals' mobility teaching in the East Jerusalem schools, especially those who live beyond the fence in Palestinian Authority territories and have to pass the checkpoints each morning and evening as the male principal Hassan and female principal Rana both noted:

> There are teachers who live on the other side of the fence and this makes it difficult for them to reach school on time each day, when they arrive they are already very tired. Sometimes they endure violent responses from the soldiers at the checkpoint and it influences their mood and behavior in school. When they leave the school, they are also tense wondering if there will be road blocks, barriers and when they will arrive home, especially the female teachers.

Another difficult problem is the lack of sufficient classrooms leading to overcrowding in the different East Jerusalem schools; the need to have residency cards for Palestinians in Jerusalem has led to many families moving from their neighborhoods to areas within the fence so that these areas have become very congested and created tensions and difficulties for the school climate as noted by the principal Muhamed:

> The partition fence has seriously influenced school management. Many people who lived beyond the fence have returned to live within the fence and so there is now an acute lack of apartments in East Jerusalem causing difficult social problems. For example, a father with an orange identity card cannot enter Jerusalem and the mother does have the appropriate

Jerusalem identity card so they live separately. As the principal I find myself coping with problems like these when it influences the students in my school. The fence has created very difficult registration problems, there are no places in the school and I cannot absorb additional students, this causes us many problems with the parents although I can quite understand their distress, but I cannot help them. The municipality should be helping to solve this problem by adding more classrooms.

Both the principals and the teachers often mentioned the problems at the checkpoints and the fact that police and soldiers enter Palestinian neighborhoods to arrest people and even destroy houses, and they note how this influences their ability to advance educational work at school. The principal Addam elucidated this point:

The school is situated at the entrance to our neighborhood, on most days there is a road block with soldiers and police, adjacent to the school. This often causes friction between the students and the police or soldiers. In the school we have to protect the girls, we do not allow them to leave the premises and risk their lives. It is also important to add that tear gas is sometimes used at the checkpoints, the girls are choked, there is panic, shouting etc. … and the school's routine is disrupted. The girls and the female teachers who do not live in our neighborhood are continually in friction with the police and soldiers, it's a reality of violence.

A summary of this evidence indicates that there are many critical implications of the partition fence and checkpoints on the work of the Palestinian schools in East Jerusalem for both principals and teachers. Of course, this situation strongly influences the motivation of both teachers and students in their teaching and learning. The following theme traces the influence of the violent environment on the schools' functioning.

## The Schools in the Heart of a Violent Struggle

The teachers and principals all talked about the influence of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the reality of daily life in Jerusalem on the schools' educational work and organization. They reported reactions such as fear, a sense of insecurity, aggression, trauma, violence, suspicion, humiliation, and suppression associating them with the security checks and the checkpoints. The teachers Islam and Aya described the exhausting route that they pass through each day to reach the school:

From the moment that I leave my home in the village until I get to the school, I am tense, stressed, I do not know how long the journey will take so I leave at 06:00 a.m. to begin the school day at 08:00 a.m. I also need to be examined, to present my identity card at the checkpoint and at the road blocks usually more than once. The soldiers check my car too, sometimes they humiliate me, and it's a difficult demeaning process. I arrive at work tired, nervy and tense, and sometimes I am late and I am sorry to say that it negatively influences my students.

This information was echoed in the words of the teacher Mahmoud:

I live in a neighborhood close to the school, but to my great regret, there is a checkpoint in the school's neighborhood, it's actually 3 minutes journey but it can sometimes take an hour

in the morning due to the security checks, traffic jams etc. And this is infuriating and annoying so that unfortunately I arrive at school annoyed and can't concentrate, it's not simple.

The teachers and principals also noted another unimaginable difficulty, the fact that students are sometimes arrested during the school day in school and its effect on the school. The principal Ahmed explained:

One of the most difficult dilemmas is the fact that each year we have to deal with the arrest of students in the school because of their stone-throwing. Recently, ten of our students have been arrested. As the principal, I am constantly having to cope with this problem, it has strong implications for the school climate, for the students' perception of the police and soldiers and for the violence that this entails especially when the students are released and return to their studies, how they return and the loads they bring with them.

The principal Ali went on to explain the implications of this situation:

In recent years we have had police or soldiers coming into the school to arrest students, we cope with very severe problems in this context, and all this is mixed up with the politics of Jerusalem, including the attacks in Jewish neighborhoods or in the Old City, the involvement of our young people in these events. And some of them are our school students. To my great sorrow the police do not act with discretion and they even arrest them in school. This situation ignites the other students and they start to confront the security forces. And we at school have to cope with that. Sometimes the teachers are also involved in these incidents when they want to separate and distance the students from the events. As the principal, I don't know who I should report to – to the Ministry of Education? To the municipality? How should I cope, should I confront the police or not, and they know that they are forbidden to enter the school but in East Jerusalem everything is permitted. They allow themselves to do anything and the minute that the students see how the police act in the school and beat the students, the teachers and the principal, then we really have a problem.

The principals also spoke about another important dimension that has a significant influence on the school climate—the discourse in the teachers' lounge. They speak about current events and not so much about pedagogy as the principal Ali explained:

The situation in Jerusalem influences everyone. When I enter the teachers' lounge each morning and I hear the conversation between the teachers, its only about the security situation, the road blocks, the destruction of houses, confrontations etc. … it's frustrating and angers me, and what can I do about it as the principal? To ask the teachers to speak about pedagogy? To ignore it? Or what? I know that most of the teachers go into their classrooms with difficult feelings of frustration and anger and they have little patience for the students and that what really frustrates me.

Both teachers stressed that they do not have sufficient tools to deal with this situation. The principals also noted that many teachers do not have the tools and skills to function in this complex reality. The lack of therapeutic staff such as psychologists and educational counselors who might be able to help teachers and principals to deal with the work in the school was noted by the teacher Noha:

Although I have worked as a teacher for 20 years I am not clear about the rules and regulations concerning the education system. I do not know what is permitted and what is forbidden and it frustrates me. There is no guidance or help for the teachers on these issues … moreover, I see that most of the teachers are frustrated, powerless, and even frightened and at risk … and they don't see the students at all and can't cope with their distress.

The words of the principal Hassan help to explain how these difficulties are expressed in the school climate:

> In recent years, against a background of the trend to stabbings and attacks, the school's students were suspected of involvement in some of the cases. Some of them were arrested, the police shot at them because they suspected them … this reality leads us to live in fear, we at the school see our job as something beyond what a school is supposed to provide for the student due to the complex reality in Jerusalem. The climate at the school is harmed, each external event negatively influences us, we forget our role as educators, forget the teaching and in the end just become protectors, looking after the children and don't get to the teaching and learning.

Another issue that was raised by the interviewees that is unique to the space of Jerusalem is the destruction of houses in Palestinian neighborhoods. Sanaa, one of the principals, spoke about this issue and its influence on the school atmosphere:

> The school climate is strongly influenced by the policy of home destruction in the Palestinian neighborhoods. When there is an act of this sort the students come to school with much tension, and it is difficult for them to study. They begin to curse, to speak about the event, sometimes shouting and inciting others. Often, we do not know how to react, are we allowed to speak about it or not? The atmosphere is stressful on this issue. This climate of rebellion is not at all simple … each week we have at least one case like this if not destruction of homes then it is a road block in our neighborhood, arrests of young people at night, or any other security issue that has difficult repercussions in the school.

To summarize, the reality in East Jerusalem with these difficult components resonates through the schools and negatively affects the principals' and teachers' ability to function successfully, to advance pedagogic issues and shape the school's mission. The teachers' motivation to work is harmed, and they find it difficult to contain the distress and difficulties of their students and to teach.

## Concluding Remarks

The purpose of the present study was to identify and describe the challenges facing Palestinian schools situated in the eye of the storm in the contested city of Jerusalem. The interviews with the principals and teachers of East Jerusalem schools enabled us to paint an authentic picture of the complex and dire reality of education in a state of conflict. In fact, the East Jerusalem education system is enveloped in a reality of dispute, and this affects the students who sense they are repressed and often threatened. The findings of the research reveal a dismal picture of school leadership under the shadow of this political dispute. The school staff are required to find ways to bridge between two clashing national projects, and they expressed their frustrations as they try to find a way to lead their educational establishments in this conflict.

At the policy level, there is a clear power struggle between two governing bodies, on the one hand the Jerusalem municipality which is determined to use all possible means to unite the city, with its complexity even if it is a coerced unification, without any consideration of the sociopolitical status of the city (Cohen, 2007;

Masry-Herzallah & Razin, 2014). The attempt to determine a new agenda in Jerusalem positions the Palestinian principals and teachers in a situation where they are torn between Israelization and Palestinization. The struggle for legitimization in the city between the Israeli entities and the Palestinian Authority "traps" the school staffs between the contradicting desires of two populations and undermines their authority with their community of parents and students. This is also expressed in the definition of Palestinian in East Jerusalem as "residents" rather than citizens, leaving them as a marginal, excluded population (Choshen, 2008). In East Jerusalem, the principals and teachers are "torn" between two administrative regimes (Brah & Coombs, 2000; Yair & Alayan, 2009), one (the municipality) strong and active and the other more symbolic and flimsier with regard to plans (Palestinian society) but having strong influence over the school and the norms of activity within its walls. The principals find themselves coping with a situation of strong "turbulence" between the demands of strict regulation by Israeli authorities and the demands of their own resistant population. Moreover, in addition to this dual loyalty that the staff are supposed to fulfill, the many stakeholders in the schools' activities have different opinions as to how the school should be run, and tensions arise between them making the school staff's work even more difficult (Masry-Herzallah & Razin, 2014; Nir, 2011).

The principals explained how they are forced to adopt a hybrid style in order to survive as principals in this split city (Sion, 2013). This struggle seems to be more pronounced than it is for Palestinian Arabs who are citizens of Israel and live outside Jerusalem (Arar & Ibrahim, 2016).

The division of the city and the continuous struggle for legitimization position the East Jerusalem education system under double governance, highlighting the detachment of school and making it physically and administratively and content-wise isolated and separated. Policies enforced on them by Israeli authorities threaten the Palestinian population of the city that expresses it resistance to the occupying forces, which often uses violent means to establish their control. This structured tension turns the school into a site of violence, and it sometimes becomes an entity that expresses resistance in an active manner through the students and in a quieter manner through the teachers. The arena of violence and clashes turns attention toward the daily tension and pushes aside pedagogical discourse in the school.

Also, the physical division of the city between two populations, the gap that is perpetuated by continuous neglect of East Jerusalem schools, and the imposition of the military regime on the Palestinian part of the city, with checkpoints and road blocks and the security fence that encloses some of the Palestinian neighborhoods, all contribute to the sense of a hostile environment, with violence bubbling under the surface (Arar & Ibrahim, 2016; Yair & Alayan, 2009). The students and also some of the staff come to the school through a precarious route, undergoing continuous security checks at the checkpoints and often experiencing friction with the uniformed guards (Ronen, 2017). This daily struggle has clear implications for the identity and affiliations of the students in the East Jerusalem schools; this reality creates antagonism among the students and also among the parents and teachers toward the Israeli establishment and makes it difficult to perform educational work in the schools.

The East Jerusalem school students and staffs and especially adolescents in junior and senior high schools have become players in an explosive national drama. The continuous arrests of students, sometimes inside the schools, impede school activities and the amenability of the students to study. This situation is intertwined with and shapes the school climate.

These findings were derived from conclusions concerning the education of children in a conflict zone, where the colonialist occupier's narrative clashes with the narrative of the East Jerusalem population's resistance. A political change is desperately needed from dispute to dialog to enable the development of East Jerusalem society and education and to assist the educators to promote constructive pedagogy.

## Recommendations for Consideration

1. The picture of the education system in East Jerusalem that emerges from the findings necessitates the enlistment of the Israeli authorities to address the difficulties described. The right of the Palestinian population to a properly functioning education system should override any political motives. There is an obvious need for access to suitable training for the school staffs, including the provision of multicultural education tools and inter-cultural encounters between educators. Palestinian Arab culture should be recognized and respected as part of the learning programs in East Jerusalem schools, and respectful inter-cultural encounters should take place between the schools in different sectors of the population throughout Jerusalem.

2. Additionally, as long as the conflict continues, East Jerusalem principals and their staffs should be helped to cope with the continual state of crisis. Supplementary services such as psychologists, counselors, and other professionals specializing in coping with crisis situations should be provided for both educators and students. These steps could help to provide appropriate tools for East Jerusalem educators and empower their work.

3. Bureaucratic and practical solutions should be found to ease the daily journeys of students and staff through the security fence.

4. The findings of this study can inform policy-makers and increase their awareness of the complexity of the dedicated work of the Palestinian education system in East Jerusalem, so that they can plan and apply culture-appropriate education programs and improve administrative strategies to assist the Palestinian educators to function more effectively in a divided city smitten by violence and conflict. A precondition for this work is respect for the right of these educators to discuss values and current events in their classrooms and to apply a multicultural pedagogy based on enabling dialog.

5. In order to accurately assess the status of the Palestinian education system in East Jerusalem, further research with teachers and principals in the East Jerusalem schools is required.

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# Chapter 4
# Violence in Nigerian Secondary Schools: Implications for Educational Management and Sustainable Development

**Francisca N. Ogba and Ntasiobi C. N. Igu**

**Abstract**  This paper explores violence in Nigerian secondary schools. School violence has recently emerged as a widespread scenario and a major concern globally. In Nigeria, hardly does a day pass without an officially or unofficially report of one form of violence witnessed in schools and manifesting in different pedestal such as bullying, shooting, sexual harassment, and kidnapping, among many others. The study is situated on violence in Nigeria secondary schools. The focus is on taking hindsight as it historically overviewed the state of art in the area of study. It pressed further with a critical examination of the types of violence prevalent in Nigerian secondary schools. A detailed touch on the above highlighted the educational implication on secondary education and national development. Based on the educational implication of the findings, the paper suggests among others that government should redesign the curriculum to equip students with twenty-first century skills to reduce overdependence on government jobs.

**Keywords**  Violence · Secondary school · Impact · Educational management · Sustainable · Development

## Introduction

Violence is a behavior involving physical force intended to hurt, damage, and kill which can lead to death, anger, aggressiveness, depression, and emotional trauma among other consequences. It is a global phenomenon that has been substantiated with evidence from researcher's violence (Burton & Leoschut, 2013; Labaree, 1997; Netshitangani, 2017). In Nigeria, violence is prevalent as there have been

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cases of violence reported by news media houses, (television channels and radio stations) and print media against children, for example, child labor, torture, kidnapping, bullying, genital mutilations, shootings, sexual harassment, rape, and corporal punishment, which have resulted in stigmatizations, discriminations, racism, tribalism, and inequalities witnessed today in schools (Ogundipe & Obinna, 2007).

In another study, the International Labour Organization (ILO) report of 2001 showed that 218 million of school-aged children were involved in various forms of violence which include, but are not limited to, child labor, trafficking, and sexual harassments (Federal Ministry Education, 2007). This paper dwells on the violence experienced in secondary schools in Nigeria, types and implications on national development, and the way forward.

## Violence in Nigerian Secondary Schools

Violence is a common scenario in the school settings considering the fact that school is a conglomeration of students from diverse family backgrounds, ethnicity, and religion who have come under one community called school for the acquisition of knowledge. It is a global issue that affects one of the core institutions of modern society to a varying degree in virtually all countries of the world.

In Nigerian schools, violence has gotten to an alarming rate in the twenty-first century with high number of deaths and level of injuries inflicted on students which has also been associated with adverse peer group influences, poor home training, failure of government to provide palliative alternatives, and churches failing in their duties to preach love and patience. Today also, violence in secondary schools is now both external and internal like the cases of the abduction of about 300 final year students from Chibok in 2014 and 190 students from Dapchi in 2017 by Boko Haram insurgents in the northeast part of Nigeria (News Agency of Nigeria, 2018; UN Child Fund, 2018). These incidents attracted both national and international condemnations.

There are still many other cases of violence on students that are not global knowledge. The physical, psychological, and emotional torture and victimization that students in secondary schools face cannot be quantified. Violence has been variously defined as unlawful exercise of physical force on individual/individuals. It is any behavior that aims at harming others in the school. Astor, Benbenishty, and Estrada (2009), the American Educational Research Association (AERA, 2013), Pitner, Marachi, Astor, and Benbenishty (2015), and Tamuno (1991) described school violence as encompassing all the physical (fighting, corporal punishment), sexual (rape, sexual harassments of all forms), and psychological (verbal abuse of a sort) and bullying (cyberbullying, carrying of weapons, guns and knives). Domenach (1978) viewed the term from three perspectives: psychological, involving irrational and murderous use of force; ethical, involving vandalism of a neighbor's property or an abuse of his/her liberty; and political, involving forceful seizure of power or the illegitimate use of political power. According to the World Health Organization

(WHO, 2002), violence is the use of physical force, power, threat, or action against oneself, another person, or against a group of persons which has the propensity of resulting in death, injury, psychological harm, underdevelopment, or deprivation. Violence in schools involves a continuum of behaviors ranging from bullying to more serious cases (Ferguson, Miguel, Kilburn, & Sanchez, 2007). Summarily put, school violence is any behavior that is intended to harm other people at schools, within the school, or around the school premises. This may include bullying and victimization or more severe forms of violence involving weapons.

## Historical Overview

The incidence of violence in Nigeria schools is no longer global news. Evidences abound in the society. The question is what led us to where we are now? In the early days of secondary schooling, there was nothing like violence, at least comparative to what obtains today. Then secondary education was taken very seriously being the acceptable qualification for good jobs and also a link to higher opportunities. Students of secondary schools were very respectful, obedient, humble, and very eager to render help to others no matter how small. There was respect for human dignity, service to human kind, and selflessness because that was what the family, the church, and the schools had independently impacted on them: good values and respect to elders which border on our culture as Africans. Parents whose children were in secondary schools were highly regarded as having impacted good values in their children. Those parents were gainfully employed either by the government or by self (farmers, traders, etc.). The churches kept on preaching love, forgiveness, and contentment. Students during holidays got involved in community services, visiting the elderly and poor by providing needed help and organizing meetings through the age grade to teach others good virtues. They engaged in meaningful things that exposed in them useful living which made them useful members of the society as is one of the cardinal objectives of secondary education. These students were proud of their background and very contented with themselves. According to Ocho (2005) during the nineteenth century in Nigeria, unity and tranquility were the hallmark of every group then (student unions, age grade).

Each secondary school was interested in bringing the best out of their students to live in unity and harmony as one indivisible, democratic, and sovereign nation founded on the principle of freedom, equality, and justice that was the broad philosophy of the Nigerian education (FRN, 2004). These continued until this decade when there is a disconnection between the family, the church, the school, and the government. The economic situation has put a huge stress on parents to meet up with the basic needs of the family. Parents are now engaged almost 24 h a day simply to make ends meet. Some families leave their children under the company of house girls/boys to act as guardians. The housemaids in quote have nothing meaningful to impact on the children left under their care.

The churches now preach money instead of good virtues (Bruser & Chung, 2007; Ogba & Igu, 2013; Ocho, 2005). The government on their own part is equally confused as there is the problem of political instability which makes the implementation of secondary education polices abysmal. Every government that comes in power tries to fashion out their own ideology on the running of educational sector (Ivowi, 2001; Ocho, 2005; Okorie, 2005). There are instructional problems as government keeps on changing educational policies frequently. Initially, we had 6-5-4 system of education; meaning 6 years in primary, 5 years in secondary, and 4 years in the university. In the late 1980s, it was changed to 6-3-3-4 system. Now it is 9-3-4, that is, 6 years of primary, 3 years of junior secondary, 3 years of senior secondary, and 4 years in the university.

The curriculum design used did not help matters as it failed to equip its grandaunts with the needed requisite skills for self-reliance. Based on the above narration, one may not be wrong to theorize that what we are suffering from is poverty of the mind (due to frustrations) which has been the bane of the violence witnessed at all the corners of the country. There is economic poverty; parents cannot meet their obligations as required of them, leaving their children unguided as they move to satellite towns to look for something to do in order to pay their school fees. Getting to Lagos, Port Harcourt, Anambra, Kano, Kaduna, and other major commercial cities during the holidays, one will find thousands of children hawking on major streets, neglected, abandoned, and exposed to different hazards and threats because they have no alternatives than what they have found themselves in. The frustrations posed by these harsh environmental experiences have caused social life, which is one of the most important influences of our mental health and positive and durable relationship with both our minds and bodies, to fall apart cumulating into obscured thinking and hatred, intimidation, and harassments of all kinds. Hence, social poverty occurs as they cannot meet up with what is expected of them as well as institutional poverty as the institutions cannot give direction for tomorrow. Therefore, peer groupings begin to play an influential role, and the children were left with no option than to join gangs and hence the escalation of violence in schools.

## Types of Violence in Nigerian Schools

School violence has evolved in various forms over the past years, ranging from bullying to gangsterism, cyberbullying, and the use of sophisticated weapons such as guns, knives, and axes. Recently, attention of the public has been drawn to the lethal and traumatic shootings in various schools across the country. This has attracted public discussions at various quarters about violence that is ravaging the school system. School violence can be classified as:

## *Bullying/Victimization*

This type of violence is very common in schools. The victims of bullying suffer physical, psychological, and emotional traumas from the perpetrators. According to Ttofi, Farrington, and Loeber (2011), it is the repeated psychological oppression of the less powerful person by a more powerful person over a period of time. Its significant effect endures for a period of time.

In Nigeria, bullying is meted on teachers by students, students by teachers, students by co-students, or even parents against teachers or students. There have been several cases of students beating up their teachers simply because a student failed promotion examination. There are some cases where students beat fellow students purple and blue and other cases of parents either insulting or beating up a teacher for correcting their child. In Ebonyi State, Nigeria, parents of a student in one of the secondary schools beat a biology teacher into a stupor for rebuking their child for bullying a fellow student.

A group of boys in a particular state forced a student out of school because she refused to have sex with one of them, and they made it a point of duty to beat her three times in a week. From there the girl stopped attending school since she cannot bear the trauma. In Lagos State, a girl named Ada was rushed to hospital from school because of head injury she suffered from a classmate who bullied her. On 4 December 2017, in Anambra State, Nigeria, a teacher of one secondary school was beaten to death by parents and brothers for flogging a student who rudely refused to sweep the classroom (Okogba, 2018).

These are common scenarios in most parts of Nigeria. Some scholars have proved that outside the obvious pains that accompany incidences of violence such as immediate pain, there are other negative experiences that are worse like depression, low self-esteem, loneliness, anxiety, absenteeism in school, student dropout, poor academic performance, and suicidal ideation (Espelage & Napolitano, 2003). Students who suffered bullying in school find it difficult to socialize even after schooling. This is in line with the Omisore et al. (2012) who report that the victims of school violence are injured psychologically, emotionally, and socially and have behavioral disorder as manifestation of posttraumatic stress/disorder, failure in associating with peers, high aggression, and the use of psychoactive substances.

In a survey conducted by Ogundipe and Obinna (2007) on violence in Nigerian schools, their findings revealed that physical violence was 85%, psychological violence 50%, gender-based violence 5%, health-related violence 1%, and sexual violence 4%. They further compared violence based on locality and reported that physical violence in secondary schools located in rural areas accounts for 90% and urban areas 80%. On the issue of staff perpetrating psychological violence on students, it was recorded 26.4%. In terms of level, it was discovered that senior students perpetrating physical violence on junior student are 4.9% and classmate 4.7% (Ogundipe & Obinna, 2007). Reporting violence based on school type in Nigeria, Omisore et al. (2012) found that private schools have less than 25% violent cases compared with public schools.

## Cyberbulling

This is a new form of violence whereby technology is used to cause emotional and psychological threat on students. It is found to be predominant in all schools in the world. It occurs due to ostentatious means of assuming power, revenge, boredom, jealousy, or emotional torture. This form of violence is rampant among juvenile/adolescent age groups. The victims of cyberbullying experience multiple negative outcomes and emotional harassments which culminate into harmful behaviors such as lying, threatening, masking ID, and defamation. Cyberbullying involves hurting a peer using information technology by sending harassing messages and posting discrediting comments or pictures on a social media platform (Smith et al., 2008).

According to Turan, Polat, Karapirli, and Turan (2011), the Internet, like other information technology tools, has features of both positivity and negativity. Cyberbullying is meant to harm individuals deliberately through the use of electronic device. For instance, in Edo State, a student committed suicide because a fellow student videoed her with the boyfriend unknowingly to her, and she was devastated when the video went viral. In my own State Ebonyi, a student was forcibly videoed nude, and her perpetrator sent the video via YouTube. But for the quick intervention of good-spirited individuals and the efforts of the state government, the girl might have committed suicide as well because she is an orphan. There are unending stories surrounding cyberbullying and its aftereffects on their victims.

## Corporal Punishments

One of the causes of violence in Nigerian schools is the use of corporal punishment. It causes physical, psychological, and emotional pains to the victims. This is an aged-long culture in schools where erring students are flogged by teachers or senior students who have been delegated with authority. Students are beaten on their buttocks, head, hands, and faces either by teachers or fellow students in the name of discipline. Teachers are one of the most perpetrators of the first incidence of physical violence in schools. There is a case that was reported that a teacher asked a student to solve a mathematical equation in class. The poor student couldn't do it. The teacher now threatened her that she will be beaten mercilessly. Upon the threat, the teacher picked a long big cane and aimed at the student's head, lashing her with several strokes at both head and face after which she yelled at her, idiot go and have your seat. Upon reaching home, the student was down with fever; she was rushed to the hospital, after 2 days the student was declared blind, and the school authority denied knowledge of it. A study titled Violence Against Children Survey (VACS), conducted in 2014 by the UNICEF, found out that six out of every ten children experience different kinds of violence, more than half of which is physical (Lawal, 2017). Dunne, Humphreys, and Leach (2006) reported that corporal punishment is part of the norm in school life in many developing countries which Nigeria is not

immune to. There are a lot of literatures which have documented its uses and abuses in Nigerian secondary schools (Al-Shihab, 2006; Daniels, Bradley, & Hays, 2007).

Lawal (2017) corroborates that students have been maimed and sometimes incapacitated. He further stated that unless corporal punishment is completely prohibited in public and private schools, youths may grow with psychological and physical memories that will result in various cycles of violence. In data collected in 2010 under "round 4" of the UNICEF, Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS4) program recorded that 91% of children aged 14 years (UNICEF, 2014a, 2014b) experienced physical and psychological violence through aggression meted on them in the name of discipline. This act is carried out either by a slap on the head, ear, and face or hit with an object or being yelled at, screamed at, and/or insulted.

Beyond Africa, there are some studies done in Israel (Benbenishty, Zeira, Astor, & Koury-Kassabri, 2002), South Asia (UNICEF, 2001), and Europe (Smith, 2003). It is true that corporal punishment is somehow allowed so long as it is administered moderately and fairly in schools, but there are some regulations guiding it which is frequently contravened in Nigeria with students reportedly being pushed, slapped, and kicked.

## *Peer Pressure*

A peer group is a social group that consists of individuals with the same age bracket and social status who share similar interest. Peer influence remains one of the major predictors of school violence. Children who develop friendships with antisocial peers in secondary schools are at high risk of participating in violent behavioral activities. Peers are a very powerful influence in the onset of delinquent and violent acts. In the environment this work is based on students imitating their peers in their way of life: mode of dressing, walking steps, eating habits, and dancing styles. Families do not have much control on such students because most times negative behaviors have been found to have influence on positivity when it comes to peer-group relationships. At this level, most of them will take to alcoholism, cigarette, and other hard substances to enable them to move away from shyness. To gain respect from their peers, they will begin to participate in violent activities such as physical abuse, verbal abuse, sexual harassment, and deprivation, and from there they will begin to join a gang to be more vibrant.

## *Gangsterism*

Students in secondary schools join gangs which is associated with delinquency at an early stage of life. At this level, you find students drinking alcohol, smoking, and taking drugs which make them be involved in indecent behaviors that are tantamount to violence. According to Nalah and Audu (2014), students between the ages

of 7 and 20 years drink alcohol, smoke Indian hemp, and carry dangerous weapons. They, on many occasions, forcefully harass fellow students/pupils sexually, drug abuse in children: cigarette cannabis, antibiotics, tobacco, Alabukun (local analgesic), caffeine, tramadol, and hypno-sedatives. The observation supports the earlier report of Nalah and Audu (2014), Fatoye and Morakinyo (2002) who stated that the use of hard substances anechoic, stimulants hypno-sedatives, tobaccos among students in urban and rural school in Nigeria is alarming. The problem of gangsterism is associated with assaults, killings, robbery, extortion, multiple raping, maiming, and kidnapping. School shooting and suicides that are two extreme cases found today in secondary schools are as a result of gangsterism.

Nowadays, students come to school with dangerous weapons to unleash terror on teachers and fellow students who failed to join in their gangs. Some of the students who refused are either made to pay a certain amount "fuck up fee" every month for their freedom or face the consequences (Idowu, 2014). This issue is quite disturbing as school administrators, parents, teachers, students, and the general public are confounded with fear. The trend has worsened now that the major cult groups have extended their modus operandi to secondary schools in order to initiate students into the junior cult group.

There was this incident reported by Nigeria Police at Ebonyi State, Nigeria, where they foiled the initiation of 46 secondary school students by a popular cult group known as "Vikings" (Eze, 2015). The senior Vikings in the university want to have junior Vikings in the secondary schools. But the quick intervention of the Nigerian Police Force who swooped in on them follows a tip-off. The police command expressed regrets over such incident and announced that they will embark on sensitization campaign to secondary schools in the state to enlighten students on the need to shun gangsterism. The command noted with dismay that if these occurrences are allowed (i.e., big cults in the universities such as Vikings, Sea Dogs, Black Axes, etc.) to initiate junior ones in the secondary schools, it will escalate violent crimes such as kidnapping, robbery, and killing, among other social ills associated with violence. There is no gain stating the obvious that the culture of gangsterism has gone the ladder to secondary schools and is gathering momentum. Today thousands of teenagers have been exposed to various aspects of violence. This ugly trend has not only contributed to moral decadence but increased the spate of violence in the country which its cumulative effect is the economy, masquerading the public with overwhelming fear that occasionally bring mysterious illness, disputes, threats, and death. Serious academic activities can hardly be undertaken in such climate as suspicion becomes the order of the day.

## The Implications of Violence on Education

Education is the foundation of all development in a society. The impact of school violence in education is very grave considering that while educational authorities strive to increase access to schools, violence dwindles school attendance and

increases the dropout rate. The impact of school violence is both physical and psychological on both the students and staff. Violence brings about posttraumatic stress, substance abuse, antisocial behaviors, aggressiveness, and anxiety due to emotional torture. The above observation makes it difficult for those who have gone through violence to assess social cues and an inability to comprehend complex social roles (De Bellis, 2001). Daniels et al. (2007) reported that biological and psychobiological effects affect hypo-arousal as children are exposed to violence and have a lower resistance which may have the effect of desensitizing children to acts of violence. The impact will be witnessed in the decline in school attendance, increase to divert behavioral problems, and low academic performance. Delaney et al. (2002) found that children exposed to violence have low IQs which affects their cognition negatively resulting in difficulty with their concentration and memory, hence low intellectual ability. Students and staff who have been under violence are definitely going to have shock due to emotional distress and thus problems functioning. This may not only create fears in them but also make them develop negative attitude to life. Teachers who are under anxiety, depression, and somatic symptoms may be functioning unprofessionally, have low efficacy in the classroom performance, and have lower emotional well-being. According to Okeahialam (2015), Ahamadau Abba, a teacher at Jajiri Government Day School in Maiduguri, stated that:

> I have been a teacher for 29 years now but am always afraid to attend class due to violence exposed to and most of our colleagues have been killed or injured.

In such dangerous repercussion, finding teachers who will teach in such region becomes a problem, and student's school attendance will drop. By early 2016 as reported by Achineku (2016), an estimation of 952,029 school-aged children have fled the violence with little to no access to education.

## Violence and National Development

School violence is the act of destroying school facilities, causing pain on students, staff, and even the community where the school is located. Violence in schools has a potential to discourage students as well as negate the principle of student-friendly schooling and hence increased absenteeism, school dropouts, poor completion rate, poor academic achievement, as well as long-term implication of threat and security. The implication of the above observation to the national development is poor economy. The country will be submerged with people who have nothing meaningful to offer to the economy, just as water has overflooded its bank destroying people's life and property, and so is violence. The national policy describes education as an instrument for national development, which lays the integration for national development and interaction of persons. This laudable statement can only thrive in an environment that is safe and secure, and when that happens, the authors believe that love, peace, and tranquility become the order. The economic development of such environment will increase.

Obviously, Nigeria has a viable and diversified economy with great potentialities for development given the size of its markets and substantial resources, but violence has impacted much on the nation's economy. Violence in the school system can transcend to full-blown crises if not checked. There was an incident that happened in the 1990s in the old Anambra State where two communities clashed, destroying property worth millions because two students fought (Gaye, 1999). This disrupted the economic activities and reduced the per capita income as business activity was disrupted and farming abandoned as villages took to their heels. Parents of the students were asked to pay for the damages, and government also contributed money to help in procuring the damaged school equipment. These are monies that would have been used in solving some educational issues in areas to boost the economy but were misappropriated.

The money that would have been channeled to another yearning project was now diverted to replace already-destroyed facilities in the school. Secondary education is very strategic in a nation's national development not only because it is a bridge between primary and university levels of education but also because it supplies lower level manpower to all profession which boost the economy of that nation. The overall philosophy of Nigerian education is to "live in unity and harmony as one indivisible, indissoluble, democratic and sovereign nation founded on the principles of freedom, equality and justice" (FRN, 2004, p. 8). This is achievable where social value (respect for human right, humility, and tolerance, among others) is upheld. Where the reverse is the case, its impact affects the functionality of the government and the entire system.

The second stanza of the Nigeria's national anthem states as follows:

Oh God of creation, direct our noble cause. Guide our leaders right, help our youths the truth to know. In love and honesty to grow and live just and true. Great lofty height attains. To build a nation where peace and justice shall reign. (Metrolyrics, 2018, p. 1)

The first line is a plea to God to help maintain our value system and way of life. The second line is for our leaders to be upright and take decision devoid of rancor and hatred, while our youths should be endowed with knowledge and understanding to know the truth to enable them grow in love and honesty to attain an enviable height, to build a nation where peace and justice shall reign. This is the prayer of all patriotic Nigerians. However, the trend at which secondary school violence is moving is capable of casting a dark shadow over the prospect for a peaceful, united, secure, and prosperous society as Nigeria. To drive home this assertion, the World Bank (2003) states that violence leads to poverty, and poverty and violence are intricate and interrelated, and they retard economic and social development of a nation. Conclusively, violence at any level of education is an enemy to the national development. Firstly, it has social consequences which bring tension on people. Secondly, it has economic consequences which center on poverty and unemployment. Thirdly, it has a political consequence which brings about marginalization, deprivation, and injustice to others.

## Conclusions

Violence in schools has been referred to as consisting of undesirable behavior that brings about threat capable of causing emotional, psychological, and physical trauma on individual students, or groups, which results into frustrations, intimidation, stigmatization, death, and injuries and hence low academic performance, absenteeism, school dropout, and low completion rates. Scholars have provided valuable insights into causes of violence in schools. These are home factors, teacher's attitudes, lack of enforcement of the school rules and regulations, peer pressure, and the use of corporal punishment (Astor et al., 2009; Daniels et al., 2007; Lawal, 2017). The aftereffect is witnessed on school absenteeism, poor academic achievement, lack of value, and poor economy. School authorities should advocate for proper/proactive management strategy of school violence as poor management will not only negatively impact on quality of academic achievement but also degenerate to multiplicity of harmful effect on emotional and physical well-being of teachers, students, and others.

## Recommendations for Consideration

Addressing this hydra-headed monster called violence in secondary schools, all hands must be on deck to promote school safety and prevention mechanism that will curb the menace since it has attracted the attention of every stakeholder – the public, politicians, educators, and even social groups. Therefore, parents, churches, and government and nongovernmental organizations should collectively join hands with the school authority in the fight against school-based violence and other social vices.

1. The government should articulate educational polices that will equip its grand-aunts with the twenty-first-century skills and vigorously pursue how it will create self-employment and reduce overdependence on government for employment.
2. Guidance and counseling units should be made compulsory and functional in every secondary school.
3. Teachers should be trained properly to take the mantle of teaching. In-service training should be made available to those who are already in the system. Teachers should be motivated intrinsically and extrinsically by providing them with accommodation, rewarding those that have done well, and enhancing their salary to enable them to teach with happiness.
4. The school authority should ensure friendly rules and regulations that are not stringent in nature. They should ensure consistency in the application of rules and regulations and be fair and equitable in administering discipline. This will help in maintaining an environment that is conducive and congenial for learning, as this will help students to thrive.

5. The government needs to formulate educational policies that will promote economic growth and development.

The church has to sit up and preach love, forgiveness, and oneness as those virtues will help to work on the children's psyche and change their perception about education. Workshops, seminars, and conferences should be organized occasionally on the evil consequences of violence, and peace education should be made compulsory as one of the prerequisites for employment.

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# Chapter 5
# Not to Silence the Principal But to Kill Him: Coping, Implications, and the Day After

**Khalid Arar, Eman Arar, and Samar Haj-Yehia**

**Abstract**  The murder of an Arab high school principal, on the eve of the opening of the school year, was unprecedented and "rocked the education system" in general and Arab society in Israel in particular, leaving the school to face this terrible tragedy. Case study is employed here to conduct an inductive observation of the immediate and long-term implications of this traumatic incident, attempting to understand and describe the consequences for the school fabric of teachers and other employees, students, and parents. More specifically, the research aims to respond to the following questions: (1) what was the underlying background for this tragic occurrence? (2) How did the staff experience the loss? (3) How did the tragic event influence the school system's functioning? (4) What were the implications of the event for the Arab community and society in general? To clarify these questions, in-depth interviews were conducted with members of the school staff, some of the older students, and parents. Additionally, documentary evidence including public announcements, reaction documents, and events that occurred following the event are analyzed in an attempt to understand additional consequences of the tragedy, the reactions to it, and subsequent policy and leadership actions in the web of different relevant systems.

**Keywords**  School violence · Violence prevention · Arab schools · Educational leadership · Weapons in school

*The authors dedicate this chapter to the blessed memory of Mr. Yosef Shahin Haj-Yehia, who was murdered in his office on 25 August 2014 while fulfilling his duty as the principal of the Amal High School in Taibe.*

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## Introduction

> Four years ago, in the afternoon before the new school year was to begin, I was sitting in
> my office as the then principal of a secondary school, together with my management team,
> immersed in our arrangements for the opening of the new school year. Suddenly the house-
> master entered my room, bearing the awful news that the principal of the Amal school in
> Taibe (a Palestinian Arab city in Israel at a distance of 25 km. from our school) had been
> murdered in his office in the middle of a similar meeting with his management team for the
> beginning of the new school year. A sharp cold wave invaded my body, I felt totally para-
> lyzed, shocked. Silence pervaded the room. A few minutes later, having recovered slightly
> from the initial astonishment at these tidings, I and my deputy drove immediately to the
> Amal school, which had served as the venue for our periodic regional meetings with the
> superintendents, to understand what had happened and help if we could.
>
>   This was a tragic life-changing event, a turning point in my life as a school principal, as
> a colleague of Mr. Yosef Haj-Yehia, who was murdered in his office. It was the first case of
> its kind in Israel, a case that has continued to haunt me as I continued my career as an educa-
> tional researcher. Every time that brutal violence including gunfire invades what we are
> accustomed to consider as the sacred territory within school walls, I am overcome by a tre-
> mendous sense of loss, even if it happens in another country: the loss of values, education and
> the collapse of the system. The most recent case in Florida shocked me no less and led me to
> contribute to this book in order to recount the story of my late colleague and friend Yosef.

The issue of the spread of illegal firearms in Arab society in Israel has caused loss of sleep to many of this population. Their loss of a sense of personal security is augmented by the lack of suitable law enforcement by the Israeli police force. In a report produced by the Knesset Research and Information Center (Knesset Israel, 2014), it was found that 49% of all criminal prisoners in Israel are members of the Arab society. When this statistic is viewed in light of the proportion of Arabs in the Israeli population (approximately 21%), Arabs are obviously strongly overrepresented in the criminal population. Over the years 2013–2016, it was found that Arabs (and foreigners) were responsible for 55% of all murder suspects, 49% of all accused murderers, 55% of all those suspected of attempted murder, and 58% of those accused of attempted murder. The potential danger to society is obvious from the abundance of criminal files opened for possession of and purchasing illegal arms in Arab society. The same Knesset report for the years 2013–2016 indicates that more than 11,000 files were opened for these crimes in Arab society in Israel, and these are of course only the cases brought to the attention of the police. In the words of the Arab member of Knesset, Ahmed Tibi: "the amounts of arms in Arab villages would not shame an armed militia" (Knesset Israel, 2014). When these data form the background, the school has obviously no immunity against the use of those weapons. This means that, unsurprisingly, the murder of a school principal within the school walls was simply the precursor of other cases of the use of firearms by outsiders who forced their way into schools, including the shooting of a student. Thus, a red line was crossed, and the phenomenon began to gain momentum and grow like a rolling snowball, the school no longer had any immunity against the use of firearms, and random individual cases became a worrying social phenomenon.

In light of these data, the purpose of this case study is to conduct an inductive observation of the immediate and long-term implications of the particularly traumatic

murder of Yosef Haj-Yehia and to understand the consequences of this incident for the school fabric including the teachers, students, employees, and parents. More specifically the research aims to respond to the following questions: (1) what was the underlying background for this tragic occurrence? (2) How did the staff experience the loss? (3) How did the tragic event influence the school system's functioning? (4) What were the implications of the event for the Arab community and society in general?

> Given the subjective difficulty involved in an in-depth study of the murder case, I asked a colleague with a doctoral degree to help me to create a more objective observation of the case and to conduct interviews with the school's educational staff in order to gain an understanding of the underlying circumstances of the case and its consequences. Additionally, I enlisted a post-graduate student from Tel Aviv university, who was a teacher at the school, to join us for the interviews we conducted with the school's graduate students who were studying at the school at the time of the murder. The collaborative work of us three enriched our ability to observe the studied phenomenon from inside and outside the research field and reinforced the objectivity of the data that was gathered.

To clarify the above questions, the authors chose an inductive case study employing in-depth interviews with the school staff, some of the older students (who had already graduated from the school), and students' parents. Additionally, documentary evidence including public announcements, reaction documents, and events that occurred following the event were analyzed to attempt to understand additional dimensions of the tragedy, the reactions to it, and subsequent actions. Further dilemmas and implications of the findings are discussed.

## Creating an Educational Climate in the Arab Education System: Literature Review

Statistics for 2017 indicate that the Arab population in Israel numbered 1.7146 million persons, or 20.2% of the total population. This large minority includes Muslims (1.4203 million), Christians (160.9 thousand), and Druze (133.4 thousand) (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2017). The Arab population mostly resides in separate communities, in rural regions afflicted by economic shortage, though some Arabs live in a few mixed Jewish-Arab cities. Arab society in Israel suffers from socioeconomic distress. Against the background of the Israel-Palestine conflict, the governments of Israel over the generations have tended to see Arab citizens as a "seventh column," a threat to the state, and have largely excluded them from public life and from government administration. Admission to many workplaces is exclusively reserved for those who have served in the army, which most Arabs do not, or on security clearance. Thus, the incomes of 53% of the Arab population are below the poverty line, and their standard of living is 60% of that of the Jewish population.

Arab society is a heterogeneous society encompassing various cultures, religions, and ideologies, and Arab citizens live in different geographic areas of Israel. In addition, the Arab population is influenced by the norms and values of

neighboring countries, rather than by those of the majority Jewish population (Arar, Beycioglu, & Oplatka, 2017).

Although there is no autonomous educational administration for Arab schools, Jewish and Arab education systems are separate; however they receive unequal resources to the disadvantage of the Arab system (Balas, 2015). Research literature and reports have dealt extensively with the discriminatory consideration of Arab education by the Israeli education system. This includes allocation of fewer teaching hours for Arab schools and poor infrastructures. The Taub Institute Statistical Yearbook (2017) stated that in 2016, the percentage of students eligible for matriculation in the Hebrew education system was 73.6% in comparison to 50.7% in the Arab education system. Therefore, there have been consistent calls for the Ministry of Education to adopt policy that ensures essential equality in relation to low starting points for Arab schools, as is done for other populations in the country (Arar, 2015). Inequality in education between Jews and Arabs extends to computer/Internet access and digital literacy. In general, Arab students demonstrate lower levels of achievement, especially in university entrance exams, which restricts their access and choice of discipline in higher education.

It is also noted that in addition to the unequal budgets for Arab schooling, over the years the Education Ministry has strictly controlled the content of learning programs in Arab schools, hindering the teaching of Arab cultural heritage, avoiding mention of Arab culture and identity in textbooks (Arar & Oplatka, 2016).

Arab society in Israel is hierarchically structured as a patriarchal society, based on "hamullas" (large extended families). The lack of government support for the development of the Arab communities and the failure to enforce state law and order in these communities mean that despite influences of global media and the surrounding more modern Jewish communities, the traditional culture and norms of the communities are generally maintained intact. In the crowded villages, there is a lack of urban planning and development and a lack of industrial areas, hindered especially by government confiscation of Arab lands since the establishment of the Israeli state.

Nevertheless, Arab communities are in a gradual state of transition from their traditional the more tribal collectivist culture to a more modern individualist culture, sometimes breeding conflict and erupting in violence. There is a loss of the sense of personal safety increased by the lack of law enforcement by the Israeli police force in Arab communities. All citizens and especially children have inalienable human rights for personal safety and a sense of protection, mental well-being, and safety of property. Yet, in many Israeli schools, but especially in Arab schools, children and their teachers are faced with increasing violence of all sorts, including bullying, random physical attacks and brawls, and in extreme cases the use of illegal arms (Benbenishty, Zeira, & Astor, 2000; Skop, 2014).

The Ministry of Education Report on School Climate (2015) based on questionnaires distributed to students found that in Arab senior high schools, there was a decrease in students' sense of safety and sense that they were being protected alongside a significant increase in violent incidents and breaches of discipline. Eleven percent of Arab students in grades 11 and 12 reported their involvement in violent incidents, in contrast to only 6% in a similar survey in the academic year 2009–2010.

The increase reported violence in Arab schools contrasts with the opposite trend found in Jewish schools where the previous survey had found 15% of students reporting involvement in violent incidents, but the 2014 survey found that only 11% students reported involvement in violent incidents. However, a doctoral thesis by Saeed (2017) found that although 50% of Arab students in secondary vocational schools reported that they knew weapons were brought into their schools, when asked if they were ever threatened with a knife, gun, or injured by a knife, 95% responded that they had never been threatened with a weapon, apparently meaning that the remaining 5% had been so threatened. This contrasts with the findings of a study by Khoury-Kasabri, Benbenishty, and Astor (2008), in which 10% of Arab school students reported that they had been threatened with weapons.

The World Health Organization defined violence as an intentional use of physical force or power against oneself, another person, or against a group, which results in injury, death, psychological harm, or inappropriate development (WHO, 2002, p. 1). This includes many types of violence, such as international war, civil wars, national uprisings, gang violence, organized crime, and interpersonal violence and even maltreatment of animals or destruction of property. Other definitions of violence relate to antihuman behavior that deviates from social norms and aims to harm oneself or others or property either directly or indirectly. Behavior that is considered to be violent is the product of a subjective judgment, influenced by the circumstances and the individual's attitudes, prior experiences, and values. Judgment of a particular incident as violent depends on the interpretation of the perpetrator's act. Insofar as the perpetrator is considered to have more responsibility for their act, then there is a strong probability that the act will be defined as violent (Astor, 1998; Benbenishty et al., 2000; Kaufman et al., 2000). Horowitz (2000) distinguished between aggression and violence. He sees aggression as focusing on the individual, while violence is considered to be centered in society. Although aggression involves behavior that intends to hurt, violence is seen as a continuous social phenomenon involving more than one person.

School violence has been defined as behavior intended to physically or emotionally harm persons in school, as well as their property and school property (Benbenishty & Astor, 2005). This would include verbal and social violence such as cursing, humiliation, ostracization, threats and extortion, physical violence, theft and damage to property, weapon use and sexual harassment, bullying, and in the last decade also cyberbullying. School violence is considered a sociocultural concern because it has negative impacts ranging from psychological (e.g., posttraumatic stress) to physical (e.g., death) at the individual and systemic levels (Knafo, Daniel, & Khoury-Kassabri, 2008; Ludwig & Warren, 2009). The violence may be expressed in different formations: by students against students, staff toward students, students toward staff members, and parents toward staff members. It may be performed by individuals or by groups. There may also be secondary injury. Violence experienced in childhood and youth may harm the normal physical and mental development of both the aggressor and the victims and even indirectly harming those present at the scene (Hyman & Snook, 2000). In fact, the term "victim" is rather arbitrary since the aggressor may also be the victim and the victim can become an aggressor

(Embry, Flannery, Vazsonyi, Powell, & Atha, 1996; Farrell & Meyer, 1997) and innocent observers in the close environment can become indirect victims or join one of the sides in the incident (Ezer, Gilat, & Sagi, 2011).

Education systems in Israel and other countries try to cope with the phenomenon of violence in schools. Researchers see different aspects of the school as significant factors that influence the level and power of violence that erupts in the school (Saeed, 2017). Although children come to school with their own personal and social backgrounds, the school's social climate can be the decisive factor determining whether the child becomes violent in school (Astor & Meyer, 2001). This is a strong indicator that preventive work can be accomplished by the development of special programs in schools.

Violence in schools threatens not only the physical and mental health of staff and students but also obviously hinders educational work. This phenomenon is not new or unique to Arab schools in Israel. Public uproar often results when extreme violent events occur such as gunfire in a school or the murder of a principal in his office. In Israel, as in many other world states, there is much concern regarding this issue, expressed among other things in various efforts to learn about violence in educational institutions and to identify the means that can help to prevent violence and deal with its consequences. Indeed, it seems that in the last two decades, these efforts have been more intensive, consistent, and persistent than in the past. For example, the first national comprehensive survey on violence in the education system was conducted in 2000 (Benbenishty et al., 2000), and this was followed by the report of the government's Vilnai committee that recommended detailed procedures for the reduction of violence in the education system (Report of the Committee for the Reduction of Violence Among Children and Youth in the Education System, 2001).

At present, in Israel there are intervention programs focusing on the development of an optimal school climate and the reduction of violent and risk behaviors in schools. These programs involve diagnosis of the dimensions of violence in the school, planning work procedures, performing the intervention, and then assessing its results. Also, they describe how schools should arrange their organization and system to reduce violence and create a sense of safety for staff and students, including specific guidelines for dealing with violent incidents.

The next section describes the specific context in which the murder occurred in the Amal High School in Taibe.

## The School Context

### Taibe: The City

Taibe is one of the Palestinian Arab cities within the green line in Israel (demarking the armistice lines after the 1967 war). This means that all its 40,000 residents, who are Arabs (99% Muslims), are citizens of the State of Israel. In 1950, the state passed

the "Absentees' Property Law" (State of Israel, 1950) and later passed the "Land Acquisition Law" (Knesset Israel, 1953). These laws enabled the state to take control of the property of absentees, so that according to the villagers, the city lost 8000 dunam of its previous territory of 11,000 dunams (approximately 11 square kilometers) (Schwarz, 1959, p. 40).

## *The Amal High School*

The Amal High School is a multidisciplinary school established in 1969. In 1970, 751 students (374 male and 317 female) began to study in the school, which opened 23 technological disciplines including electronics, mechanics, nursing, management, fashion design, etc. Sixty-five teachers and 26 technicians instructed and taught the children in theoretical, humanist, and technological streams, spreading out in different ability classes from youth at risk to gifted students. The school aims to foster young leadership with academic skills, possessing intellectual and critical integrity, and also to foster a culture of a healthy mind in a healthy body, an aesthetic sensitivity and a creative approach to the arts. The vision that leads the school is to provide opportunities for achievement by each and every student to realize their inherent potential in different fields of knowledge, different social domains, sports, and the arts. The late school principal, who headed the school for two decades, emphasized the need to foster motivation for learning among the school's students while continuously striving for excellence and developing leadership skills and socio-scientific innovation. This approach helped the school to radiate success, expressed in the improvement of students' matriculation exam achievements, and it became one of the leading schools in its region. The school acted and still acts as a hothouse for the development of new generations of future leaders in academic, economic, and social fields. It specializes in creating appropriate programs modified to provide a response for different students, from gifted students to those with weaker abilities and learning disabilities, and to provide its students with knowledge and tools to cope with the challenges of a rapidly changing world.

## *The Trauma of the Principal's Murder as Reported in the Media and the Ensuing Storm*

The press reported the death of the school principal Yosef Haj-Yehia, after he was shot in the head and chest by a masked gunman while leading a meeting of his staff in his office. They reported that the staff responded with screams and the gunman ran off. Paramedics who arrived at the scene tried to resuscitate Haj-Yehia in vain, and he was taken to hospital where his death was confirmed. The local police declared that the motive for the crime was criminal and not nationalist and opened

an investigation, but the file was transferred to regional office of the police due to the public importance of the victim, noting that Haj-Yehia had announced his intention to run for election to the local government. Ahmed Tibi, an Arab Member of Knesset, praised the educational work of Haj-Yehia and called on law enforcement to find the perpetrator, adding that *internal violence is a cancer in the body of all of us and should be stopped*. The education department manager and teachers expressed shock. The local government representative lauded Haj-Yehia and said: *this is a dangerous turning point in the phenomenon of violence prevalent in Arab society, that threatens us and does not allow us to sleep.*

A ceremony was held in the school yard to dedicate the Amal Multidisciplinary School in the name of Yosef Haj-Yehia. The ceremony was attended by the directress of the Amal schools' chain, lawyer Ravit Dom, and the chain's managerial staff, the local mayor Arik Barami, the late principal's family, the school staff, and students. Ruth Dom described the late principal as her true friend and a special educator: *a man with strong values, who loved people, an educator head and shoulders above others whose educational and moral work was deeply rooted*. She explained that it was difficult to accept the painful fact of his absence.

## Methodology

To investigate reactions to the trauma that ensued after the murder of the principal Yosef Shahin of blessed memory, we chose to use case study limited in time and location (Marshall & Rossman, 2012), in order to learn about the events that followed the tragic incident, the way in which the principal and his work was perceived, and what had happened to the school following his death. Interviewees were selected following preliminary conversations with those who had worked closely with the principal. Interviewees included the school secretary who had been present in the office where the murder took place, the female school principal, a schoolroom teacher, and coordinator who had also been in the office at the time of the murder. The interviewees also included the pedagogic coordinator, two students now graduates of the school, who had studied at the school at the time of the murder, and the late principal's daughter (the interviewees are given fictitious names here to maintain their privacy). In all there were three teachers, the school secretary, two school graduates, and the principal's daughter.

The research tools were a semi-structured interview from which data were elicited concerning the tragic incident, reactions to the incident in the principal's immediate family and educational circle, and in broader system and social circles. The interviews with the interviewees were conducted at different venues, some in the school, some in cafes, and some in the interviewees' homes according to the interviewees' choice. The interviews lasted between 60 and 90 min. The research purpose was explained to the interviewees, and they were promised anonymity in any research report and could cease the interview at any moment. The research questions related to four provisional areas of inquiry: the tragic murder and reactions to the

murder, who was Yosef Shahin, the school and the society, and the day after. The interview transcripts were uploaded onto the computer and translated from Arabic to English and then underwent holistic analysis, searching for recurrent experiences, feelings, and attitudes. This method enabled data to be encoded, consolidated, and connected to form central themes. The coding was guided by the principles of "comparative analysis" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), which includes the comparison of all coded elements within and between emergent categories and subcategories. In order to increase trustworthiness and reliability in the research, the analysis was strengthened by structured analysis and by peer review of the seven interviews by each of the authors (Marshall & Rossman, 2012). The systematic data collection procedure employed in this study was designed to enhance the credibility and authenticity of the data (Rajendran, 2001). However, since this is a very small sample and the interviewees could not be considered as constituting a representative sample of the case under investigation, the implications of this study and generalization of its results are necessarily limited. In the next section, the findings are presented according to the different themes that emerged from the analysis of the interviews.

## Findings

So, what have we learned from our interviews? Our initial findings allowed us to elicit a few central themes and dilemmas that await solution. The first of these was: what can we learn about the principal, who was murdered? What red lines were crossed, and what were the reactions to this, in terms of policies and the complex systems of society and community? There were also questions concerning the return to the school after the incident.

### *Yosef Shahin Haj-Yehia and His Work*

Yosef Shahin invested much of his time and energies in propelling the school, which had been at the margins of the city of Taibe, forward into prominence and the twenty-first century. Unsurprisingly, the school secretary also noticed this process:

> I felt that he was my father, he was my manager, my brother, the person with whom I spent a long period, who taught me a lot, raised me. He was the one that helped me to integrate as a secretary immediately after I completed 12th grade, I met with him six days every week, so of course he had an influence on my life, everything that he did was special.

A female graduate of the school described the principal as follows:

> The principal was a most generous person, always giving of himself, he always accepted us as though we were his children. When we took examinations he wished us well, His intention to give to others, to help was felt most powerfully. It was a tragic loss that influenced all of us, adults, children, teachers and even people outside the educational framework. His murder undermined the norms of all of us who knew him and left us with many questions and dilemmas, why on earth did it happen/OR for what exactly?

These words are in line with the testimony of a teacher who was also a grade coordinator in the school:

I was very close to him, he radiated paternal concern, he was a friend and even intervened in personal matters to resolve things and make them better… if you were absent or disappeared from his view, he would check that everything was alright, he was most involved.

Another teacher added:

Yosef Shahin was a legend for me, I would like to share my last meeting with him, he told me: 'take all your things, clear them out, I want them to paint your office, so it will be more attractive and cleaner [the teacher cried]. On a personal level he gave all his strength to solving conflicts. We would hear the taps of his shoes, we felt that we had strong backing, you could say anything openly in front of him. He would request, insist that all the paperwork should be perfect, but he also always gave his full support, a powerful person, giving all his support, but checking, asking, following-up things. Today all these values have retreated, we have reached a stage where we are frightened… Therefore, I have chosen to study and not to take any extra job. We came to the staff meeting, two weeks after his murder, we sat in silence, complete silence, suddenly someone laughed, his secretary attacked us, it was difficult for her to accept that and she began to cry.

As we could hear from these testimonies, Yosef was a concerned and interested educationalist, charismatic, consistent, containing the difficulties of others, and knowing how to apply these characteristics as part of his daily pedagogy that bound the school's teachers to his vision and motivated the students to be learning-oriented, and led the school to success. However, his tragic death cut short this process.

## *The Red Line That Was Crossed and the Trauma That Ensued in the School*

The secretary told us about the tragic event:

It was on 25th August, 2014, a few days before the opening of the school year. I sat in my office working on the computer. The principal was in his office, holding a meeting with the teachers. Suddenly I saw someone peeping round my door. I thought it was one of the amusing teachers trying to make a joke. Then I realized that it was a masked man, all in black. He came in with his gun and at that same moment I understood who it was and what he had come to do. I wanted to call out his name, but I thought he might shoot me. That same day the principal sat with his back to the cameras. The murderer went in towards him, all the teachers hid under the table and he shot the principal immediately with several shots. It all happened in seconds [the secretary is choked by her tears]. He fell like a feather, because I didn't hear the sound of his fall. The murderer ran off immediately. I began to scream, everyone left and he was lying on the floor. I knew that he had died, he had shot him in the chest and neck [again choked]. I shouted, I was flying around going berserk in my distress, I felt my life had ended, the school had been destroyed, and I would never be the same person again. My brothers came to fetch me and took me away from here… I was the only one that dared to give evidence, if it had been the opposite, he would not have been silent, he would have done everything for me….

After the murder, the education system, the school, the students, and the entire city were suffering from posttraumatic symptoms. The walls of security of each of the teachers and students had been shattered. The school's status in Islamic-Arab society as a holy sanctuary had been devastated. The entire paradigm within which the school had been entwined with the image of the principal disintegrated. Difficult questions and dilemmas ensued: how to act and continue? What should be done in terms of policies, at the level of the individual teacher and student and at the level of the entire system? How should the implications of this incident be assessed, and which priorities should be addressed, for the short and long term, including the maintenance of the educational heritage of Yosef Shahin? Could this tragic event become a life-altering event, or would it be the beginning of a rolling snowball gathering force, and where and how could this stop? And finally, in retrospect, which new dilemmas are engendered by this event?

## Questions of the "Day After"

Again, we learnt about this from the school secretary:

> I expected them to do more, to expel the murderer's family from Taibe. We were crushed. There wasn't a day when I didn't see the principal in my dreams. I was ashamed, I felt I had betrayed him… I was offered mental assistance by the Amal chain and the Ministry of Education, but they disappeared immediately. I am already three years without any treatment… I feel very alone and no one understands me.

The principal's daughter spoke about the "day after":

> On the day of the murder, there was a demonstration and several days later there was another demonstration with the entire education system in the city. There were speeches by different people from the regional office, the mayor, Members of the Knesset Arab lists, they went to the police and presented demands. The president of the state also came to visit and console us. Students stood opposite our house. On 1st of September there was a general strike in Taibe, and the day after that was devoted to talk about our father, his life and commemoration of his work.

Later, she talked about the reactions to the killing:

> I feel great disappointment, at first there was a hullabaloo, but it was only symbolic, a demonstration, another demonstration, a strike, the Memorial Day forty days after his murder, a carnival of speeches by the whole spectrum of educational and political bodies, but they all dissipated. There was no mechanism through which lessons could be learned, no planning of action program and teaching in different languages to perpetuate his heritage and give the students coping tools and education for dialog and problem resolution in conflicts.

The interviews allowed us to return to the question: could this happen again and in the same or another school in the city? The shocking answer was yes, without any hesitation because a red line had been crossed and the wall was shattered. One of the female school graduates also spoke about what had happened as a

result of the murder and how the educational staff had coped with the state of post-trauma:

> I had heard about murder cases before, which had not influenced me, but it was really tragic. There was no reason for it, I had always heard about the murder of criminals, but not my principal. The teachers tried to hide their pain, they pretended that they were strong in order not to influence us, but their anxiety and sadness were so obvious…. I entered the school the next day with much fear, I was afraid to come to school, it was not the same school that had received us with flowers every year, something was missing. The teachers tried everything possible in order to stand up to the situation, we lost an important person, but they had decided not to give up.

She also spoke about reactions to the murder:

> At first everyone was angry and they demonstrated, this was the first time that I had participated in a demonstration with the encouragement of my parents. But I quickly left the demonstration, I felt wounded, the whole city was in shock. But a month later it was as if nothing had happened… whatever was done for him was not sufficient and there were no real results. The police were the source of the mistake, the citizens did all that they should.

We heard about the functioning of the Ministry of Education in this complex situation from another male school graduate: *They did nothing for us, it was only thanks to the teachers that we managed to overcome it a bit. There should have been support at least for the teachers because the students were supported by the teachers… the teachers did far beyond what was expected.* When asked whether he felt any support or change after the event he answered:

> In any place where something so awful occurs, it is difficult to return to it. We had to go back to school, if there was another place and we had a choice, we would not return to the school. It was the same for the teachers… when we entered our class for the first time, we spoke in fear, there was an atmosphere of anxiety, sadness, anger, frustration… I don't remember the Ministry of Education doing something special for us, there were no workshops or projects or something that could increase awareness to prevent violence, the situation did not change and in my opinion, it will not change.

When we asked one of the teachers what they wanted to do in the name of Yosef, she answered:

> I would like them to make a film about him, that they would broadcast on the television, or an activity book for students, something educational… it is sad that it happened in Arab society, because if it happened in Jewish society it would have received another reaction, far more in the media and a system-wide powerful response and also educational… its as if nothing happened.

This was also the late principal's daughter's conclusion:

> This case changed the appearance of things, we have a problem. There is murder here, a big problem, but everyone acts as though nothing happened. If there had been a storm in the state as a result of the murder, it would not happen again… I am angry at myself for not knowing that my father was under threat and for what? I could not listen to my father, I am very angry at the system, because my father did so much for the benefit of everyone and they left us alone, disappointed by the senior functionaries whom I expected would be at our side and guide us as to what to do. But after the speeches, it was as if we did not exist. My father would have turned the world upside down for other people. Members of the Knesset, who were his friends didn't bother to do anything, they forgot us.

With these reactions in the background, we asked about the school as it is today, after the murder. We heard about this from one of the teachers:

> This event altered the appearance of the education system for the worst. It was a tragedy, but an issue that had not been awarded the necessary treatment. Two armed persons entered a school in a nearby village and shot a student. There was no uproar throughout the state. When this happens in an Arab community, there is quiet legitimization by the law enforcement bodies. I would expect a change in the curriculum, so that there would be a learning unit in education about violence, to give students tools for dialog, to educate a non-violent generation.

Thus too, the late principal's daughter, who is herself a teacher, responded:

> I would like the murderer's grandsons to sit in my class and I would ask the students to write a few words to the murderer of the educator Yosef Shahin, to arouse the murderer's grandsons so that they would go and ask their grandfather why he murdered him?

In contrast, the female graduate of the school noted:

> I think that the teachers need treatment, and support, to provide them with tools and coping strategies. Civil society associations should do something in his name, because the Ministry of Education did not. There was an initiative by one of the students who wanted to create a film about him, we distributed the idea and wrote articles on violence, a picture and film could be a stronger medium in my opinion.

To summarize the above findings, it seems that the murder of the principal caught the system unprepared but even more difficult, lacking ability to process the tragedy for individuals (students and teachers) for the local education system, the state education system, and the complex system that links the different education systems, society, and the community and to develop policies to cope with the disaster and its consequences.[1]

## What Do We Still Not Understand: Questions and Dilemmas for Future Policies and Leadership

In our conclusions, we have chosen to present questions regarding policies and leadership strategies that remain open and dilemmas that await resolution. It is too late to ask which policies, leadership strategies, and actions at the levels of the teacher and student in the classroom should have been taken and still need to be taken throughout the state to prevent such a tragedy. However, we can say that it seems that the attempts to provide such policies and strategies have not been sufficiently systemic. The regional office has not provided instructions and answers, and they have left the teachers and students with the hope that such a case will not be repeated. The school staff had no idea how to cope with the tragedy and its posttraumatic

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[1] The murderer, the owner of a kiosk in the school, who had disagreed with the principal about the opening of an additional kiosk in the school, was found almost immediately, tried, and after plea bargaining sentenced to 16 years of imprisonment.

aftermath. What they in their school and the entire education system received was insufficient to continue the day after.

*The first dilemma* of the day after that should concern us was how to return and reopen the school. What was the logistic value of the speeches and demonstrations that took place or the tears in order to process the tragedy? Would the symbolic entrance of the police into the school help? How did the leadership of the regional education office and the Amal chain that includes this school act in order to replace the empty space of leadership that was created? How was a continuity formed between the cohesion that the principal had formed before the opening of the school year and the disruption that was formed as a result of his murder? How could the sad and wounded educational and administrative staff continue to cope with the aftermath of the murder, some of whom stopped attending celebrations such as weddings for a year after (according to one of the teachers) as a sign of their mourning for a person whom they felt to be their "deceased father."

*The second dilemma* was how to reconstruct the educational staff after the trauma and how to return to the educational routine. To sharpen the presentation of this dilemma, we present the words of the school secretary:

> I went to the first meeting with the new principal. I felt bad, I had pangs of conscience, I didn't want to work with the principal. I finished the meetings and went straight to Yosef's grave to apologize to him.

The reaction of the teacher from the management team was in a similar vein:

> I left the management team, because nobody backed me. Before the principal had always given me his backing, he asked for everything from us but also always supported us. Till today his voice echoes in my mind: "work with conscience", and it was a catastrophe if you forgot a child and did not give him what he needed. He would get really heated up about it. Today's leaders are different, everything is done easy, easy. As a teacher it posed a dilemma for me, whether to contribute or to give up and go? I decided to stay here for him, I supported two principals after him, to honor his work.

*The third dilemma*, is how to draw a line and continue the educational work that the murdered principal began through the reconstruction of the school system? The teachers were frustrated by the education system, but when they were recovered, they returned to their routines wounded and traumatized, unable to share their feelings and not feeling that someone in the system understood their pain and loss. And in the words of one of the teachers:

> I feel hurt and disappointment regarding the reactions of the Ministry of Education, people from the psychology service came to hold a workshop with us using plasticine, on the day after [the murder] they sat us down in a group and did activities to improve our cohesion… As a teacher who was present at the murder and remained under the table looking at the murdered victim, they gave me plasticine to play with… I threw it away and shouted a lot at everyone: "you are belittling us, you are unable to understand", I didn't receive any psychological therapy.

The tragic event caused trauma and damage. A therapeutic staff should have arrived to provide treatment for individuals and for the system, to assess the damage and to help to mediate between those who were directly affected and those in the second and third circles indirectly affected by the event.

A further dilemma relates to educational leadership; the school was now run by a more authoritarian leadership, leading female teachers abandoning their feminine characteristics after the trauma. They felt they needed to embrace a more authoritarian "unbalanced" style in order to protect the school. As one of the teachers indicated:

> There are people here who are unable to continue their lives in a natural manner after the murder. We had been a management team of 12 out of a staff of 120 teachers, the managerial pyramid was harmed, most of us were in the room when the murder occurred. I could not go to the school's end of year party any more, because my principal with his values and power had been murdered. He was murdered because he was courageous and an influential figure in our community. I believe that if he had not been murdered he would have one day become our mayor.

The last dilemma relates to public discourse, the circle of contact where the school and the social community in which it resides merge. In this discourse, there was little change following the murder. The discourse was not elevated to a higher level nor was it tightly oriented to the goal of repudiating the violent event and preventing future incidents of this kind. The impression that was gained from the findings was that there was actually a regression by the community and civil society. The situation that was created became even more complex, the murder of the principal lies in the background, and the system has not risen to face the challenge.

## Conclusion: Optimism and Hope

Violence in schools threatens the security of teachers and students and harms the educational act. This phenomenon is not new. However, the uniqueness of the case studied here is that it broke through a red line and formed a new threshold of violence since it was the ultimate violent act aimed toward the highest authority in the school. Nevertheless, the echo that the principal's murder produced was insufficient for the strength of this case. In Israel, as in many world states, there is much concern regarding the issue of violence in schools, concern that is expressed, inter alia, in various attempts to learn about violence in educational institutions and to identify possible strategies to prevent violence and treat this phenomenon in a holistic systemic manner.

## Recommendations for Consideration

1. A strategy of systemic intervention necessitates collaboration between policymakers, education leaders, the principal, and various auxiliary bodies, i.e., social workers, sociologists, and psychologists, to monitor and treat the damage that

was caused, to assess its implications, and to build dialogical education and provide tools for conflict resolution.

2. In response to the murder, alongside the need for an accelerated police investigation, structured intervention programs should be introduced, with thorough follow-up regarding the effectiveness of these programs. These strategies should include intervention in the management and steering of the crisis itself, assisting and supporting services for the victims, consultation for individuals in the immediate circle, and establishment of support groups for those who are witnesses to traumatic events of this kind.

3. One of the main conclusions that emerged from this case study is the need to map the damage created at the time of the violent event and in the long term, including the identification of those who are hurt in the immediate and more distant circles. Intervention to help those affected should be provided on the basis of empirical data about the school, and the victims should be supported by collaborative work between the different systems involved in policy formation and leadership.

4. To support education work, tools and strategies for conflict resolution should be supplied to cope with and prevent school violence of all kinds including violence stemming from racial-ethnic conflict, etc.

5. In addition, there is a need for programs to impart social skills and pro-social behaviors, training leaders to prevent and cope with violence. Community programs are needed to relate to and moderate gangs and bullies: police community programs, support groups in churches and mosques, including physical defense strategies such as structural changes in communal buildings, guarding, and metal detectors, etc. Such strategies should be capacity building for schools and their students and teachers and reinforce the sense of a safer school climate.

6. Education institutions should develop programs to reduce violence and increase discipline in schools. Such programs should include several components: (1) increased clarity of rules and regulations, (2) increased consistent enforcement of the rules, (3) increased involvement and personal responsibility of the staff and students regarding discipline and prevention of violence, (4) serious involvement of the staff and students in the development of programs and their implementation, (5) intervention programs that relate to the school as a whole and not just students with violent behavior, and (6) preventive and educative work in parallel at different levels and with different target populations – the individual student, class, grade, entire school, educational staff, administrative staff, and parents. Such work would increase the awareness of all these populations regarding the phenomenon of violence and the types of violence that are prevalent, creating clear guidelines and practicing exercises for the entire school so that they will understand and act according to rules for action before, during, and after the eruption of violence.

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# Chapter 6
# Investigation of Aggression and Belligerence in Greek Primary and Secondary Schools

**Evangeloula Papadatou and Anna Saiti**

**Abstract** In the context of the school's working environment, unexpected events such as damage to the school building (whether accidental or intentional), students using intimidation and/or violence toward their classmates, etc. often occur. The purpose of this chapter is, by reviewing the relevant literature, to assess the current situation regarding the phenomenon of school aggression and bullying in primary and secondary schools in Greece. This study supports the view that effective communication and cooperation between parents and the school, systematic training for teachers on how to manage students' antisocial attitudes at school, and the development of educational activities are actions that would help to confront aggression at school more effectively.

**Keywords** School violence · Student's aggression · Bullying · Management of school violence · Primary education · Secondary education

## Introduction

A school is a social organization that has a specific structure and consists of functional elements (students, educators, a manager, parents) who communicate, interact, and work together to achieve specific goals. To achieve these objectives, the school unit must function effectively. Studies that took place in recent decades have revealed the contribution that a positive working environment makes to qualitative improvements in, and the effective operation of, the school process (Kapsalis, 2005; Lezotte, 1992; Olweus, 1992, 1994; Rigby, 2017; Stall & Mortimore, 1997). Good interpersonal relationships and, by extension, friendly cooperation among the members of the school community positively influence the functioning of the school. Indeed, the effective operation of a school unit, as well as any public or private organization, is facilitated when there is good cooperation between the school head

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and the teaching staff, good communication between teachers and their students, and, of course, when the individual needs of teachers are satisfied. Furthermore, a positive school climate influences the motivation of the educators and hence the quality of their actions within the school unit.

However, in the context of the school's working environment, unexpected events such as damage to the school building (whether accidental or intentional), students using intimidation and/or violence toward their classmates, etc. (Rigby, 2017) often occur. Such events—unpleasant incidents which in many cases are difficult to control and tackle effectively—are detrimental to school units, educators, and students. In particular, these situations cause a cognitive disruption among students which, in turn, adversely affects the learning process as well as the smooth social and emotional development of students.

With particular reference to violence and intimidation exercised by Greek students, research has shown that:

- In primary and secondary schools, cooperation between the school and students' families is the "key" to tackling the phenomenon of school aggression and to mitigating its consequences. This notion is supported by the central scientific committee of the Greek Ministry of Education responsible for school violence and aggression (Artinopoulou, Babalis, & Nikolopoulos, 2016).
- The schoolyard is also a factor responsible for the violent behavior of students at break time, either because of the poor condition of its playing surface or due to the lack of recreational/pedagogical toys (e.g., chess) which would encourage students to improve their mental condition through recreational activity that is pedagogical (Olweus, 1995; Rigby, 2017).
- Gender shapes different instances of aggressive behavior. Thus, boys are more likely to be involved in incidents of direct harassment and resort to physical violence. Girls are more likely to harass and indirectly pick on their victims as they attempt to socially alienate and separate their victims from their peer group(s).

From the above, we see the real and dynamic power of a school's working environment lies in its ability to arouse either pleasant or unpleasant emotions that have a positive or negative effect, respectively, on the mental attitude of teachers regarding how they perform their duties and of course on how the pupils perform. In other words, a well-maintained harmonious school environment is crucial for the effective functioning of the school and is inextricably linked with the sense of security that prevails among its members. Within this framework, based on the relevant literature, this study investigates violence and intimidation in Greek schools and considers that their orderly functioning is a direct consequence of a safe and healthy environment.

## Aim of the Study

The purpose of this paper is, by reviewing the relevant literature, to assess the current situation regarding the phenomenon of school aggression and bullying in primary and secondary schools in Greece. The specific objectives of the research study are to:

- Report the causes of school violence and intimidation in primary and secondary schools
- Investigate how administrators and educators confront incidents of violence and delinquency in their schools
- Suggest proposals for the best possible management of the specific situations in Greek schools

## Theoretical Framework Regarding Violence and Bullying at School

The term "bullying" in international literature (Olweus, 1993, p.26) is defined as the aggression of students toward their classmates, otherwise known as "victimization," and focuses on those intentional and recurrent acts of aggression toward certain students that aims to isolate and exclude those students from their peer group (Olweus, 1994). According to this definition, aggression is closely linked to, and interdependent with, intimidation. That is, the two concepts of school aggression and school bullying are somewhat synonymous: a behavior is characterized as aggressive when it can harm its recipient (the victim), and the act of intimidation must necessarily have a victim (Rigby, 2017).

The forms in which school bullying manifests itself are many and include:

- Direct or physical bullying in which the perpetrator exercises all forms of physical violence and does not hesitate to proceed with the deterioration, destruction, or rape of the victim's person or their property (Besag, 1989; Beze, 1998; Tsiantis & Asimakopoulos, 2010).
- Verbal bullying where the perpetrator attacks the victim (often repeatedly) with taunts and gestures. This is the most common form of psychological violence among pupils aged 9–13 (Ladd & Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2002).
- Indirect/social/relational bullying in which the victim's peers/friends attempt to isolate them socially by excluding them from the group. The social isolation of a victim is quite common among girls as it is a form of bullying that victims have difficulty reporting (Wang, Iannotti, & Luk, 2012; Woods & Wolke, 2004).
- Cyberbullying or sexting in which the perpetrator uses electronic media (mobile phones, social media, e-mail, etc.) to reduce their victim to a troubled psychological state (Perdavani, 2010; Woods & Wolke, 2004). This type of intimidation is more common among secondary school pupils and usually takes place off the

school premises, since the possession of mobile phones is forbidden in the Greek educational system.

- Sexual bullying, where the perpetrator causes their victim to feel embarrassed or ashamed by openly making inappropriate gestures and/or sexual comments (Renold, 2004; Rigby, 2017; Smith, 2011; Smith, Nika, & Papasideri, 2004).
- Racial bullying, whereby the perpetrator uses abusive behaviors on the basis of the victim's national/cultural/social identity or even their different socioeconomic status (Eron & Huesmann, 1986; Galtung, 1990; Smith, 2011).

We should emphasize that in all the kinds of school bullying mentioned above, the perpetrator can either be an individual or a group of individuals. Students usually express aggression as a result of the following influences:

- The family. Here, negative influences arise when the parents' roles are outside socially acceptable patterns. The raising of children in a highly negative environment (drugs, alcohol, crime, etc.) leads the child to subconsciously imitate (Bandura, 1972) and adopt a behavior similar to that encountered in their surroundings. In contrast, an overly zealous family expresses its love with the uncensored education of their child, believing that it is their duty to satisfy all their child's requirements and requests—even irrational ones (Duncan, 2004; Olweus, 1994, 1995). Other aspects that can make a family dysfunctional include unstable parent relationships (including the permanent or temporary separation of parents), family conflicts, the size of the home, living conditions, etc. Undeniably, such family situations not only have negative effects on the psychoemotional development of children but are also often the causes of aggressive behavior in these children (Artinopoulou & Magganas, 1996).
- The school. This is the living space where pupils acquire knowledge and play for several hours a day. Research has shown that, besides the size of the school, the decoration and shape of the space and the school halls also affect student behavior and performance (Olweus, 1994; Whitney & Smith, 1993). As a result, research has shown that most cases of school aggression occur mainly at break times, occurring twice as frequently in the schoolyard at a distance from the playground supervisor/educator and in multipurpose schools (Craig, Pepler, & Atlas, 2000; Petropoulos & Papastylianou, 2001). In the face of such situations, the attitudes of educators, their values, their beliefs, and their manner toward students will help them in situations of conflict among the members of the school community (Boidaskis, 1987).
- A multicultural mix of students. A multicultural element is another factor that plays a major role in school aggression. With particular reference to the Greek education system which has now become multicultural, the classes are numerous and heterogeneous, and the problem of school violence is increasing (Robolis, 2007). In particular, the aggressive and/or intimidating behavior of some students toward their classmates is usually triggered by the diversity of the person who receives the violent reaction (ethnicity, religion, language, color, morals, customs, etc.)

- Technology. Violence seen on television or in action films such as those involving "comic book heroes" (e.g., Batman, Spiderman, Iron Man, etc.) lead children to copy and imitate the images they have seen (Doob & MacDonald, 1979; Liakopoulou, 1996). A similar role is played by the Internet and video games where scenes of violence, war games, or inappropriate sites lead unsuspecting minor children along various dark paths (e.g., the blue whale game) (Daskalopoulou, 2013; Hinduja & Patchin, 2008; Rigby, 2017). At the same time, hours of immobility in front of a screen have a negative effect not only on children's behavior but also on their linguistic and emotional development. Furthermore, it limits their imagination and creativity (Olweus, 1994; Triga-Mertika, 2014, p.76).
- Hereditary/biological causes: Students with brain damage (e.g., schizophrenia), incomplete physical development, hormonal disturbances, or low intelligence are more susceptible to aggressive behaviors as organic pathological conditions prevent these children from developing the social skills they need in order to adapt to the space where they want to be accepted (Seals & Young, 2003; Swearer, Espelage, & Napolitano, 2009).

The root causes of school aggression mentioned above not only bring about dysfunctionality in the school but also influence the psychosocial development of the student. Indeed, if those causes are wrongly diagnosed or not recognized at all, there can be adverse consequences not only for pupils' physical integrity but also for their mental well-being. For example, for six out of ten students who had been identified as offenders by the age of 24, by the time they were half that age, they had at least four court convictions, and the others had at least one (Ladd & Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2002; Olweus, 1993). In addition, the effects of school aggression may be associated with increased absenteeism, poor school attendance, school avoidance, and low learning performance (Bosworth, Espelage, & Simon, 1999; Dake, Price, & Telljohann, 2003; Due et al., 2005; Fuller, 1998; Karatzias, Power, & Swanson, 2002). Furthermore, intimidation supports psychosomatic problems (e.g., sleep disorders, headaches), loneliness, and poor relations with friends and ends up with the social exclusion of the student in his/her adult life (Due et al., 2005; Karatzias et al., 2002; Olweus, 1992; Seals & Young, 2003). In the particular case of Greece, in 2013 the Ministry of Education took measures to address pupil aggression in schools by establishing a framework for the operation of the observatory for the prevention of school violence and intimidation. Efforts to address this phenomenon began by informing and training those teachers in each school unit who were responsible for handling school bullying issues. However, time showed that this effort did not bring the expected results, either because it remained buried in reports but not practiced or because individual managers simply ignored the training and resorted to applying their own initiative to handle such incidents on their own or because the training activity was only a 50-hour distance learning course conducted during a single school year without any requirement for feedback.

## The Greek School Reality

In Greece, the number of studies that have been conducted to investigate the phenomenon of school aggression is extremely low relative to the corresponding research conducted internationally. The low level of activity among Greek educational researchers can be attributed to three main reasons: the increased homogeneity of the Greek student population in previous decades, the structure of the Greek family, and, finally, the fear of social stigmatization. With reference to the Greek studies, we can mention the following:

In the school year 1998–1999, the Pedagogical Institute carried out a survey of 450 primary and secondary schools, with a sample of 3000 pupils. It showed that the size of the school unit, the number of co-schools, the workload of the teachers, and the student-teacher and parent relationships are all linked to violence and aggression in school.

This finding is confirmed by earlier studies on potential causes of intimidation (Olweus, 1993, 1994; Rigby, 1997). In 2001, Pateraki and Houndoumadi surveyed 1312 8–12-year-old students in Athens. Its aim was to investigate the extent and forms of aggressive behavior of pupils but also to look at pupils' perceptions of how aware teachers and parents are of intimidation. The sample of this research showed that physical violence was reported in 34% of boys compared to 22.83% of girls. In contrast, verbal violence rates were higher for girls (38%) compared with boys (22.83%). According to students' reports, teachers have talked to victims and perpetrators significantly less than parents. These results confirm a previous study from the international literature, both with the type and the progression of aggression in the school unit, the gender relationship and the attitudes of teachers toward school bullying (Bosworth et al., 1999; Olweus, 1993). Furthermore, the above data show that aggression in Greek schools is very real and manifests itself in different forms.

In a 2006 Katsigianni survey on the attitudes of teachers toward incidences of bullying among 731 elementary school pupils (years 5 and 6), the majority of students either did not trust their teacher to report the incident or feared being punished or thought that the teacher would not be objective. Regarding the reaction of teachers/school heads to the pupils after the incident, 46% of the students said that the teacher punished the intimidating student. Two out of every ten educators ignored the incident, and one in ten punished both parties (offender and victim). Also, 63.7% of students reported the incident to their family. The findings of the above research show that a significant percentage of teachers (a) disregard the antisocial behavior of their students and (b) use "odd" forms of punishment in which victims are blamed as much as the perpetrators. This attitude of educators may be attributed to the fact that either the teachers do not know how to handle school bullying or relations between members of the school community are poor, resulting in an air of indifference.

At this point, it should be noted that a recent survey on the operation of the cooperative municipalities of the prefecture of Attica also showed that "…the area for each pupil in the schoolyard of a consolidated (merged) elementary school is only

1.75 m²". Based on this result and taking into account the requirements of the School Buildings Organization (1982) for the construction of school premises (which states for elementary schools, e.g., that the minimum school size should be 5–7 m² per pupil), we may claim that the cohesive elementary schools in the sample do not meet the space specifications.

Research by Glarentzou, Karagianni, Kotalakidis, Gelfe-Anesti, and Haramis (2010) carried out under the auspices of the Bullying at School Committee during the school years 2006–2007 and 2007–2008 surveyed secondary school teachers and, among other things, found that the family environment (e.g., parents' use of corporal punishment toward their children or total indifference toward them) is a root cause of aggressive behavior in students.

Moreover, Dimou (2012) attempted to investigate school violence among foreign and native primary school students in a sample of 631 students, of whom 124 were from immigrant families in rural and semi-urban areas of Greece. The findings of the study showed that foreign pupils are more often involved in incidents of school violence and boys are more likely to be involved in incidents than girls. The findings of this research are consistent with earlier research which also found that gender, pupils' low socioeconomic status, and difficulty in understanding the Greek language made them feel they were at a disadvantage compared to their native classmates, resulting in both a sense of rejection and racist behavior. To counter this, they had a tendency to be violent in order to show their strength (Andreou & Metallidou, 2004; Houndoumadi, Pateraki, & Doanidou, 2003).

## Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the phenomenon of aggression and intimidation in primary and secondary schools in Greece. The review of relevant studies over the last 20 years has revealed some aspects of the problems of intra-school violence faced by the first two levels of education. First of all, from the literature findings previously mentioned, it appears that the phenomenon of school aggression has not yet grown in Greece to the extent that exists in developed countries of the West (Vavetsi & Sousamidou, 2013).

As regards the emergence of aggressive behavior, it is understood that several factors are involved. In particular, the school environment seems to be shaped and influenced by a series of teaching and pedagogical parameters that are linked to aspects of child aggression and bullying at school (Daiou & Tsivas, 2013). More specifically, the existing school infrastructure and the lack of space for sports, to play, and other related activities are sources of child aggression at school (Artinopoulou et al., 2016; Artinopoulou & Magganas, 1996; Drogidis & Papageorgiou, 2013). In addition, the relevant educational legislative framework (Ministry Decision No. 105657/2002) states that teachers can help prevent school violence by working with their pupils, teaching them to respect the personality of their fellow human beings, and thus cultivating and inspiring democratic behavior (Article 36). However, the research data

mentioned above reveals that a significant percentage of teachers are indifferent to the antisocial attitudes of their pupils.

Students claim that they trust their parents more and their teachers less, which points to another source of school aggression. This is because the relevant finding suggests that teachers do not notice and/or do not properly confront incidents of pupil violence that occur in their class. In addition, the growing heterogeneity that has been a feature of Greek schools in recent years due to the growing number of pupils from immigrant and refugee families with different religious beliefs, cultures, languages, etc. often induces negative feelings in children that prevent the development of self-esteem – elements that contribute to aggressive behavior among students. At the same time, parents and teachers involved in the educational process find it difficult to manage unpleasant situations at school. Particularly for the parents of migrant and refugee pupils, communication with the school to solve a problem is often difficult either because they do not know the Greek language well enough or because of various work commitments.

Problematic families seem to be another factor that favors aggressive behavior in children at school since, as claimed (Gourgiotou, 2005), families with low socio-economic status, single-parent families, families of divorced parents, parents with little education, parents who do not have enough time for their children, and parents that often quarrel at home are just some of the scenarios that make the family environment a determinant factor of behavioral problems in children.

In summary, school aggression and bullying are primarily a social phenomenon with many causes that are related to the system of values prevailing in the wider social environment, the family, the neighborhood, and within the school. Therefore, preventing and repressing this phenomenon presuppose the need for high-level strategic planning that should be established by the central administration. At school level, effective communication and cooperation between parents and the school, systematic training for teachers on how to manage students' antisocial attitudes at school, and the development of educational activities are actions that would help to confront aggression at school more effectively.

## Recommendations for Consideration

1. The real and dynamic power of a school's working environment lies in its ability to arouse either pleasant or unpleasant emotions that have a positive or negative effect, respectively, on the mental attitude of teachers regarding how they perform their duties and of course on how the pupils perform. In other words, a well-maintained harmonious school environment is crucial for the effective functioning of the school and is inextricably linked with the sense of security that prevails among its members.

2. The school head contributes to the smooth and efficient functioning of the school and its staff by implementing the plans of the educational unit and is effectively the protagonist of the school's educational process.

3. Given that (a) human behavior is not easy to estimate and measure, (b) it is the result of an interaction of information flow, communication channels, and personal motives (Busch, Seidenspinner, & Unger, 2007; Saiti, Papa, & Brown, 2017), and (c) environmental stimuli in general (and of a school in particular) play an important role in the shaping of behavior (Jongbloed, 2008; Kassotaki-Maridaki, 2011), and then the trust relationship between teachers and students is crucial when aiming to closely monitor, and positively influence, students' behavior.
4. Teachers, without the proper knowledge and the necessary methodological tools, find it difficult to manage the heterogeneity (due to the influx of pupils from immigrant and refugee families) in their class.
5. The design and implementation of a school curriculum for school violence, the adoption and implementation of the school regulation, the improvement of the school's infrastructure, and the systematic updating of parents on the issue of raising their children by state educational scientists are some measures that could be taken in this direction.

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# Chapter 7
# School Violence in México: When Addressing Bullying Is Not Enough

**Marta Sánchez**

**Abstract**  Neoliberal logic plays a role in school violence in México. To advance this logic, discourses focused on individuals' actions are deployed. These deflect a focus on structural dynamics that contribute to or are the root cause of violence. Neoliberal logic insinuates itself into Mexican society through national and international organisms that frame the discourse of and responses to school violence. This chapter broadens the discussion to include the context beyond schooling and considers the role of external mechanisms that contribute to school violence. School violence in México is increasingly discussed as bullying, but to understand the landscape of violence among students, the discussion does well to explore factors that extend beyond bullying. The dominance of a bullying discourse in media and educational initiatives to describe school violence suggests its ability to reference a common human experience. Being taunted, humiliated, or beaten is possible, perhaps even probable, in the course of a human life. "Bullying" provides a common language about certain behaviors, dispositions, and actions but camouflages structural bias and violence around class, race, and gender. Ignoring structural bias can place Mexican schoolchildren, youth, and young adults in peril.

**Keywords**  México · School violence · Bullying · Neoliberal logic · OECD · Standardization

## Introduction

Neoliberal logic plays a role in school violence in México. Neoliberal logic upholds that the individual is responsible for his/her own successes and ills. To advance this logic, discourses focused on individuals' actions are deployed. This logic deflects a focus on structural dynamics that contribute to or are the root cause of violence, and it insinuates itself into Mexican society through national and international organisms that frame the discourse of and responses to school violence. This chapter

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broadens the discussion to include the context beyond schooling and considers the role of external mechanisms that contribute to school violence. School violence in México is increasingly discussed as bullying, but to understand the landscape of violence that involves schoolchildren and students who are youth and young adults, the discussion must explore dynamics that extend beyond bullying. The dominance of a bullying discourse in media and educational initiatives to describe school violence suggests that it is a very accessible discourse in its ability to reference a common human experience. Being taunted, humiliated, or beaten and victimized by other types of aggressions are possible, perhaps even probable, in the course of a human life, and certainly, most individuals will have experienced some form of bullying. Cases of bullying seem to have increased, or one can say, that the discourse of bullying helps us identify what decades ago existed but had not been understood as conforming to a set of criteria that constitute a phenomenon that could be labeled. "Bullying" provides a common language about certain behaviors, attitudes, dispositions, and actions. However, a bullying discourse camouflages structural bias around class, race, and gender, as well as global mechanisms that contribute to societal violence, and places Mexican schoolchildren, youth, and young adults in peril.

Social media have also provided imagery for the labels, allowing for a view of bullying in action. In 2013, for example, a boy in an elementary school in the northern state of Sonora in México choked a classmate, a girl, leaving her unconscious (Sin Embargo, 2013, June 18). The incident was videotaped and disseminated on social media. The video captured other schoolchildren cheering the boy on, telling him to stay in the fight so that the girl would know that he, as a boy, was the boss. The girl later recovered, and as more details emerged, the public learned that the boy had entered the classroom upset and attacked the girl without warning. The girl immediately succumbed to the boy's choke hold. It is unclear why there were no adults in the classroom; the victim's family met with school authorities to demand that the teachers be held accountable for the incident. A more recent video of school violence that also went viral showed a middle school boy chasing a classmate, a girl, across a classroom, catching her, and wrestling her to the ground, where he beat her. On social media, the boy was condemned for being sexist. It was later learned that the girl had frequently bullied the boy because he was gay (Changoonga Media, 2018, September 20). The discussion was recalibrated; it switched from gendered bullying to promoting inclusive practices and rejecting the privileging of heteronormativity.

School violence in elementary and middle schools in México is currently being addressed by promoting anti-bullying awareness and offering intervention programs designed and deployed by the Secretaría de Educación (SEP) [Secretary of Education] and the Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación, SNTE (2014) [National Teachers' Syndicate]. It is important to understand that as a member of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), México's education system is ensnared in the OECD's continuous push for standardization, which flattens complex student profiles, and is in itself a form of exclusion and bullying of radical heterogeneity.

The OECD (2017) reported on 2015 PISA data on student exposure to bullying. The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is the mechanism by

which the OECD evaluates educational systems in the world; student evaluation data drives the PISA and is administered to 15-year-olds. The research on bullying represents the first time that PISA surveyed students about their experiences with school violence. The study includes data for 29 countries, 16 of which are OECD member nations. General findings include that bullying takes various forms; it is relational and physical and has gendered patterns with more boys reporting being hit and more girls reporting being victims of rumors. Bullying can contribute to disengagement from school; this was observed on science performance among schools with high and low levels of bullying. High-prevalence schools are defined by the OECD as schools in which more than 10% of students report being bullied frequently; low-prevalence schools are schools with less than 5% of students report being bullied frequently. There was an average 25-point difference in performance on science between high- and low-prevalence schools. Immigrant children were more likely to experience bullying if they arrived to the host country after the age of 12. Children in disadvantaged schools were more likely to report bullying than children in advantaged schools, except in Japan, Korea, and Macao, where the pattern was reversed.

The PISA outcomes for México indicate that bullying is a common phenomenon; 20% of Mexican students said they were frequently the victims of bullying; slightly less than 10% experienced relational bullying, reporting that other students spread nasty rumors about them; slightly more than 5% reported being hit or pushed around by other students (p. 3). In México, there is about a 22-point difference in outcomes on performance measures in science between schools with a high prevalence of bullying and schools with a low prevalence of bullying, even after controlling for the socioeconomic profile of the school (p. 4). The data for México suggest that attending a school with a higher socioeconomic status (SES) may serve as a protective factor against the impact of bullying on academic performance in science given that before controlling for the school's SES profile, the point difference was higher at over 30%, but the impact of bullying on school performance in science is, nonetheless, high. The OECD (2017) study suggests that Mexican schoolchildren who face bullying are vulnerable to low academic performance, the onset of which is the emotional trauma experienced that then leads to disengagement and loss of the opportunity that schooling should provide to students.

## The Broader Context of Bullying

In this chapter, the discussion of school violence is broadened to go beyond a bullying discourse. A bullying discourse, observed by a Mexican columnist, Monica Garza (in Becerra & Sánchez, 2014), is used to describe all violence as a catchall term, one that could oversimplify the social reality of the country:

> Mexico is a violent society that tolerates violence. Bullying…has become the word of the moment, signaling any kind of violence, at school or at work, and it's time to call things by their names. Murder is not bullying. It's murder. Assault is not bullying. It's assault... (Becerra & Sánchez, 2014, para. 9)

Though Garza's comments describe a reality of the past 18 years, Méxicos's new government has a coordinated effort to address homicides and theft, the most prevalent types of violence. Nonetheless, this is a long-term effort, and Garza's observation supports what is reflected in the OECD study. While the study draws out differences in the types of bullying (e.g., relational, physical, gendered), the report tends to examine the impact of bullying by using a single global definition that collapses the diverse forms into generic bullying; in doing so, the degree of violence from relational to physical bullying is glossed over. Aside from camouflaging societal ills, as Garza noted, a bullying discourse is undergirded by neoliberal logic that ignores structural and state violence and relocates the responsibility of the state onto the individual with the aim of having the individual create the conditions that make social tranquility possible. It makes of children, youth, and young adults the site of intervention for "bad behavior" and positions individual parents and individual teachers as the ones who either fail or succeed at ending bullying through strategies that modify behavior. In such an arrangement, parents and teachers can become adversaries, perceiving each other as failing the child when the strategies they use fail, thus making each adult's job more difficult. The chapter introduces sociological perspectives and examines the function of violence within neoliberal logic, specifically symbolic and state violence in Mexican educational settings.

## Neoliberal Logic and Symbolic Violence

French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu (1977), defines symbolic violence as violence that imposes itself on one so that choosing to suffer under it becomes inevitable; one does this to honor what is asked. This theorization of symbolic violence provides insight into how it is a mechanism that helps establish, for example, class identity or notions about the good citizen. Mexican sociologist, Mingo (2010), expands on this definition, pointing out the abuse of power that extracts consent and is constitutive of symbolic violence: symbolic violence is a form of power (abuse of power based on the consent that is established and is imposed by the use of symbols of authority), verbal and institutional (marginalization, discrimination, and restraint practices used by different institutions that instrumentalize power strategies) (p. 44).

Neoliberal logic adopts such violence when it reduces structural inequalities and oppression to individual ones that require individual modification. Bourdieu (1998) notes that this is how neoliberal logic impels a "struggle of all against all" (para. 8). A recent example of symbolic violence is the action taken by the state government of the eastern state of Veracruz to approve a law that prohibits in any social media forum the use of memes to damage a person's reputation. Anyone who violates this law can face up to 2 years in prison. The law is an example of state overreach that silences freedom of expression, a right that is guaranteed by the Mexican Constitution. The broader context of this law suggests that it may be retaliatory: the wife of the ex-governor of Veracruz was memed when riding public transportation in London. The meme illustrated how she was living a carefree life after she and her

husband left a trail of destruction through their alleged involvement in the assassination of several journalists and financial fraud. The anti-meme law not only silences the citizenry but gives greater presence to the punitive, surveilling state that inserts itself into the process of constructing a sociopolitical space through the community's critique of the government and its ability to speak back through memes.

The decision of the state government of Veracruz to enact a law that criminalizes memes is a form of symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1991) that begins to shape the structures of feeling (Williams, 1977) of a community and society. Structures of feeling are the "intricate forms of unevenness and confusion" (p. 414), with a deep distrust of the state, because at the same time that the state criminalizes memes, it does nothing to protect the integrity of the press by punishing those media outlets that issue fake news, of which there is a proliferation and which is designed to misinform the general public. The posturing of the state government is spectacular if one further considers that the young journalists who accused the ex-governor of involvement in the murders of several journalists were themselves shot to death by masked, armed men in México City after having fled to that city from Veracruz after their lives were threatened.

## *Neoliberal Logic and Violence Beyond the School Walls*

There are several Mexican films that highlight the ways in which symbolic, relational, and physical violence reaches into the daily experiences of Mexican schoolchildren, youth, and young adults. The films span a period of 64 years, and each highlights a societal ill or injustice of its time. The five films that help illuminate the broader social context of school violence are *Río Escondido* [Hidden River] (de Anda & Fernández, 1948), *Los Olvidados* [The Forgotten Ones] (Dancigers & Buñuel, 1950), *Canoa* [a city in the Mexican state of Puebla] (Lozoya, Chavira, & Cazals, 1976), *Perras* [Bitches] (Sánchez & Ríos, 2011), and *Después de Lucía* [After Lucía] (Franco et al., 2012).

*Río Escondido* introduces Rosaura Salazar, a rural teacher, who is called into service by the president of the republic in the aftermath of the Mexican revolution. As a rural teacher, she is asked to go to Río Escondido, a remote part of the country where hacienda politics and violent forms of domination are still intact. Salazar has to contend with the hacienda owner who does not want her in the town and is openly hostile to her and to the workers he still commandeers but who is forced to accept her as the teacher to the children whose parents he exploits. The extreme poverty and historical negation of schooling of the Mexican people are what has made the hacienda owner wealthy. The presence of the rural teacher, who also represents the government's social justice orientation of the era, disrupts the status quo of the town and reveals how the hacienda owner and the families he exploits are at cross-purposes of each other; as he seeks to maintain power and control over the families and assaults the teacher, the future generations are being emancipated through education. The direct physical violence of the former regime, represented by the landowner, can no longer subjugate the people once education is made available.

Intergenerational poverty ends through education, changing the relationship between the exploiter and the exploited. The historical moment captured in *Río Escondido* is the birth of modern México in which the revolution has made available a lay, free, and public education to the masses and in the most remote locations, opening up possibilities for a life beyond the reach of the hacienda system.

*Los Olvidados* (Dancigers & Buñuel, 1950) depicts urban poverty in México City in the 1950s, almost two decades after México's expropriation of its oil from British and Dutch companies, an act that created wealth for the nation and helped build a middle class. The film gives voice to the forgotten ones, the ones that the rising nation has left behind. *Los Olvidados* centers itself on the lives of poor, young boys and the work they have to do in order to survive and help their families survive. Their lives unfold in the street and in markets, where they face danger and police harassment. The poverty the boys live is extreme and negates them the possibility of an education. One boy is accused of stealing a knife. The police seek the mother's authorization to send him to the reformatory; the mother agrees, and the boy is sent away where it is thought that he will be reeducated, although in reality it will be the first time he receives some form of schooling. The film points to ironies that persist to this day: when the state's modes of production fail citizens and the state must nonetheless incorporate them into society, as criminals or as children in need of reform, institutions where behavior is highly regulated and the body is under constant surveillance and control, such as jails, prisons, and reformatories, become sites of socialization and education.

*Canoa* is a film that depicts a historical event, a tragedy, that took place in the Mexican state of Puebla in September of 1968, during the ongoing student protests in México City and a month before the October 2 México City massacre of students by state forces. In *Canoa*, five university workers were on their way to the foot of one of the volcanos in the region where they planned to hike. The young men had to stop before reaching their destination because of heavy rains; they sought shelter in the town of San Miguel Canoa in the home of a local. Through fabrications about who the five young men were and what they were doing in Canoa, they were ultimately mistaken by the townspeople for outside agitators linked to the México City students, and a mob quickly formed through a priest's insistence. Three of the five young men were killed along with the host who had offered them shelter. The perpetrators of the crime could not be readily identified; in the end, the individuals who were arrested were eventually released because the authorities did not have sufficient evidence with which to convict them of the crime. *Canoa* highlights how state actions are reproduced by the citizenry to be used in the same brutal way. Namely, *Canoa* illustrates how, through symbolic violence, the state positioned the México City student protesters and, by default, all Mexican youth as dangerous, morally degenerate, and hostile to the established social order, and this narrative was taken up by the people of San Miguel Canoa to justify the killings.

*Perras* reveals the individual sufferings of a group of high school girls and how these individual backstories express themselves as power plays, taunts, and dominance in interactions with each other while they wait in their classroom to be interrogated about an incident they were all involved in. *Perras* introduces the many

ways gender is performed and how these multiple performances are inscribed with society's norms about gender. *Perras* is about symbolic and real violence as the girls accept gender norms in their efforts to fit in either as subordinate or dominant subjects and their willingness to tolerate cruelty in order to not be excluded.

*Después de Lucía* is a film that depicts extreme peer violence centered on Alejandra, a teenager who together with her father moves to México City after her mother dies. Alejandra is harassed after a boy, José, videotapes a sexual encounter they have at a party, and he circulates the video in school. Alejandra is physically assaulted by the girls in her peer group and is ultimately raped by the boys. Alejandra disappears as they all gather on the beach, and eventually, her peers notify her father thinking that something may have happened to Alejandra. When the father learns about the filmed sexual encounter and the subsequent harassment and assault his daughter has endured, he kidnaps and kills José after the authorities tell him that because the perpetrators are all minors, the law cannot take action. Alejandra reappears; she had simply taken refuge from her peers in an empty building and fell asleep there. *Después de Lucía* is about symbolic and physical violence. Reference is made to structural forms of violence that reinforce gender norms and that position a sexually active girl as a "slut," while the boy is not singled out in any way by his peers, even as he violates basic social norms when he videotapes the sexual encounter and circulates the video. Other structural barriers are referenced, such as the inability to make a justice claim.

The five films show how across time the same problems are reproduced through the state's or governing regime's indolence or abuse, because it does not intend to find ways to provide recourse and support for those who are suffering. The first film shows how state economic regimes, like the hacienda system, created the poor and bullied them into virtual economic slavery through exploitative labor practices and denial of schooling. The other films engage the intersectionality of class and gender or youth and gender and how greater vulnerability exists at the intersection of stigmatized identities. *Los Olvidados* highlights how poor boys are perceived as delinquents; *Canoa* demonstrates how being young males created vulnerability for the travelers within the context of student protests; *Perras* reveals how class status might be a malleable construct for girls; in the film, a girl from a lower socioeconomic class can gain more social capital if she is physically attractive, thus protecting her from class-based bullying but entrenching her in gender norms that objectify women's bodies; *Después de Lucía*, the most recent of the five films, exposes the persistence of gender norms that stigmatize women more readily than men. The five films show that the geographies of schooling are dangerous, even within the social justice imaginary of *Río Escondido*.

School is where gender, class, and race and other social identities that make one vulnerable to violence in schools are learned, performed, and either rewarded or punished. In this sense, schooling itself is a process of bullying. In this sense, neoliberal logic that works to destroy the collective, and even crush the family (Bourdieu, 1998) by focusing on the individual and individualistic responses to oppression, is not a new logic.

## *Neoliberal Logic and Violence in Higher Education*

Porros are "grupos de choque" [groups of confrontation, shock]. "Choque" has several meanings that include a confrontation, a collision, a crash, or a shock. Porros, as the word "choque" implies in its diverse meanings, are disruptive and confrontational. Porros have had the historical role of intimidating and beating university students considered to be leftist (Rodríguez Araujo, 2018, September 11). Porros are internal bodies created by the state, political parties, or other groups, though, namely, groups connected with the political system that have an interest in breaking up social movements and destabilizing groups formed around ideological lines or any dynamics that challenges their interests and hold on power (Ordorika, 2005).

Ordorika (2005) offers an important history of porros and porrismo and the violence they introduce on college campuses against college students. "Porros," explained by Ordorika, refers to cheerleaders and cheerleading. The groups are called this because of their nexus to university and governing powers that promote American football teams and cheerleaders (p. 462). Porros represent institutionalized violence in Mexican higher education and began when the Catholic Church gained greater access to the university:

> Beginning in 1933, Catholic and conservative groups opposed to the regime took control of the UNAM (National Autonomous University of Mexico) and other institutions of higher education. From the administrative offices of these universities, they [the Catholic and conservative groups] promoted the systematic practice of violence, intimidation and exclusion, initiated by their [the conservatives'] student groups. (Ordorika, 2005, p. 462)

Ordorika notes that porros are gang-like groups that were effective in weakening the democratic and social justice orientation of the universities; by 1968, the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM) [National Autonomous University of México] own student groups were significantly weakened, which gave way to the greater presence of the violent porros. There are currently 52 groups of porros on the campus of the UNAM alone (Camacho Servin & Sánchez, 2018, September, 7). Ordorika explains that when the porros multiplied, they became increasingly disruptive within distinct schools and colleges within the UNAM and became more violent, beating and assaulting students and sexually harassing others, and did so under the protection of university actors with political aims:

> Porrismo is a distinctive phenomenon of Mexican higher education and is the historical consequence of conflicts within universities and the relationships between public universities and the political system in our country. The generic term "porrismo" denotes a diverse set of acts of violence that take place in educational space and that are connected, at least at the origin, to the corporate control policy and practices that have characterized the political regime in Mexico. (Ordorika, 2005, p. 473)

In the fall of 2018, students of the UNAM gathered in front of the university's main administrative building where the chancellor's office is located to read a list of demands to improve their experience as students. As they read their petition, the students were attacked by porros (El Heraldo de México, 2018, September 3). In response to the porros' violent eruption onto their university, 60,000 UNAM

students marched for peace on their campus. The chancellor committed to eradicating porros from the university (Camacho Servin, 2018, September 5).

Bourdieu (1998) writes that neoliberalism is a "project that aims to create the conditions under which the "theory" can be realized and can function: a programme of the methodical destruction of collectives" (para. 4). That is, neoliberalism has to ensure its own existence by creating the conditions that will allow it to exist; one condition is to destroy collectives, including nations, or, in the case of the UNAM, student groups or universities. Bourdieu's definition illuminates the function of the porros: to dismantle collectives. It is telling that the students had gathered as a collective with a list of demands written collectively to petition the university for change, and at the moment, the porros attacked the students.

## *Neoliberal Logic and Transnational Violence*

Since the year 2000, the past three presidencies have sought to build a new airport for México City at the edges of the city in the state of México. The airport has broken ground on what is left of Lake Texcoco, a lake that was a living presence of an indigenous, precolonial landscape and which was home to a diversity of flora and fauna. The lake was filled with soil in order to build the airport. In 2000, the communities, which would be displaced by the airport, were able to stop its construction but not without a violent confrontation with state forces. In 2006, the president of México and the governor of the state of México ordered the police and the military to act and, under the rubric of eminent domain, took possession of the ejidos [communal land] in San Salvador Atenco in the state of México (Vera-Herrera, 2018, July 16, para. 3). The Nuevo Aeropuerto Internacional de la Ciudad de México (NAICM) [New International Airport of México City] is 20% built and counts with multibillion dollar investments from the Mexican elite and from BlackRock, a US investment firm with billions of dollars of global investments in its portfolio. The project is in the eye of the OECD, which oversees its development through its economic evaluation arm (OECD, 2016). The new president of México who received 30 million votes, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, asked the Mexican people to vote on the future of the airport through a special elicitation process asking for a single-issue vote. Engineers have said that the maintenance of the airport will be excessive in its costs because the NAICM will sit on a lake bed and require continuous attention to prevent flooding and sinking; environmentalists have warned that its further construction represents ecocide and endangers access to water for Mexicans. More importantly, the displacement of the 15 indigenous communities from their ancestral homes represents a great loss of histories and the everyday practice of life, which are tied to specific geographies. These communities have opposed the construction of the NAICM for 16 years; in 2002 the protests turned

violent and resulted in many injuries among protestors and government agents; the protests halted the NAICM project (Thompson, 2002, July 18).

A social media campaign presented the potential benefits and potential risks of continuing the construction of the NAICM, and alternative proposals to the NAICM were made. The Mexican people voted to cancel the project, and all construction activity has now stopped. The NAICM was a test of Mexican sovereignty. In the interim, national and transnational elites and organisms will have to wrestle with the idea that their ill-conceived project has launched violence against indigenous communities and the environment and had put at great risk the future of these entities as well as the broader Mexican population by limiting the nation's access to water. The project itself is a form of violence fueled by capitalist interest; it is as if Mexican history repeats itself: it liberated itself from colonialism and landlordism (latifundismo) only to encounter new would-be-masters. The violent impact of national and transnational organisms on México is visible to schoolchildren and youth everywhere, in their families' intergenerational struggles against brute power and economic injustice, and in their daily lives in the classroom.

## Conclusions

This chapter has attempted to highlight how neoliberalism as a system of governance and economic growth is imbricated in local, national, and transnational bodies and discourses. Using Mexican cultural artifacts (e.g., films) and phenomenon (e.g., porros) to provide examples of structural classism, racism, and overall bias that engender relational and physical violence in school and beyond, the chapter provides evidence that school violence is a symptom of societal and global phenomena. By introducing the problematic role of the OECD in a country as diverse as México, the chapter highlights how the OECD does more harm than good. The OECD is a global actor in setting schooling agendas that promote standardized testing and neoliberal education reform. The latter champions public-private partnerships that further deplete public coffers as private firms sell their wares for profit to educational systems. Academics have expressed concern about the OECD's PISA zealous and continuous testing regime that harms schoolchildren, is dismissive of diversity and what diversity implies in learning and teaching, and reduces teacher autonomy. Academics are also concerned by the OECD's use of outcomes on standardized testing to drive school reform agendas (The Guardian, 2014, May 6). The OECD had the support of the ruling and capitalist elite of México; it has lost much of this support with the new president, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, for 2018–2024, but the OECD is powerful with tentacles that reach the global elite; as such, they have voice and power. Ending school violence will take all of us.

## Recommendations for Consideration

In addition to the practices presented below, it is important that parents and teachers, with the support of advocacy groups, together come to understand that responses to school violence, when reduced to a teacher-student or parent-child approach, can put these relationships in greater peril. Neoliberal logic prefers solutions focused on the individual over collective voice and action; Bourdieu (1998) has suggested that neoliberalism's primary aim is to crush the collective because the collective can resist. When communities have understood that neoliberal logic seeks to erase human difference through its factory models of education that advance standardization of curricula and tests, they will then have also understood that bullying serves neoliberal logic by identifying, brutalizing, and excluding difference. Bullying is gendered, raced, classed, ableist, as well as focused on religious belief, national origin, language, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and immigration status, and finds expression in the very structures that claim to support children. In short, unless parents, teachers and advocates sway school systems to abandon neoliberal logic in schooling and honor difference through the curriculum and the policies and practices around modes of relating and communicating, bullying will continue to wreak havoc on the lives of children and limit their academic attainment.

These practices are drawn from a series of publications prepared by diverse stakeholders within education. The publications include best evidence-based practices as well as practices derived from models of critical pedagogy and democratic principles of inclusion. The publications were designed for the teaching force to guide practice and support the establishment of relationships that promote schooling environments free of violence with reference to general guidelines for school-level practices. A common approach was to design holistic, prevention-oriented practice guided by the principle that children have a right to safety in their schools and a call for including the student, the teacher, and the family in responses to bullying.

1. Know the rights of schoolchildren and focus on prevention through the use of collective school projects, non-violent conflict resolution, and activities focused on self-protection (Conde Flores, 2010).
2. Understand the forms of violence schoolchildren encounter, such as community and sexual violence, to illuminate how schoolchildren perceive violence and inform the design of school responses to violence (Comisión para poner fin a toda forma de violencia contra niñas, niños y adolescentes, 2017, June).
3. Recognize the vulnerability of stigmatized social identities (e.g., gender nonconforming, indigenous, immigrant), and engage inclusive practices in the classroom that give voice to those identities; infuse curriculum and in partnership with the community affirm identities (Leinen & Tello Méndez, 2018, August).
4. Establish a process for documenting cases of bullying both within and outside of schooling (e.g., in neighborhood), and intervene if present during incident; notify key stakeholders (e.g., parents, school supervisors), and analyze incident to determine best intervention and course of action; see cases through to level of local educational authority if school-level intervention and support fail (SNTE, 2014, July).

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# Chapter 8
# Bullying and Mental Health

Check for updates

## Violet Cox-Wingo and Sandra Poirier

**Abstract** The social worker perspective on bullying is that here is a strong link between bullies and their mental health. Bullying is a form of misplaced aggressive behavior often carried through by using intimidation, shaming, and profound hurtful comments. Young people who have experienced bullying are more likely to experience mental health issues, and those who have mental health issues are more likely to be bullied. Stress and anxiety caused by bullying and harassment can make it more difficult for kids to learn. This chapter illustrates the serious effects of childhood bullying on health, resulting in substantial costs for individuals, their families, and their communities. Recommendations for consideration on practices, research, and policies conclude this chapter.

**Keywords** Bullying · Mental health · Cyberbullying

## Introduction

At one time bullying was not considered to be a major problem. Well-meaning parents informed their child to "stand up" to the neighbor bully. Thinking back to reruns of the hit sitcom, the Andy Griffin show, Andy Griffin was telling son, Opie, to fight off the neighborhood bully. The next scene showed Opie and the neighborhood's bully becoming best friends and sharing a peanut butter sandwich. Understand this was a different generation and a different world. The world of television which have happy endings were magical in the making. Fast forward to 2019 and we are plagued with issues of bullying that does not have happy

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magical endings. According to Lee (2018), Duke University recently conducted a research that shows the rates for agoraphobia and panic disorders greatly increase with bullying. Mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, and low esteem haunt many adults who were once bullied in childhood. According to American Psychological Association, common characteristics of those bullied include:

- A feeling of helplessness
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Withdrawal from family and school activities
- Wanting to be left alone
- Shyness
- Stomachaches
- Headaches
- Panic attacks
- Not being able to sleep
- Bed-wetting
- Sleeping too much
- Being exhausted
- Nightmares

Bullying also hurts the bystanders, as well as the person who bullies others. Bystanders are afraid they could be the next victim. Even if they feel badly for the person being bullied, they avoid getting involved in order to protect themselves or because they are not sure what to do. Children who learn they can get away with violence and aggression continue to do so in adulthood. They have a higher chance of getting involved in dating aggression, sexual harassment, and criminal behavior later in life.

Stress and anxiety caused by bullying and harassment can make it more difficult for kids to learn. It can cause difficulty in concentration and decrease their ability to focus, which affects their ability to remember things they have learned. Bullying is painful and humiliating, and kids who are bullied feel embarrassed, battered, and shamed, and some children become bullies themselves. According to Centers for Disease Control and Department of Education (2014), persistent bullying can lead to social isolation, rejection, fear as well as depression which can contribute to suicide behavior (Stopbullying.gov, n.d.).

A UCLA study (Wolpert, 2010) of 2300 students in 11 middle schools in Los Angeles found that a high level of bullying was associated with lower grades across 3 years of middle school. Students who were rated as the most bullied performed significantly worse academically than their peers. Another longitudinal study led by a group of scientists in Norway investigated the long-term psychological effects of bullying on adolescents. Results of the study indicated that all groups involved in bullying during adolescence, both bullies and victims, experienced adverse mental health outcomes in adulthood. While the victims showed a high level of depressive

symptoms in adulthood, both groups experienced an increased risk of psychiatric hospitalization due to mental health disorders (Sigurdson, Undheim, Wallander, Lydersen, & Sund, 2015, p. 42).

Being bullied frequently is a traumatic experience. When kids are frequently the targets of bullying, it affects their social, emotional, and psychological development. Bullying behavior should be taken seriously by teachers, parents, and their peers because early intervention in childhood bullying can help prevent its long-term mental health consequences.

Many licensed clinical social workers have seen the effects of bullying decades later when the patients reported painful childhood experiences. Some of the experiences were buried deep in the subconscious mind. However, some of the *results* of the experiences were evident in how they related or interacted with others. It was often other psychosocial issues or mental health issues (depression, job stress, substance abuse, marital discord, suicide attempt) that brought them into therapy. The biopsychosocial assessment revealed the history of bullying (victim or aggressor and sometimes both). Through therapy and becoming to understand self and others, these buried emotions that were never healed surfaced. It is helpful for clients and victims to understand how the bullying affected their lives and how they had internalized many of the negative mind-sets associated with low self-esteem, conduct disorder, or antisocial personalities. Through the therapeutic process, the client can reconnect with the vulnerable child and give voice to the feelings of depression, anxiety, and fear. The recovery process includes cognitive behavioral therapy, self-care, building self-esteem, and learning to like oneself. The mantra, "hurting people hurt others," rings clear. But seeking help and a willingness to work through past negative mind-set experiences often prove helpful.

## The Scope of the Problem

Bullying is a serious issue that confronts many schools as well as corporate and healthcare environments. The term "bullying" is not new. Bullying is a form of misplaced aggressive behavior often carried through by using intimidation, shaming, and profound hurtful comments. The behavior and abuse of power are usually repeated over time. Young people who are perceived as different from their peers are often at risk for being bullied. The person being bullied often feels isolated, may have inadequate support systems, or feels they cannot trust others to make the problem or occurrences go away or become minimized. Bullying over time can lead to psychosocial as well as mental health issues. Bullying robs the individual of core dignity and serves as an avenue for future exploitation of human worth. According to Stopbullying.com (n.d.), a website managed by US Department of Health and Human Services, there are three main types of bullying:

- Verbal bullying is saying or writing things. Verbal bullying includes:

  – Teasing
  – Name-calling
  – Inappropriate sexual comments
  – Taunting
  – Threatening to cause harm

*Teasing* can be extreme in some cases. Teasing may include laughter and make fun of another person's differences or perceived weaknesses. The constancy of teasing can lead to an assault on an individual's character and integrity and how it is viewed in his/her environment. Teasing can lead to embarrassment and serves to annoy or upset the individual through words or gestures.

*Name-calling* is more aversive in approach. Words do matter and words can hurt, especially to children that are in the formative years of training and socialization. Name-calling is often derogatory, and years later, some who have experienced bullying are able to vividly recall the names and the feelings and emotions associated with the experience.

*Inappropriate sexual comments* can lead to embarrassment as well as feelings of exploitation. Inappropriate sexual comments can be gender specific and serve as an avenue to produce laughter at the expense of the individual being bullied. Sexual comments about the size of one's breast, derriere, penis, or other body parts have found its place in case studies of sexual harassment and bullying. Inappropriate sexual comments, in more extreme cases, have been followed by unwanted touching and using intimidation to force silence of the individual experiencing the bullying.

*Taunting* is a form of teasing, more aimed at mocking an individual. The taunting used in bullying is more of sneering, making/poking fun of, to ridicule or torment. Over time the provocation can lead to social isolation and low self-esteem by those experiencing the bullying.

*Threatening to cause harm.* Some victims have not only received threats of harm, but some have actually received harm. This can be in the form of fights when the aggressor and his group or acquaintances gang up against the victim. In some cases, the person being bullied is threaten harm to family members should they tell or seek help from adults/parents who are in a position to help. It is not uncommon of the LGBTQ victims to report acts of violence. There are a variety of reasons why those being bullied may not seek help. The fear of being labeled by their peer group, the feeling that they are causing the bullying or that they deserve the bullying are suspected reasons for the under reporting. Others have stated mistrust of the system; those in a position to help will not believe them or patronize them.

*Social bullying* is akin to relational bullying which involves hurting someone's reputation or relationships. Social bullying includes:

- Leaving someone out on purpose
- Telling other children not to be friends with someone
- Spreading rumors about someone
- Embarrassing someone in public

*Leaving someone out on purpose*. Children by nature are social beings. At an early age, they seek to connect to the environment in which they live. Purposely leaving others out of birthday parties or the last to be picked for team exercises at school can have an effect on the individual. Children may state "my feelings were hurt and no one wanted to play with me." Kids who are bullied may already feel socially isolated. They may feel like no one cares or could understand.

*Telling other children not to be friends with someone*. This may sound trivia to adults, but for children the hurt behind the rejection of friendship or acceptance can lead to more social withdrawal. Children are often taught to be nice; however, they enter a school setting where niceness and the inability to advocate for themselves can be seen as a sign of weakness. Connectedness and acceptance are a part of the child's socialization process. At an early age, they fail to understand why others may not want to be their friend. This creates a feeling of differences, and the child internalizes that "something" is wrong with him. Other children are being told by his/her peer to stay away or avoid him. There have been instances when the bystander wants to reach out to the child that is being ostracized, but he too fears rejection from his peers, so he remains silent.

*Spreading rumors about someone*. Rumor spreading can have a devastating effect on an individual. Hearing or seeing embarrassing or humiliating situations that may or may not be true and the rumors associated with each can cause social isolation and draining of self-worth. Feeling that life is never going to change, or as an effort to make the pain and shame go away, suicide has been viewed as a viable option for longtime hurt. Using a permanent solution (suicide) for a temporary problem has caused the degeneration of families and communities. Bullying spread by social media seems to take a life of its own. Once information is posted, it is there for life, even if the material is taken down or blocked from view. This form of bullying using social media is more permanent and years later has come up as a reminder of a time that the individual being bullied does not want to relive. DoSomething.org (n.d.), a digital platform committed to mobilizing young people to sign up for volunteer, social change, or civic action campaign to make real-world impact on a cause they care about, states the following 11 facts about cyberbullying ((DoSomething.org, n.d., para. 2):

1. Nearly 43% of the kids have been bullied on line. 1 in 4 has had it happen more than once (Moessner, 2014).
2. 70% of students report seeing frequent bullying on line (Graham, 2014).
3. Over 80% of teens use a cell phone regularly, making it the most common medium for cyber bullying (Connolly, 2014).
4. 68% of teens agree that cyber bullying is a serious problem (Cox Communications, 2014).
5. 81% of young people think bullying is a serious problem (Cox Communications, 2014).
6. 90% of teens who have seen social-media bullying say they have ignored it. 84% have seen others tell cyber bullies to stop (PewInternet, 2011).

7. Only 1 in 10 victims will inform a parent or trusted adult of their abuse (Connolly, 2014).
8. Girls are about twice likely as boys to be victims and perpetrators of cyber bullying (Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance, 2019).
9. About 58% of kids admit someone has said mean or hurtful things to them online. More than 4 out 10 say it has happened more than once (SAFE Inc., 2014).
10. Bullying victims are 2 to 9 times more likely to consider committing suicide (Reed, 2014)
11. About 75% of students admit they have visited a website bashing another student (Connolly, 2014).

*Embarrassing someone in public* is a form of bullying, especially when the aggressor is aware that the information/action is used to cause humiliation or mortification in public. The embarrassment takes place on the playground, school bus, school-related activities, and posts on social media. Usually sarcastic or hurtful comments/words are used as weapons. Undermining, cutting off, silencing, or belittling remarks/comments are a few examples.

*Physical bullying* involves hurting a person or their possessions. Physical bullying includes:

- Hitting/kicking/punching
- Spitting
- Tripping/pushing
- Taking or breaking someone's things
- Making mean or rude hand gestures

*Hitting/kicking/punching*. The escalation of these behaviors can lead to acts of extreme violence. This kind of bullying behavior may be easier to detect as evidence may be on the body; however, victims of this kind of bullying have been known to offer varied explanation as an avenue to camouflage what is happening. There is a feeling of shame associated with being unable to protect self.

*Spitting* bodily fluids at someone is one of the most offensive acts that one can use to demean and degrade. Spitting is a form of violence, very confrontational perhaps the most violent you can use against someone without actually hitting them stated Ross Coomber (2003), a principal lecturer in sociology at the University of Plymouth. Spitting is an act of aggression that allows contact with a person in a way that they do not like, but the individual did not strike them. The end result is feeling insulted and humiliated.

*Tripping/pushing* is an act of aggression and intimidation. The person bullying others uses this technique as a fear factor to keep the person being bullied aware that more of the same behavior may be used. Tripping and pushing are bullying behaviors that often lead to escalation of physical violence.

*Taking or breaking someone's things* is a sign of dominance, dominance in the sense that power is exerted of the person being bullied. In some instances, the person being bullied will hand over requested items to the aggressor in attempt to

diminish the bulling behavior. However, compliance does not diminish the behavior but can serve as a stimulus to the aggressor to demand more. Fear or peer pressure can lead to underreporting and seeking assistance from those in a position to offer or provide assistance.

*Making mean or rude hand gesture* can be a form of intimidation. The aggressor signal with his hands through gestures things that s/he will or could do to the person being bullied. Gestures may be pointing finger to head as if to state, "I will shoot you," using hand gesture to indicate cutting off the head, strangling a person, or pretending to stab in the heart or stomach. There are hand signals that signify sexual contact. These are just a few examples of bullying behavior without the exchange of words.

DoSomething.org (n.d.) offers 11 historical perspective of bullying:

- Over 3.2 million students are victims of bullying each year (Cohn & Canter, 2014).
- Approximately 160,000 teens skip school every day because of bullying (The National Education Association, 20017-2002).
- 17% of American student's report being bullied 2 to 3 times a month or more within a school semester (Strauss, 2014).
- 1 in 4 teachers see nothing wrong with bullying and will only intervene 4% of the time (Cohn & Canter, 2014).
- By age 14 less than 30% of boys and 40% of girls will talk to their peers about bullying (Rigby, 2007).
- Over 67% of students believe that schools respond poorly to bullying, with a high percentage of students believing that adult help is infrequent and ineffective (Cohn & Canter, 2014).
- 71% of students report incidents of bullying as a problem at their school (Nolin, Davis, & Chandler, 1996).
- 90% of 4th through 8th graders report being victims of bullying (Osanloo, 2014).
- 1 in 10 students drop out of school because of repeated bullying (Osanloo, 2014).
- As boys age they are less and less likely to feel sympathy for victims of bullying. In fact they are more likely to add to the problem than solve it (Rigby, 2007).
- Physical bullying increases in elementary school, peaks in middle school and declines in high school. Verbal abuse, on the other hand, remains constant (Cohn & Canter, 2014).

The above data presents a staggering account of the effects bullying has on the school system. Teachers, parents, and community leaders are forced with an issue that is all encompassing. Schools should be a place of higher learning, fostering of relationships, and a time for shaping bright minds. The sad reality is that many of our school systems are not equipped to deal with the issues of bullying causing many prospective educators to rethink the field of education as a career choice.

One is left to wonder, how did bulling begin? Sadly, to say, some homes or environments are a breeding ground for misplaced aggression and the inability to mediate and regulate emotional intelligence. Children at an early age are *taught* to navigate their environment. If the environment is plagued with inadequate parenting

and coping skills, then the child learns the language of survival. They become a product of the life they live. This model as maladaptive as it is can be viewed as the way to manage in the future. The adage that 'we become parents based on the way we are parented can also lead to the belief that children are the product of their environment. The need for safety and social skills training is paramount for the child entering kindergarten, head start, or daycare. Children are taught to be kind, share, be respectful, and follow classroom commands. The breakdown is lack of carry through in the child's natural setting – the home or environment in which they live. Home for some children can be a scary difficult place to be; survival of the fittest indicates survival by any means necessary. Unresolved anger, frustration, hurt, pain, isolation, and labeling can add to the fragile child that is yet learning his place in the larger world. He becomes a product of his community, and he survives by managing others even if through bullying. Sometimes bullies have been bullied themselves or have other issues they are struggling with, so they may be feeling angry or vulnerable. He is trying to compensate a low sense of self.

A treatment modality is to allow the child the opportunity to express anger, hurt, and disappointments in a healthy controlled environment. Emotional regulation and creating a safe environment are pivotal in eradicating bullying.

The effects or consequences of repeated bullying can have lifelong profound effects on children and adolescent expanding to adulthood. One of the authors of this paper describes a personal case as an example of the lifelong effects:

> Stanley, age 46, recalls his years of being bullied in school due to his weight. Stanley sought support from his Teachers; however, the taunting increased once the behavior was reported. One day Stanley was changing clothes in preparation for his gym class; it was there that his clothes were hidden by the group of students that had gathered in the locker room. Stanley was called names by the other children joining in the harassment and was made to walk around the locker room naked. After what appeared to be eternity to Stanley, the teacher entered the locker room and disbanded the group. Stanley did not initially report the incident to his parents, but notable changes in his personality and grades ensued. Stanley became fearful of going to schools and faked various sickness as a way to avoid contact from his harassers. The effects upon Stanley were so severe, that two years from the initial start of the continued bullying, his parents thought it was best to transfer him to a private school. At age forty -six, Stanley is able to vividly recall his painstaking experiences, many which are unresolved today. As a parent, he is more tuned to bullying and moves quickly to address issues presented by his children.

According to Locklear (2013), children who are experiencing bullying behavior often exhibit some warning signs as listed below:

- Have torn, damaged, or missing pieces of clothing, books, or other belongings.
- Have unexplained cuts, bruises, and scratches from fighting and have few, if any, friends with whom he or she spends time.
- Seem afraid of going to school, walking to and from school, riding the school bus, or taking part in organized activities (such as clubs or sports) with peers.
- Take a long "illogical" route when walking to or from school.
- Lose interest in doing school work or suddenly begin to do poorly in school.
- Appear sad, moody, teary, or depressed when he or she comes home.

- Complain frequently of headaches, stomachs, or other physical problems, have suicidal thoughts.
- Have frequent bad dreams or trouble sleeping.
- Experience a loss of appetite.
- Appear anxious and suffer from low self-esteem.

Another factor in the equation is the warning signs that may be exhibited by children who bully others:

- Are increasingly aggressive
- Quit to blame and are accusatory toward others
- Inability to accept responsibility for their actions
- Competitive and will lie to justify their behavior
- Worried about their popularity and "fitting in"
- Exhibit strong sense of self
- Get into physical or verbal fights and are usually the aggressor
- Have friends who bully others
- Have new belongings or unexplained money
- Most likely to spend time in the principal's office or detention (Stopbullying.gov, n.d.)

Understanding these warning signs can help parents/guardians/teachers and those working with children prevent children from becoming bullies or help them to not become a victim of bulling. Counseling or therapy is a good method in helping to treat a child or teen who exhibits signs of bullying. Children/teens who are victims may also need support or counseling to help resolve underlying issues of emotional feelings of inadequacy. Children who are confident and have higher self-esteem are less likely to fall prey to the attacks of bullying.

According to the Anti-Bullying Alliance (2017), there is a strong link between mental health and bullying. Young people who have experienced bullying are more likely to experience mental health issues, and those who have mental health issues are more likely to be bullied. In 2015, the Anti-Bullying Alliance teamed up with YoungMinds (a charity committed to improving the well-being of young people and children) to raise awareness to mental health and bullying. The key findings of their consultation are:

- Bullying has a significant effect on children and young people's mental health, emotional well-being, and identity.
- Bullying which if not responded to effectively can cause children and young people to develop other coping strategies such as self-isolation or self-harm and cause significant disruption to their ability to engage with school, learning, and their wider relationships.
- Children and young people with mental health or emotional and behavioral difficulties need support for their mental health needs in school in a way that is non-stigmatizing and involved collaboration between school staff and the young people themselves.

- Schools need to ensure that young people feel able to talk about bullying and how it affects their emotional well-being.
- Disruptive behavior can be an expression of difficulties or distress, and schools need to be mindful of this.
- There needs to be recognition and support for the emotional needs of children and young people who are being bullied and who bully others.
- Do not underestimate the importance of effective listening when responding to reports of bullying.

Bullying robs children, adolescent, and teens of happy childhood school experiences.

The goal should be to create an open environment, where bullying is acknowledged and there are clear and effective approaches to preventing and responding to it. Some children fail to report the bullying, feeling that somehow they have caused it by being different or unlikeable, i.e., fat, skinny, skin color, or a host of causes that they may have no control, yet they suffer in silence or are afraid to speak up. The person penetrating the bullying is fighting for control, power, and popularity or feeling good about self, by inflicting pain on others less powerful than him. A comprehensive program including all stakeholders is needed to combat bullying. The program is to be inclusive of a mental health component. This component should be age-appropriate groups or guided classroom talk allowing children/teens to express their feelings about what makes them sad, bullying, and other psychosocial issues that lead to victimization or bullying. These groups should be facilitated by trained staff (i.e., school social worker or mental health counselor with proficiency in working with children/adolescent/teen, teacher, and parents). Bullying effects are far-reaching and often beyond the school environment. If left untreated there could be years of disruptive behavior, detention, jail, incarceration, and stays in mental health facilities. A review of many inmate profiles reveals histories of bullying behavior (victim or aggressor) leading back to school age or before. There is a need to provide education and awareness highlighting the impact of bullying on mental health, self-esteem, and identity.

## Preventive Interventions

Prevention programming is not new and has been conducted in a variety of different settings; however the majority of research has been conducted in schools. Response to Intervention (RtI) is a very popular intervention today that is currently practiced in many American schools reports Batsche et al. (2005). Implementation of RtI requires the use of a tiered model of intervention which begins with the universal intervention strategy focusing on the entire school population. The second tier is the selective prevention interventions serving approximately 15% of the school's population in a group setting. Lastly, the third tier is called the indicated preventive interventions which serves 5% of the school population with intensive and individual

intervention according to Batsche (2014). There is a continuum of many prevention frameworks that are currently used in many public health settings; however for the purposes of this chapter, bullying prevention among youth in schools will be the focal point.

The multi-tiered prevention framework as seen in Fig. 8.1 illustrates the three levels of preventative strategies, universal, selective, and indicated, that are preceded by promotion efforts and followed by treatment and maintenance (National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2009).

When examining universal prevention programs, there is a focus of reducing risks and strengthening skills for all youths within the school setting. Examples of these Tier 1 interventions include using social-emotional lessons that are used in the classroom, behavioral expectations taught by teachers, counselors coming into to the classroom to demonstrate strategies for responding to or reporting bullying, and hosting informal meetings to discuss relevant issues related to bullying in the classroom. Also included might be digital media guidelines for students while at school.

The next level in this tiered framework is referred to as the selective preventive interventions or Tier 2. In this level, techniques may either target youth who are at risk for engaging in bullying or those at risk of being bullied with more intensive social-emotional skills training, coping skills, or de-escalation approaches for youth who are involved in bullying. Generally, the students in this level have not responded adequately to the universal preventive interventions according to the National Research Council and Institute of Medicine (2009).

The last level in the framework is the indicated preventive interventions or Tier 3. The strategies at this level customized the needs of those students who are already exhibiting bullying behavior or have a history of being bullied and showing signs of behavioral, academic, or mental health consequences. To support the youth at many
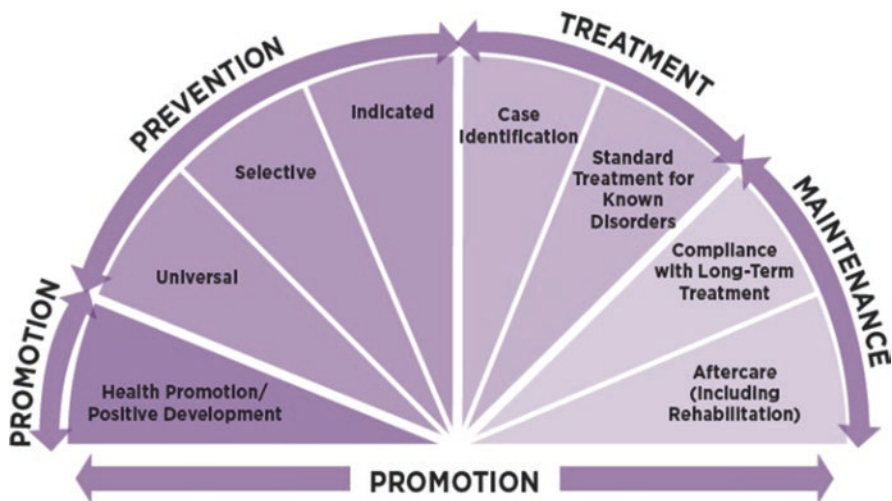


**Fig. 8.1**  Mental health intervention spectrum. Source: Gordon (1987)

levels, the youth's family is included with the teachers, education support professionals, school resource officers, healthcare professionals, and community members.

## Federal Law and Policy

State and local lawmakers have taken steps to prevent bullying in all 50 states by creating a bullying policy and procedure for handling the problem according to the US Department of Health and Human Services. Each jurisdiction addresses the issue differently either by establishing laws, creating model schools, or establishing local agencies to assist with the problem. In most cases the problem is addressed by reacting to an event, like the Columbine High School Shooting in 1999 and suicides among youth who have been bullied according to the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (2016). A few states have implemented bullying prevention programs or included the topic in a health education or professional development course for their staff. The laws in most states do not classify bullying as a criminal offense according to the US Department of Health and Human Services.

## Recommendations for Consideration: Future Directions for Research, Policy, and Practice

Bullying is not a normal part of childhood and is considered to be a serious public health problem according to National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (2016). This chapter has illustrated the serious effects of childhood bullying on health, resulting in substantial costs for individuals, their families, and their communities. In the United States, it has been estimated that preventing bullying in high schools results in a lifetime cost of over $1.4 million dollars per individual (Wolke & Lereya, 2015). To solve this complex public health issue, it will take the combined efforts of teachers, principals, families, and others working with youth to create positive solutions.

1. There is limited information on the physical damages of bullying; however existing evidence illustrates the biological effects of bullying on sleep disturbances, gastrointestinal concerns, and headaches. The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (2016) concluded that the effects of being bullied on the brain are not well understood; however there are changes in the stress response systems and in the brain that are associated with increased risk for mental health problems, cognitive function, self-regulation, and other physical health problems. This is an important area for further research.

2. When you examine all of the negative effects of being bullied and also the fact
   that students spend more time with their peers than their parents by the time they
   reach 18 years of age, it is surprising that bullying is not at the top of the public
   health list in all communities according to the research reported by Dale et al.
   (2014). Youth are embedded in multiple contexts ranging from peer and family
   to school, community, and macro-systems making it difficult to separate the
   association between these individual characteristics and perpetrating and/or
   being the target of bullying behavior according to the National Academies of
   Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (2016). Complicating this issue is the fact
   that much of the research on bullying is mostly descriptive and fails to fully
   address the multitude of contextual factors, i.e., shifting demographics and mod-
   ern technology and changing societal norms that operate differently across the
   diverse groups of youth, thus, making it difficult to generalize the research find-
   ings to all youth as seen in Fig. 8.2. Therefore, an important direction for future
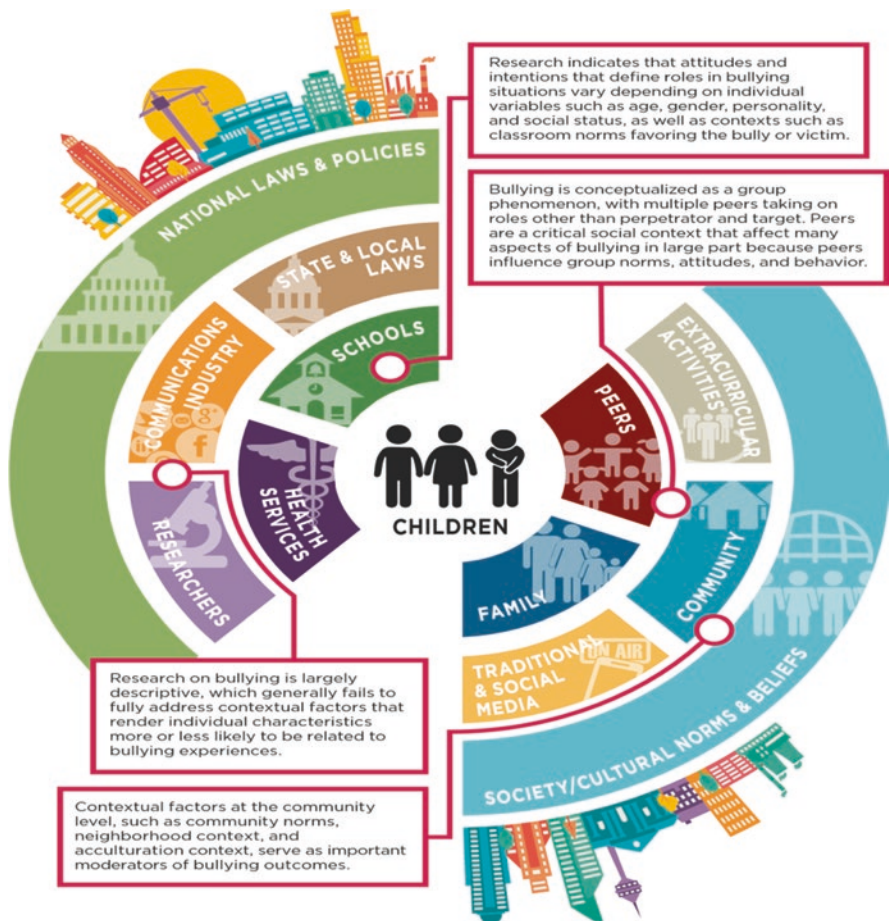


**Fig. 8.2**  The landscape of bullying. Source: National Academy of Sciences (2016)

studies is to identify the processes linking anti-bullying policies to reductions in bullying behavior for various contextual groups according to the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (2016). Additionally, research into these moderating factors can provide critical information on youth from diverse populations for whom anti-bullying policies are more effective or ineffective.

3. It is obvious that in order to have positive outcomes for any bullying prevention program in the United States, it will require a research agenda that is a multifaceted effort at the level of federal and state governments and agencies, communities, schools and families, healthcare, media, and social media. Additionally, there are many international research projects relating to this topic (Chamberlain, George, Golden, Walker, & Benton, 2010), and the results of their efforts can be shared to further reduce bullying behavior and its consequences.

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# Part II
# ELWB Scholars United States of America Perspectives

# Chapter 9
# Contemporary Society and the Phenomenon of School Rampage Shootings in the United States: A Theoretical Approach to Understanding

**Eileen S. Johnson**

**Abstract**  In this chapter, the author explores what is currently known about the history and prevalence of school rampage shootings, its putative causes, and implications for social and educational policy as well as future research. Because of the limited and contradictory findings contained in empirical research studies, the author also draws upon published works that offer philosophical, theoretical, and literary explorations of the causes and implications of school rampage shootings. While not intending to diminish or negate the existence and outcomes of other forms of violence in schools and communities, this chapter focuses on rampage shootings, which have primarily taken place in predominantly White, suburban, and rural schools.

**Keywords**  Corporatization · Gun control · Media · Mental illness · Postmodern

Few contemporary phenomena are more startling, disruptive to the sense of safety and well-being, and seemingly inexplicable than rampage shootings, especially those that take place on school grounds. Despite a general decline in violent crime in the United States since 1991 (Ferguson, Coulson, & Barnett, 2011) and a concomitant decline in youth violence during the same period (Butts, 2000; Dinkes, Cataldi, Kena, & Baum, 2006; Madfis, 2016), a spate of school shootings over the past two decades has garnered substantial media attention. This has resulted in a justified quest to understand the causes of these incidents in order to predict and prevent similar incidents in the future. At this time, however, there has been little in the way of empirical research, and the results of this limited research base are inconclusive and at times contradictory. Instead, some scholars have drawn upon philosophical, theoretical, and literary frames of reference in an attempt to make sense of the phenomenon of rampage shootings in general and school shootings in particular. This chapter explores what is currently known about the history and prevalence of

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school shootings, its putative causes, and implications for social and educational policy as well as future research.

## Prevalence of School Rampage Shootings and the Distinction from Other Forms of Violence

School massacres are not a new phenomenon in the United States. One of the earliest known incidents took place in Bath Township, Michigan, in 1927 when a 55-year-old male detonated explosives that killed 38 elementary school children and 6 adults and injured 58 others. Typical of what would become a recognizable pattern, the perpetrator first killed his wife and then committed suicide after he executed his planned massacre (Boissoneault, 2017; Knoll, 2010). Several instances of school shootings, perpetrated for revenge or malice, took place throughout the country during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and were documented primarily by local newspapers at the time of the shootings (Wikipedia, 2018b). Nor is the phenomenon of school shootings unique to the United States. Excluding massacres perpetrated by terrorist and/or military organizations, contemporary school shootings and massacres have taken place in a wide range of countries including, but not limited to, Brazil, Bulgaria, China, Finland, Germany, France, Hong Kong, Japan, Russia, the UK, etc. (Wikipedia, 2018a). However, it is difficult to compare the incidence of school shootings internationally due to a lack of consistency in how school shootings are defined (e.g., whether the count includes institutions of higher education; gun violence related to gangs, drugs, and other crimes such as robberies; military, terrorist, and other politically-motivated attacks, etc.). Furthermore, the United States does not keep official national figures relating to shootings that take place in school and university settings, leaving researchers to rely on data collected by media and other organizations (MacGuill, 2018). Nevertheless, there are adequate data to conclude that the United States has experienced more school shootings than other countries, even when controlling for population and definition of school shooting (Cox, Rich, Chiu, Muyskens, & Ulmanu, 2018; Grabow & Rose, 2018; Price, Khubchandani, Payton, & Thompson, 2016).

Despite the long history of school massacres and shootings, and the spate of rampage shootings that have taken place in a variety of public settings in the United States since 1991, it is important to understand the larger context in which these incidents are occurring. According to Ferguson et al. (2011), the United States, like other nations across the globe, experiences periodic waves of crime. The most recent crime wave hitting the United States, after previously noted crime waves in the late 1800s and 1930s, occurred between the late 1960s and ended by the early 1990s. Thus, crime in general in the United States is at an all-time low (Madfis, 2016). Despite this fact, there has been an increase in the number and severity of mass shootings in the United States, with three of the most deadly attacks in US history occurring within a 5-month span between 2017 and 2018 (Al Jazeera, 2018).

While there are some exceptions, the perpetrators of these shootings were over-whelmingly White males who were US citizens between the ages of 20 and 49 (Berkowitz, Lu, & Alcantara, 2018).

Other than age, the demographic profile of school shooters is strikingly similar. Despite the general decrease in violent crime in the United States, including youth violence, the unpredictability of these rampages as well as the randomness with which they seem to take place in otherwise mundane and seemingly safe public spaces is perhaps its most disquieting feature. Adding to this, the fact that school rampage shootings specifically target children and are often perpetrated by students or former classmates adds to the incomprehensibility and seemingly senselessness of the crime. While this is not to negate or diminish in any way the seriousness of other forms of violence in schools, including gun violence related to gangs, drugs, etc., the remainder of this chapter will focus on the phenomenon of school rampage shootings perpetrated by students or former students.

## *Putative Causes of School Rampage Shootings*

School rampage shootings are extremely rare, and statistically speaking, the prob-ability that school-aged youth will die of homicide in school is only about 1 in 2,000,000 (Muschert, 2007). Furthermore, it is well established that school-aged youth are far more likely to be shot by a friend or family member in the home than in a school shooting (Shuffelton, 2015). In fact, deaths from individual school ram-page shooting events are far fewer than the daily average of 85 deaths per day in the United States due to gun violence (Mozaffarian, Hemenway, & Ludwig, 2013). Nevertheless, even one incident is too many, and the fact is that the United States has experienced far more school shootings than other major industrialized nations (Grabow & Rose, 2018). Furthermore, that these acts of violence—the mass murder of children—have taken place in what is otherwise considered a safe and sacred space of communal society has led to a sense of helplessness and moral panic (Altheide, 2009; Best, 2002; Burns & Crawford, 1999; Cohen, 2002; Glassner, 2004) that demands immediate answers.

In the aftermath of such tragedies, this moral panic is expressed in opinions, unverified theories, and calls for action that have limited or no established basis in public policy or criminal justice theories (Ferguson et al., 2011; Frymer, 2009; Madfis, 2016). Too often, these events are sensationalized by media and seized upon by various groups for political and ideological ends. For example, school rampage shootings are often used by detractors of public education to reinforce claims that public schools are unsafe and ineffective (Warnick, Kim, & Robinson, 2015) or, ironically, that rather than being designated as "gun-free zones," school personnel should be armed (e.g., Payne, 2018). Thus, despite the relative rarity of school ram-page shootings, the public fascination and moral panic associated with these events, coupled with subsequent intense and pervasive media attention, stem from the real-ization that gun violence is not just a problem of poor, inner-city schools; it can and

does occur in predominantly White, middle- and upper-class rural and suburban settings (Madfis, 2016). It is with the realization that school rampage shootings are a particular form of violence experienced almost solely within predominantly White suburban and rural communities that demands are made for answers as to how and why it could happen (Langman, 2009).

## *"Profile" Features of Shooters*

As Langman (2009) pointed out, it is very difficult if not impossible to develop a cohesive "profile" of school rampage shooters. To begin with, the definition of rampage shooter varies from researcher to researcher. In addition, school rampage shootings are statistically rare events and, thus, the population of school rampage shooters is extremely small. Furthermore, perpetrators often commit suicide after the rampage shooting or are killed while being apprehended, which leaves an even smaller population for study. Whether the perpetrator survives the rampage shooting or not, researchers are usually limited to retrospective reviews of the shooter's life and behaviors, gathered through interviews with family members and people who knew them, which introduces the possibility of biased and selective recall.

For example, had the interviews taken place *prior* to the rampage shooting, would the views of family, friends, and peers of the perpetrator be the same as they are *after* the shooting has already taken place? In addition to the difficulties inherent in trying to gather valid and reliable information about the perpetrator after a rampage shooting, various compilations of common characteristics of school rampage shooters are often contradictory and lacking in explanatory power.

McGee and DeBarnardo (1999) developed a profile of individuals they termed "classroom avengers" who were primarily White male adolescents considered to be loners and who were fascinated with violence but had no history of violence. These "classroom avengers" were described as tending to be depressed with features of paranoia, narcissism, and antisocial personality traits. On the other hand, Verlinden, Hersen, and Thomas (2000) described school rampage shooters as having a history of aggression, uncontrolled anger, depression, suicidal ideation, discipline problems, and feelings of being rejected and bullied.

A study conducted by the FBI (O'Toole, 2000) identified narcissism, bigotry, poor anger management, fascination with violence, low self-esteem, and lack of empathy as key features of school rampage shooters. Yet another study found that school rampage shooters were often bullied but not bullies themselves, were preoccupied with weapons and fantasy, and had histories of substance abuse. Most were *not* depressed and did *not* have histories of antisocial behavior (Meloy, Hempel, Mohandie, Shiva, & Gray, 2001).

Overall, as stated by Langman, part of the problem is that "Trying to explain aberrant events by commonplace behavior is not a productive approach" (2009, p. 79). Indeed, many students in all parts of the world experience bullying in school yet do not commit murder, and the idea of the school shooter as a loner has been

challenged. Instead, many school rampage shooters were later identified as outsiders who socialized with peers who were disliked by mainstream student groups and/or were considered part of a "fringe" group (Vossekuil, Fein, Reddy, Borum, & Modzeleski, 2002). In the section below, three frequently hypothesized causal factors of school rampage shooters are analyzed separately.

## *The Role of Mental Illness*

Following any rampage shooting, especially those that take place in schools, the shooters are often portrayed in the media as suffering from some form of severe mental illness, and there are often outcries over the lack of mental health services in the United States (Bushman et al., 2016). Shern and Lindstrom (2013), for example, highlighted several facts about mental health in the United States, including the fact that symptoms of many mental disorders are first manifest in childhood or adolescence. Yet treatment is often unavailable until substantial evidence of illness results in a formal diagnosis, sometimes years later. Adding to the problem is that until the Affordable Care Act required that behavioral health services be included as a benefit in any plan offered through the new health insurance exchange, treatment was often difficult if not impossible to obtain through private insurance.

Despite these issues, however, the fact is that any "link between mental illness and violence is tenuous and indirect" (Shern and Lindstrom, 2013, p. 447). Furthermore, Bushman et al. (2016) noted that "the factors predictive of future violence among the severely mentally ill are similar to those that predict violence in the general population" (p. 25), and many rampage shooters did not appear to exhibit symptoms of mental illness prior to the rampage shooting. Furthermore, according to an international study on lifetime prevalence and age of onset distributions of mental disorders by Kessler et al. (2007), impulse control disorders have the earliest median age of onset, yet most school rampage shootings were carefully planned and executed (Knoll, 2010). In other words, the perpetrators did not "snap," as is often portrayed in the media.

## *The Role of Violent Media*

Another theory that is often invoked in the aftermath of a school rampage shooting is that exposure to violent media (movies, video games, etc.) creates in susceptible youth a propensity toward violence. However, there is very little research to support this assertion, and several studies have found no correlation between exposure to violent media and school rampage shootings. Similar to attributing the cause of school rampage shootings to bullying or mental illness, the problem lies in the fact that many youth play violent video games but do not go on to perpetrate violent acts. In fact, Ferguson et al. (2011) pointed out that, as video games soared in popularity

and violent content, youth violence actually plummeted to a 40-year low. And while a causal relationship cannot be inferred from this negative correlation, it highlights the flawed logic of linking violent media to school rampage shootings.

On the other hand, Bushman et al. (2016) cited meta-analyses that have determined a significant effect of exposure to TV violence and criminal violence but, again, he noted that "millions of young Americans consume violent media and do not commit violent crimes" (p. 23). He also noted that there is a link between aggression, rejection, and consumption of violent media, where youth who are socially maladjusted or aggressive are rejected by socially competent, nonaggressive peers and, thus, spend more time-consuming violent media and associating with others who are similarly rejected. Overall, however, there is little in the way of convincing evidence that exposure to violent media including video games has a direct, causal relationship with school rampage shootings.

## *Accessibility of Guns and Weapons*

It is difficult to contest the argument that, without access to guns, there would be no rampage shootings. However, it is more difficult to demonstrate a direct causal link from access to guns and the propensity to commit a school rampage shooting. To be clear, there are data and research studies that clearly demonstrate a link between access to guns and youth violence in general. For example, Bushman et al. (2016) cited several studies that have pointed to three general types of evidence. To begin with, the high prevalence of gun ownership coupled with lax gun control laws in the U.S. results in greater unsupervised access to guns among youth compared to other nations of similar economic development. However, the two variables must be considered together since states with the highest rates of gun ownership also have the least restrictive gun laws. Additionally, for every 1% increase in household gun ownership, youth homicides committed with a gun increased by 2.4% (Miller, Hemenway, & Azrael, 2007).

Finally, the number of youth homicides committed with guns has corresponded with increases and decreases in arrests for illegally carrying a firearm. Furthermore, Simckes et al. (2017) reported a national survey that found students who reported having been bullied, including traditional as well as cyber bullying, were three times more likely to report having access to a loaded gun without adult supervision. While it is not possible to infer direct causality in a correlational study, a potential explanation is that homes in which youth have unsupervised access to loaded guns may be unstable and lacking in strong parental controls. This, in turn, may contribute to youth behaviors and attributes that lead to social marginalization, bullying, and low self-esteem, all of which have been linked in varying degrees to the profile of school rampage shooters.

## Political Affiliation, Level of Education, and Attributions of Cause

In their study of attributions of blame regarding the causes of three mass shootings, Haider-Markel and Joslyn (2011) invoked the theory of motivated reasoning which "posits that the human mind works to satisfy two distinct motivations" (p. 5). Directional thinking, which seeks a specific conclusion similar to confirmation bias, results in individuals selectively focusing on sources of information that support or reinforce a predetermined (albeit sometimes subconscious) conclusion. By contrast, analytic thinking is motivated by a desire for accuracy and results in individuals seeking both confirming and disconfirming evidence and considering a greater number of plausible alternatives.

In addition, according to these authors, causal attributions after tragedy, including rampage shootings, tend to fall along party lines. Democrats are more likely to emphasize external or social causes such as inadequate gun control, societal neglect of mental illness, etc., whereas Republicans are more likely to emphasize internal or individualistic causes such as the character or upbringing of the assailant, etc. One interesting finding of this study was that the effects of education were large and robust among participants identifying as Democrat but these effects disappeared for participants identifying as Republican.

In other words, as level of education increased for Democrats, there was a significant correlational increase in the use of analytic vs. directional thinking when making attributions of cause, but this effect was not present for Republicans. Instead, as education level increased for Republicans, they utilized more sophisticated cognitive skills and strategies to defend their directional (partisan) thinking. The Haider-Markel and Joslyn (2011) study may explain why, after the tragedy of school rampage shootings, there are such hotly contested debates surrounding hypothesized causes of and solutions to school rampage shootings and why there is so much contradiction in the data and theories that are reported in the media. Given this lack of consistency in findings from empirical research, potential insights into causes and solutions may be found elsewhere through philosophy and literature.

## Postmodern Theoretical Approaches to Understanding

In her discussion on the role of media and violence, O'Dea (2015) noted that "it is notoriously difficult to establish direct causes for complex human behavior" (p. 406), and the causes of school rampage shootings are particularly and sufficiently complex as to require an equally complex and diverse range of responses. While much speculation has focused on exposure to violent media as a potential cause or catalyst for school rampage shootings, O'Dea, instead, focuses on the role of social media as the context of a postmodern society.

For example, in the 1960s and 1970s, Marshall McLuhan implicated the role of electronic media in the stripping away of individual identity and meaning. In fact, his famous phrase, "the medium *is* the message" (McLuhan, 1964), may have particular relevance today as identities are not so much reflected in images but are created, maintained, and reimagined over and over through various forms of social media, images that are not so much reflections of reality but projections or "masks" of potentialities and personas. Is it possible that the seemingly random and meaningless violence wrought by school rampage shooters is a postmodern form of identity and meaning-seeking that plays out in a surreal manner through social media and the continuous news stories that flood our screens? The following sections will explore the postmodern philosophical approaches to understanding the phenomenon of school rampage shootings and the individuals who perpetrate them.

## *Masculine Identity, White Privilege, and Suburban Middle-Class Malaise*

In his exploration of the persona of school rampage shooters, Phipps (2015) noted that:

> The predominant tendency in the media is to categorize the perpetrator as a bullied misfit, a figure of derision who occupies the very bottom of the high school hierarchy. The attendant narrative of persecution and revenge supplies an easily digestible explanation that presents school hierarchies in rudimentary terms. This explanation also provides a buffer against the more disturbing idea that figures such as Eric Harris, Dylan Klebold, and Adam Lanza are, in fact, all too normal. (p. 102)

Phipps draws upon Žižek's (2012) theory of the mask to deconstruct two literary characters, Charlie Decker in Stephen King's (1977) novel, *Rage*, and Kevin Khatchadourian in Lionel Shriver's (2003) *We Need to Talk about Kevin*. Through the application of this theoretical lens to these fictional characters, Phipps postulated that the school rampage shooter dons the mask of the coolly detached, recklessly courageous, and hypermasculine persona. However, rather than the mask serving to hide the individual behind a fictional role that conceals his true identity, the mask itself is constructed from the traumas, inadequacies, passions, and perversities the individual keeps hidden from view. In short, "the mask is not a social identity that the individual presents to others, but rather a persona that he hides until the 'carnivalesque' moments when he shatters the standard rules" (p. 102).

Further, Phipps postulated that while the discourse that often surrounds school rampage shootings focuses on the lack of any definitive ethnic, cultural, or social marginalization, the White privilege of American suburbs, with its large homes and good schools, is perceived by American youth as a cultural dead end, an existence that is stultifying and predictable. School rampage shooters indeed often anticipate the media response beforehand, understanding that the act will be framed in the media and social discourse as senseless violence and meaningless evil. In this way,

Phipps's application of Žižek's theory explains that the meaning for school rampage shooters is precisely its meaninglessness and the attendant resulting ability to shatter the stifling White suburban malaise.

Indeed, in their discussion of why schools are often the sites of rampage shootings, Warnick et al. (2015) drew upon films to point out the cultural narratives that separate urban and suburban or rural schools. The plot of films about urban schools is often couched in taken-for-granted violence and crime, with the protagonists often portrayed as middle-class teachers who step in to impart wisdom and middle-class values and who pave the way for future success among the otherwise deprived youth.

In contrast, films about suburban and rural schools tend to focus on the students themselves, with the characters yearning to break free of the stultifying White middle-class environment and its requisite conformity to social norms and generic expectations for success by parents and teachers. Thus, school rampage shootings are considered by these authors to be a form of existential self-expression—an act of asserting and enacting the constructed identity that allows the shooter to break free of the shallow, socially imposed persona and ensure that their "true" identity will live on as a legend and legacy.

However, in some ironic way, school rampage shootings have become a grotesque form of banality—a fact that was not lost on Columbine shooter, Eric Harris, who expressed fear in his journal that his rampage would be deemed "unoriginal." Shapiro (2015) echoed this fact in his discussion of constructed binaries that reinforce notions of good vs. evil, urban vs. suburban, individual vs. community, normal vs. exceptional, etc. He noted that what is exceptional in one age ultimately becomes the rule in another and that, in this inversion of exception and rule, "the exception everywhere becomes the rule…and exclusion and inclusion, outside and inside… right and fact, enter into a zone of irreducible indistinction" (p. 430).

## Mass Consumer Culture and the Corporatization of the Public School

In the wake of a school rampage shooting, continuous and widespread media coverage often results in a flurry of debates surrounding causes and potential solutions. A common and understandable reaction to such events is to bemoan the senselessness, absurdity, and irrationality of these acts of violence. Yet, as Keehan and Boyles (2015) noted, this reaction leads to the asking of only the most shallow questions relating to proximate or material causes such as those discussed in the first part of this chapter. These authors disputed this perspective, stating that there are a number of factors that, when taken together, position gun violence in schools as not only *understandable* but a natural consequence of the current climate in public education in the United States. These authors argued that not only is there "something particularly murderous about Americans" (p. 12) but that the often overzealousness of

media coverage both sensationalizes and normalizes the phenomena of school rampage shootings. This is exacerbated by the corporatization of schools and the particularly insidious nature of the consumer culture in the United States where school-aged youth are simultaneously treated as consumers and consumables. This process ultimately objectifies youth and strips them of their individual humanity, replacing ethical human interaction with market transactions. Thus, school children in the United States are predispositioned from an early age to not only fail to see in themselves an inherent humanity that is ethical and compassionate (i.e., form of life discussed by Shapiro, 2015) but are rendered incapable of seeing others as unique individuals. Instead, school-aged youth are mired in the logic of consumption, subsumption, and possession that has been normalized through the increasing corporatization of schools. These authors assert that a primary starting point in addressing the issue of school rampage shootings is to treat school-aged youth "not as instantiations of universal abstract categories" (p. 457) but as individuals who are particular and irreducible to categories, statistics, and corporate brands. "When they see themselves as more than passive objects that oscillate between consumer and consumable, they will cease to see others in that way as well" (p. 457).

## Criminalization of Schools

In the aftermath of a school rampage shooting, debates rage as to how to react and prevent future occurrences. Proposed solutions range from arming teachers to increasing security measures in schools. The problem with these proposed solutions is that they are often voiced from a particular ideological vantage point that is rooted in political leaning. In addition, Madfis (2016) pointed out that school officials often adopt decision-making standards and policy for general issues of behavior and discipline with the threat of a school rampage shooting in mind, despite the rarity of these events and the fact that most problem behaviors manifest by students are far less serious. This has led to what is known as criminalizing schools. Yet, additional security measures such as metal detectors and armed security officers were not deterrents in several school rampage shootings.

Furthermore, some authors (e.g., Gereluk, Donlevy, & Thompson, 2015; Madfis, 2016; Rajan & Branas, 2018) have noted that increased security measures in schools may be counterproductive in that they interrupt or negate the sense of communal belonging, trust, and openness necessary for an effective educational environment. Another often-touted "solution" is to arm teachers, yet it is widely acknowledged that an increase in access to guns is *not* associated with increased security or protection from violence. Indeed, it is not difficult to imagine a multitude of tragic scenarios that would likely result from the presence of loaded weapons within reach of children and teenagers. Price et al. (2016) found that school

administrators perceived the following measures to be the least effective in pre-
venting firearm violence in schools: installing bulletproof glass and metal detec-
tors, implementing a policy to allow selected school personnel to carry firearms in
school, training students to collectively attack and subdue an armed gunman, and
requiring students to carry translucent or Kevlar-type backpacks.

Instead, measures that focused on building relationships with law enforcement,
increasing mental health services in schools, and implementing programs designed
to reduce bullying and create a nurturing school environment were perceived by
respondents to be the most effective measures in possibly preventing gun-related
violence in school. Overall, as noted by Madfis (2016), school rampage shootings
are not the original impetus for the criminalization of schools but, rather, events
which further facilitated the shift to policing and control as a dominant form of
socialization within schools—a shift that has effectively eroded rather than increased
trust and engagement that is critical to successful youth development and
education.

## Conclusion

The literature that was reviewed for this chapter has revealed that there is no simple
cause or solution to gun violence in schools, particularly rampage shootings. Despite
a decrease over the past three decades of general violence and crime, including
youth violence and crime, the number and intensity of rampage shootings has
increased. Nevertheless, school rampage shootings are statistically very rare despite
the perception that often results from media saturation of these events. As noted by
several authors, there is no panacea, and understanding and preventing school ram-
page shootings requires a complex, interdisciplinary approach that considers not
only the characteristics or "profile" of past and potential school shooters. Researchers
must also attend to the complex social, economic, and historical attributes of the
culture in which these events occur. As Warnick et al. (2015) noted in their explora-
tion of the question, *why schools?*, schools are places of coercion, symbolic vio-
lence, and microaggressions. They are, at the same time, expected to be places of
hope and preparation for a future life, where friendships and romances are formed,
and that are assumed to provide refuge and safety for students. In this paradoxical
situation, especially when those expectations are not met, coupled with the dehu-
manization through corporatization described by Keehan and Boyles (2015),
schools become a natural setting for violent expression of self. It is only through
diligent work to reestablish schools as caring, loving environments that are safe,
nurturing, and responsive for all students will school leaders and policy-makers
begin to address the phenomenon of the school rampage shooting.

## Recommendations for Consideration

As this review of the literature indicates, school rampage shootings are complex events that are not easily distilled into neat, simplistic explanations. Instead, they are both product and producer of complex social and cultural phenomena that are framed within a particular sociopolitical, national, and historical context. The following are recommendations for policy and future research:

1. More research is needed regarding the role of news media and social media, both in terms of creating a context for school rampage shootings and sensationalizing and normalizing in the aftermath of this otherwise statistically rare and aberrant behavior.
2. School personnel and educational policy-makers must understand the detrimental and potentially counterproductive effects of criminalizing schools. Instead, more interdisciplinary research is needed to determine the most effective approaches to restoring and maintaining an educational environment that encourages trust, safety, and a sense of belonging among students, staff, families, etc.
3. More research is needed to understand the long-term effects of corporatization and consumerism on the identity development of school-aged youth. In particular, cross-national and international research may be particularly informative on its potentially dehumanizing effects.

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# Chapter 10
# School Leaders' Caring for Place While Addressing Fear, Moral Panic, and Control

Check for updates

**Jane Clark Lindle**

**Abstract**  Security is a sacred trust for schooling, fundamental to learning, and tied to communities' educational values such as access, equity, and achievement for students as well as their families. School leaders must balance safety and learning climate while mediating communities' concerns, assets, and disagreements. Each day in school rests on a fulcrum balancing individual needs and rights with groups' expectations and rights. School leaders navigate the daily churn with a clear focus on balancing risks inherent in learning and among the social-emotional, place-based connections between learning and behavior. This chapter suggests issues with reactive policy focus on perpetrators and explores the tensions over schools as place, symbol, and target while addressing the issues of security for students and personnel. These balancing acts entail caring, control, community, identity, and site security. The recommendations for balancing risks focus on adding a place-conscious approach to establishing an authentic purpose within each school's locale.

**Keywords**  Caring · Community identity · Control · Place-consciousness · Safety · Security

## Schooling as Contested Space: Caring, Control, and Place

In the United States, education governance and policy disperses among the 50 states, various territories, and more than 13,000 public school districts and another 3000 independent charter schools (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2017). The sheer vastness of the US's decentralized schooling structures demonstrates the complexities of forming and implementing education policies throughout this disparate, diverse, and slackly connected arrangement (Berkman & Plutzer, 2005; Fowler, 2013; Goldspink, 2007; Mitra, 2018). Thus, the democratic policy-making process replicates itself endlessly throughout these jurisdictions

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(Cooper, Fusarelli, & Randall, 2004; Goldspink, 2007; Grodzins, 1966). Such involvement depends on local community insight and shared values about education's social, economic, and political roles in their children and their own futures (Grissom & Herrington, 2012; Kirst, 1984; Lindle, 2018). Five persisting themes permeate local school policy deliberations, including (a) choice, (b) efficiency, (c) equity, (d) excellence, and (e) security (Cobb & DeMitchell, 2006; Lindle, 2018; Marshall, Ryan, & Uhlenberg, 2015). The latter, *security*, once a fundamental assumption about the nexus of family and schooling, has ascended to a higher level of debate with the rise in awareness and frequency of reported school violence (Birkland & Lawrence, 2009; Cobb & DeMitchell, 2006; Lindle, 2018). Families and schools are the two primary social institutions associated with caring for individuals, from birth through a significant, and increasing, proportion of adulthood (Brewer & Lindle, 2014; Bronfenbrenner, 1976, 1979).

## Nexus of Caring-Control: Families and Schools

In US law, schools serve as proxy for parents in caring for students, the principle of in loco parentis (DeMitchell, 2002; Levinsky, 2016; Nance, 2017). The legal definition offers an assumption about both parents' and school personnel's obligation to control student behavior due to children's nascent judgment in governing impulses, emotions, and risky behavior (Levinsky, 2016; Nance, 2017). The early twentieth-century bargain for compulsory education included a trust that school personnel assume the caring parental role to protect and guide students (DeMitchell, 2002; Nance, 2017). Thus, the social contract between school and families represents an intimate and overlapping space for caring (Brewer & Lindle, 2014; Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Noddings, 2002, 2006; Smylie, Murphy, & Louis, 2016).

Yet, neither families nor schools provide entirely satisfactory support for all students' needs, desires, abilities, or proclivities, neither solely nor in collaboration (Baumrind, 1968, 1971; Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Even given the fact that, in the United States, both families and schools are under-resourced for children's diverse medical, social, emotional, and educational needs, another persistently overlooked finding links family discipline patterns and effects with similar school discipline results (Baumrind, 1968; Fisher, Viano, Curran, Pearman, & Gardella, 2018; Hoy, 2001; Ispa-Landa, 2016, 2018; Lau, Wong, & Dudovitz, 2018; Willower, Eidell, & Hoy, 1967, 1973). A continuing angst about repeated school violence incidents focus remedies on school policies about perpetrators' relationships in a number of social, ecological perspectives linking families and schools (Birkland & Lawrence, 2009).

For the field of psychology, a conceptual link between family and school relational styles was founded on a four-style model of family or school, adult-child relationships (Baumrind, 1968, 1971). The four styles included the following: (a) authoritarian, the most controlling style; (b) permissive, the most nondirective, responsive style; (c) neglectful, the least attentive to child needs, if at all; and (d) authoritative, a balanced style of adult guidance with trusting relationships

(Baumrind, 1971; Fisher et al., 2018; Lau et al., 2018). These repeatedly replicated findings from studies of family dynamics and children's behavior reveal the more balanced parenting style, authoritative, as preferable to any others, with neglect and authoritarian styles producing extremes in negative child behaviors. Such findings, though persistent, fly in the face of a "commonsense view that more rigid enforcement of rules and regulations" (Lindle, 1994, p. 96) lead to more orderly school environments. Despite that appealing notion, all these studies reveal that strictness does not produce positive relationships nor positive behaviors (Baumrind, 1968, 1971; Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Ispa-Landa, 2016). Instead, ongoing social psychological research link healthy and positive family communications in yielding better behavior at home or in schooling's development of youth into upstanding citizens (Fisher et al., 2018; Ispa-Landa, 2016, 2018; Lau et al., 2018).

Interestingly, a parallel set of specifically school leadership-based studies offers similar results about adults' role in shaping student deportment and associated communications and relationship style (Gottfredson, 1990; Hoy, 2001; Packard, 1988). These studies originated at the Pennsylvania State University and were known as the Pupil Control Ideology Studies. Willower and associates (Hoy, 2001; Willower et al., 1967, 1973) developed a conceptual model for school disciplinary style with a continuum of school personnel's stance ranging from a highly strict, custodial style, to a more permissive, humanistic style. Hoy (2001) claimed that more than 200 studies used an instrument based on this continuum with consistent results. Those results cite the custodial approach as exacerbating misbehavior rather than mitigating it (Hoy, 2001; Packard, 1988). As the Pupil Control Studies' custodial concept originated in Lewin, Lippitt, and White's (1939) experiments with authoritarian versus democratic leadership in adult-led children social groups, then these enduring findings, like the family and social psychologists' findings, indict adult rigidity as an ineffective strategy that tends to destroy school climate and contributes to student-initiated disruption (Watts & Erevelles, 2004).

## *A School-Based Model of Caring-Control with Families and Community*

These parallel lines of psychological and educational knowledge about adult-youth relationships in families and schools contributed to a 2014 model for school leaders which offered a heuristic for balancing care and control in the face of classroom and school incidents (Brewer & Lindle, 2014). The proponents' goal for this model recommended that school leaders exercise their professional discretion to preserve or expand adults' and students' sense of belongingness and safety at school. Specifically, in light of outbreaks of school violence through the 1980s through the turn of the twenty-first century, multiple researchers cited issues with school and community relationships that upset any person's, adult's, or pupil's sense of safety and belongingness (Allen, Kern, Vella-Brodrick, Hattie, & Waters, 2018; Smylie et al., 2016; Warner, Weist, & Krulak, 1999).

Brewer and Lindle (2014) theorized that the micropolitical, social circumstances of schooling represent a negotiated space for principals to both educate and protect individuals and groups at school, a historical and repeatedly recommended educative stance toward school disorder (Covaleski, 1992; Duke, 2002; Gregory & Fergus, 2017; Lindle, 1994). In their approach, Brewer and Lindle (2014) used a continuum between *control* and *caring*. Brewer and Lindle (2014) defined *control*, in its extreme, as tight minimization of risk through strict enforcement and absolute adherence to zero-tolerance policies. Their definition of *caring* acknowledged the field of education's professional ethic "necessary to create relationships conducive to learning" (p. 38). In this multi-level model, school leaders navigate a relational line among the societal institutional levels originating from Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ethos of the child: (a) the microlevel of interpersonal relationships, (b) the mesolevel of community (e.g., family, school, and neighborhood) social morés, and (c) the macrolevel of laws. With consideration of these permeable levels and the dynamics of relationships surrounding and internal to schools, Brewer and Lindle recommended that school leaders work to preserve their professional discretion, a recommendation consistent with other scholars of educational leadership, social justice, and school law (Frick, 2011; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016; Stefkovich, 2014; Torres, 2012). The preservation of professional judgment and its associated informed discretion is particularly important because the antecedents of school infractions often stem from disruptions in relationships among students, families, and school personnel and, in fact, intimately with each other (Brewer & Lindle, 2014; Lindle, 2006; Louvar Reeves & Brock, 2018; Wike & Fraser, 2009).

## *Principals as Fulcrums in Balancing of Care-Control with Schools and Families*

The roles of principals inhabit the discourse space between individuals, such as teachers and students, students and students, and families and teachers (Brewer & Lindle, 2014). The increasing literature on school violence prevention policies depend heavily on the psychology of the victim (Gerard, Whitfield, Porter, & Browne, 2016; Gutsche & Salkin, 2017; Henry, 2009; Nicholson, 2000) and the sociology of the family and community (Henry, 2009; Muschert & Peguero, 2010). Legal analysts and law enforcement promote further remedies and immediate responses for the crises of school violence (Louvar Reeves & Brock, 2018; Mullen, 2018; Woitaszewski, Crepeau-Hobson, Conolly, & Cruz, 2018). Yet, all of these sources lag in aspects of the political culture that affect individual and social behaviors (Altheide, 2009; Birkland & Lawrence, 2009; Nicholson, 2000).

Principals seem to be aware of the sociopsychological antecedents to school violence as well as the expectations of law enforcement and anti-violence policies (Blad, 2018; Brown, 2018; Goodrum, Woodward, & Thompson, 2017; Liou, 2015; Price, Khubchandani, Payton, & Thompson, 2016; Shah, 2013). For

example, several studies indicate that principals understand that bullying can play a role in attacks on schools, although that threat is neither the only source of school violence and may not be the greatest trigger (Blad, 2018; Gutsche & Salkin, 2017; Hall & Chapman, 2018; Hong, Peguero, & Espelage, 2018; Mears, Moon, & Thielo, 2017; Price et al., 2016). Other studies show that principals recognize the depth of their social responsibilities and anticipate their own as well as teachers' socioemotional reactions should violence come to school (Anderman et al., 2018; Brown, 2018; Madfis, 2016). The range of anti-violence policies seems to divide starkly between fixing individuals and relationships and risk management (Madfis, 2016; Mullen, 2018; Muschert & Peguero, 2010; Roque, 2012). The relationship-based anti-violence policies include at least these four strategies: (a) antibullying interventions, (b) adult-led counseling and/or peer mediation, (c) better multi-agency, school and family communication, and (d) school climate monitoring and improvement (Lindsay & Hart, 2017; Muschert & Peguero, 2010). At least one of the risk management policies may conflict with the relationship-mending approaches, that is, zero-tolerance, punishment approaches (Curran, 2016; Giroux, 2009; Muschert & Peguero, 2010). Such exclusionary policies exacerbate simmer resentments and escalate personal and social conflicts practically ensuring irreparable disengagement and alienation for both individuals and targeted student and community groups (Triplett, Allen, & Lewis, 2014; Watts & Erevelles, 2004). Other risk management policies focus on facilities and school grounds with modifications to building design, surveillance through patrols and technology, and some level of crisis management plans (Fisher et al., 2018; Muschert & Peguero, 2010). The surveillance patrols can include either education professionals or law enforcement officials or both, with bifurcated effects of improved school relationships or decreasing school climate with a militarized environment (Giroux, 2009; Tanner-Smith & Fisher, 2016; Theriot, 2016; Theriot & Orme, 2016). Policies that emphasize facilities and site hardening change the sense of school as a *place* of learning and safety in different ways for different community members and groups.

School-based leaders, principals, and assistant principals serve as stewards of the *place* for learning because they exist in a micropolitical site (Hoyle, 1982; Iannaccone, 1991; Lindle, 1994, in press). That micropolitical ecology proves to be a problematic dimension in that school safety writings offer them very few recommendations about the ways schools personify troubled local histories and civic discord (Corbett, 2014; Garland & Chakraborti, 2006; Green, 2015; Lindle, 2008; McHenry-Sorber, 2014). Instead schools' symbolism as place may be a generalized ideal image; conversely, a high likelihood exists that any particular school's image exemplifies divisions among the community from the school's site to associated events, activities, and even controversial slogans and mascots (Callais, 2010; Gerstl-Pepin & Liang, 2010; Karanxha, Agosto, Black, & Effiom, 2013; Siegel-Hawley, Diem, & Frankenberg, 2018; Williams, 2013). These political-cultural dimensions increase the vulnerability of schools as politically infused places and elevate principals' responsibilities in managing schools' symbolic potency as local political symbol.

The intimacy of families and schooling represent but one aspect of how the values and expectations surrounding security reflect impressions about geographical locations, such as home, school, and neighborhood (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Schnell, 2013; Schnell, Harty, & Deaner, 2013; Theobald, 1992; Theobald & Manus, 1991). Although many retrospectives on school violence focus on perpetrators with the worthy goal of addressing such individuals' social and emotional distress to prevent violence, the scenes of violence may matter as much or more (Henry, 2009; Woitaszewski et al., 2018). Such places serve not merely as settings for school violence but also as targets in understudied but important ways (Birkland & Lawrence, 2009; Giroux, 2009; Gruenewald, 2008; Henry, 2009).

## Place-Consciousness and School Safety

On occasion, adults or non-enrolled youth, not students, bring violence to school (Blad, 2016; Lindle, 2008; Shah, 2013). For example, at least one of the earliest breaches of school security occurred in the late 1920s in Bath, Michigan, and the adult perpetrator was a school board member (Ellsworth, crica 1927; Lindle, 2008). Other histories of school violence provide evidence that school violence is not a recent development and reference a variety of early twentieth-century incidents as seminal examples (e.g., Katsiyannis, Whitford, & Ennis, 2018). The cautionary lesson from the Bath bombing reveals the degree of complexity in protecting students at school, not merely from each other, but also from community members. This event also may provide insights into school sites and their political-cultural *place* as existential target and arena of community identity imbued with historic community discord (Altheide, 2009; Holtkamp & Weaver, 2018; Lindle, 2018; Schnell, 2013; Wirt & Kirst, 1989; Zhao, 2014).

### *Schools as Existential Threats and Targets*

When schools serve as targets, they serve as a triggering motif that embodies communities' identity and symbolic meanings (Altheide, 2009; Lieske, 1993). Many schools serve as local centers for social events, economic development, but, as importantly, a duality of existence as an arena for competing civic values as well as a physical symbol of which part of the community won and, implicitly, which part lost the debate (Altheide, 2009; Corbett, 2014; McHenry-Sorber, 2014; Nicholson, 2000; Wirt & Kirst, 1989; Zhao, 2014). Conflicts over any community's vision of schooling are contested as hotly as rivalries in sports.

Decades ago, Goodlad (1983, 1984, 1985) outlined a range of persisting goals that US parents and citizens held for the schooling of children and youth into adulthood. Those goals still expand well beyond functional academic achievement and extend beyond student-based individual benefits. Instead, these goals reflect

larger community aspirations involving how schools contribute to vocational and community development (Williams, 2013; Zuckerman, Campbell Wilcox, Schiller, & Durand, 2018), including exploitation of school sports and other student performance as local entertainment (Fontana, Bass, & Fry, 2015; Smith, Harrison, & Brown, 2017).

Such expansive education goals persist in today's education policies because each community engages in politicized debates over whose children participate in schooling, what they should be taught, how the community should allocate resources for schools, and even where the school campuses should be sited (Lindle, 2018; March, 1978; Williams, 2013; Zhao, 2014). Each of these debates may produce a degree of concerted community action and simultaneously produce decades—long lingering feelings of loss and disenfranchisement among some community members (Karanxha et al., 2013; Siegel-Hawley et al., 2018; Warner & Lindle, 2009; Williams, 2013).

The Bath, Michigan, massacre (Bernstein, 2009; Boissoneault, 2017; Story Corps, 2009) illustrates one man's animus toward the community, which he inflicted on the school site by bombing it, killing 38 students and 7 adults. The perpetrator, a 55-year-old, school board member and farmer, harbored a grudge about the newly built, consolidated school's impact on his own property taxes. Known in that era, as one of the few knowledgeable about electricity, and with a reputation as a handyman, most community members accepted his hovering presence in and about the school property for months before, and even the day of, the bombing. As has been the case with several late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries' perpetrators (Altheide, 2009; Gutsche & Salkin, 2017; Henry, 2009; Langman, 2009; Roque, 2012; Warner et al., 1999), this 1927 culprit made a rampage of his violence. He killed his wife and set his farm on fire nearly simultaneously to the school bombing and committed suicide while murdering the school superintendent in the same moment (Bernstein, 2009; Boissoneault, 2017; Ellsworth, crica 1927). This example demonstrates how the school served as the symbolic place upon which this disgruntled offender projected his anger regardless of the collateral damage to students or others. Why should he have paid for schooling other people's children? Even though the community's civic process indicated that a consolidated school was desirable, clearly he felt loss in the political process. At the time, and as happens now, this perpetrator, like others, quickly earned the label, *demented*. Nonetheless, the issue of mental health has a collective and politicized dimension, not existing solely as an internalized, isolated-to-the-individual phenomenon (Henry, 2009; Nicholson, 2000). Schools and schooling mirror political systems and biases that disproportionally affect and marginalize groups or individuals.

## Schools as Places Politicized to Serve Institutionalized Bias

The US mid-twentieth century's debate over who should go to school had an added nuance with an ancillary question: schooling whom with who else? The national, federal judicial, and legislative answers opened school doors to students in poverty,

students with disabilities, as well as students of color (DeMatthews, Carey, Olivarez, & Moussavi Saeedi, 2017; Maydosz, 2014; Okilwa, Khalifa, & Briscoe, 2017; Triplett et al., 2014). Yet, over 60 years later, the federal answer remains contested and undermined with geopolitical maneuvers at the local level (Frankenberg, McDermott, DeBray, & Blankenship, 2015; Richards, 2014; Richards & Stroub, 2015). In the intervening decades, the federal stance has softened, even retreated (Liebowitz, 2018; Reardon, Grewal, Kalogrides, & Greenberg, 2012; Reardon & Owens, 2014), which has legitimated ongoing local resistance and subversion of equity in schooling all students. Instead, the local and expansively national trends tend toward a more exclusive approach toward educating a select group of students apart from those who differ from them, even at the risk of excluding different student groups altogether (Frankenberg et al., 2015; Holme & Finigan, 2013; Siegel-Hawley et al., 2018).

The question of who has access to public schools divided local communities in formal and politicized decisions to close minorities' schools and force them to travel miles and hours from their homes and neighborhoods (Fultz, 2004; Nicoletti & Patterson, 1974; Richards & Stroub, 2015; Siegel-Hawley, 2013). These local losses seemingly contradictory to principles of equity stemmed from entrenched local political culture and history designed to render some community groups powerless in the face of dominant traditional elites (Elazar, 1970, 1972, 1994; Febey & Louis, 2008; Frankenberg et al., 2015; Lindle & Hampshire, 2017). Diversity is any local community's political identity, likely more fragmented than whole (Carter, Skiba, Arredondo, & Pollock, 2017; Mitra, 2018; Norris, 2007). Politicized communities fragment identities over race, language, poverty, religion, sex, and gender identities along with the full range of human abilities (physical or cognitive). Often these community fragmentations represent non-elite and marginalized groups in the politics of schooling and discipline policies (Hong et al., 2018; Sibblis, 2014). For each of these groups within differentiated local power structures, schools are neither safe nor secure because the politics of schooling replicates the community's systemic bias and marginalization, explicitly known as the *school-to-prison-pipeline* (STPP) (Bal, 2016; DeMatthews et al., 2017; Mallett, 2016; Potter, Boggs, & Dunbar, 2017; Triplett et al., 2014).

The sociopolitical construction of diversity as deviance often leads to implicit bias in overly scrupulous risk management, heavy surveillance, swift punishment, and criminalization of youth's behavior (Giroux, 2009; Mallett, 2016; Ryan, Katsiyannis, Counts, & Shelnut, 2018; Tanner-Smith & Fisher, 2016). Although White youth, and others who exist in the spaces of dominant, politically and socially elite groups, find signs of increased school security comforting, the persistently marginalized and oppressed group members feel less safe, consequently more disengaged from the school's culture and community (Giroux, 2009; McKenna & White, 2018; Nance, 2017; Ryan et al., 2018). In a spiral of detachment from the school and community, such youth at school interactions may involve diminished contact with educational professionals exchanged for systemic exclusion through school-based law enforcement officers' interventions (Curran, 2016; Ryan et al., 2018). The criminalization phenomenon shifts students from the

juxtaposition of care and control between the institutions of family and school into the institutional ethos of prison (Giroux, 2009; McKenna & White, 2018; Muschert & Peguero, 2010; Ryan et al., 2018). Indeed, the lessons about the benefits of authoritative relationships between parents and children and educators and students in contrast to the negative behaviors associated with authoritarian strictness seem lost in the tendency to tighten security and err on the side of minimizing risk (Brewer & Lindle, 2014; Giroux, 2009; Hoy, 2001; Madfis, 2016). Ongoing marginalization throughout the larger community's culture and governance may infiltrate school-based systems as implicit and persistent bias alienating the vulnerable and exacerbating risk to both place and people in schooling (Bal, 2016; Carter et al., 2017; Nance, 2017).

## *Place Conscious School Leadership*

Gruenewald (2003, 2008) conceptualized place-consciousness as a multidimensional concept useful for critical educational practice, a step toward addressing locality as spaces for teaching and learning. Gruenewald (2003) theorized five dimensions:

(a) Perceptual, a phenomenological awareness of school in not only the world but its locale, too
(b) Sociological, the interweaving of place with identity and culture
(c) Ideological, the critical examination of the function of geographies as both public and private with locales serving designations of power
(d) Political, the means of asserting individual and cultural identity in the mainstream or on the margins
(e) Ecological, a model of educational diversity based on the flourishing of bioecological dimensions

Gruenewald (2008) expanded his definition of place-conscious education in emphasizing the critical perspective, an essentially educative element infusing surroundings into instruction and learning. This element also sparked activism in empowering students and imbedding them in their communities in contrast to traditional education settings that tend to shield both communities and students from each other. Place-consciousness may be a necessary, and novel, addition to how principals may address the phenomena associated with school violence.

Although the place of school is politically salient to how communities represent themselves, and replicate their politics, schoolings' loftier purposes might incorporate place-consciousness and ignite community identity along with student engagement (Goodlad, 1983, 1984, 1985; Schafft & Biddle, 2013; Theobald, 1992; Theobald & Manus, 1991). Still the fundamental challenge remains that principals and assistant principals see their work in the combined places of school and community as opposed to the defensive posture of minimizing risk or even retrenching their own practice to risk avoidance (Brewer & Lindle, 2014; Corbett, 2014; Ryan,

2010; Schafft & Biddle, 2013; Starr, 2012). As much as schools serve the intimacy of child development with families, such places are community spaces and need to be integrated into the public ecology rather than further retrenched from it.

## Conclusions

Responses to school violence focus attention on the nexus of relationships among schools, families, and neighborhoods with social, emotional, and behavioral remedies (Birkland & Lawrence, 2009; Muschert & Peguero, 2010). Policy responses focus on risk management through hardening school campuses, surveillance, and consistent consequences, often interpreted as punishment coupled with zero tolerance, a level of ineffective authoritarianism, and, as often, extending into criminalization of student behavior (Mullen, 2018; Muschert & Peguero, 2010). However, these emphases are too narrow in light of the meanings of *place*, that is, schools' political space and symbolism in communities' identities.

Although school leaders must attend to all various school safety and security policy demands, these recommendations treat spaces defensively, not politically, and lead to treatment of students in ways that are neither educative nor healthy and, ultimately, not protective either. Instead, the remedies have to be multidimensional from sociopsychological to environmental. Yet, the understanding of environmental security needs to expand to place-conscious political interventions joining school with community, rather than defensively isolating schools and education from the community's identity. If the purposes of schooling leap over the local educational and developmental needs, then the place of school is locally irrelevant and a more vulnerable target because of its inauthentic site within that community. School leaders must understand the higher risks associated with a lack of a place-conscious purpose for their schools in their local communities.

## Recommendations for Consideration

The United States is closing in on a century of recorded school violence and the stark reality that remedies and policies, at the most, represent only a couple of decades of study. That contrasting time span between knowledge of school violence and known recommendations for anti-violence practices and policies portends a lag in knowledge about effectiveness in any policies or practices. This review suggested that complete minimization of risk is an impossible goal, while the attempts to narrow risks in stricter, authoritarian styles do have long-known exacerbating effects. This review also exposed how recent recommendations may have unknown interaction effects and likely require differing combinations based on local politics, history, and community identity. Further research on multiple effects of these multiple anti-violence policies adopted individually or multiply is necessary. The thesis of

this review is that one more worthy anti-violence approach is place-conscious school leadership.

School leaders who adopt a place-conscious anti-violence approach, whether or not they are native to their school locales, must take two steps. First, they must assume a cultural, anthropological stance to learn as much as they can about diverse community perspectives about the school's history, meaning, and image. Second, based on that knowledge, they must adopt micropolitical strategies for leveraging and managing school image, school identity, and aligning school and community purposes.

In the first step, the cultural, anthropological stance is a deliberate, observational awareness of others' perspectives about every aspect of the school's site, name, events, activities, and history. Such a stance requires school leaders to question notions of school impressions among various community groups internal and external to the school.

1. What stories do different people tell about what the school means to them?
2. What do local records and media reveal about the school's history and image?
3. Who or what is the school named for?
4. Beyond internal school climate studies, what do community climate studies reveal about that school in relation to any others in the community?
5. What different purposes bring people to the school?
6. What events or activities draw which people and groups in the community?
7. Who among the community does not set foot on school grounds and why not?
8. Where does the school fit, and in what social networks, not merely media, but people and groups?
9. How connected is the school to what community businesses, churches and other social agencies, or government bodies?
10. Which people or groups want or have access to the school grounds and students, and why?
11. In school students' daily routines, what parts of the community do they travel and experience to and from school? How safe or risky are those community routes and routines?

These questions are starter questions for the mapping of the school's identity as both physical and sociopolitical local place. With a cultural-anthropological stance, each answer may lead to more questions about the meaning of a particular school in its locale. These answers may reveal a deeper purpose for that school-as-place than a narrow focus on functional literacy in letters and numbers. Moreover, that set of answers may unearth the ways in which the school embodies a threat or target in its community role.

Either finding clarifies the micropolitical agenda for the school leader. With community expectations about a greater school purpose, then school leader can negotiate ways to fulfill or manage those expectations. For example, higher expectations open the opportunity to engage the community in school and the school in the community. Educational strategies may include learning through addressing community problems in the school site or on-the-job at community sites. With awareness of the

school place as an existential threat or target, the school leader must manage and change those perceptions. This response may have urgency and requires collaboration with other parts of the community to ensure a positive outcome.

A place-conscious approach is not a single answer for the issues of school violence. It cannot replace a full complement of anti-violence policies. Yet, place-consciousness in addressing school violence may be the most underused, and understudied, consideration in balancing the multiple dimensions of school security and managing both care and control at school.

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# Chapter 11
# Investigation of Texas Educator Response Trainings for Serious Violence from Outside Intruders

J. Kenneth Young, Sean Walker, and Sandra Harris

**Abstract**  The purpose of this descriptive study was to identify response training components, the frequency of response training for faculty and staff in the event of serious school violence occurring from outsiders on Texas high school campuses, and the documentation of these response trainings. A random sample of 300 Texas public high school principals was selected for this study. Eighty-two principals completed a 20-item survey. The findings revealed that a majority of responding principals held response trainings for acts of violence, with the assistance of local law enforcement, documented their trainings, and conducted them annually. However, gaps were apparent in the areas of knowledge of national training standards and the overall percentage of respondents who reported that all of their full-time teachers had been trained. An increase in required trainings and improved education related to campus safety are among the recommendations for practice.

**Keywords**  School violence · Educator training · School · School safety

## Texas Educator Response Trainings for Serious Violence from Outside Intruders

Although it seems a relatively new phenomenon, serious violence in American public schools has a lengthy history (Bondü, Cornell, & Scheithauer, 2011; Finley, 2011; Van Brunt, 2012). The earliest known incident of violence dates back to 1764, when four Lenape Native Americans scalped and killed at least nine students and their teacher as a part of Pontiac's Rebellion (Van Brunt, 2012). Although numerous acts of violence have occurred within US schools since the first recorded attack, the

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number, frequency, and fatality rates of shootings that occurred since the 1990s have increased the demand for more to be done regarding school safety.

As a result, an entire industry has emerged to keep public schools safe. In addition to the numerous new safety devices for classrooms, educational curriculum focused on teaching children what to do in the case of an act of violence, and increased usage of school resource officers (SROs), some schools have chosen to arm educators as a deterrent to acts of violence. In this chapter, we provide an overview of research on school violence in the United States, with a focus on the threat sources, responses, and prevention. We then provide findings from a descriptive study identifying response training components and the frequency of response training for public school faculty and staff in the event of serious school violence occurring from outsiders on Texas high school campuses.

## What We Know About School Violence

Violence in schools has primarily been perpetrated by one of two sources: outside intruders and students. Aside from the attack in 1764 by the Lenape tribe (Van Brunt, 2012), the first mass act of violence by an outside intruder resulting in fatalities was a 1927 attack on a school in Michigan. An angry farmer and school board member upset about a tax increase to build a new school set off a series of explosives that resulted in 44 fatalities (K12 Academics, 2013). Since that time, there have been numerous attacks from outside sources upon American schools in which the perpetrators used explosives, firearms, or both to exact a large toll of fatalities (Finley, 2011). In the majority of these cases, the outside intruders either were disgruntled with some aspect of the schools they attacked (Johnston, 1999; Matthews, 2013), were seeking attention for a personal cause (Townes, 2004), or were known to suffer from mental illness (Stewart, 2013; United Press International, 2012). In other cases, the reasons were unknown because the shooters either were killed or took their own life (Connecticut State Attorney's Report, 2013; Illescas, Rouse, & Bunch, 2006; Meadows & Childress, 2006).

As for acts of violence in which students are the perpetrators, one of the earliest known attacks was the 1853 shooting of a school principal in Kentucky by a student (Ireland, 1986). Roughly a century later, an act of violence carried out by a student that reshaped American school safety practices was the 1958 school fire that killed 95 people at Our Lady of the Angels School in Chicago, IL (Groves, 2008). Since these early shooting incidents, there have been numerous attacks on American schools by the students. Much like with outside intruders, these attacks were the result of students feeling bullied/disgruntled (Chalmers, 2009; Finley, 2011; Klein, 2012; Martin, 2001) or in retaliation for something perceived as an offense to the student (Ireland, 1986; Linedecker, 1999).

Beyond the source of attackers and their reasons, attempts to understand the patterns of violence have not yielded much consensus. Age does not appear to be a viable marker, as violent acts have been carried out by individuals as young as 10 years old (Chalmers, 2009) and as old as 55 years (Johnston, 1999). Likewise, setting or context has no consistency, as acts of violence have not been limited to the

K-12 schools in a variety of settings but have also occurred on college and university campuses (Davies, 2008; Kingsbury, Brush, Green, & Schulte, 2007). Although most attacks have been carried out by males, there exists at least one occasion of a female carrying out an attack.

One disturbing characteristic that has gained some consensus is the increased level of orchestration that has gone into acts of school violence. Whereas some of the earlier historical accounts seemed to have little to no planning, since 1988, attacks have demonstrated much more complexity and orchestration. For example, a 1988 orchestrated attack carried out by Laurie Dann in an elementary school in Winnetka, Illinois, resulted in six students shot, one of whom perished (UPI, 2012). The coordinated and premeditated murder of Jason Robinson by three other students who stabbed Robinson to death inside a classroom was another example of an orchestrated attack (Rimer, 1993). Langham (2009) described the 1998 attack in Jonesboro, AR, which was carried out by 11-year old Andrew Golden and 13-year old Mitchell Johnson, as a carefully orchestrated attack where the boys hid in the nearby woods and shot their teachers and classmates who had come outside because of the fire alarm. The 1999 attack at Columbine High School that resulted in the deaths of 15 people, including the gunmen, was the culmination of a premeditated attack by Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold (Klein, 2012). Although there were numerous school shootings prior to the 1999 Columbine High School attack, the attack at Columbine was on a level of devastation that had not previously been experienced in an American school (Barrios, 2001).

## Serious School Violence Prevention

There are numerous factors required for a successful violence prevention program to be implemented in schools, such as leadership, political will, trust of teachers and students, appropriate training, a continued commitment to the program, and previous successes with school initiatives (Greene, 2008). When considering violence prevention programs, school leaders should carefully assess the needs of their respective campuses and consider potential episodes of violence that may need to be prevented (Nader, 2013). This section discusses issues of serious school violence prevention. The topics include the following: school climate, building design, armed teachers, and school resource officers as methods of serious school violence prevention measures.

### *School Climate*

Finley (2011) noted that school climate is the subjective experience of stakeholders within a school and that how safe a student or teacher feels has a direct correlation to the school climate. The more a student feels safe at school, the greater the likelihood of their academic success. Peterson and Skiba (2001) framed school climate as the long-term feelings associated with a school building by both staff and students.

According to Scherz (2014), school climate should be the central focus of all efforts to have a successful violence prevention program. The types of violence prevention programs that have been deemed successful are research driven, ground in theory, sustained through ongoing support, and a distinct part of the school culture. Therefore, efforts to have a healthy school climate need to be focused on the prevention and early intervention of episodes of school violence. Manvell (2012) noted that the focused efforts of violence prevention and early intervention have reduced the likelihood of a campus crisis event. Manvell included connections with other people in the school, a sense of power, the feeling of safety, and the notion of being valued as the descriptors of a positive school climate. Positive changes in school climate can quickly improve student learning and relationships, along with a reduction in violence on campuses. Thus, according to Peterson and Skiba (2001), positive school climate should be the focus of school safety efforts and not physical efforts, such as metal detectors, security cameras, and personnel used as guards.

Areas to focus on when attempting to improve school climate to prevent episodes of violence are parental and community involvement, character education, violence prevention and conflict resolution curricula, peer mediation, and bullying prevention (Bucher & Manning, 2005; Elliott, 2009; Peterson & Skiba, 2001). To make schools safer, the programs that are adopted must be designed so that the whole school is the focus of the intervention and that the result of the program is to create a climate of respect and support (Sprague & Hill, 2005).

Elliott (2009) noted that other than building security, emergency planning, and first responder planning, school leaders must place a high priority in making sure that a safe and positive school climate exists. The elements of a safe and positive school climate should include a focus on academics, a sense of respect for both teachers and students, positive feelings toward the school by students, the idea that hard work is rewarded, respect for authority, a well-kept campus, high staff morale, and clear discipline policies that are consistently and fairly enforced.

Specifically, Elliott (2009) suggested that evidence-based violence prevention programs should have a strong research design to evaluate effectiveness, a meaningful effect up to a year after its conclusion, and replication in other locations that demonstrate similar positive results. Elliott reported that too often violence prevention in schools has not been ahigh priority and that school leaders are reluctant to adopt programs and systems that are not tied directly to improving the academic performance oftheir students. In fact, even when school leaders have been shown data that indicated the relationship between feeling safe at school andacademic success at school, principals were reluctant to adopt violence prevention programs.

## Building Design

McLester (2011) suggested that the 1999 attack at Columbine High School was a driving force in the challenge to improve school safety through facility design in existing and new structures. McLester argued that the theory of crime prevention

through environmental design or CPTED that was originally proposed by C. Ray Jeffery and revised by Oscar Newman asserted that if a building or space is designed carefully enough, it can limit the chances for negative behaviors to occur. The CPTED theory contains three basic concepts: natural surveillance, natural access control, and territoriality. Natural surveillance is the ability to clearly observe what is taking place, natural access control is the level at which entry and exit to a particular environment can be controlled, while territoriality is the ability of a legitimate group of users to maintain control over a certain area while discouraging the use from illegitimate users (Schneider, Walker, & Sprague, 2000). Schools using CPTED throughout the world have seen a reduction in policy violations and crime while seeing an increase in their overall academic achievement (Fennelly & Crowe, 2013).

Earthman (2013) reported that visibility is the most important safety factor among principals and architects who were surveyed. The idea of visibility is considered as part of the principle of natural surveillance in the CPTED model. Earthman also noted that they felt the main doors to the school were of paramount importance when designing a school. The concern over the main entrance to a school fits within the realm of natural access control as outlined in the CPTED model presented by Schneider et al. (2000).

According to Schneider et al. (2000), the design of most schools occurred when safety and security were not a major concern nationally. The school designers of the past were aware of ways to increase the safety and security of campuses through their designs, but the safety and security of schools were a less important priority. Too often school administrators, school security personnel, and school resource officers are not involved with architects in the design of their schools (McLester, 2011). In addition, Schneider et al. (2000) reported a shortage of school architects formally trained in CPTED and many other school architects reject the notion because they are experienced and see no value in the theory. While there were architects that saw little value in the notion of CPTED, Atlas and Schneider (2008) asserted that CPTED practices could reduce school criminal activity and reduce the feeling of a school appearing as a fortress. Schools designed with the CPTED principles in mind are more likely to have order and comfort while, at the same time, minimizing the negative effects of some of the safety measures employed by a school, such as metal detectors, that can make schools feel like a prison (Carter & Carter, 2001).

## Armed Teachers

Rostron (2014) noted that numerous state legislatures began exploring the possibility of having armed teachers in the classroom after the attack in Newtown, Connecticut. However, this idea was not a new phenomenon as both Utah and Texas had teachers who were armed years before the 2012 attack took place (Rostron, 2014; Trump, 2011). Fox and Levin (2014) reported that in response to the school shooting that took place at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut,

at least six states formally promoted bills that would allow teachers to carry firearms in the classroom if they were formally trained. They also noted that since the creation of gun-free zones around schools in the 1990s, proponents of arming school staff members have pointed out that an armed person, whether a student or an outside intruder, would likely not face any opposition. Supporters of having armed teachers on campus believe that it could be a strong deterrent to a person who would potentially attempt to carry out a mass school shooting. However, Fox and Levin questioned the premise of arming staff members because of issues such as school buses and playgrounds where there will be instances where large groups of students are gathered and an armed staff member would not be present.

Shah (2013b) reported that after the attack at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, the curiosity about the notion of having armed teachers in classrooms gained momentum across the United States. National educational organizations were predominantly against the concept, but some state legislators and school boards were considering it as a method to prevent another school shooting. For example, one school district in Texas that recently began using a school marshal program placed warning signage on the perimeter of all four of the district's campuses that told visitors that there were staff members who were armed and that any necessary force would be used to protect students (Golgowski, 2014).

A school district in Clarksville, Arkansas, trained both teachers and administrators to carry weapons and act as armed guards if an incident were to occur in a direct response to the massacre that took place in Newtown, Connecticut, in 2012 (Associated Press, 2013). Other states that have crafted or proposed actions include Maine (Bell, 2013), Wyoming (Brown, 2014), Arizona (Christie, 2013), Colorado (Wyatt, 2014), and South Dakota (Lammers, 2013). Shah (2013b) reported that Michael Dorn, the leader of Safe Havens International, an organization devoted to school safety, shared concern because the notion of carrying a weapon in the classroom has put more educators in the mode of attack, rather than being diligent about prevention efforts.

## School Resource Officers

While there has been more attention given to the need for school resource officers or SROs to be present in schools as a result of high-profile shootings of the 1990s, the concept actually goes back to the 1950s (Weiler & Cray, 2011). The overall role of an SRO is specifically focused on increasing the safety of the campus in order to ensure a safe learning environment for both students and teachers and is based in a preventative premise. The National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO) promotes the concept of the triad model for school-based policing that includes the roles of teacher, counselor, and officer (Rosiak, 2009). Properly trained SROs prevent acts of violence from occurring in schools (Trump, 2011). Sussman (2012) suggested that violence would be reduced in schools through partnerships built in trust and an understanding of the role of police in schools. In Texas, the

National Rifle Association or NRA proposed having armed guards in all American schools in response to the shooting that took place at Sandy Hook Elementary School in December of 2012 (Rostron, 2014).

Kupchik (2010) noted that the largest increase in SRO programs occurred in the 1990s due to legislation related to safe schools that increased funding for safety initiatives focused in violence prevention. After the media heavily reported on school shootings, many schools began placing law enforcement officers in their schools to increase safety (Clark, 2011). The National Association of School Resource Officers' executive director noted that attendance in the training they provided to SROs doubled in the year following the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting (Snyder, 2013). Rudick (2011) reported the time spent training to respond to an active shooter situation is only a portion of the role of the SRO. SROs spend time dealing with issues such as assault, drug possession, weapon possession, theft, and working with incidents that involve special education students, disgruntled parents, and angry teachers.

Dunlap (2013) noted that while there is difficulty in determining the overall effectiveness of SRO programs across the country, the vast majority of students, teachers, and administrators reported feeling safer by having an SRO on their campus. Dunlap outlined several key elements to a successful SRO and school partnership including a clearly defined role for the SRO, a careful selection process for choosing SROs, constant collaboration between the school and the SRO, frequent and continued training for the SRO, and constant evaluation of the SRO program by both the school and police department. SROs could be a major part of a school's desire to create a safer environment because SROs have a unique chance to participate in efforts to intervene and prevent criminal activities on school campuses (Rosiak, 2009).

## Preparation for Acts of Serious Violence

This section discusses response trainings as a method of preparation for acts of serious school violence that occur from outside intruders. The topics include the following: expert recommendations, types of training, and legislative mandates as related to response trainings.

### *Expert Recommendations*

A school safety expert asserted that after the tragedy in Newtown, Connecticut, constant training and a review of existing safety measures would be the best course of action (Blad, 2013). Horse (2013) and Hull (2010) recommended that safety drills be conducted during unexpected times rather than being held when it was convenient according to the school's daily schedule. Additionally, Hull suggested that drills include variables, such as blocking doors, to require students and teachers to react in ways that would be similar to an actual crisis.

Recommended trainings should include conducting mock active shooter situations to train an organization to properly know how to respond to active shooter events (US Department of Homeland Security, 2014) and ongoing training executed by local law enforcement in concert with school employees (Buerger & Buerger, 2010; US Department of Education, 2013). Many schools around the country are substituting lockdown drills with active shooter drills to better prepare their students and staff for a wider range of crises (Regan, 2014). The need to train all members of a school staff to know how to respond properly to an emergency or crisis situation has gained recognition in recent years (Trump, 2011).

The National Incident Management System (2008) or NIMS is the framework that exists to ensure that government agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and the private sector work together to manage incidents that involve hazards or threats of all sizes. This framework was developed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency or FEMA in an effort to coordinate local agencies' responses to crisis situations. The framework's implementation is a requirement for K-12 schools that received Federal monies targeted at preparedness from the US Department of Education, the US Department of Homeland Security, or the US Department of Health and Human Services. Regardless of whether or not a school received preparedness money and is required to implement NIMS, the US Department of Education has recommended the adoption and implementation of NIMS by K-12 schools. The six integrated guiding principles of NIMS that serve as its foundation include command and management, preparedness, resource management, communications and information management, supporting technologies, and ongoing management and maintenance.

## *Types of Training*

One company that has specifically designed a workshop for dangerous intruders is SafePlans. Their specific course teaching professionals how to respond to an armed intruder event was called *Intruderology* (Intruderology, 2014).

Another model of training for an intruder event is termed ALICE training, which is an acronym for alert, lockdown, inform, counter, and evacuate, and could be used in a variety of workplaces and offered specialized trainings provided by the ALICE Training Institute for the school setting (ALICE, 2014). The ALICE Training Institute was known to be a pioneering agency in teaching educators how to respond to a violent event before law enforcement was able to arrive on scene (ELERTS and ALICE Training institute form exclusive partnership for school safety, 2014). The goal of the ALICE training model is to give teachers and students a fighting chance in the event of a violent school attack; the ALICE Training Institute feels strongly that people must have a plan and strategy for survival as they wait for law enforcement to arrive.

The CRASE model or the Civilian Response to Active Shooter Events for an intruder event was specifically geared toward police officers that will train civilians who experience an active shooter event (ALERRT, 2014). This particular training model that is provided through the ALERRT (Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training) Center at Texas State University does not have a session that is unique for educators nor is it offered directly to civilians.

## *Legislative Mandates*

Shah (2013a) noted that many states have proposed or adopted laws that required emergency preparedness drills. For example, he noted that in an effort to increase campus safety in Oklahoma, a minimum of two outside intruder drills per school year was made law and Illinois governor, Pat Quinn, signed a law requiring schools to conduct safety drills that mimic the response they would need in case of a school shooting. Michigan governor, Rick Snyder, signed a 2014 law that required Michigan schools to conduct at least three lockdown drills, designed to teach proper response to armed intruders, per year; one of the three drills must occur during a lunch or recess period. In Texas, former Attorney General and current Governor, Greg Abbott, outlined a recommendation for schools to conduct at least one emergency response drill coordinated with law enforcement annually (Abbott, 2013).

Currently, the National Fire Protection Association and the State Fire Marshal (2014) of Texas standards require schools to practice fire drills at a minimum of one time per month to prepare students and staff to properly respond to a school fire; however, no such regulation currently exists in Texas for drills related to acts of violence. The Texas Education Code Chapter 37 (2009) calls for multi-hazard emergency response plans and training of employees and even requires that drills are mandatory as part of the plan. The statute fails to define how frequent these drills should occur or what hazards schools should be specifically prepared to handle. The statute calls for a safety audit to be performed at least once every 3 years and that the emergency response plan be reviewed at least once annually, but does not specify requirements for what training should occur to prepare staff and students for multi-hazard emergencies.

A descriptive study to identify response training components and the frequency of response training for public school faculty and staff in the event of serious school violence occurring from outsiders on Texas high school campuses was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the components of the response trainings that Texas high school principals use to prepare personnel on their campuses for acts of violence on their campus by outside intruders?
2. What is the frequency that response trainings that prepare campus personnel for acts of violence by outside intruders are occurring in Texas high schools?
3. How are response trainings for acts of violence on their campus documented by Texas high school principals?

## The Study

This study used a cross-sectional survey design to explore the components and frequency of trainings occurring in Texas high schools to prepare faculty members to respond to events of serious school violence occurring from outside intruders on Texas high school campuses, as well as the documentation of the response trainings. The survey allowed for baseline data specific to strategies used to train faculties to

**Table 11.1** Participant
campus demographics *n* = 82

| Characteristics | Sample *n* (%) |
|---|---|
| Campus setting | |
| Urban | 9 (10.9) |
| Suburban | 29 (35.4) |
| Rural | 44 (53.7) |
| Campus enrollment | |
| 0–104 | 4 (4.9) |
| 105–219 | 4 (4.9) |
| 220–464 | 24 (29.3) |
| 465–1059 | 21 (25.6) |
| 1060–2099 | 16 (19.5) |
| 2100+ | 13 (15.9) |

respond to incidents of serious violence occurring from outsiders and the frequency of such trainings in Texas high schools to be established.

A random sample of 300 Texas public high school principals was invited to participate in the survey. The response rate was 27.3% (82 of 300 total principals responded). The respondents completed items related to demographics, which are reported in Table 11.1.

A 20-item survey was created to collect data response training components for high school campuses regarding occasions of serious violence occurring from outsiders, the frequency of the aforementioned trainings, and the documentation of the trainings. The basis of the survey was DiMatteo's (2012) High School Safety: A Survey. Other appropriate items were created based upon the National Incident Management System (NIMS, 2008) standards and recommendations for K-12 schools.

## Components of Response Training for Texas High School Principals

Of the 82 participants who responded, 68 (82.9%) indicated they conducted response trainings as a campus. Approximately 60% (*n* = 41) of these respondents used local law enforcement or school resource officers to conduct their trainings, and small percentage of the respondents (4% or less) indicated they conducted trainings from private industry training courses, such as ALICE, Intruderology, Standard Response Protocol, Defender, or CrisisGo to prepare their staffs for an outside intruder event. It was not clear from the data how many of the participants used more than one type of training resources (e.g., used both local law enforcement and a private company), and the majority of the 79 (62.1%) principals who indicated they had training were not sure if the trainings on their campuses were NIMS compliant or not. Finally, of those who conducted trainings, 74 (92.7%) reported that follow-up activities to campus trainings occurred.

Participants were also asked whether or not their campuses had a written campus safety plan specifically related to a response for an attack by an outside intruder as part of their training. Of the 82 participants who responded, 79 (96.3%) indicated that their campus had written safety plans. Approximately 90% ($n = 69$) of those also indicated they had received training in their plan, and 87% ($n = 69$) made them available to all of their employees. However, when asked to gauge the percentage of full-time teachers who had received training in the written safety plans, the principals indicated that only 55.6% ($n = 44$) of campuses had trained all full-time teachers in the written safety plans and 7.5% ($n = 6$) of campuses reported that all of their substitute teachers received training related to the written campus safety plan.

Memos of understanding between schools and emergency agencies were reported to exist with 86.1% ($n = 68$) of participants' campuses. Most frequently, local police, fire, and EMS were the emergency agencies that reportedly participated in training exercises. Slightly more than half ($n = 79$) of the principals reported that participation from community agencies in training exercises had increased in the last 3 years with no reported decrease.

## Frequency of Response Training

In addition to inquiring about how many participants had response trainings, participants were also asked about the frequency of trainings for their staff in response to acts of violence from an outside intruder. Table 11.2 provides the responses to frequency of training questions.

## Documenting Response Training

To determine how response trainings were documented by Texas high school principals, a single item was used that asked participants to select all the ways their districts documented training. Table 11.3 provides frequencies and percentages of responses related to this item.

**Table 11.2**  Reported frequency of response training $n = 82$

| Frequency | $n$ (%) |
| --- | --- |
| Increased safety training over last 3 years | 53 (64.6) |
| Staff received training within last year | 67 (81.7) |
| Staff received campus safety plan within last year | 75 (91.5) |
| Principals reviewed safety plan annually | 78 (95.1) |
| Principals had some form of practice of the safety plan | 74 (90.2) |
| Principals had annual practice of safety plan | 64 (78.0) |

**Table 11.3** Reported
documentation for training
$n = 82$

| Documentation | $n$ (%) |
|---|---|
| Training log | 56 (68.2) |
| Sign-in sheets | 39 (47.5) |
| Instructors' document | 17 (20.7) |
| There are no trainings | 14 (17.1) |
| Digital file, campus | 9 (10.9) |
| Digital file, district | 7 (8.5) |
| No documentation | 7 (8.5) |

## Conclusions and Suggestions for Practitioners

Overall, findings from this study suggest that Texas high school principals were making efforts to prepare personnel for safer schools, but there was more work to be done in the area of campus safety. Although a majority of the Texas high school principals who participated in the study have followed the recommendation of school safety experts, such as Horse (2013), and state recommendations for schools to conduct at least one emergency response drill coordinated with law enforcement annually (Abbott, 2013), the participants in the study had not trained all members of a school staff to know how to respond properly to an emergency or crisis situation, due to the apparent lack of trainings provided to substitute teachers.

Likewise, a gap existed in the knowledge base of participating high school principals' understanding of the National Incident Management System training requirements. This knowledge gap was in direct opposition of the US Department of Education's (2013) recommendation of the adoption and implementation of NIMS by K-12 schools. The findings from the study suggest the conclusion that high school principals in Texas who participated in the study typically follow the Federal Bureau of Investigation's recommendation that staff training in response to an active shooter situation in school not be a one-time training but an ongoing training executed by local law enforcement in concert with school employees (Buerger & Buerger, 2010).

On a positive note, Texas high school principals who participated in the current study indicated an increase in their level of awareness and preparedness in safety trainings that included their entire full-time staffs. According to the Texas Education Code Chapter 37 (2009), schools were required to develop multi-hazard emergency response plans, which were to be reviewed annually; something that the majority of participants indicated was happening on their campuses. They also appeared to be a part of systems that had multiple sources of documentation for the various response trainings.

## Recommendations for Consideration

Based on the findings of this study, there were several implications for practice that were made:

1. Lawmakers and school districts should consider increasing the minimum number of response safety trainings that occur on campuses throughout the state. This would be similar to the recent law change in Oklahoma that requires two outside intruder drills per year.

2. The various private industry response trainings, such as ALICE, Intruderology, Standard Response Protocol, Defender, or CrisisGo trainings that are offered, are emerging and should be considered by high school principals as a resource to train their staffs or supplement the trainings that are so often conducted by local law enforcement.

3. This study reported a large difference between the number of principals who had received training in their campuses' written safety plans and those who reported their entire staff had received training in the plan. Administrators must ensure their entire staff knows how to properly respond in the event of an outside intruder attack (Horse, 2013). Therefore, campus principals need to ensure that all staff members on their campuses have received response training and should include it as part of their professional development plan.

4. Due to the heavy reliance on local law enforcement to conduct campus safety trainings, lawmakers should consider a requirement that any law enforcement officer who conducts a campus training be certified in the CRASE model provided through the ALERRT Center at Texas State University that is geared toward police officers who train civilians who experience an active shooter event (ALERRT, 2014).

5. Principal preparation programs throughout the state should include the National Incident Management System standards related to education as a part of their curricula. Additionally, regional service centers should provide training and support for existing principals in the NIMS standards related to education and campus safety practices.

6. Since documentation of safety trainings is required by the state, policymakers should consider a standardized method of documentation. A statewide database that required principals to log their trainings would be a recommended method of documenting trainings that occur on campus.

7. In addition to the principals and staff members being trained on how to respond to an act of violence from an outside intruder, schools should consider involving students in the campus response trainings and eventually drills. These drills should be unexpected and unannounced as recommended by Horse (2013) rather than being held when it is convenient according to the school's daily schedule. Due to the overall frequency of serious violence on American campuses, outside intruder response trainings and drills should be as common and frequent as fire drills and severe weather drills that occur with regularity and are readily accepted by teachers, students, and parents.

8. Principals need to allocate time within the school year to conduct trainings, follow-up activities, and drills related to an act of violence carried out by an outside intruder on their campuses.

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# Chapter 12
# School Safety Upgrades and Perceptions of Safety Protocols in Prevention of School Shootings

**C. Lawrence Jagodzinski**

**Abstract**  This chapter presents a mixed-methods study on the perception of school safety upgrades and protocols in a suburban school district in the United States. The study examined how parents, teachers, and support staff viewed the relationship between the perceptions of safety in regard to various school safety options. Quantitative data were collected to determine which protocols and/or safety upgrades were viewed as essential, effective, and positive or negative. To delve deeper into the perceptions, qualitative data were collected in a series of focus group sessions. The mixed-methods approach allowed the researcher to identify themes but also uncover strategies and protocols that were not expected. The study offers 17 recommendations that school leaders should consider as they develop their safety plan.

**Keywords**  Emergency response plan · Ballistic glass · Weapon sniffing dog · Bollards · School resource officers · Perimeter fencing · Mental health

## Introduction

The American school system has endured countless tragedies in regard to school violence. Bath Township, University of Texas, Columbine, Red Lake, Virginia Tech, Sandy Hook, Parkland, and Santa Fe, to mention a few, have brought tremendous fear and sadness to our education system. With each tragedy our society looks for answers, motives, and ultimately solutions. Finding a solution to school violence is tremendously difficult as each attack has unique circumstances. Predicting the unpredictable has become a grueling task for law enforcement and school administration. However, compiling data, sharing strategies, and collaborating with stakeholders might provide us opportunities to move forward and eventually end school violence.

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School violence has been an unfortunate part of the modern American school system and has increased dramatically over the past 50 years. According to the Stanford Mass Shootings of America (Stanford Library, 2016, para 5) data project, there have been 64 mass shootings with "3 or more victims" in American school settings since the University of Texas tower shooting in 1966. Furthermore, *ABC News*' Pearle (2016) reported that there have been "50 cases of mass murders or attempted mass murders at schools since the Columbine massacre of 1999" (p. 2). While the tower shooting in Austin, Texas, was what Shultz, Cohen, Muschert, and Apodaca (2013) call a "seminal incident" (para. 11), the Columbine High School shooting would become the incident that all future school violence would be compared against. Logan (2016) explained,

> Just like the attack performed by Charles Whitman in Austin, Texas from "The Texas Tower" in 1966, the attack performed by Harris and Klebold in Littleton, Colorado at Columbine High School in 1999 had a long-term major impact on law enforcement response protocols. (para. 1)

Stanford Library MSA project (2016) also found that in the time between the UT tower shooting and Columbine, America witnessed 32 mass shootings at educational facilities. Since Columbine until 2016, there were another 31 mass shootings (Stanford Library, 2016, para 5).

Not every school shooting results in injury or death, but the prevalence of guns being used on school campuses is at an all-time high. In fact, according to Everytown Research (2016), "Since 2013, there have been at least 173 school shootings in America—an average of nearly one a week" (para. 1). In 2018 alone, Everytown Research (2018) found, "There have been at least 63 incidents of gunfire on school grounds in 2018" (para. 2).

Safety upgrades and protocols are consistently revised each time such a tragedy strikes. Logan (2016) stated,

> Columbine marked the first active shooter event I can find where helicopter news crews managed to broadcast the actions and pieces of response outside the school. The American public saw police officers and deputies taking cover behind police vehicles outside the school while gunshots could still be heard inside the school. When it was realized—and it didn't take long—that those gunshots meant students were being shot while the law enforcement responders stayed in relative safety outside, the public outcry grew far and wide. (para. 2)

Columbine in particular ushered in a new era of reform with regard to school safety. Today, national organizations like FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency, 2017) and its NIMS (National Incident Management System) training protocol have produced guidelines for school districts to follow. In addition, Presidential Policy Directive 8 (PPD 8) made it clear that the US government would lead the way with regard to preparedness. The PPD8: National Preparedness Website (2015) stated,

> This directive is aimed at strengthening the security and resilience of the United States through systematic preparation for the threats that pose the greatest risk to the security of the Nation, including acts of terrorism, cyber-attacks, pandemics, and catastrophic natural disasters. (para. 1)

Experts such as Aronson (2004) have found that one of the underlying causes of school violence has been "the poisonous social atmosphere prevalent at most high schools in this country—an atmosphere characterized by exclusion, rejection, taunting and humiliation" (p. 355). Taking the social atmosphere into consideration, the best way to avoid school violence may be to eliminate such toxic atmospheres on campus.

Follman and Andrews (2017) cite a *Mother Jones* investigation showing that "the nation's worst high school shooting has inspired at least 72 plots or attacks in 30 states" (para. 1). The authors also found that 13 cases involved students who wished to surpass the carnage of Columbine and that in 10 cases, the plotters viewed the Columbine killers as heroes, martyrs, and idols. In fact, three of the plotters had made pilgrimages to Littleton, Colorado (the site of the 1999 high school shooting), and 14 of them had planned their attacks to occur on the anniversary of Columbine (Follman & Andrews, 2017).

The American Association of School Administrators (AASA) (n.d.) also recommends that schools focus on being aware of threats of violence, creating emergency response plans to address such threats, having a balanced approach to safety, and controlling the learning environment by limiting points of entry and conducting emergency response drills (n.d., para. 2). According to Buerger and Buerger (2010), "most active-shooter protocols contain the same advice: implement lockdown procedures, minimize the target profile, and wait for police to neutralize the situation. Teachers and students should hide quietly, lock or barricade doors, and turn off lights and electrical equipment" (para. 4). Having in place a viable emergency response plan (ERP) and a well-trained staff is ideal.

Recruitment and retainment of teachers can also be affected by the perception of school safety preparedness. According to Zurawiecki (2013), "Indicators of School Crime and Safety (2010) reported that during the 2007–2008 school year, approximately 6–10% of teachers were threatened with injury and between 2 and 5% were physically attacked" (p. 3).

In 2018, a study was completed that explored the connection between school safety upgrades and the perceptions of safety protocols for preventing school shootings by parents, teachers, and staff. The study (Jagodzinski, Papa, Brown, Delecki, & Sweeney, 2018) sought to provide recommendations to district leadership to help drive decision-making in regard to security renovations and emergency response spending. The data gathered through the study were published in hope that it might help guide decision-makers of schools nationwide to address safety concerns and understand how those upgrades and protocols might be "perceived" by their stakeholders. Such a study provides insight into the perceptions regarding the effectiveness of each upgrade option and which options are perceived to be the most critical.

## Jagodzinski Study

The Jagodzinski et al. (2018) study looked at the perceptions of parents, teachers, and support staff in a small suburban school district toward recent school safety upgrades. Specifically, it sought to determine whether the upgrades were viewed as positive or negative, essential or nonessential, and effective or ineffective.

The following specific research questions guided this study:

1. What are the perceptions of parents, teachers, and support staff regarding?

    a. Having an effective and detailed emergency response plan (ERP)?
    b. Ballistic glass installation in school lobbies throughout the district?
    c. Drywall installation in school lobbies throughout the district?
    d. Concrete sphere bollard installation outside school entrances throughout the district?
    e. High-definition security cameras installed on school campuses throughout the district?
    f. Ornamental fencing installed on school campuses throughout the district?
    g. Safety and security window film installed on school campuses throughout the district?
    h. The purchase and usage of golf carts for administration and security personnel?
    i. Increasing suspensions and expulsions of students?
    j. Additional school resource officers?
    k. The purchase of individual bulletproof whiteboards for students?
    l. Additional mental health services?
    m. Creation of crisis intervention teams? (Jagodzinski et al., 2018, p. 5)

For school districts looking to upgrade their safety protocols, this study provided guidance on safety upgrades for school sites and informs school administrators regarding the perceptions of those upgrades/protocols held by stakeholders.

The primary findings suggested that all three groups of stakeholders (parents, teachers, and staff) in the district believed that emergency response plans were the most critical, followed by the presence of school resource officers, and the installation of ballistic glass throughout the school. These findings are validated by the review of literature.

### *Emergency Response Plans*

Survey responses and focus group sessions clearly delineated that parents, teachers, and support staff viewed emergency response planning as the centerpiece to school safety. The findings on emergency response plans are supported by Gay (2014), who stated, "now, since the tragedy at Sandy Hook, experts are advocating for

proactive training to equip staff and students to respond to acts of violence, as well as foster an environment that helps prevent violence from occurring" (para. 8). These findings also correspond with Rigsby (2013), who found, "NSBA encourages local school boards to recognize that prevention, preparedness, mitigation, and emergency response and recovery plans are critical to protect the safety and health of students, employees, and all who visit school facilities" (para. 13). In addition to the importance of emergency response plans, respondents in this study stressed the importance of updating emergency response plans with each new school violence incident that occurs. A parent mentioned in their focus group session,

> I think people feel better when we do things that are based on the last shooting that happened. The bullet-proof glass at all the front entrances is because of Sandy Hook, because he shot through it. Things that were done because of what the guys did at Columbine; so we are reacting to what the last incident looked like. The schools are trying to predict the unpredictable.

Although stakeholders understood that school districts are predicting the unpredictable, and that school personnel are forced to be reactive, versus proactive, they still felt it was best to update with each new incident across US schools. This conclusion is supported by the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (2017) *Guide for Developing High-Quality School Emergency Operations Plans*, which stated "lessons learned from school emergencies highlight the importance of preparing school officials and first responders to implement emergency operations plans" (p. 1). Regardless, schools are unique and each one poses its own challenges. These challenges are unfortunate as it makes deterring a tragedy difficult. Through focus group sessions, the participants discussed this challenge facing schools within the district, and ultimately, across the nation. This realization was supported by Freeman (2015) who indicated, "the shooting in Red Lake, Minnesota transpired despite stellar perimeter fencing, metal detectors, video surveillance, access control, and the presence of two uniformed security officers" (Stephens, 2013, as cited in Freeman, 2015, p. 50).

## Presence of School Resource Officers (SRO)

School resource officers (SRO) were viewed by the participants as positive, essential, and effective in prevention of school shootings. In fact, focus group sessions revealed that all stakeholders believe they are key to overall school safety and that there should be an SRO assigned to each campus and two assigned to the high school. Their desire is in conjunction with national statistics as Hall (2015) found "the body of research reveals approximately 20,000 school-based police officers patrol schools on a full-time basis, making this profession one of the fastest growing occupations in public safety" (Brown, 2006 as cited in Hall, 2015, p. 8). Patrolling campus with a visible police officer was found to be essential for this community. These findings support Jones (2001), who maintained,

> Effective patrol is the backbone of any good security and safety program. … There are several different ways or methods to patrol a school campus and they can be used in conjunction with each other. Patrolling methods include foot patrol, vehicle patrol (automobile, bicycle, moped, motorcycle and/or golf cart, conspicuous patrol, inconspicuous patrol, general patrol, selective patrol, stake out, indoor patrol, and outdoor patrol. (p. 95)

Respondents in this study further claimed that school resource officers provide school campuses a presence that deters people from creating crimes. They also emphasized the importance of visibility and consistent patrol of the campus. One concern parents expressed was that SRO's need to feel pressure to do their job and not be overwhelmed with too many responsibilities. A parent stated,

> With what we saw in Florida (Parkland), officers need to feel pressure to do their job. If the other guy is going to do it, I have to do it too. That competition of two, but it costs money to have that.

This attitude was reinforced by Brydolf (2013), who discovered in an interview with Ron Davis, chief of the East Palo Alto Police Department, "Davis believes school resource officers can make schools safer. But he says too many campus police wind up disciplining students for minor infractions, issuing tickets and citations and stepping into matters best handled by teachers and school administrators" (para. 27). In the most recent mass shooting on February 14, 2018, at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, which killed 17 people, the school resource officer made national news. According to Keneally (2018), "Law enforcement officers freezing under pressure has come into the spotlight after reports that the school resource officer at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, did not go into the building when the deadly shooting was unfolding" (para. 6).

## *Ballistic Glass in Entrance Lobby*

Ballistic glass had been recently installed in all district schools of this study and was the most obvious safety upgrade parents, teachers, and support staff have interacted with. Through that interaction in each entrance lobby, participants mentioned the glass frequently with several parents perceiving it as positive, essential, and effective. Focus group participants felt the lobby renovations, which included large sections of ballistic glass, provided a barrier that ensured safety and deterred possible violence. A support staff employee mentioned in a focus group session,

> Anyone who enters any of the district schools is going to see the safety upgrades. Anybody who comes on the campus, or might be casing the campus, will see that and might think that we have more upgrades that are not visible.

This is consistent with a recent focus group study by Massey-Jones (2013) that reported on teachers' perceptions of school safety: "The building has a large amount of glass at the entrances and teachers feel that it is a vulnerable area. It is not bullet proof glass and could be broken or shot out to allow someone to enter similar to Sandy Hook" (p. 75). This overwhelming support of ballistic glass is consistent

with Gay (2016), who stated "the idea of protecting and reinforcing glass has been recommended by school safety experts for quite a while. This simple measure can deter, delay, or completely prevent unauthorized entrance to school buildings through glass windows and doors" (para. 2). The use of ballistic glass is a relatively new upgrade option and many schools were built prior to its popularity. Focus group participants explored ballistic window film as an option for the massive amount of windows on the various school campuses, especially the high school. Due to its cost, many schools across the nation have installed ballistic window film as an alternative. This reasoning is supported by Tanber (2017), who reported, "installation of shatter-proof windows and entryway reconstruction has proven to be cost-prohibitive for many schools…increasingly, they have turned to safety and security window film installation as a reliable and cost-effective alternative" (para. 4). Ballistic window film also serves multiple purposes, which made it favorable with parents and teachers. That attribute is consistent with Plummer (2017), who stated, "window film now plays a role in many safety and security applications. Those include graffiti mitigation, blast mitigation and even making glass more safe by helping to keep dangerous shards of glass together when impacted by storms or high winds" (para. 4).

The idea of creating one fortified entry point on campus was overwhelmingly supported in focus group discussions. The desire to limit entry and exit points on campus is maintained by Total Security Solutions (n.d.), a specialist in creating safe lobbies for public buildings, who suggested that "the most cost-effective solution involves funneling all visitors to your main entrance and securing that entryway with a custom bullet-resistant barrier" (para. 11).

The major findings, emergency response plans, school resource officers, and ballistic glass were somewhat expected to be seen as positive, essential, and effective. Those safety mechanisms are popular with school districts, easy to implement, and already exist in many schools. However, the results of the study reinforced the importance of these safety mechanisms and provide policymakers data to drive future decisions in regard to safety planning and proper funding of schools.

## Interesting Surprises

Surprises were found in this mixed-methods study on school safety. These surprises were discovered through discussion with several stakeholders, which show when all stakeholders, parents, support staff, and teachers/administrators in the school community are asked, suggestions emerge that should be considered.

*Weapon Sniffing Dogs*  Weapon sniffing dogs emerged as a potential solution to open, outdoor campuses with multiple entry points. Focus group participants were intrigued by the possibility of using these highly trained dogs to alert staff to potential danger and patrol campus. A parent stated,

> I really like the idea of the dog, for dual purposes and for budget reasons.

Utilizing a trained dog at entry points would provide an additional layer of security that is convenient and efficient. The presence of the dog would also potentially deter students and adults from bringing weapons on campus due to the fear of alerting the dog. The ability to attack an active shooter or perpetrator would offer another service that could save lives. A support staff employee stated in their focus group,

> I have even heard that with the weapon sniffing dogs that if they hear a shooter that they would come and attack the shooter. That would be helpful to assist in the instance of an active shooter too, so that would be cool.

*Fire Drill Protocols*   Some school shootings have occurred by utilizing fire drill protocols to target students. This was a concern of parents, teachers, and support staff in focus group sessions. On March 24, 1998, at Westside Middle School in Jonesboro, Arkansas, two boys "pulled a fire alarm and lured students out of classrooms where they opened fire killing five people" (Stanford Library, 2016, para 5). This study found that stakeholders believe that it is essential to rethink fire evacuation drills and upgrade alarm systems to distinguish between a pulled alarm and one tripped naturally. A support staff employee indicated,

> We should change the procedure to where we do not evacuate. My specific post is at the bus drop off, for me there is concern that someone could just drive up and shoot kids that are just standing there.

Should students remain in class when a fire alarm is activated? Should the administration check the campus prior to ordering an evacuation? These questions were examined in focus group sessions, and all participants agreed that immediate evacuation is no longer the safest option. A parent asked,

> Is there a way to not rely on the pulled the alarm, but say we have a code that only the teachers know?

During the focus group session, several parents pointed out that they couldn't remember the last school tragedy induced by fire. While discussing monthly fire drills a parent asked,

> When was the last casualty related to a fire?

Another parent responded,

> I couldn't tell you.

However, they all referenced several school shootings, including Jonesboro that showed they remembered the use of fire drill protocols as a means to hurt students. This revelation led many in the focus groups to agree that school administration should call for an evacuation, not the alarm system.

*Perimeter Fencing*   Another surprise in the findings was the view of many participants that perimeter fencing, and more importantly single-entry points on school campuses, was positive, essential, and effective. This opinion is consistent with Hanover Research (2013): "Ornamental fences, such as wrought iron, steel, or aluminum fencing, offer an option that cannot be easily scaled or vandalized" (p. 12).

Parent focus groups especially mentioned the need for all school sites to increase fencing and add self-closing gates with panic bars. Hanover Research (2013) confirmed the usefulness of such barriers: "According to ASIS International vulnerability assessment models, ornamental fences delay intruders for a minute or more. In the same model, a chain-link fence delays intruders for only four seconds" (p. 12). Stakeholders also noted that utilizing one entry point with a weapon sniffing dog was key. A parent stated,

> Having one entry and one exit, with the dog and a police officer there would be effective.

While metal detectors were not part of this study, they were brought up in the open-ended survey question on overall school safety and in focus groups. Several stakeholders felt that metal detectors should be installed on all campuses. However, when probed about weapon sniffing dogs in lieu of metal detectors, many respondents stated they favored the dogs over the metal detectors. The efficiency of the dog and the negative connotation of having a metal detector in a relatively safe community were cited by some parents. One parent stated,

> Having the dog instead of the metal detectors would be great as kids love therapy dogs and stuff like that.

*Mental Health Services*  Although the findings of the questionnaire did not support mental health services as one of the top three safety mechanisms perceived, they were mentioned frequently in the qualitative data. The uncertainty of the mental health world was noted by the researcher in focus group sessions, and the services were always discussed in the most general of terms. Parents, teachers, and support staff all agreed that mental health services are needed; they just didn't know how to implement them in schools. One interesting point made in the parent focus group was the stigma that can be associated with mental health services and parents denying that their child needs help. A parent stated on the topic of mental health services,

> It sounds like it's not about affordability, but people do not want to be labeled as their kid needs to have counseling.

The affordability of mental health services was also discussed in focus groups. Many participants felt that those services were unattainable for many families due to financial reasons. A concerned parent explained,

> When it comes to the services that are available, if you are a middle-class person, they are more limited for mental health.

## Conclusions

Our nation is facing an epidemic of school violence and unfortunately the solution is quite complicated. Safety upgrades and protocols can save lives and prevent school violence. Unfortunately, by the time an emergency response plan is

activated, a school resource officer leaps into action, and lockdown procedures are initiated, it is too late, and we can only hope that those safety mechanisms save lives. Preventing school violence has to begin with how people treat others and offering help to those who feel hope has departed. School leaders need to begin by creating a culture and climate on campus that fosters respect and opportunity for all students to find success. Ensuring that each school in America has undergone a vulnerability assessment and taken those findings to their decision-makers for the implementation of safety upgrades is key to prevention. Examining past tragedies and having conversations with site emergency response teams will help prevent a tragedy from being replicated. Finally, we need to provide students opportunities to receive mental health services and give them a place to go and a person to listen to their problems.

The findings here that are supported by the literature suggest that safety upgrades and protocols are viewed positively by parents, teachers, and support staff. The findings also suggest the importance of having a thorough emergency response plan that is frequently updated, school resource officers patrolling campus, and installation of ballistic glass and film throughout campus. Limiting access to schools by providing a single-entry point and ensuring that the entry point is well fortified and supervised is essential. High-definition cameras, concrete bollards, and mental health services are also key to school safety, and even trying an innovative approach like utilizing a weapon sniffing dog might provide additional security.

## Recommendations for Consideration

Knowing that it is impossible to predict the unpredictable, as one parent stated, here are recommendations for school leaders to consider to improve their school safety. Regardless of safety upgrades and protocols, police presence, and a masterful emergency response plan, school districts are always playing defense against the next school shooter. School districts will continue to react to what has happened to the next victim school and try their best to avoid a similar attack at their own school.

- Consider having local police and emergency response personnel conduct a vulnerability assessment on each campus within a school district. Vulnerability assessments allow experts in the field to help school leadership plan and upgrade their facilities and their protocols.
- Ensure that each school has a comprehensive emergency response plan that addresses a variety of emergencies. Ensure that each site's plan is unique to the school and addresses the recommendations of the vulnerability assessment.
- Consider increasing the number of lockdown drills that are completed each year. In doing so, consider varying each lockdown drill to ensure that they address realistic situations that are unique to the site. For example, have a lockdown drill during a fire drill. Increase trainings for these situations by hosting professional development opportunities, parent forums, and training videos for students.

- Provide each school with an assigned school resource officer. Consider multiple officers at large schools. Ensure that resource officers patrol throughout the day and know the students they serve.
- Eliminate multiple entry points at school sites and provide a single-entry point that is upgraded with ballistic glass, ballistic drywall, a buzzer system for doors, and motion detection cameras that record all interactions.
- Install additional ornamental fencing on the perimeter of each campus with self-closing gates that are equipped with panic bars.
- Install high-definition cameras on each site that also provide motion detection on entry points and vulnerable areas on campus. Ensure that local police have remote access to the video feed to ensure they have quicker response times and have critical knowledge of the situation prior to arrival.
- Provide staff with panic buttons that alert administration and police of an emergency situation. If funding exists, link panic buttons to electronic doors and locks to truly lockdown the facility.
- Consider acquiring a weapon sniffing dog that is on duty at the main entry to the school and patrols the campus throughout the day, especially at sites that are open and have outside hallways and meeting places. Ensure that the dog is trained to attack an active shooter, which will provide additional time for police response.
- Install ballistic window film throughout the school, especially in areas that provide access to the public from the perimeter of the school.
- Provide school administration and security with golf carts to allow them quick access to patrol the campus and ensure a quick response to potential situations.
- Conduct a school culture and climate assessment. This allows students, staff, parents, and the local community to provide feedback and allows for collaboration in regard to school safety.
- Provide substitute teachers and visitors on campus with emergency response instructions, including keys in the case of a lockdown.
- Consider meeting with the local fire department and discuss upgrading fire drill protocols. Inquire with local fire personnel about the possibility of changing the immediate evacuation protocol, and consider evacuation after school administration has had an opportunity to investigate the situation. Train staff to use common sense and check their surroundings for a fire before making a decision to evacuate or stay in the classroom.
- Provide access to mental health services via the school district. Eliminate the obstacle of attaining services by providing them on campus. Invest money in mental health services as a preventative measure.
- Create a culture and climate on campus where students feel respected and bullying, harassment, and isolation are eliminated. Encourage that all students on campus belong to a club, sport, or activity to ensure that they are not isolated and have positive social interaction at school.
- Inspect each classroom and common area on campus and clearly mark the area that students are to assemble in a lockdown situation. Provide items that can be used as protection in an active shooter situation.

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# Chapter 13
# Examining School Administrators' Perceptions of School-Based Violence Prevention Strategies

**Dixie Friend Abernathy**

**Abstract**  Our nation has engaged in a decades-long discussion and debate on the prevention of violence in our nation's schools. Equipment, strategies, programs, and "cutting-edge" tools have been purchased, piloted, implemented, and employed—all with a common goal in mind: the assurance of a safe learning environment for all students and all educators. In 2018, the Wayland H. Cato, Jr. School of Education at Queens University of Charlotte sought to add to this discussion by seeking out the perceptions of the very administrators who lead in these K-12 learning institutions. Through a representative survey of over 100 North Carolina K-12 school leaders, insight was gathered regarding the school safety strategies that hold the most promise—and those that are the least effective—through the lens of the school leader. Research participants included leaders from private, charter, and traditional public schools, as well as leaders from elementary, middle, and high school levels. The findings and recommendations in this study add to the ongoing national discussion surrounding the safety of our nation's schools and students.

**Keywords**  School safety · Violence prevention · School leader · School administrator · School shootings · Education · Resource officer · Student mental health

## Introduction

> Public policymakers, school administrators, police officials, and parents continue to search for explanations for the targeted violence that occurred at Columbine High School and other schools across the country, and seek assurance that similar incidents will not be repeated at educational institutions in their communities. (United States Secret Service & United States Department of Education, 2004, p. 6)

This quote, included in the final report of the Safe School Initiative, a joint endeavor by the United States Secret Service and the United States Department of Education,

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certainly echoes the sentiments felt and shared in the year 2018, yet this report and the findings at its foundations were issued in 2004. Such has been the cyclical nature of the outrage and inaction surrounding school violence and, more specifically, school shootings. In seeking "assurance" (as stated in the cited report above), we declare "never again" …yet, assurance is fleeting and *again* seems, at times, tragically inevitable. As invested stakeholder groups, including parents, students, and politicians, continue to seek out answers and wisdom in moving forward, it is critical to seek out the advisement and perceptions of the very people who stand at the helm of the schools themselves—the school leaders. It is the school leader who will be in the position to make decisions about safety protocol, teacher training and preparation, facility security and monitoring, student discipline, evacuation practices and processes, supervision patterns of staff, and many other safety-related annual rituals. It is also the school leader who will be on the front line of an unexpected school violence incidence—and the first person to make split-second, potentially lifesaving decisions regarding employees, students, and community. In considering the viewpoints and perspectives on how to keep our nation's schools safe, the voice of the school administrator is of critical importance.

## Historical Context

Much of the discussion surrounding this topic in America may center on the recent 2018 school shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, and on the tragic loss of 17 students and faculty. In the days that followed this carnage, President Donald Trump gathered with parents, educators, researchers, and students to discuss the event and how we may move forward in preventing violence on our school campuses. This was not, however, the first time our nation collectively called for action. Between 1995 and 1999, seven multiple-fatality school shootings occurred in our nation, resulting in 33 deaths and including the Columbine High School tragedy of 1999. These prompted then President Bill Clinton to establish a White House committee of experts to advise him on the subject of violence in our schools. Following the 2012 shootings at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, "governors, legislators, and education leaders from across the country signaled their intentions to pursue legislation and policy to improve school safety" (Education Commission of States, 2013, p. 1).

At present, there are no less than 25 state and national consortiums, centers, and websites designed specifically for the study of advisement on the topic of keeping schools safe (Education Commission of States, 2013). One such database is the Indicators of School Crime and Safety (ISCS) report, an annual summary and data warehouse produced jointly by the US Department of Education and the US Department of Justice as part of the National Center for Education Statistics (2017). An analysis of the 2017 ISCS, the 20th such report of its kind, reveals increases in the number of school resource officers in our nation's schools, the use of security cameras and metal detectors, and the frequency of teacher and staff training. The

same report, however, also reveals that during the 2015–2016 school year, "about 69% of schools recorded one or more violent incidents of crime" (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2017, p. v).

There is a plethora of data that supports the premise that, statistically speaking, children are safer in school than in other segments of their lives in their neighborhoods, communities, or homes (Malcolm & Swearer, 2018). Nonetheless, when violence does occur, whether in mass form or to one lone child, the school climate, the community's trust, and the overall teaching and learning are negatively and, perhaps irreparably, impacted.

## Under a School's Control

In examining the potential effectiveness in terms of school safety initiatives, it is critical to first define what is meant by school safety. The school safety conversation cannot be solely limited to school shootings or high-profile tragedies involving mass violence, injuries, or death. Of related relevance to school leaders as well as to communities as a whole are school violence incidents involving bullying, assault, physical threats, or gang-related incidents. School leaders are charged with the safety of the student population from any and all corners, from within the building itself and extending to external threats from strangers or acquaintances.

Perhaps more prominently covered in media, mass shootings such as Columbine-style school shootings are statistically infrequent (Fox & Fridel, 2016; Malcolm & Swearer, 2018; Nicodemo & Petronia, 2018). While "about 50.7 million students" attend public schools each day across our country (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018, p. 1), over the past 25 years, an average of 10 students were killed each year by gun-related violence while attending school (Nicodemo & Petronia, 2018). In contrast, "about 800 school-aged children are killed in motor vehicle crashes during normal school travel hours" each school year (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, Medicines, 2002, p. 1). It is also relevant to recognize that "between July 1, 2014, and June 30, 2015, a total of 20 of the 1168 homicides of school-age youth (ages 5–18) occurred at school" (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017, p. iv). Statistics such as these may alleviate some fears of a school violence epidemic, but they also tell just part of the story. More difficult to measure is the inevitable impact on school climate, parent uncertainty, and student learning when school environments are perceived as unsafe.

## The Impact of Mental Health

In Grant Duwe's *Patterns and Prevalence of Mass Public Shootings in the United States, 1915–2013*, Duwe (2017) considers a longitudinal examination of mass shootings and the evolution of school shootings as part of this horrendous

phenomenon. One conclusion reached by Duwe is that "while not all mass public shooters have a history of mental illness, a little more than 60% had been either diagnosed with a mental disorder or demonstrated signs of serious mental illness prior to the attack" (2017, p.9).

School staff are often aware of significant behavior or social issues even before parents or medical professionals. Even with early identification, schools are often ill-equipped to address serious mental health issues within the traditional learning environment. School leaders may be encouraged to refer students demonstrating troubled behavior to community health or law enforcement; however, a study of the Parkland shooter would suggest that such referrals may not receive appropriate follow-up outside of the schooling experience (Malcolm & Swearer, 2018).

Citing several studies over the past two decades, the National Association of School Psychologists has concluded that school mental health services are "integral to student success because mental health directly affects the development and learning of children and adolescents" (2013, p. 2). This support should come from trained mental health professionals, such as counselors, psychologists, and social workers.

Unfortunately, of the millions of students in our nation's schools, "1 in 5 show signs of a mental health disorder" (NPR, 2016, p. 2). It is also estimated that of these students facing mental health challenges, "nearly 80% won't receive counseling. Or therapy. Or medication. They won't get any treatment at all" (NPR, 2016, p. 6). These "five million affected students" (NPR, 2016, p. 6) are in our schools, yet our administrators and teachers are trained in education, not medical treatments, and those support personnel who do have medical-based expertise (psychologists, nurses, counselors) are often allotted in scarce ratios (Harris, 2014). For example, "in 2014–2015, the student-to-school counselor ratio was 482-to-1, according to the American School Counselor Association, nearly twice the organization's recommended ratio" (Nicodemo & Petronia, 2018, p. 5).

## The Role of Relationships

In the early days after the Parkland school shooting, many of the questions centered upon how so many red flags could have resulted in so few interventions. The 19-year-old shooter was "the subject of dozens of 911 calls and at least two separate tips to the FBI" (Rose & Booker, 2018, p. 1), yet all proved insufficient in preventing the Parkland tragedy.

Educators experience much in the line of training, such as how to look for signs of potential suicidal thoughts or how to recognize gang recruitment gestures. At present, over two-thirds of schools and districts conduct active-shooter drills, running educators through realistic practice simulations of a school shooting scenario (Engel, 2018). Teachers are taught how to detect discussions or writings involving death, depression, or rage—and are also trained in how to respond in times of emergency—whether it be a traditional fire drill or a practice lockdown or shelter-in-place in preparation for the unthinkable. Educators are also aware and reminded of

the signs and impact of bullying, and this is particularly relevant in light of research indicating that many perpetrators of school violence share feelings of bullying or injury at the hands of others (United States Secret Service & United States Department of Education, 2004). With the prevalence of technological tools and communication means, it is also relevant to cite the obvious "disconnectedness" demonstrated by so many of the perpetrators of school violence. In addition to less than ideal family and home situations of many of these school shooters (Malcolm & Swearer, 2018), it is also often apparent that they are relatively isolated young people living on the outskirts of societal norms. Duwe (2017) adds in his research that "it is perhaps unsurprising that they are often distrustful and socially isolated" (p. 30). In this age of instant social communication, interpersonal teacher-student relationships may be more critical than ever. As stated in the work of Schwartz et al. (2016) for the National Institute of Justice, "school climate is one element that affects the likelihood of violence occurring in a school" (p. 1). In terms of interpersonal relations, teachers are the educators who are often most relevant to the student's academic and social development and, thus, realize significant relationship-building potential.

## A Weaponized Defense

In considering actions or approaches that may be effective in preventing future school violence, one of the most often discussed may be the impact of a continuous law enforcement presence on a school's campus. According to a study conducted by the FBI, the majority of school shooting incidents "ended in five minutes or less" (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2013, p. 8). While the presence of law enforcement often stops or brings to a close a violent act on a school campus, proponents of increased law enforcement presence on a permanent basis in our schools might argue that the quicker this encounter takes place (between police and perpetrator), the quicker any violence or injury ceases or is prevented all together.

Another idea that has gained or lost steam, depending on the perspective, is the idea of administrators, teachers, or other staff either carrying weapons or having access to weapons while on the job at school. The debate includes strong sentiments associated with everything from accidental discharge or whether a teacher's natural role should be that of first responder (Hartocollis & Fortin, 2018). Proponents of this approach may be most driven by media reports that school shooters have often sought out targets based on the likelihood of an armed defense. Those in support of this approach may also point to a much-reduced response time if those in the school, under attack, actually were armed and able to put up a defense themselves, in protection of themselves and their students. Critics of this approach point to fears of increased injury or death, whether intentional or not, as more weapons are actually inside the traditionally "gun-free" zones of our schoolhouses. States such as Utah, Alabama, Rhode Island, Wyoming, New Hampshire, Oregon, and Alaska have all allowed teachers and staff to conceal-carry weapons on public school campuses,

with no incidents of accidental or intentional student injury or death as a result (Malcolm & Swearer, 2018). In a few school districts in the state of Ohio, while teachers and administrators cannot conceal-carry on school grounds, they are given district permission (allowed through state law) to lock their guns in a school safe and to have access to these in the case of an emergency as part of their role on the school's armed response team (Spears, 2018). A 2017 poll found that parents were almost evenly split on their opinion of this approach, with "55% saying they would oppose allowing teachers and school officials to carry guns in K-12 schools [and] 45% saying they would favor" this option (Pew Research Center, 2017, p. 1). There can be no doubt that the analysis of these potential deterrents, as weighed against the impact on school climate and the risk of additional injury, will continue to be a critical one in the ongoing national debate on school violence, and the perceptions of the actual leader who supervises all of these school employees—the school administrator—are key elements to the discussion moving forward.

## The Search for Answers

One element of the ongoing debate on school safety and violence prevention can be the unfortunate tendency to always feel one step behind the perpetrators. Safety measures such as practice active-shooter drills and metal detectors are, according to some, proven to be ineffective as some shootings have taken place despite the implementation of these strategies. Researchers may also note that even when buildings are "locked down" or secure, shooters may still target students on playgrounds or in parking lots (Fox & Fridel, 2016; Stoops, 2018). School shootings often receive significant media coverage, yet there are many types of violence that can impact the safety of students and the climate of a school, including assault, weapons, explosives, and rape. While school-based violence has been on a steady decline since the 1990s (Nicodemo & Petronia, 2018; Schwartz et al., 2016), "approximately one out of every six public schools experienced an incident of serious violence" as recently as the 2009–2010 school year (Schwartz et al., 2016, p. x).

The more current emphasis on research has led to new school safety discoveries, and this empirical base may now lead to a new generation of action and application (Jimerson & Furlong, 2006). A 2018 federal spending bill, signed into law by President Donald Trump, redirects funding previously designated for research to more tangible physical school security measures, training programs, and police presence (Blad, 2018). Beginning in 2014, the National Institute of Justice provided funding to create four national databases in order to track school-level data on crime and safety, the involvement of law enforcement, data on averted school attacks, and school-associated deaths and injuries (National Institute of Justice, 2018). In addition, "over $170 million" in school safety research has been funded through the NIJ since 2015, in the pursuit of research-based strategies and programs (National Institute of Justice, 2018, p. 1).

It cannot be ignored, however, that in the case of any incident of school violence or mass school shooting, there was a school leader—or a team of school leaders—administrators, headmasters, deans, and leaders—people whose job included the difficult early decisions in the effort to keep students and employees safe. These are the people whose responsibilities include staff training, staff selection, staff supervision, student behavior management, safety plans and protocols, facility inspections, safety drills, student monitoring, parent communication in the event of emergencies, calls for lockdowns or evaluations, processing of threats, decisions regarding discipline, and a plethora of other safety-related responsibilities. If all of the nation's school leaders were gathered in one room, what would their impressions be when asked about the key elements and strategies related to school safety and violence prevention? This study is an early first step to answering that very question.

## Surveying of School Administrators

During spring of 2018, a survey designed to gage administrator perceptions of 15 school-based violence prevention strategies was approved through the Queens University of Charlotte Institutional Review Board and was prepared for distribution to a random selection of North Carolina public and private school administrators. This survey included an opportunity for administrators to rate, in terms of perceived effectiveness or potential to be effective, 15 commonly discussed ideas or strategies related to school violence prevention. While much of the national debate on this topic may, at times, be focused on issues related to gun control, parental supervision, mental health support, video game influence, and other pertinent national debate points, this survey and study remained aligned with school-based strategies—those under the control of school or district leadership. In doing so, this study attempted to isolate administrator perceptions to realistic school or district-controlled solutions in terms of whether these would make a difference or not.

The specific 22-question survey (see Appendix) included 15 questions (on a Likert rating scale of 1–10, with 1 representing a strategy perceived as least effective and 10 representing a strategy perceived as most effective), each of which highlighted a specific school violence prevention strategy:

1. Bullying prevention programs
2. Controlled access system (on the school entrance/door)
3. All building perimeter doors closed and locked throughout the day
4. Full-time school resource officer (dedicated to one school)
5. Part-time school resource officer (dedicated to two or more schools)
6. Bookbag or other item searches upon school entry
7. Armed school administrators
8. School administrator access to a secured weapon on site
9. Metal detectors
10. Armed school faculty (selected teachers or other staff)

11. School faculty (selected teachers or other staff) access to a secured weapon on site
12. School security camera system
13. Anonymous school "tip" lines or reporting systems
14. Increased alternative school settings for behavioral or health-related interventions
15. Frequent training of school faculty and staff regarding warning signs or potential threats

Questions 16–20 of the survey collected demographic information by which to more deeply analyze survey results, including information on size of school, leadership role, school venue, and school setting. Questions 21 and 22 were designed to allow participants to provide qualitative information on any of the strategies for which they rated effectiveness in Questions 1–15 and to provide any other perspective relevant to strategies that may not have been included in the survey. The window for survey completion was April and May of 2018, with the survey closing on May 30, 2018. An email with a survey link and information on the research study was sent to selected participants individually with research dates specified and an assurance of anonymity for research participation.

A random sampling of 657 schools (representing 19% of all North Carolina schools) was selected for the research, and the principals, assistant principals, or school leaders of these schools were emailed with a survey link. In order to ensure as accurate a sampling as possible, at least one private school was selected from each of the counties in North Carolina, and all charter schools were selected to receive a survey invitation link. To ensure a representative distribution of public schools received the survey invitation, the author divided the N.C. public schools and districts into the following categories:

Smallest school systems (0–2500 students)
Moderately small school districts (2501–10,000 students)
Medium school districts (10,001–20,000 students)
Moderately large school districts (20,001–30,000 students)
Large school districts (30,001–50,000 students)
Largest school systems (50,001 + students)

Within each of these categories, 5 districts were randomly chosen, and within those 5 districts, 15 schools were randomly chosen, with levels (elementary, middle, and high school) evenly distributed within these 15 schools (note: with the smaller school districts, this was not always possible due to limited number of high schools or schools altogether). Schools in which multiple school leaders existed and for whom email information was available were sent separate links for each school leader (principals, assistant principals, headmasters, etc.). A total of 889 leaders at the 657 selected schools received the survey link.

It should also be noted that during the 2016–2017 school year, 127,847 North Carolina students attended a homeschool (N.C. Department of Public Instruction, 2017; WRAL, 2018). Homeschool parents were not invited to complete the survey

**Table 13.1** North Carolina school enrollment statistics

|  | Private schools | Charter schools | Public schools | Homeschools | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Approximate number of N.C. K-12 students who attend | 101,775 | 89,000 | 1,543,527 | 127,847 | 1,862,149 |
| Percentage of N.C. K-12 students who attend | 5.4% | 4.8% | 83% | 6.8% | 100% |
| Number of schools in N.C. | 752 | 167 | 2477 |  |  |
| Percentage of N.C. schools falling into this category | 22.1% | 4.9% | 73% |  |  |

Sources: North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2018; State of North Carolina Department of Administration, 2017

**Table 13.2** Survey distribution by administrator and school group

|  | # invited | # participating |
|---|---|---|
| Private school administrators | 180 | 13 |
| Charter school administrators | 172 | 31 |
| Public school administrators (traditional/non-charter) | 537 | 57 |
|  | 889 | 101 |

(Author created)

in their role as school leader due to the unique one-to-one learning environment of a homeschool and the many contrasts in security measures for a home (with one or a few students) as opposed to a school that serves hundreds or thousands of students.

At the conclusion of the survey campaign, a total number of 101 invited administrators voluntarily participated in the research. This represented a participation rate of 11.3% of invited participants (Tables 13.1 and 13.2).

Survey data was also analyzed by identifiers such as leadership role within the school, school setting, or size of school. Related demographic data used for these analyses are included in Table 13.3.

## Results

To begin the analysis and interpretation of survey results, ratings from each question were represented in terms of response count, mean, median, and mode. The Likert scale provided for each question included the numbers 1–10, with 1 representing a strategy that was perceived as least effective and 10 representing a strategy that was perceived as most effective. Please see Tables 13.4 and 13.5 for this data.

**Table 13.3**  Survey participant identifiers

| Participant identifiers | Number of participants | % of total participants (%) |
|---|---|---|
| *Leadership role within school* | | |
| Principal | 71 | 70.3 |
| Assistant principal | 22 | 21.8 |
| Other school administrator position | 8 | 7.9 |
| *School category* | | |
| A public school (non-charter) | 57 | 56.4 |
| A charter school | 31 | 30.7 |
| A private school | 13 | 12.9 |
| *Grade level configuration* | | |
| Elementary | 22 | 21.8 |
| Middle school | 17 | 16.8 |
| High school | 27 | 26.7 |
| Multiple (K-8, K-12, etc.) | 35 | 34.7 |
| *School setting* | | |
| Urban | 19 | 18.8 |
| Suburban | 59 | 58.4 |
| Rural | 23 | 22.8 |
| *Student population of school* | | |
| 0–250 | 19 | 18.8 |
| 251–500 | 23 | 22.8 |
| 501–750 | 24 | 23.8 |
| 751–1000 | 13 | 12.9 |
| 1001–1250 | 6 | 5.9 |
| 1251–1500 | 4 | 4 |
| 1501–1750 | 3 | 3 |
| 1751–2000 | 5 | 5 |
| 2001+ | 4 | 4 |

(Author created)

## Survey Conclusions

The immediate and most significant questions to address when initially scanning the survey results are related to how the presented strategies would be ranked when considered in terms of administrator perceptions and preferences. In order to engage in this ranking, it is helpful to first consider the strategy options that received the highest average scores—those scoring an average of 7 or more on a Likert scale of 1–10.

**Highest Ranked Strategies**  The highest ranking strategy, with a mean score of 8.470 (Table 13.5), was the use of increased alternative school settings for behavioral or health-related interventions. As cited in the previous background section, the support and assistance provided to students who are faced with mental or emotional

**Table 13.4** Response counts

| Likert scale rating | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Bullying prevention programs | 0 | 1 | 16 | 10 | 18 | 14 | 18 | 14 | 7 | 3 |
| Controlled access system | 1 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 15 | 8 | 14 | 24 | 21 | 11 |
| Perimeter doors locked | 2 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 7 | 7 | 11 | 24 | 25 | 19 |
| Full-time school resource officer | 3 | 0 | 3 | 5 | 8 | 3 | 7 | 17 | 26 | 28 |
| Part-time school resource officer | 9 | 8 | 15 | 15 | 15 | 15 | 13 | 6 | 3 | 2 |
| Bookbag or other item searches | 5 | 3 | 13 | 8 | 20 | 2 | 23 | 13 | 5 | 7 |
| Armed school administrators | 49 | 7 | 8 | 7 | 7 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 5 |
| School administrator access to secured weapons | 43 | 10 | 10 | 5 | 7 | 2 | 11 | 5 | 3 | 5 |
| Metal detectors | 8 | 4 | 10 | 8 | 17 | 17 | 10 | 10 | 8 | 8 |
| Armed school faculty | 58 | 10 | 11 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 5 | 2 | 4 |
| School faculty access to secured weapons | 51 | 11 | 13 | 2 | 6 | 5 | 5 | 3 | 1 | 2 |
| School security camera systems | 1 | 0 | 5 | 1 | 9 | 12 | 24 | 18 | 9 | 22 |
| Anonymous school "tip" lines | 3 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 16 | 10 | 26 | 16 | 14 | 10 |
| Increased alternative school settings for behavioral or health-related interventions | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 7 | 3 | 8 | 22 | 25 | 33 |
| Frequent training of school faculty and staff regarding warning signs or potential threats | 0 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 4 | 5 | 10 | 33 | 21 | 22 |

(Author created)

**Table 13.5** Ordered mean ranking of strategies

| | Mean | Standard deviation |
|---|---|---|
| Increased alternative school settings for behavioral or health-related interventions | 8.470 | 1.61717 |
| Frequent training of school faculty and staff regarding warning signs or potential threats | 8.080 | 1.74472 |
| Full-time school resource officer | 7.890 | 2.31331 |
| Perimeter doors locked | 7.762 | 2.05011 |
| School security camera systems | 7.426 | 2.01666 |
| Controlled access system | 7.307 | 1.96846 |
| Anonymous school "tip" lines | 6.980 | 2.04530 |
| Bullying prevention programs | 5.891 | 2.00450 |
| Bookbag or other item searches | 5.798 | 2.41162 |
| Metal detectors | 5.670 | 2.54675 |
| Part-time school resource officer | 4.762 | 2.24566 |
| School administrator access to secured weapons | 3.505 | 2.93470 |
| Armed school administrators | 3.212 | 2.86168 |
| School faculty access to secured weapon | 2.707 | 2.40430 |
| Armed school faculty | 2.630 | 2.64252 |

(Author created)

challenges are of tantamount concern to education and medical professionals, yet resources and time may be limited in the traditional school environment. This strategy, as presented on the survey, suggests the existence of an alternative school setting and could include specialized support, individualized interventions, modified learning structures, increased access to counseling, or a plethora of other nontraditional student support systems.

From the author's viewpoint, the existence of this particular strategy at the top of the rankings is also a clear cry for help. For too long, schools and school employees have been held to account for social or community failures that are anything but education- related. Questions aimed at the school's deficiencies or lack of expertise are often the first to be asked in the wake of school violence. Pundits and even non-educational "experts" may inquire as to how could the teachers have missed those warning signs. One survey participant pointed out a common frustration that:

> It sometimes takes years for me to get a student the mental health support needed and that typically happens when the students commits a crime so that they get into the system.

The ranking of this particular strategy as the most effective strategy, as perceived by administrators, points to a reverse outcry from educators—one that asks not for exclusion for children who struggle with mental health challenges—but rather a measured and specialized support for their needs, one that stretches beyond and perhaps temporarily in place of the traditional classroom experience. Several survey participants commented on the need for such an alternative, with the words of one explaining:

> There are not enough options for students with severe emotional disturbances or violent tendencies. States should acknowledge that mental health is an increasing issue amongst all people, including children, and invest in creating schools and facilities tailored to serve and rehabilitate these students in a safe manner. At this time, we are all struggling with students with severe issues housed within our buildings, stretching ourselves thin to try to serve their needs. Consolidating services for these students would be more cost effective and keep everyone safer, and be better for the child.

What these alternative school settings may be, look like, or offer, is a topic for further examination. The first step, however, is recognizing the educator's inevitable reality, as shared by a survey participant through the following statement:

> All the safety measures in the world can be put into place, but if that student continues to struggle with mental health and continues to attend school, a risk of violence is present.

The second highest ranking (Table 13.5) was afforded to the frequent training of faculty and staff regarding warning signs or threats. During the 2015–2016 school year, "76% of schools … were engaged in training teachers on recognizing physical, social or verbal bullying behaviors" (National Center of Education Statistics, 2017, p. iv). The high ranking of this strategy could be viewed as not only an affirmation that this training has the potential to be effective but also that with ongoing transiency of teachers and staff in and out of schools, training must be of high priority and continuous in order to realize this positive effect.

Front and center in the recent debates regarding school safety has been the role and responsibility of law enforcement in preventing and, in the most tragic of circumstances, reacting to violent school acts. The survey participants were given two school resource officer (SRO) options to rank—one being a full-time officer (dedicated to one school for the entirety of the day) and the other being a part-time officer (dedicated to two or more schools). It is interesting to note the significant difference in the perceived effectiveness of these two options. A full-time SRO, with an average score of 7.890 (Table 13.5), was perceived as a highly effective preventative measure, while a part-time SRO, with an average score of 4.762 (Table 13.5), was perceived as ineffective. The mode of responses for the full-time SRO was a 10, and over half of the respondents scored this strategy at either a 9 or a 10 (one of only two strategies in the entire survey receiving this overwhelming endorsement). In the midst of a national discussion on the place of law enforcement on our school campuses, it could be gleaned from this research that not all "law enforcement presence" is equal as viewed through the lens of the school leader, and, in fact, the presence of a part-time SRO is perceived as ineffective. Also of note in this analysis are the varying viewpoints of school leaders from different school settings and school venues. While mean responses were similar across these categories, it is relevant to note how differently private school leaders viewed the potential effectiveness of full-time SRO positions as compared to public school leaders—yet interestingly, the means for the part-time SRO option were very similar (Table 13.6). This could be attributed to more experience with this type of law enforcement presence in public schools or even with the tendency for private schools to be smaller with limited enrollments and smaller facilities.

The next grouping of highly rated strategies (from Table 13.5) are those associated with facility security—perimeter doors locked (7.762), camera systems (7.426), and controlled access systems (7.307). It is pertinent to note that this research was designed to gage perceptions of school violence preventative measures—which include mass school shootings but also could include physical assault (fights, gang violence), the use of other weapons on campus (bombs, knives, etc.), or other violent acts (sexual assault, violence toward staff, etc.). It is evident from these strong mean scores that strategies seen as fortifying the school building against threats from the outside or enhancing monitoring or observation of threats from the inside are seen to have a high potential for effectiveness.

**Table 13.6** Participant group means for SRO options

|                                      | Full-time SRO | Part-time SRO |
| ------------------------------------ | ------------- | ------------- |
| Public school (non-charter) leader   | 8.768         | 4.877         |
| Charter school leader                | 7.000         | 4.806         |
| Private school leader                | 6.231         | 4.154         |
| Urban school leader                  | 8.526         | 5.895         |
| Suburban school leader               | 7.414         | 4.237         |
| Rural school leader                  | 8.565         | 5.174         |

(Author created)

**Lowest Ranked Strategies**  In contrast to the six strategies receiving strong marks from the survey participants in Table 13.5, there were also four options that were ranked glaringly lower than all other options, as highlighted below (Table 13.7).

Two of the options related to this topic (Table 13.7) involved the leaders themselves—giving administrators access to secured weapons and allowing administrators to be armed at all times. Considering the responses of private school leaders in isolation and solely in relation to armed school administrators, this strategy was actually scored at a mean level (5.000)—notably higher than the mean rank given by private school leaders to the option of a part-time SRO (4.154). However, when considered in terms of all school leaders completing the survey, both "armed administrator" options scored dismally low—with means of 3.505 and 3.212, respectively. In addition, both resulted in a median score of 2 and a mode of 1—with over half of these school leaders selecting a 1 or a 2 (the two lowest scores available) for these two "weaponized administrator" options. Survey participants also took the time to provide many comments related to these options, the most comments of any topic on the survey, with remarks sharing not only a professional rebuke of these approaches but a personal rejection of them as well. One such participant comment follows:

> Being armed myself (I have never handled a gun in my life other than maybe in a history museum) …or having my own children's teachers/administrators armed would make me feel VERY unsafe. Unsafe to the point that I would probably quit my job.

In the perceptions of the survey participants, there was no worse idea, no least effective strategy given, than arming administrators, *except* the arming of the school's faculty. When given the same two options for the teachers and staff, school administrators perceived those approaches to be the least effective of all 15 strategies surveyed (Table 13.7). When sharing comments, survey participants used words such as "emotional volatility" and "dubious" to share their weariness of these approaches. These two options (faculty access to weapons and armed school faculty) not only received the lowest average scores of the survey but also both resulted in a median and a mode of 1. These results are quite compelling and unwavering, as over half of the survey participants selected a score of 1 for each of these two "weaponized faculty options." One participant summed up the potential for unintended consequences with this statement: *teachers get purses stolen or desks broken into way too often to think a gun would be safe.* Perhaps more telling, however, were the

**Table 13.7**  Lowest ranking strategies by mean scores

|  | Mean | Standard deviation |
| --- | --- | --- |
| School administrator access to secured weapons | 3.505 | 2.93470 |
| Armed school administrators | 3.212 | 2.86168 |
| School faculty access to secured weapons | 2.707 | 2.40430 |
| Armed school faculty | 2.630 | 2.64252 |

(Author created)

statements which pointed to a blurring of lines and an inappropriate allocation of roles of responsibilities. One participant shared this sentiment with the following comment: *We should not ask educators to serve as security just as we would not ask security personnel to serve as teachers.*

## Conclusions

Perhaps most interesting when analyzing the results of this research as a whole is the overwhelming lack of confidence displayed by these administrators in considering the potential effectiveness of arming educators within schools. While nationally, 45 percent of survey participants viewed this strategy favorably (Pew Research Center, 2017), school administrators appear to see scant merit in this approach. A paradigm shift of this magnitude (arming educators) for our nation's schools would certainly be unsuccessful without the endorsement and support of the school leader. This research would suggest that such support may not exist. This research study would also suggest that more is needed in terms of gaging school leader input into this potential "armed educator" approach as well as increased education, training, or research in order to impact administrator perceptions moving forward.

In addition, the administrators involved in this research offered a clear distinction in considering part-time law enforcement presence—rating this as ineffective. In other words, a piecemeal approach won't work. This research data suggests the need for a "wake-up call" to political leaders, especially those who write and promote budgetary recommendations, and to those who are tempted to blur the lines between educator, law enforcement, and health professional. This research suggests that school leaders are very clear in their conviction that these are three separate roles with three specialized areas of expertise related to each.

One strength of the survey (brevity, with only 15 strategies analyzed) could also be seen as a shortcoming. There are a myriad of new and "in development" school safety strategies as well as tried-and-true approaches—all of which should be explored in terms of school leader perspective. Just in terms of technology, Schwartz et al. identified 12 potential ways that technology could make a positive difference in terms of school violence prevention, including identification systems, social media monitoring, and emergency alerts (2016).

Because recent mass school shootings have involved primarily public schools (Sandy Hook Elementary School, Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School), the tendency is to sometimes consider this challenge in terms of a public school challenge. This angle is understandably based on statistics—as the vast majority of K-12 students in our nation do attend a public school. Yet, this would be a philosophically incorrect approach. Preventing school violence is a challenge and a calling for all of our nation's schools: traditional public, charter, and private, and it is relevant to recognize the comparatively similar mean responses among the various types of school leaders included in the survey. For example, private, public, and charter school leaders were in agreement regarding the perceived ineffectiveness of arming

school personnel as well as the perceived effectiveness of providing alternative school settings in support of students with mental health challenges.

## Recommendations for Consideration

This research uncovered compelling support for two strategies in particular:

1.  The inclusion of full-time law enforcement presence in our schools
2.  The availability of alternative settings for students in need of mental health support

Both of these strategies are tied significantly to budgetary decisions as well as to workforce development and availability of specialists. Are there enough police officers for every school? Are there enough nurses and psychologists to serve every student in need? Addressing these workforce and support structure needs is critical as the research and discussions on this topic continue.

The quest to discover and implement the most effective means to school safety is one that touches all schools and all educators. Forums, roundtables, and research moving forward should continue to include a mosaic of educational voices to add to our nation's school safety blueprint. Wherever children are gathered in the pursuit of learning, we must speak with one voice—a voice that cries out "never again."

## Appendix: Survey

**1. Bullying Prevention Programs**

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

**2. Controlled Access System (on the school entrance/door)**

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

**3. All building perimeter doors closed and locked throughout day**

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

**4. Full time School Resource Officer (dedicated to one school)**

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

**5. Part time School Resource Officer (dedicated to two or more schools)**

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

**6. Bookbag or other item searches upon school entry**

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

**7. Armed school administrators**

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

**8. School administrator access to a secured weapon on site**

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

**9. Metal detectors**

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

**10. Armed school faculty (selected teachers or other staff)**

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

**11. School faculty (selected teachers or other staff) access to a secured weapon on site**

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

**12. School security camera systems**

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

**13. Anonymous school "tip" lines or reporting systems**

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

**14. Increased alternative school settings for behavioral or health-related interventions**

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

**15. Frequent training of school faculty and staff regarding warning signs or potential threats**

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

**16. I currently serve as a(n):**

○ principal

○ assistant principal

○ other school administrator position

**17. I serve as a school administrator for:**

○ a public school (non-charter)

○ a charter school

○ a private school

**18. The general grade level for my school is:**

○ Elementary School

○ Middle School

○ High School

○ Multiple levels (ex.:K-8; K-12, etc.)
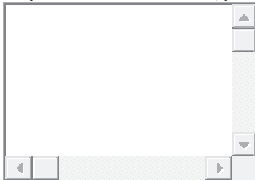
**19. Of the following choices, the one that most accurately describes the location of my school is:**

○ Urban

○ Suburban

○ Rural
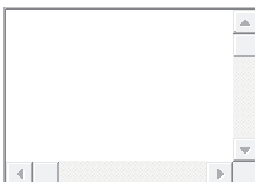
**20. The student population of my school is:**

○ 0-250 students

○ 250-500 students

○ 500-750 students

○ 750-1,000 students

○ 1,000-1,250 students

○ 1,250-1,500 students

○ 1,500-1,750 students

○ 1,750-2,000 students

○ 2,000 students +

**21. If there are school violence prevention measures that were not featured in Questions #1-15 that you consider to hold the potential for effectiveness, please share those here.**

**22. As an educator serving in a school administrator role, share any insight, thoughts or concerns you may have regarding any of the school violence prevention measures highlighted in Questions #1-15:**

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# Chapter 14
# School Liability in School Shooting Cases

**M. David Alexander**

**Abstract** This article reviewed litigation that was spawned by school shootings. The litigation commenced after the Columbine shooting where 15 cases were decided. The Columbine cases and subsequent shooting litigation, both in state and federal courts, determined that the defendants prevailed; therefore, no liability existed. These decisions were the result of the high legal liability standards established by the federal courts under the Fourteenth Amendment and in state courts on the issue of governmental immunity where school boards, school offices, and law enforcement officers were held not liable since they could not have foreseen the horrific acts of private individuals who committed the acts.

**Keywords** Liability · Columbine · Fourteenth Amendment · Schools · Shooting · Due process · Governmental immunity

## Introduction

The United States has experienced a wrath of school shootings both in elementary and secondary education and at the college and university level in the last two decades. After these senseless shootings and knowing that their loved ones could not be brought back, parents, survivors, and others sought monetary damages through the judicial process. These individuals sought compensation for medical costs for those injured and other expenses, such as pain and suffering. These cases have been litigated in both state and federal courts based on numerous legal theories. The most common litigation in federal courts has revolved around the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment of the US Constitution. State court litigation has primarily been brought under tort laws of the state, specifically focusing on the school being negligent in carrying out its duties to protect the students.

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The tragic shooting in the fall of 1999 at the Columbine High School in Colorado led to lawsuits with litigation commencing in 2001 and continuing to 2018. The Columbine litigation raised legal issues in both federal and state courts. The majority of all reported school shooting cases originated from the Columbine incident with 15 cases; there have been other shootings throughout the country, but those shootings combined have not generated as many court cases as the Columbine incident.

The Columbine cases covered the spectrum of legal challenges with the plaintiffs being students who survived the shooting,[1] parents of murdered students,[2] parents of wounded students,[3] the estate of a teacher who was killed,[4] and students who witnessed the shooting.[5] The defendants included the sheriff,[6] sheriff's department,[7] Jefferson County Board of Commissioners,[8] police officers,[9] parents of shooters,[10] principal,[11] assistant principal,[12] school resource officer,[13] manufacturers of drugs

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[1] Shoels ex rel. Shoels v. Stone, 2001 WL 1808549 (D. Colo. 2001); Rohrbough v. Stone, 189 F. Supp. 2d 1088 (D. Colo. 2001).

[2] Reuggegger v. Jefferson County Board of Commissioners, 197 F. Supp. 2d 1247 (D. Colo. 2001).

[3] Reuggegger v. Jefferson County Board of Commissioners, 197 F. Supp. 2d 1247 (D. Colo. 2001); Castaldo v. Stone, 191 F. Supp. 2d 1196 (D. Colo. 2002).

[4] Sanders v. Board of County Commissioners of County of Jefferson, Colorado, 192 F. Supp. 2d 1094 (D. Colo. 2001); Sanders v. Acclaim Entertainment, Inc. 188 F. Supp. 2d 1264 (D. Colo. 2002).

[5] Schnurr v. Board of Commissioners of Jefferson County, 189 F. Supp. 2d 1105 (D. Colo. 2001).

[6] Rohrbough v. Stone, 189 F. Supp. 2d 1088 (D. Colo. 2001); Ruggegger v. Jefferson County Board of Commissioners, 197 F. Supp. 2d 1247 (D. Colo. 2001); Schnurr v. Board of Commissioners of Jefferson County, 189 F. Supp. 2d 1105 (D. Colo. 2001); Castaldo v. Stone, 191 F. Supp. 2d 1196 (D. Colo. 2002); Shoels v. Stone, 2002 WL 423456 (D. Colo. 2002); Ireland v. Jefferson Sheriff's Department, 193 F. Supp. 2d 1201 (D. Colo. 2002).

[7] Rohrbough v. Stone, 189 F. Supp. 2d 1088 (D. Colo. 2001); Ruggegger v. Jefferson County Board of Commissioners, 197 F. Supp. 2d 1247 (D. Colo. 2001); Schnurr v. Board of Commissioners of Jefferson County, 189 F. Supp. 2d 1105 (D. Colo. 2001); Castaldo v. Stone, 191 F. Supp. 2d 1196 (D. Colo. 2002); Shoels v. Stone, 2002 WL 423456 (D. Colo. 2002); Ireland v. Jefferson Sheriff's Department, 193 F. Supp. 2d 1201 (D. Colo. 2002).

[8] Rohrbough v. Stone, 189 F. Supp. 2d 1088 (D. Colo. 2001); Ruggegger v. Jefferson County Board of Commissioners, 197 F. Supp. 2d 1247 (D. Colo. 2001); Schnurr v. Board of Commissioners of Jefferson County, 189 F. Supp. 2d 1105 (D. Colo. 2001); Castaldo v. Stone, 191 F. Supp. 2d 1196 (D. Colo. 2002); Shoels v. Stone, 2002 WL 423456 (D. Colo. 2002).

[9] Rohrbough v. Stone, 189 F. Supp. 2d 1088 (D. Colo. 2001).

[10] Shoels v. Kiebold, 375 F.3d 1054 (10th Cir. [Colo.] 2004).

[11] Shoels v. ex rel. Shoels v. Stone, 2001 WL 1808549 (D. Colo. 2001); Castalda v. Stone, 191 F. Supp. 2d 1196 (D. Colo. 2002); Ireland v. Jefferson Sheriff's Department, 193 F. Supp. 2d 1201 (D. Colo. 2002).

[12] Shoels v. ex rel. Shoels v. Stone, 2001 WL 1808549 (D. Colo. 2001); Castalda v. Stone, 191 F. Supp. 2d 1196 (D. Colo. 2002); Ireland v. Jefferson Sheriff's Department, 193 F. Supp. 2d 1201 (D. Colo. 2002).

[13] Castalda v. Stone, 191 F. Supp. 2d 1196 (D. Colo. 2002).

that the shooter was taking,[14] maker of video games the shooter played,[15] producer and distributer of video games, operator of gun show, and gun seller.[16]

## Federal Court Cases

The general consensus in school shooting cases litigated in federal courts is that plaintiffs do not prevail because of the US Supreme Court's decision in *DeShaney v. Winnebago County Department of Social Services*.[17] Although *DeShaney* was not a school shooting case, its legal principles are applicable to governmental liability in regard to the US Constitution and have been cited as the rule of law in federal court shooting cases.

In *DeShaney* the court ruled that under the US Constitution, the state has no duty to protect the life, liberty, or property of an individual when the violence is perpetrated by a private individual. Therefore, the government is not liable when one private individual injures another private person. The Due Process Clause of the US Constitution protects individuals from the state but not from other private individuals. The Supreme Court said that liability could exist under the Due Process Clause under two narrow exceptions: (1) when a "special relationship" exists between the state and the injured party and (2) if the state's action has "created a danger," which results in an individual's injury.[18]

Although it appears to be a harsh result for grieving families and/or others, it is the legal conclusion that establishing legal liability in school shooting liability cases has not been successful in federal court.

### *DeShaney Case*

The importance of the DeShaney case to litigation in school shootings warrants a closer examination since it has been cited as controlling in these cases. This tragic story started in Wyoming, when Joshua DeShaney's parents were divorced and Joshua's father was awarded custody. The father, Randy DeShaney, and Joshua moved to Wisconsin in 1980, where the father remarried and, subsequently, divorced his second wife who complained to the police that the father, Randy, had hit Joshua causing marks. The Winnebago County Department of Social Services (DSS) interviewed the father who denied the accusations. In January 1983, Joshua was admitted to the hospital with "multiple bruises and abrasions." DSS was notified of child

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[14] Rohrbough v. Harris, 549 F. 3d 1313 (10th Cir. (Colo.) 2008).

[15] Sanders v. Acclaim Entertainment, Inc. 184 F. Supp. 2d 1264 (D. Colo. 2002).

[16] Ireland v. Jefferson Sheriff's Department, 193 F. Supp. 2d 1201 (D. Colo. 2002).

[17] DeShaney v. Winnebago County Department of Social Services, 109 S. Ct. 998 (1989).

[18] DeShaney, at page 1000.

abuse by the physician, whereupon the Wisconsin juvenile court placed Joshua in the custody of the hospital.

After a "child protection" team meeting, it was determined there was insufficient evidence to keep Joshua; the team did recommend counseling to the father, Randy, who entered an agreement that he would cooperate with the team. Joshua was released to the father and, a month later, was in the emergency room again. A caseworker determined there was no basis for a DSS action. In November 1983, Joshua was again treated in the emergency room. Then, in March 1984, Randy DeShaney beat 4-year-old Joshua so severely that he went into a coma. Joshua did not die but was placed in an institution for the profoundly retarded. The father was convicted of child abuse.

Joshua's mother brought an action against the Winnebago County Department of Social Services and individual employees alleging the deprivation of Joshua's liberty rights without due process under the Fourteenth Amendment. Joshua's mother contended that his liberty interests under the substantive due process section of the Fourteenth Amendment were violated because of the "unjustified intrusion on personal freedom" since the DSS did not provide adequate protection from Joshua's father's violence.

The Supreme Court stated, "… nothing in the language of the Due Process Clause itself requires the state to protect the Life, Liberty, and Property of its citizens against the invasion by private actors,"[19] and "…the Due Process Clause does not transform every tort committed by a state actor into a constitutional violation."[20] This constitutional provision protects an individual from the government but does not guarantee a level of safety and security of one individual from the acts of another person.

Joshua's mother also claimed there was a "special relationship" because of DSS involvement which established a duty for the state to protect Joshua. However, the court rejected this proposition. The Court stated that a duty arose when the state limited an individual's freedom "…. through incarceration, institutionalization, or other similar restraint of personal liberty, which is the 'deprivation of liberty' triggering the protection of the Due Process Clause, not its failure to act to protect his liberty against harms inflicted by other means."[21]

The Supreme Court noted that the people of Wisconsin may want to extend liability upon state institutions if they wish. The Court stated:

> The people of Wisconsin may well prefer a system of liability which would place upon the State and its officials the responsibility for failure to act in situations such as the present one. They may create such a system … by changing the tort law of the state in accordance with the regular lawmaking process. But they should not have it thrust upon them by this Court's [U.S. Supreme Court] expansion of the Due Process Clause or the Fourteenth Amendment.[22]

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[19] DeShaney at page 1003.

[20] DeShaney at page 1006–1007.

[21] DeShaney at page 1007.

[22] Ibid.

Therefore, the state, as per, the *DeShaney* case, has no constitutional duty to protect an individual (student) from an injury caused by another private individual. *DeShaney* did say the state had a duty if the state created a danger or enhanced a danger to the individual. "While the [s]tate may have been aware of the dangers that Joshua faced … it played no part in their creation, nor did it do anything to render him more vulnerable."[23]

In an en banc ruling, the Third US Circuit Court of Appeals in *Morrow v. Balaski*[24] stated in a school bullying case:

> … liability may attach where the state acts to create or enhance a danger that deprives the plaintiff of his or her Fourteenth Amendment right to substantive due process.[25]

The *Morrow* Court listed four factors that must be met to determine if the state had a created danger:

1. The harm ultimately caused was foreseeable and fairly direct.
2. A state actor acted with a degree of culpability that *shocks the conscience*.
3. A relationship between the state and the plaintiff existed such that the plaintiff was a foreseeable victim of the defendant's acts or a member of a discrete class of persons subjected to the potential harm brought about by the state's actions, as opposed to a member of the public in general.
4. A state actor affirmatively used his or her authority in a way that created a danger to the citizen or that rendered the citizen more vulnerable to danger than had the state not acted at all.[26]

These factors have been cited in federal court cases involving victims of school shootings where the plaintiff could not establish that the state had created the danger and was therefore not liable.

In *McQueen v. Beecher Community Schools*,[27] a student brought a gun to school and fatally shot his first grade classmate while the teacher was out of the room. The teacher left six students in the classroom as punishment for not completing their work as she escorted the other class members to a computer room. The court stated, "As with the affirmation act requirement, we have set a high bar for the special danger requirement."[28] Simply because the teacher left six students unsupervised in her classroom, "…was not an affirmative act that created or increased risk, for purposes of liability under state-created-danger-theory or constitutional liability."[29]

Several plaintiffs have proffered in litigation that since all states have legislated requiring students of a certain age, to attend school, under compulsory attendance statutes, the state has created a "special relationship." Therefore, the state, as per the

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[23] See Footnote 18.

[24] Morrow v. Balaski, 719 F. 3d 160 (3rd Cir. (PA) 2013).

[25] Morrow at page 177.

[26] Ibid.

[27] McQueen v. Beecher Community Schools, 433 F. 3d 460 (6th Cir. (Mich.) 2006).

[28] McQueen at page 467–468.

[29] McQueen at page 465–466.

compulsory attendance statute, has created a "special relationship," and hence, the state has a duty to protect the students from harm. The federal courts have uniformly rejected this concept. In a concurring opinion in *Doe ex rel Magee v. Covington County School District*,[30] Judge Grady stated, "There is no room—not an inch—for confusion. The law yesterday and today is bare and bold: No *DeShaney* special relationship exists between a public school and its students. Absent a special relationship any analysis of the defendant's conduct as deliberately indifferent to the rights of the student is, under DeShaney, irrelevant."[31]

## School Shooting Cases in State Court

When school shooting litigation occurs in state courts, plaintiffs have likewise been unsuccessful. Generally, a state is immune from tort liability when exercising a governmental function. Several cases have been litigated in state court advancing the legal theory of the school district being negligent in school shootings. The majority of these cases have ruled that the school has no duty to protect a student from an intentional act of a third party.

When suits involving school shootings are filed in state courts, it is generally alleged that the school officials were negligent. "It is elemental tort law that a negligence action requires: (1) a recognized duty; (2) a breach of that duty; and (3) consequent injury."[32] In the majority of these cases, the plaintiff could not establish a duty to protect, "…common [tort] law has historically held that there is no duty to aid another absent a special relationship unless the actor caused the peril."[33] Most states have very narrow exceptions to the "special relationship" duty, such as "A common carrier is under duty to its passengers to take reasonable action … to protect against unreasonable risk or physical harm."[34]

Another major obstacle in bringing a negligence action against school officials is that many states either have statutes that barred negligent actions against the state or common law immunity established by the state courts.[35] "At least 33 states have statutory limits on the amount of compensatory damages that a state can pay."[36]

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[30] Doe ex rel. Magee v. Covington County School District, 75 F. 3d 849 (5th Cir. (Miss.) 2012).

[31] Doe at page 870.

[32] James v. Wilson, 95 S.W. 3d 875 (Ct. App. Ky. 2002), page 889.

[33] Wilson, at page 889.

[34] Wilson, at page 890.

[35] "Shootings on Campus: Successful §1983 Suits Against the School" 62 Drake Law Review 41, Susan S. Bendlin; Lentz v. Morris, 327 S. E. 2d 608 (S. Ct. VA 1988).

[36] 62 Drake Law Review 41, at page 87.

Some states place a cap on the amount an individual can recover in negligence actions against the state—Florida has a limit of $200,000 per claim on these actions[37]; Virginia has a $10,000 limit on these actions.[38]

At approximately 7:30 a.m., on April 16, 2007, Seung-Hui Cho, a Virginia Tech[39] student, shot and killed 32 students and faculty and wounded 17 others. The estates for two of the students filed wrongful death suits against Virginia Tech and the Commonwealth of Virginia. The administrators of the estate claimed that there was a special relationship between the students and the Virginia Tech employees, which established a duty to protect.

The Virginia Supreme Court ruled that "Assuming without deciding that a special relationship existed between the Commonwealth and Virginia Tech students, based on the specific facts of this case, as a matter of law, no duty to warn students of harm by a third-party criminal arose."[40] Each victim's estate was awarded $100,000 in accordance with the Virginia Tort Claim Act, 8.01–195.

On December 1, 1997, Michael Carneal,[41] a 14-year-old student at Heath High School in McCracken County, Kentucky, removed a 22-caliber pistol from his backpack and opened fire into a student prayer group. He killed three students and wounded five.

The parents of 3 students who were killed filed a civil liability action against 53 defendants. Suit was filed against Wendall Nace, the owner of the 22-caliber pistol. Plaintiffs argued that Nace was negligent in the manner in which he stored the pistol and, therefore, contributed to the deaths. The Court ruled Nace was not negligent since Carneal stole the pistol and later broke into an outbuilding that Nace owned and stole the ammunition. The court said, "As a matter of law, Nace cannot be said to have been negligent in storage of his pistol and ammunition."[42]

The plaintiff, also, alleged that John and Ann Carneal, Michael's parents, were negligent in failing to control their son. No evidence was produced that the parents "…knew or should have known that they needed to exercise control over their son necessary to prevent him from shooting his classmates."[43]

The plaintiff then alleged that at least ten of Carneal's classmates had a duty to take action to prevent the shooting. Several students were aware that Carneal has previously brought a gun to school; one student bought a gun from Carneal, and

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[37] Florida State Ann § 8.02–195.3.

[38] Virginia Code Ann. § 8.01–195.3.

[39] Commonwealth v. Peterson, 749 S.E.2d 307 (S. Ct. Va. 2013). All of the families impacted by the Virginia Tech shooting, except the two parties who litigated the *Commonwealth v. Peterson* case, reached a settlement agreement with the Commonwealth of Virginia, which provided $11 million for distribution to the parties. The representatives of the faculty and students killed received $100,000, as per the Code of Virginia statutory cap. The injured individuals received healthcare expense under the settlement. Source: Roanoke Times, April 9, 2008, Greg Esposito.

[40] Commonwealth v. Peterson, at page 313.

[41] James v. Wilson 95 S.W.3d 875 (Ct. App. Ky. 2002).

[42] James v. Wilson at page 886.

[43] James v. Wilson at page 888.

therefore, their inactions caused the death. The court stated, "It is well settled in Kentucky jurisprudence that there is no legal duty to report the commission of a crime by another, let alone the possibility of a crime being committed by another."[44] In reviewing the *Restatement (Second or Torts)*, the court quoted:

> The result of the rule has been a series of older decisions to the effect that one human being, seeing a fellow man in dire peril, is under no legal obligation to aid him, but may sit on the dock, smoke his cigar, and watch the other drown. Such decisions have been condemned by legal writers as revolting to any moral sense, but thus far they remain the law.[45]

Also, under tort law there is no duty to control the action of a third party who might cause physical harm to another unless a "special relationship" exists and no special relationship existed between parties in this case.

The plaintiff then alleged that school officials were negligent in not preventing the death. There were 30 school officials named in the suit—school board members, administrators, and teachers. The negligence, as stated by the plaintiff, was a failure to implement safety measures to protect all students by detecting and preventing the shooting since Carneal had a history of disciplinary problems. The court ruled that under Kentucky tort law, school officials were immune from negligence when exercising their discretionary functions. "… all of the school employees are immune from liability…."[46]

There have been various cases where the school district has been immune under state law when a student has been murdered at school. In *Stoddard v. Pocatello School District* #25,[47] two students murdered a classmate in a home off-campus. The two students had been talking about a Columbine-type shooting at school on and off for approximately 2.5 years. The principal, school resource officer, and school officials had investigated all of the previous incidents. After the shooting the family of the victim filed suit against the school district for wrongful death, negligent, and/or intentional infliction of emotional distress for failure to protect.

Simply because the school official investigated the incident did not establish a duty for school personnel to protect the individual. The Supreme Court of Idaho ruled the murder was not foreseeable and the school district had no duty to protect the student from the incident that occurred at night, off school grounds. The court also stated that analyzing a tort claim against a school district in Idaho must be viewed under the Idaho Torts Claim Act (I.C. Section 6-901 et seq) which grants governmental immunity to school districts and school officials in tort actions.

On October 9, 1996, a student (W. J.)[48] brought a hand gun to school and kept it in his locker. Another student informed a teacher that W. J. had a gun at school, whereupon school officials conducted two searches but no weapon was found. On the school bus that afternoon, W. J. shot and killed another student. The parents

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[44] James v. Wilson at page 885.

[45] James v. Wilson at page 889–890.

[46] James v. Wilson at page 910.

[47] Stoddard v. Pocatello School District # 25, 239 P.3d 784 (S. Ct. Idaho).

[48] Rudd v. Pulaski County Special School District, 20 S.W.3d 310 (S.Ct. Ark. 2000).

brought suit claiming that the school district had violated the Arkansas Civil Rights Act by failure to protect the student and also that the school district was negligent resulting in a student's death. Even though the school district knew W. J. had a propensity for violence, this did not establish "special relationship" between the victim and the school district imposing a duty to protect under the Arkansas Civil Rights Act. As for the negligent claim under the Arkansas Code Ann Section 21-9-301, "[I]t is declared public policy of the State of Arkansas that all… school districts… shall be immune from [tort] liability and from suit for damages except to the extent that may be covered by liability insurance. No tort action shall lie against any such political subdivision because of the acts of its agents and employees."[49]

## Conclusion

Unfortunately, school shootings have become quite common in the United States. After such a horrible event, survivors, families, loved ones, and others have litigated against the shooter(s), their families, school personnel, and law enforcement seeking damages or compensations. Of course, the monetary damage can never offset the tragic death of a loved one, but can provide some resources for those injured, addressing the pain and suffering of families.

To date, none of these liability suits have been successful. The legal standard to find an individual(s) liable or state entities in state or federal court is very high. It has been suggested that greater gun control limiting individual's access to high-powered weapons would be a deterrent. However, the political lobby of gun manufacturers has thwarted these actions because of passages of federal legislation that provides gun manufacturers immunity in these situations.

## Recommendations for Consideration

Preventing school shootings is the ideal solution and schools are working hard to address this most complex, societal problem. The recommendations are:

1. No school official wishes to face the prospects and horrors of a school shooting. School safety is paramount to educators, but no one can predict when or where the next event will happen. Therefore, schools should establish their safety procedures as soon as possible.
2. Conducting risk assessments, preparing teacher and students to be observant for troublesome/different behaviors, and increasing mental health programs are a good place to start. Collaborating with local law enforcement in developing a school safety plan will add to the plan's effectiveness.

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[49] Rudd v. Pulaski County Special School District at page 802.

3. Working together with mental health programs to bolster students' social skills and assist parents with parenting skills are critical. Broader approaches include establishing school/community security teams and cultivating community awareness. Establishing strict policies addressing student bullying coupled with enforcement procedures to enforce these policies is a must.

4. Arming faculty and/or staff will be unproductive and potentially increase the school's legal liability. Educating and being active in gun control efforts might also be approached.

# Chapter 15
# A Father's Perspective on School Shootings in the United States: Considerations on Anger and Fear

**Zachary Jernigan**

**Abstract** School violence in the United States is a distinctly male phenomenon, demanding solutions that are gender specific. Male role models bear a greater burden to address issues of aggression and fear, the major contributing emotional factors to violence. Solutions to the problem are both culturally specific, relating to how American men communicate with younger men and male children, and politically specific, relating to reducing general access to firearms.

**Keywords** Fatherhood · Boyhood · Masculinity · Violence · Schools · Shootings · United States · US · Aggression · Gender

## A Father's View on School Shootings

My son was 8 years old on February 14, 2018—the day when Nikolas Cruz, a 19-year-old former student of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, opened fire at the Parkland, FL, school, killing 17 students and staff and injuring 17 others. I heard the news while driving and pulled over. I sat with the engine on, gripping the steering wheel tightly. I don't know if I cried. I probably did.

Of course, I thought of my son. I had no reason to think he wasn't safe. Regardless, for a few moments, I fought the urge to call his school. I imagine parents all over the United States called their children's schools that day—with no real justification for worry, only to be sure.

A week after the shooting, my wife and I received word from our son's school that he'd been called to the principal's office the previous day to discuss an altercation in which another student had threatened to shoot a teacher. My son, who'd overheard the conversation in question, hadn't told us about it.

I picked him up from aftercare with this on my mind—the fact that it had happened and the fact that he'd kept it from his parents. I can't recall if I felt anger when

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I pulled into the parking lot or if the anger came later, when we began to discuss what happened.

As is the case in all relationships, parents and children fall into familiar patterns. My son and I tend to begin discussions with me broaching the subject (hardly hiding my dissatisfaction), him shifting the blame to someone else, and then me rambling on for about 20 min, trying, desperately, to reason with his young brain.

On this occasion, the tension ratcheted instantly. I was afraid for him, but the emotion didn't feel like fear; it felt like anger, pure and simple. We exited the car and stood in the garage together. I stared down at him, in that moment so upset that I used a word I've never before or since used with him.

> *If something like that happens again, you fucking tell us!*

I regretted it instantly. The frightened look on his face—no mistaking the emotion this time—shamed me, made me feel like a bully.

But I wanted him to listen to me. In that moment, *fuck* felt like the only tool I had.

In the wake of school shootings—which have become too common for any reasonable society to tolerate (yet tolerate it seems to be *exactly* what we do in the United States, which begs the question, *How reasonable are we?*)—our friends and colleagues respond in a variety of ways.

On social media, we are inundated with posts and memes. Discounting the ridiculous calls for armed citizen-heroes shooting up bad guys as they enter our schools, many of the sentiments ring true; they echo former US President Barack Obama's words in response to 2012's Sandy Hook Elementary shooting in Newtown, CT:

> This evening, Michelle and I will do what I know every parent in America will do, which is hug our children a little tighter, and we'll tell them that we love them, and we'll remind each other how deeply we love one another. (Washington Post, 2012, p. 1)

These are beautiful words. They sound right, comforting—as in, *This is the way we are*.

Unfortunately, that's not the way all of us are.

Following horrific acts of violence in our schools, not all of us hug our children tighter or speak words of love. Some of us react in ways that seem nonsensical. We snap at our children for being curious about the events of the day. We yell at them— *Go to sleep!*—for crying in the night, for having nightmares.

For reminding us of our own fear—our own inability to protect them at all times—we often punish our children. Maybe we think that our anger will protect them, that it will communicate how serious the matter is.

If we're good parents, we apologize afterward. We tell our kids that we're sorry, that we acted out of fear. We try to explain and comfort. Others among us, though, keep our fear inside, refusing to be vulnerable in front of our children.

All too often, our response to fear is to increase fear in others. We don't intend to do harm, but leaving children in the dark about our emotions only increases their uncertainty. And when children encounter emotions that confuse them, they act out. Children don't understand that disclosing their fear is the only sure way to overcome it.

How could they understand this? How many of *us* successfully learned to cope with fear?

## Considerations on Anger and Fear

*The scenario*: My son walks into a busy street without looking. I grab him roughly and pull him back onto the curb. I shout to make it clear what he's done and what could've happened. Like when I used the word *fuck*, I'm trying to convey the seriousness of the situation. If I make him fearful enough, my brain tells me he'll avoid walking into the street again.

The question is as follows: Does this approach actually keep my son safer?

Probably not. In moments of stress, it's unlikely he understands why I'm angry. He's too young to understand that anger—most often associated with dissatisfaction and discipline, not life or death situations—is synonymous with fear. I'd argue that instead of making my son safer, using anger to communicate my fear for his well-being is inefficient at best.

In the long run, encouraging him to confront fear with anger will hurt him.

To be clear, women also respond in the way outlined above; we've all seen mothers grab their children and shout at them. Parents are allowed the occasional overreaction. Due to the fact that the majority of US children are raised by female caregivers, it's inevitable that we'll witness women acting in aggressive ways toward children.

Regardless, on average women do tend to react to fear differently than men. According to author-researcher Gina Barreca, Ph.D.:

> Instead of the more typically masculine patterns of bottling up anxiety and irritation, or acting out in terms of violent or outwardly destructive behavior, women are more likely to manifest their feelings in terms of physical symptoms—nagging and vague complaints, headaches, dizziness, toothaches, cramps, and allergies… While all of us are naturally fearful during the most vulnerable years of childhood, boys and girls alike, girls are not taught or encouraged to slough off their fears and anxieties, or to fight their enemies and demons directly. Part of the reasoning behind this is perfectly adaptive for the real world of the playground—a girl who punches, even when she punches her enemy, will be regarded as deviant in a way that a boy would not. (Barreca, 2011, September 23, p. 2)

When girls manifest fear, they tend not to escalate situations physically, whereas boys lash out—a relevant factor in school shootings we can safely speculate.

Couple this with a greater likelihood of boys taking part in aggressive school behavior—according to the National Center for Education Statistics, in 2016, "the rate of total victimization at school was higher for males than for females," with 38 per 1000 male students reporting incidents versus 20 per 1000 female students reporting incidents—and we move beyond speculation (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018, n.p.).

In short, the fact that the vast majority of school shooters are male begins to feel like a given, yet there is still room for surprise: Simply saying that most school

shooters are male is not the same as understanding that less than 5% of school shooters are female. According to statistics-gathering organization Statista:

> Between 1982 and September 20, 2018, 3 mass shootings were initiated by solo-female shooters. In contrast, 100 mass shootings were carried out by male shooters. The mass shooting in San Bernardino on December 2nd 2016 was the only instance in which both a male and female were the shooters. (Statista, 2018, p. 4)

This statistic should give anyone pause. In an era when we—at least the progressive ones among us—are fighting for greater gender parity, drawing a distinction between boys and girls can feel uncomfortable.

Regardless, we are forced to consider: What is the problem with our boys? How can we move beyond our assumptions about "boyish" behavior and work toward real change?

As the father of a smart, charismatic, headstrong little man, I can tell you that my interactions with him are illustrative of the larger problem. Every day, I see how my own inability to grapple with fear contributes to his confusion and encourages him to lash out. I believe my son will grow up to be an excellent person, exhibiting kindness and compassion as he has been shown, but he is still prey to the same negative influences as his peers—namely, male role models.

## Conclusions

Of course, simply saying that male role models need to share a greater burden of responsibility isn't a comprehensive plan for reducing the number of school shootings in the United States; to make a significant change requires a massive shift in the way we think of boyhood. And as we see with the near constant attack on gender nonconformity, cultures are resistant to altering their views of boys and girls.

Much easier, reason says, is to reduce children's access to firearms. It really is fairly straightforward: You see the problem (children using guns to kill other children) and you do what any rational person would do (keep guns out of their hands).

Unfortunately, regardless of the loss of young lives, this is not a popular option in the world's most well-heeled country—at least not among conservative-leaning politicians and policy influencers. The sitting US president, Donald Trump, is willing to bet children's lives on the belief that more guns equal greater safety from gun violence: "I will get rid of gun-free zones on schools, and—you have to—and on military bases. My first day, it gets signed, okay? My first day. There's no more gun-free zones" (Johnson, 2016, p. 5).

In the United States, we are plagued by politicians who believe in attacking a problem with the problem itself. *Bear attacks? Let's get more good bears to fight the bad bears!*

This reasoning is beyond ridiculous, easily discredited by the same grade schoolers at risk of being targets for assault, yet US citizens grow up with the belief that bearing firearms is a right—and thus positive, thus inviolate. The gun is virtuous. The gun is not to be questioned.

In this cultural climate, seeing a way forward is difficult. Knowing how little our children's lives are valued—understanding that many of our neighbors vote to keep and expand access to firearms in the face of dead school children—forces us into a sort of constant wartime footing, preparing our children to encounter armed shooters before they learn to read.

Regrettably, other countries are not immune to the kind of rhetoric we have grown used to in the United States. As I was in the process of writing this essay, Jair Bolsonaro became president-elect of Brazil. Bolsonaro stated, "Jesus Christ was not totally passive. He drove the money changers from the temple. If he had a firearm, he'd have used it" (Amin, 2018, p. 6).

It does not take a divinity student to understand that Bolsonaro's words constitute a fundamental perversion of Jesus Christ's teachings in the New Testament. For Bolsonaro's followers, however, as with Trump's followers, the truth is hardly a barrier. Fear has become weaponized, steamrolling over truth, encouraging people to embrace quick, viscerally pleasing fixes rather than seeking harder, longer-term solutions that require patience, humility, and courage.

Yet there is hope. Within these pages, you'll glimpse it. You'll see that not all cultures respond to fear with more fear. Some understand the nature of hate—that it cannot be solved with more hate. Or, in the words of one of my country's most compassionate men, Martin Luther King, Jr., "Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that" (Lovearth Network, n.d., p. 7).

I hope you read this book's collection with a mind to altering the trajectory of school violence.

And, for all our sakes, the next time your child is fearful, you sit down and listen.

## Recommendations for Consideration

1. Fathers, brothers, teachers, coaches, and other men with influence over boys—the responsibility may not solely be on us, but we haven't done enough to alter the pattern of violence. We need to take a more active role in boys' lives, discouraging repression and aggression in favor of discussion.

   Loneliness, displacement, otherness, rejection, and emotional and physical abuse—all topics must be on the table, open for honest and compassionate discussion, if our boys are to grow into men with enough confidence to confront darkness with words instead of fists.

2. *Vote to reduce access to firearms, beginning with low hanging political fruit*—relatively simple alterations to existing law, such as banning high-capacity magazines and eventually assault rifles—and ending with comprehensive firearm reform similar to what has been done in other developed nations in the wake of school violence.

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