Have We Learned from Columbine: Exploring the Preparation of School Counselors Response to School Violence and Crises

Wendy Henderson-Ditchfield

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SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

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Under the direction of the dissertation committee and approved by all its members, this dissertation has been approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of DOCTOR OF EDUCATION.

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Have We Learned From Columbine: Exploring the Preparation of School Counselors

Response to School Violence and Crises

July 1, 2010

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Abstract

Purpose

California State Policy indicates that K-12 school counselors will respond to social justice related issues such as racial conflict, social unrest, school violence, gang activity, antisocial behavior, and potential suicides. This directive assumes that school counselors have crisis response training as a standard in their education. The purpose of this study was to determine if a gap exists between policy expectations and counselor preparedness, to determine if counselors are anxious about their anticipated response, and to determine if additional crisis response training is needed. Issues of response to terrorism and natural disaster were added to the study because of increased exposure in the United States since the time of policy development.

Methodology

A forty-three question descriptive survey was distributed to all active e-mail addresses of school counselors in a single Southern California county. One hundred and one counselors completed the survey. Likert scales were used to measure levels of anxiety in relation to counselor anticipated crisis response. Pearson Chi, Probability and Probit Regressions were utilized to demonstrate significance between variables such as crisis plan rehearsals, anxiety response, incident exposure, counselor participation in crisis plan development and counselor awareness of state policy directives.

Findings

Statistical analysis demonstrated significant relationships between schools having a plan for crisis response and counselor anxiety about crisis response preparedness. When schools did not have a plan in policy related issues, the counselors demonstrated high
levels of anxiety. The survey results also indicated significant gaps in crisis response training taken by school counselors and the desire for more training in social justice related policy issues.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study found a number of issues of concern. Primarily, those issues included the demonstrated existence of social justice related issues on school campuses, the inconsistent preparation of school counselors to policy related school-wide crisis, the need for consistent and comprehensive training in crisis response, the presence of significant crisis response anxiety levels among school counselors working in the county, counselor liability concerns, and the desire to provide a quality, caring, and professional advocacy for students in crisis. Recommendations for change would include discussion with county Department of Education Leadership in reference to the implementation of successful crisis response training utilized in other areas of the country. In addition it is hoped this study will assist with an amendment to state policy to include terrorism and natural disaster as crucial crisis situations requiring a trained school counselor response.
Dedication

I would like to dedicate this research to the people who wouldn’t let me fail.

- In memory of my mother, [Name]: She taught me education is the power that sets women free, makes women independent and opens their dreams among the stars.

- To my husband, [Name]: He always carried me when I began to fall and loved me when I was unlovable.

- To my father, [Name]: A hero beyond measure who would never let me accept mediocrity and kept pushing education when I didn’t want to listen.

- To my friend [Name]: She always told me how much she believed in me and how much she knew I was capable of doing. I will share the scrabble tiara more.

- To [Name] who loved [Name] when studying a lot.

- To my [Name] for their unending support, hospital visits, and total belief when I didn’t let them know I didn’t believe in myself.

- To [Name] who encouraged me to enter this path and called me doctor long before I would let them.

- To my first head counselor and the P.E. teacher whom I met at the grocery store more than school. They shared their stories.

- Finally, to my neighbors who shared their talent, wisdom, and delectables. Their kindness is appreciated beyond measure.
Acknowledgement

I am indebted to many people who made this dissertation a reality. This research happened because hundreds of students disclosed their fears and need for crisis intervention. It also happened because counselors expressed their fear of response to catastrophe.

I am so thankful for the belief of Dr. Ron Morgan, my dissertation chair, who understood the plight of students and responding counselors. He supported my belief that professional and coordinated counselor response needed to be researched and that my research could lead toward a change in education.

Dr. Ron Williams has been a man of three hats. As a committee member he constantly nudged me to amend things. As a colleague he kept telling me to get more education and credentials, and as a friend he never let me feel stupid for not understanding.

Dr. Johaness Moenius guided me through the statistical calculations in this study. He helped me understand the mathematical relationship between the world I work in and the world of statistical data. He and his wife, [name], are also neighbors. Together they both fed me with good food and a totally positive attitude.

Dr. Phillip Mirce, was unwavering in his example of professional integrity, personal search and kindness in my Master’s Degree studies and Doctoral inquiry.

[Name], an extraordinary counseling intern stood by my side during the entire survey process. She assisted in the assembly of counselor e-mail lists. She also tutored me with huge amounts of computer operations and calm breathing.

Police officer [name] is a school resource officer and police woman has always put students and safety first. Her professionalism, calm demeanor and the belief that there is a socially just way to work with students motivated me to look into a collaborative response to crises. If there ever is a struggle I hope she will be there.

All of the professors and staff at the University of Redlands were living examples of educational inquiry, moral reasoning, and proponents of Educational Justice.
Table of Contents

List of Tables and Figures ........................................................................................................ xi
Abstract of Dissertation ........................................................................................................... ii
Dedication ................................................................................................................................. iv
Acknowledgement .................................................................................................................. v

Chapter

1.  Introduction ............................................................................................................................ 1
   Background .............................................................................................................................. 2
   Problem Statement ............................................................................................................... 6
   Significance of the Study ...................................................................................................... 7
   Purpose ................................................................................................................................... 8
   Definition of Terms ............................................................................................................... 9

Chapter

2.  Literature Review ................................................................................................................ 12
   Violence and Trauma Related Crises on School Campuses ........................................... 12
   Magnitude of Violence and Trauma .................................................................................. 12
   Response to Violence and Trauma ...................................................................................... 16
   Other Victims of Violence and Trauma ............................................................................. 19
   Historical Policy Development / Ethical Motivation ....................................................... 21
   Funding ................................................................................................................................. 21
   Freedom from Psychological Fear ..................................................................................... 24
   Looking beyond Our Boundaries ....................................................................................... 25
   Policy Development ............................................................................................................ 27
Expectations of Response / Cause of Crisis ...........................................31
Suicide ......................................................................................................32
Prevalent Theme ......................................................................................34
Summary ...................................................................................................35

Chapter
3. Methodology ..........................................................................................36
   Research Questions ..................................................................................36
   Delimitations ............................................................................................36
   Variables ..................................................................................................36
   Hypotheses ...............................................................................................37
   Description ...............................................................................................37

Chapter
4. Findings ..................................................................................................41
   Demographics / Job Training ...................................................................41
   Policy Understanding ...............................................................................55
   Crisis Plan Development ..........................................................................56
   Exposure ....................................................................................................64
   Crisis Response Anxiety ..........................................................................67
   Desired Counselor Training ......................................................................73
   Hypothesis Test ........................................................................................76
Chapter

5. Summary of Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations ................................................84

   Purpose ..................................................................................................................84

   Summary of Findings ...............................................................................................85

   Research Question 1 ...............................................................................................88

   Research Question 2 ...............................................................................................89

   Research Question 3 ...............................................................................................90

   Conclusions .............................................................................................................90

   Recommendations for Further Study .................................................................92

References ................................................................................................................95

Appendix

A   IRB .........................................................................................................................107

B   E-mails Requesting and Thanking Respondents Participation .............................116
List of Tables and Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question 2: How Many Years Have You Worked as a Guidance Counselor?.....42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 3: Please Check all Types of Professional Credentials or Degrees You Have Completed .................................................................43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 5: Please Indicate the Type of School in Which You Work .................45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 7: Please Mark All Categories of Experience, if you have .................46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 9: Please Mark the Following Emergency or Medical Response Certificates you have Earned .................................................................47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 12 (Part 3): Please Mark All Areas in Which You Have Received Formal Training .................................................................49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 31: In Your Opinion, How Well Prepared are You to Act as a First Responder to School violence/homicide or an attempted suicide? .......50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 32: How Prepared Do You Feel if Confronted with an Area-Wide Disaster Such as an Earthquake or Tornado Should the Student Release Last Several Hours or Days and Local Crisis Response Teams are Overwhelmed and Unavailable .................................................................51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 38: Does Your School Rehearse Crisis Response Scenarios? .............52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 40: Do you participate in a rehearsal or drill simulating the school counselor’s mental health response to school crisis? .....................53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 41: Please check the Following Applications to an “All Call” Requesting All Staff to Immediately Report Outside for Student Supervision .................................................................................................54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
12. Question 42: Have You Been Trained in Your Expected Response to Students and Staff during a Lock Down Situation? ........................................55


14. Question 34: Has Your School Published a Detailed Crisis Response Plan? ....57

15. Question 35: If there is a Crisis Response Plan at Your School Site, Did a School Counselor Participate in the Development of that Plan? ...............58

16. Question 37: If there is a Designated Crisis Response Team at Your School Site, Does it Include a School Counselor? .........................................................59

17. Percentage Comparison of Between Question Completers and Entire Response Pool .............................................................................................................60

18. Question 24: Please Check All of the Following Categories which Specifically Address the Mental Health Role of a School Counselor in Your School’s Crisis Response Plan .................................................................................................61

19. Differences between Being Aware of a Plan and Being Familiar with Plan Contents ...........................................................................................................62

20. Question 25: If there is A Crisis Response Plan in Place at Your School Site, Please Check all of the Following Categories that You are Completely Familiar ........................................................................................................63
21. Question 10 (Part 1): Please Mark the Type of Situations You Have Experienced as a Guidance Counselor .................................................................65

22. Breakdown of Exposure Rates ........................................................................................................66

23. Question 27 (Part 1): Please Mark the Categories that Apply: If You Feel Anxiety about Your Level of Preparedness or Training in Response to the Following Anticipated Campus Crisis Situations .............69

24. Modified Anxiety Rating Levels .................................................................................................71

25. Question 28 (Part 2): Please Mark the Level of Anxiety You Experience when Anticipating a Response to the Following School Crisis Situations ....73

26. Question 30: If You Experience Anxiety at the Prospect of Responding to a School-wide Crucial Crisis Situation, would Additional Training in School Crisis Response Reduce Your Anxiety? ........................................................................74

27. Question 13 (Part 4): Please Mark All of the Areas in which You Would Like More Training ................................................................................................................75

28. Response Rate of Formal Trainings .............................................................................................77

29. Pearson chi and Probability Results ............................................................................................80

30. Comparison of Question 28 and Question 1 Pearson Chi 2 (1) and Probability Results .................................................................................................................................82
CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The role of school counselors is changing and with it so are the expectations of a counselor’s professional performance. By their nature, school counselors are student advocates. That role of advocate is expanding and beginning to be represented through current practices within Social Advocacy, Social Justice Advocacy, and Educational Justice (Kiselica & Robinson, 2001; Ratts & Hutchins, 2009). These practices of advocacy and justice are calling upon school counselors to act as change agents. It is through the lens of Social Justice that this study was conducted. It explored whether students who are victims of intended violence and students who are emotionally impaired by school-wide trauma will receive their needed counselor advocacy. Current demands are challenging counselors to advocate for students who are victims of social illness. Or as innocent trauma victims, will they be serviced or treated by a population of adequately or inadequately trained counselor advocates? It is this time when students are the most vulnerable, when they are incapable of tending to their own needs that the question arises; will they be neglected due to causes such as resource allocation, underrepresentation, political power plays or the belief that victimization only occurs elsewhere (Ratts & Hutchins, 2009; Rovnak, Reynolds & Smith, 2009)?

School counselors at a moment’s notice are often expected to perform a wide variety of tasks related to school-wide trauma. This includes acting as first responders to any school-wide crisis. This study explored school counselors’ perceptions regarding their ability and training to perform first response functions in comparison to expectations dictated by state policy. California State Educational Policy for school guidance counselors addresses educational justice issues. It has stipulated the focus of a school counseling program was to include: “provisions for
resolving recurrent problems related to current issues such as social unrest . . . racial conflict . . . crucial crisis situations related to gang activity, school violence, potential suicides, antisocial behavior and school discipline” (California Dept. of Education, 1995, p. 1). This dictate would infer that at some time school counselors are expected to be first responders to crises in a multitude of potentially violent and catastrophic school situations. Will they be ready to address and advocate for their vulnerable students?

Background

The tragedy at Columbine High School in Colorado, which occurred on April 11, 1999, will be etched forever in America’s memory. It ushered in new expectations for the training of school counselors and how they respond to campus violence or crisis. Subsequent crisis events in the United States such as the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Hurricane Katrina, shootings at Virginia Tech, and most recently Fort Hood, have further pointed to the need for extensive crisis training. Educators must be aware of what constitutes a crisis and that crisis events do not have to occur on school campuses to severely impact our students (Zyromski, 2007; Duplechain & Reignier, 2008; Gelman & Mirabito, 2005).

Crisis on a school campus could be defined as a time when a student, a group of students, or an entire school has reached a state of disequilibrium to the point where normal functioning has stopped. The Homeland Security Crisis Response Manual refers to a crisis as “an event that is experienced or witnessed in which people’s ability to cope is overwhelmed” (Human Technology, Inc., 2005, pp. 7-5) by multiple situations including exposure to the following: actual or potential death, serious injury, property destruction, and loss of family/friend contact. Crisis Theory differentiates crisis from other forms of trauma experienced on a school campus. In the book Best Practices in School Crisis Prevention and Intervention, the editors Brock,
Lazarus, & Jimerson (2002) state: “truly traumatic crises are not a part of the normal school experience. In fact they are so far from the ordinary that they overwhelm previously developed problem-solving or coping strategies” (p. 6). (Herman, J., 1992/1997; Young, 1998)

When such a crisis occurs on a school campus, educational communities have increasingly called upon their counselors to immediately respond, initiate healing, and in dire situations, intervene with hostile students. They were immediately needed as advocates to deal with issues of victimization, mental instability, hatred, and isolation. School counselors have been expected to have knowledge and skills in basic mental health issues and have been the presumed coordinators of a school’s response to emotional crisis (Petersen & Straub, 1992; McGrady Mathai, 2002). Professional counseling associations and researchers have acknowledged that school counselors have been and continue to be called upon consistently as crisis responders and advocates for intervention (Arman, 2000; AP, 1998; American School Counselor Association, 2004).

Both the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) and Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs’ (CACREP) National Standards Alignment Matrix for School Counseling standard nine stipulated that school counselors were responsible for performing the following activities:

- Crisis intervention and prevention models including the use of psychological first aid strategies.
- Understand how to address the needs of witnesses, victims and perpetrators of violence.
• Understand counselor’s role and responsibilities as a team member in response to a trauma causing event and the potential impact of crises and disasters on students and other school staff. (CTC & CACREP, 2009, pp. 4-5)

Yet in the same document there was a disclaimer to standard nine that stated the CACREP does not describe or “address the specific needs of witnesses, victims & perpetrators of violence” (CTC & CACREP, 2009, p. 9) or recommend training standards. In addition, the underlying statement was that counselors have been expected to deal with intended violations of a student’s human rights. This nationally recognized document exhibited the basis for discrepancies between the existing school counselor populations, their training, and expected response to crisis or violence. McAdams and Keener (2008) described this as a “curious absence in counselor preparation, certification, supervision, and ethical practice standards of a consistent or comprehensive guideline for crisis prevention/intervention and post crisis recovery” (p. 1). A dichotomy existed they said when we realized that school counselors are regularly the first to assess, identify, and when available, refer impaired students to specialized intervention especially when they may not be qualified to perform the task they have been called upon to perform. In Christina McGrady Mathai’s doctoral dissertation she quoted L. D. Borders, “School counselors are frontline mental health professionals for students and families, who present the gamut from normal developmental issues to serious dysfunctional problems, and often they are the only mental health professionals these students and families will see” (McGrady Mathai, 2002, p. 17; Borders, 2002).

As advocates for students and social justice, author Michael D’Andrea (2004) described school counselors; to be “well positioned” to perform the duties related to crisis intervention and prevention development. He believed that school counselors were “In the position to promote
basic human rights such as the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness without being subjected to various forms of violence that frequently undermine these fundamental democratic rights” (p. 4). This research study examined the question: Does the fact that a counselor is ideally positioned for violence response and prevention correlate with their level of preparation?

The majority of school violence research has indicated that law enforcement agencies or mental health agencies were not the first responders to a campus crisis or critical incident (Newman, 2004). A first responder has been the person who was immediately on the scene of the critical incident and responds to the crisis and trauma. Because of their close proximity to a campus crisis, school staff members have historically been the first responders. As a result, school staff members including school counselors have been placed in potentially dangerous situations sometimes referred to as an occupational hazard. The Final Report and Findings of the Safe School Initiative: Implications for the Prevention of School Attacks in the United States, was a study conducted jointly by the U.S. Secret Service and the United States Department of Education. Their research demonstrated that school staff members were the first responders due to close proximity and often the speed of a developing violent attack (Vossekuil, Fein, Reddy, Borum, & Modzeleski, 2002). According to Kenneth Trump (2007b), a school security specialist and congressional advisor, “teachers, principals, custodians, secretaries . . . and other school officials are our very first responders when an incident of crime, violence, mass casualty, or natural disaster strike at their schools” (p. 2).

It was with the understanding that school counselors are often situated to be first responders to the emotional component of a school crisis that this study was conducted. It investigated counselors’ self-perceptions of training, preparation, and anxiety in relationship to their role as first responders to “crucial crisis situations” (California Dept. of Education, 1995, p.
1). National and state studies (not California) have indicated a gap between policy expectation and preparation of school counselors (McAdams III & Keener, 2008). This study investigated whether the correlation existed within currently employed school counselors working in a large urban/suburban county of Southern California.

Problem Statement

When crisis occurs, counselors have been presumed to be the appropriate responders to crucial-crisis situations on a school campus. The underlying core of policy mandated response was that crucial-crisis situations relating to issues such as gang activity, school violence, social unrest, and suicide are categorical names for racism, victimization, marginalization, and homicide. From the counselors’ perspective, this has presented a dilemma. During informal conversations prior to this study, many counselors stated they have often been put in harm’s way without adequate training. They have reported that the victimization of gang activity on school campuses and in the surrounding communities was on the rise. Research literature indicated that at some point school counselors must accept the fact that they will be called upon to respond to student crisis (McAdams III & Keener, 2008). In addition, it has been commonly known that much of southern California lies on the San Andreas Fault Line and that it is very likely at some time in the future, county schools will experience a major earthquake (Chang, 2006). Historically, counselor preparation has not focused on the skills required to perform first response services to a catastrophic disaster and resulting emotional crisis leaving counselors unprepared for needed care and advocacy (Williams and Corvo, 2005; Rogers, 2007).

School counselors may also have been liable for their lack of appropriately performing expected crisis intervention resulting in further trauma (McGrady Mathai, 2002; Johnson, 2000). According to authors Herman and Abbe (2002), school counselors historically have been
responsible as other school officials for the provision of protecting students from harm. For counselors, the protection of students from harm included the protection needed from psychological harm. Herman and Abbe argued that although no judgments have been passed upon counselors to date for their lack of provision, counselors have been liable for not providing appropriate care and that there was no consensus “regarding appropriate care” (p. 2).

There has been an abundance of research literature informing school counselors how to respond and develop comprehensive counseling programs that included violence prevention and crisis response components. Little to nothing in that body of literature was written about the school counselors’ role as first responders or crisis interventionists. The majority of literature regarding the role of school counselors involved in school crisis situations seemed to express a need for counselor interventions; that is, interventions where counselors could act as advocates in the school setting and community at large. Despite the abundance of knowledge, there seemed to be a major disconnect between knowing what preventative anti-violence components were needed in counseling programs, and the reality of insufficient program inclusion of crisis response as well as mandated counselor training and program evaluation (Cunningham & Sandhu, 2000; McAdams III & Keener, 2008). There has been no California regulation of how school counselors should have been trained to perform crisis prevention or act as first responders to issues dictated in state policy. Without any policy crisis training mandates, it could be inferred there have been no standards for the existence or level of counselor training specific to social justice issues of racism, hatred, social unrest, marginalization, or suicide.

Significance of the Study

This study presented many issues of significance, for administrators, legislators, and educational institutions. The study looked at whether a need existed for comprehensive counselor
training in crisis response. For policy makers and educators, this study may provide data and insight into the need for mandated training related to existing policy directives. This study may also provide counselors a format in which they can express their anxiety levels about immediately responding to large scale social issues. It may also demonstrate the degree to which counselors feel adequately or inadequately prepared for such a response. An informal and confidential questioning of guidance counselors from several school districts resulted in a small preliminary picture of counselor perceptions. Five out of five counselors stated they had no training in responding to large scale crises. They stated they felt unprepared and frightened about how they might respond. In some cases this fear of responding already had counselors avoiding their response to potentially violent school events.

An important point was how one experienced counselor described the concerns of many counselor conversations. She stated that she was always being called out to supervise during periods of anticipated school violence or lockdowns when campus gang activity was on the increase. In addition, she said that she didn’t know what was going on when she was called out to supervise and didn’t know what was expected of her if the violence occurred. These discussions were a leading factor in choosing to research counselor training for crucial crisis response. The data obtained from this study may validate if this fear is common among school counselors or if it is an anomaly.

Purpose

It was with the understanding that students require a physically and psychologically safe environment to learn that this purpose was defined. It became apparent during informal discussions that school counselors may not be trained to respond to school-wide crises or violence or the issues causing the violence or crisis. When one looked at the cause of this
violence, it was with the realization that hatred, racism, sexism, physical victimization, neglect, and many other issues were at the core of the crises (D'Andrea, 2004; Riley, 2006).

The purpose of this study was to explore what school counselors’ thought their level of crisis response preparedness was compared to policy stated social justice issues and compatible issues that have had a current public focus, such as terrorism and natural disasters. A second purpose was to see if a gap existed between government policy directives and training implementation within the context of counselors performing school crisis and violence response. The final and third purpose of this study was to examine the presence of self-reported anxiety and confidence levels of school counselors as they contemplated responding to a potential school crisis or violence of major proportion. The intentional use of such information was to advocate for implementation of crisis response training standards among school counselors working county wide and potentially the state of California at large. With this advocacy of responding to Social Justice Issues within school counseling, it was hoped that students will benefit and suffer less psychological harm than necessary.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are a composite of definitions present in crisis response literature. It will assist in the understanding and reading of this research study.

- **School Counselor**: A counselor working in a school setting with credentials required by the State of California to perform duties as directed by state policy.

- **Traumatic Crisis**: are crises that do not fit in a normal experience category on school campuses. They are so extraordinary all problem solving and coping strategies are inhibited and create a sense of hopelessness. These sudden events are horrific in nature, depersonalizing, and can generate large scale impact (Brock et al., 2002).
• Critical Incident: is an event or events experienced at schools that are sudden in nature, have no significant warning, and are overwhelming. The event will cause a student, groups of students, or the entire school community extraordinary distress to the point that normal functioning is not possible. A critical incident experienced on a school campus can overwhelm normal responses, procedures, and coping strategies. Ultimately it can impair emotional and organizational capacities of students and or staff. The sudden event will threaten a person’s sense of safety, survival, and competency. This threat can result in forms of psychiatric injury or traumatic impact. Some incidents which can trigger such devastation are: fatal accidents, natural disaster, sudden death, assault, violent crime, abuse, life threatening activity, terrorism, war, and observation of unethical acts (Critical Incident Policy).

• Critical Incident Debriefing: A series of psychological decompression strategies that are professionally delivered to trauma victims which enable a more rapid recovery.

• Psychological First Aid: “A systematic set of helping actions aimed at reducing initial post-trauma distress and supporting short- and long-term adaptive functioning. Designed as an initial component of a comprehensive disaster/trauma response” (Ruzek, Brymer, Jacobs, Layne, Vernberg, & Watson, 2007, p. 17).

• Post Traumatic Stress Disorder: A highly responsive arousal to normal stimulus resulting from traumatic experiences. Symptoms may be physical such as fatigue, shock symptoms, headaches, chest pain, breathing difficulties, and tremors . . . etc. Cognitive loss may include confusion, uncertainty, highly vigilant, nervousness, disorientation, poor abstract thinking, memory loss, intrusive images . . . etc. Emotional symptoms may include fear, grief, panic, anxiety, agitation, depression,
outbursts, suicidal thoughts, and loss of emotional control. Behavioral manifestations may include withdrawal, antisocial behavior, sleep deprivation, and change in physical movement, appetite, speech, and alcohol consumption.

- **9/11**: The accepted reference to a terrorism plot carried out against three U.S. sites; the twin towers, the pentagon and a thwarted attempt against the White House. These events impacted millions of U.S. Citizens, students, and killed thousands.

- **Virginia Tech Disaster**: Refers to a single gunman’s rampage on April 16, 2007 at Virginia Tech University in Blacksburg, Virginia. His actions resulted in the death of 32 students and staff as well as multiple injuries. The perpetrator Seung-Hui Cho, committed suicide as the final act of his rampage.

- **Fort Hood Massacre**: On November 5, 2009, a single gunman opened fire upon several military personnel at Fort Hood Texas. Nidal Mali Hassan has been charged with 13 counts of premeditated murder and 32 counts of attempted murder and is awaiting court marshal. All schools on the largest U.S. Army base in the United States were placed in lock-down status for hours.

- **K-12**: an accepted abbreviation for the term kindergarten through twelfth grade.
CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

This literature review will illustrate the existence of violence and trauma related crises on school campuses, the historical development of policy related to school crisis and violence, the ethics motivating a trained response, the expectations of school counselors’ response to crisis events, and some causes of emotional crisis.

Violence and Trauma Related Crises on School Campuses

In most school crisis events, there has been a time lapse between the immediate time of a critical incident requiring school staff to respond immediately and the time required for a law enforcement response. Law enforcement or emergency services have not been able to respond any faster than they have been notified and the time required for deployment. This has created a period of time where school staff must have had the training to professionally respond (Trump, 2007b). This time has ranged from minutes to hours to days, depending on the type and magnitude of the incident. A critical incident or crisis could have been a multitude of situations ranging from responding to a student suicide, a hostage situation, an earthquake, to a race riot or even a national level terrorist attack. School counselors have been looked upon as front line responders for school related emotional crises until other trained personnel could or could not respond.

Magnitude of Violence and Trauma

Although incidents such as the 9/11 terrorist attacks and shootings at Virginia Tech and Fort Hood did not occur on K-12 school campuses, their impact along with events that did occur on school campuses have had wide-reaching, catastrophic effects upon student populations (Duplechain & Reigner, 2008; Klein, 2007). Using Columbine as an example, 13 people were
killed as a result of student violence, with 90,000 students in the school district which encompassed 786 square miles (Austin, 2003). Immediately upon awareness of the incident, all schools in the district were placed in lock-down status for the entire day and all school counselors in the district were required to report to Columbine High School to lend assistance. All schools in the district were closed the next day. Everyone in the community was impacted. According to Sandra Austin, a counselor at Columbine High School at the time of the shooting, the mental health load on school counselors was overwhelming necessitating the hiring of outside mental health counselors, more than doubling the existing counseling staff from 6 to 13 counselors. That increase in staffing lasted several years and created some problems with outside counselors entering an established school community.

Immediately after the April 16th, 2007 massacre at Virginia Tech, five extra school counselors were assigned to Westfield High School in Fairfax County Virginia because of the expected trauma backlash (Klein, 2007). Although both school sites were in differing cities, they were connected because five of the slain students and the shooter at Virginia Tech were graduates of Westfield High. The high school and school district were deluged with inquiries about their relationship to the shooting. This secondary form of impact was typical of vicarious trauma.

Because trauma can be experienced by direct contact with a traumatic event or by knowing someone involved in the event or witnessing it via the media, counselors may have been expected to perform crisis intervention on micro, mezzo, and macro levels. This has meant school counselors may have had to deal with trauma caused by an event far from their school site. For example, students in school within the immediate physical proximity of the twin towers attack would have been impacted on the immediate or micro level; students related to or
knowing someone injured, killed, or traumatized by the event would be impacted on the mezzo level; and nationwide students witnessing the event on television would have sustained impact on the macro scale or vicariously (Gelman & Mirabito, 2005). Additional research has indicated having a prior history of trauma could intensify any of these situations school counselors may be exposed to (Marquez, 2006; Asmussen & Creswell, 2002).

The direction and intention of violent school attacks have demonstrated the need for policy directives stating counselors are expected to respond to racial conflict and social unrest. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) *Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2007* report demonstrated the probability that Black and Hispanic students feared more for their safety verses white students. “Nine percent of Black students and 10 percent of Hispanic students reported that they were afraid of being attacked at school (including on the way to and from school) compared to 4 percent of White students” (2007, p. 1). Six percent of all students who were high school age stated they avoided school activities or specific school places due to fear (National Center for Education Statistics).

Another form of trauma and subsequent crisis to which students have been subjected, is death. Whether their exposure to death was on or off campus, by natural means, suicide, accident, violence, or natural disaster, students experienced the same stages of grieving, loss, and adjustment. The level to which they experienced trauma varied and depended upon the crisis magnitude. In some cases where a student witnessed a traumatic death, or experienced Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome (PTSD), their ability to learn had been blocked (Allen, Burt, Bryan, Carter, Orsi, & Durkan, 2002). Studies of minority populations who have been exposed to violence indicate as many as 74% of African American youth in Chicago have witnessed a shooting, robbery, stabbing, or killing and “between 70 and 90%” of Los Angeles minority sixth
graders had witnessed violence in their communities” (Zyromski, 2007, p. 127). With increasing population mobility and migration from urban to suburban districts, this problem has not been limited strictly to city schools.

Exposure to a traumatic event has not only impaired their ability to focus, it has a negative impact on school attendance, and it often results in referrals to counselors and administrators for behavioral concerns and students suffering from PTSD. Duplechain’s and Reigner’s (2008) reviewed Maslow’s *Hierarchy of Developmental Needs (1954)*, and found that trauma impacted student achievement in reading and their psychological development. Both authors illuminated the fact that students must have basic needs met, such as personal safety in place, before being able to learn (Duplechain & Reigner). Often the impact of trauma has been reflected in temporarily or permanently lowered academic scores, student behavior as well as symptoms of PTSD. Those symptoms have included the inability to focus, hypersensitivity, disrupted sleep, and aggression (Zyromski, 2007). Subsequently those students have been referred to school counselors for behavior problems when the problems are an unknown manifestation of the student’s trauma and the resulting PTSD (Fein, Vossekuil, Pollack, Borum, Modzeleski, & Reddy, 2002).

Because counselors have been expected to work with students in the areas of educational, social, academic, and personal domains, they have been called upon when students have been in crisis (American School Counselor Association, 2004; Jaksec III, 2007; Lassiter, 2002). This response may have been more prevalent than previously thought of and have had long-term impact upon students. Recent research indicated that it has often been the seemingly typical student who did not display behavioral problems and performs below expected norms that may have been suffering from PTSD related to violence exposure (Duplechain & Reigner, 2008).
Duplechain and Reigner’s research demonstrated that students who were moderately exposed to violence and not demonstrating poor behavior have also lacked counselor response services and therefore have been impacted with unresolved issues and longer duration of learning impairment. Repeated exposure to traumatic events has been shown to lead to student “survival fatigue, the condition of passivity, hopelessness” and perceptions of helplessness (Warner & Weist, 1996, p.126). The purpose of school counselors performing crisis intervention was to help students recover from their disrupted state of equilibrium and prevented as much future impairment as possible as well as the return to normal school functioning.

Response to Violence and Trauma

With the understanding of how crisis and trauma has impacted students and the role of counselors, this study examined the existence of reported violence in California’s K-12 schools. School violence researcher R. D. Stephens (2008) reported California has had the highest number of school violence acts compared to any other state in the union. Statistical data detailed deaths resulting from shootings, suicide, stabbings, physical assaults, and heart attack (National Center for Education Statistics, 2007). The magnitude of those statistics completely aligned themselves with school counselor directives indicating the need for counselors to respond to school violence and social unrest in California school policy. From the 1992/1993 school year to the 2007/2008 school year, there have been 92 school associated deaths in the state of California. School associated violent deaths depicted victims who may have been students, staff, and campus visitors who were present or traveling to and from school. This connected to the concept that a trauma occurring off campus could significantly impact emotions on campus. An escalation of school violence in 1999 in conjunction with media coverage of Columbine High
School and Westside Middle School massacres proved to be pivotal catalysts in school violence research.

The United States (U.S.) Congress responded to the escalation and requested detailed investigations. The result was a series of three collaborative studies that were conducted by two agencies, The U.S. Department of Education and The U.S. Secret Service. Together, the agencies studied the preceding decade of school violence (Vossekuil et al., 2002; Fein et al., 2002; Pollack, Modzeleski, & Rooney, 2008). The first study, addressed the commonalities among school violence incidents in which firearms were used. That study, “The Final Report and Findings of the Safe School Initiative: Implications for the prevention of school attacks in the United States” supported the National School Safety Center Report findings (Vossekuil et al.). Data from two of the studies indicated California students have faced the highest number of reported school violence incidents in the nation. Some of the major findings were that school crises need to be prevented as much as possible by having a more caring environment in school, develop relationships of trust with adult staff members, and becoming more comfortable in reporting a potential crisis event to appropriate staff members.

Getting accurate statistics on school crime is difficult. One way to investigate school violence statistics has been to survey self reported incidents. This method has had a tendency to report more incidents of school violence than have been reported through law enforcement. Often students have thought no one would do anything if they reported an incident or they have been fearful of reprisal due to disclosure. A comprehensive picture of school violence utilizing multiple forms of reported data was described in the book, School Crime and Juvenile Justice. That book stated nation-wide during the 2001 school year, “About 107,000 students were victims of violent crimes (rape, sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault) at school, and 290,000
serious violent crimes while away from school” (Lawrence, 1998/2007, p. 16). In addition to those statistics, the NCES (National Center for Education Statistics, 2007, p. 1) web site posted the following data for the 2005/2006 school year. There were 17 school associated violent deaths, 628,200 violent crimes (simple assault and serious violent crime) and 10% of male students, ages 9-12 reported being injured or threatened with a weapon in school during the previous twelve months. Six percent of the ninth-twelfth grade students reported they had carried a weapon on campus during the last 30 days. Because the various reports of school violence were grouped differently into categories and the method of collections were different, direct comparisons indicating a rate of school violence increase or decrease in the last decade has been difficult.

An NCES report, done in collaboration with the Institute of Education Sciences in the U.S. Department of Education and the Bureau of Justice Statistics in the U.S. Department of Justice depicted bullying to be a significant factor in school violence. They discussed that bullying was directed at 11% of students on an everyday basis (National Center for Education Statistics, 2007, p. 1). This bullying dilemma has appeared to be a focal point calling for change in counseling delivery and crisis intervention, because it often has appeared as a common experience within suicidal and homicidal students (Jones, 2001, p. 17; Joiner, 2005, pp. 149-150; Newman, 2004, pp. 149-150). Most experts in the field concurred that bullying which starts in elementary school and continues on to higher grade levels often has served as a catalyst to violent forms of retaliation and suicide (Herman & Abbe, 2002; Vossekuil et al., 2002).

The federal government has recognized one of the greatest mortality factors for youth was homicide. This reported increase in crime prompted Congress to designate youth violence as a public health concern. As a result, the government directed the United States Office of the
Surgeon General to study youth violence. Directed by Surgeon General Dr. David Satcher, the office studied youth violence from a preventative approach. This was a paradigm shift from previous rehabilitation perspectives. One supportive fact described in the resulting report, was the dire need for change. It stated in 1999 homicide deaths were down, but aggravated assaults were up 70% nationwide. The report also indicated a tendency as a nation, to put aside the reality of youth violence and its implications. In her message to the nation, Secretary of Health and Human Services, Donna E. Shalala stated: “In our country today, the greatest threat to the lives of children and adolescents is not disease or starvation or abandonment, but the terrible reality of violence” (Office of the Surgeon General, 2001, p. 1).

Other Victims of Violence and Trauma

Students were not the only victims of school violence. School crime researcher, Richard Lawrence, reported that teachers were also victims of student violence. He wrote in the school years between 1997 and 2001, reports indicated 48,000 teachers were victims of serious school related violent crimes. Later in the 2003/2004 school year, data published by the National Center for Educational Statistics showed that 10% of city school teachers, 6% of suburban school teachers and 5% of rural school teachers were threatened with physical injury or attacked by students. There is no distinction in the reports between victimization of teachers or school counselors (Lawrence, 1998/2007, p. 21; National Center for Education Statistics, 2007, p. 1). The depth and magnitude of school violence in the United States cannot be ignored with the existing data.

There was very little to no research in the area of anxiety among school staff in relationship to school violence. Less research has been published specifically applying to school counselors. One qualitative study compared the intensity of fear experienced by student teachers
verses experienced teachers when confronted with the idea of school violence (Williams & Corvo, 2005). Williams and Corvo found that teachers who had three or more years of experience were more frightened for their students’ safety and how to protect their students from school violence. The student teachers appeared to fear more violence being directed toward them. In some cases, the researchers postulated this might prevent pre-service teachers from completing their training and entering the field of teaching. One might assume like the teachers, counselors have feared for their students’ safety or feared for themselves during a violent episode on campus or possibly have withdrawn from completing their training. This fear can impair the professional level of a counselor response (Williams & Corvo, p. 47+) (Daniels, Bradley, Cramer, Winkler, Kinebrew & Crokett, 2007, p. 483).

Although there was very little research in the area of school counselor violence response or existing preparation, crisis response investigators have compiled one case study that focused on a single school counselor’s response to a hostage crisis. In that study, the counselor drew upon procedure and skills learned in her crisis training. Because of in-depth training, she stated she felt prepared and appropriate in her response. She was able to maintain her focus and deliver services to her students and parents during a school hostage situation (Daniels et al., 2007). Teachers, who probably have as little training in catastrophic crisis intervention as guidance counselors, have stated when confronted with a violent situation, they will take care of it on their own. As one teacher put it, “I feel more safe and less safe. I feel personally safe if a student comes at me with anything other than a gun, they’re going to die. But I’m trained. I’m trained by the military, and I’m trained in martial arts. . . . (Finley, L., 2003, p. 58).
Historical Policy Development / Ethical Motivation

Although California Education Policy listed crisis intervention as a counselor’s preventative focus especially in the areas of gang activity, school violence, suicides, and antisocial behavior it has not mandated specific training requirements relating to policy implementation (California Dept. of Education, 1995). California School policy integrated the moral and ethical beliefs that all students have the right to an education free from physical or emotional harm (Paul & Elder, 2006). According to education researcher Michael D’Andrea (2004), ignoring documented literature stating that counselors must be prepared in school violence intervention and prevention makes us guilty with regard to another issue by not responding to this social justice issue of freedom from harm, argued “If we are silent about violence, we contribute to the occurrence of violent acts through our quiet complicity” (p. 4). As elaborated further in his study of school-based violence prevention training, D’Andrea stated “Not calling attention to the prevalent role of violence throughout our society contributes to the perpetuation of various cycles of violence. That is failing to openly address the issue of violence in our world can be viewed as tacit condoning of violence” (p. 280).

One study entitled “A Comprehensive Approach to School-Community Violence Prevention” challenged counselors to lobby for students having greater access to school-based mental health services which in turn could reduce the risk factors contributing to youth violence and suicide (Cunningham & Sandhu, 2000; Pollack et al., 2008; Zenere & Lazarus, 2009).

Funding

This recommendation for violence and suicide prevention was more difficult than it seemed. California has faced one of the most constraining budgets in history. Cutbacks in school-based mental health services has been rampant and counselor caseloads have been
increasing as school counseling staff have been receiving pink slips (California Health Line, 2008). During the last decade, cutbacks in Mental Health Services have been significant (California School Board Association, 2008). Looking at bulging caseloads, The National Association for College Admissions study on College Counseling in America declared California as the “notorious leader in the highest student to counselor ratios at 994:1” (McDonough, 2005, p. 16). This was almost four times the recommended standard in the United States. The American School Counseling Association (ASCA) recommended that the professional school counselor to student ratio should be 250 students to one counselor (American School Counselor Association, 2007, p. 1).

While lobbying for decreased case loads, the American School Counseling Association published a position statement stating “professional school counselors are a pivotal member of a school/school district’s crisis/critical incident response team . . .” and they “should be trained in a variety of crisis intervention models to help with the mitigation of stressors in students. Such training included, but was not limited to, training held by the American Red Cross, the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation or the Crisis Management Institute” (American School Counselor Association, 2007, p. 1). With the abundance of crisis intervention knowledge, training availability, and recommendations to increase mental health programs in school counseling, the literature indicated an increasing dichotomy between recommendations and appropriate staffing (Cunningham & Sandhu, 2000; Newman, 2004/2004).

The focus of education on academic achievement directly related to hidden issues in violence prevention. For instance, children who were afraid of victimization at school choose to avoid school. The majority of students wouldn’t report to school adults or officials about their fear (Newman, 2004/2004; Morrison, 2001; Fein et al., 2002). They just disappeared and avoided
or missed school (Benbenishty, Zeira, & Vinokur, 2002, p. 73). Another dilemma related to attendance was when school officials wanted funding from grant programs related to the No Child Left Behind legislation (Lawrence, 1998/2007). In order to qualify for NCLB funding, schools were unable to be designated as unsafe. This unpublicized violence clause in the legislation may have contributed to school administrators feeling pressured and ultimately reported as little as possible or nothing about school crime. That has been because federal funding could be denied. Several questions came to mind when determining who gets state or federal funding. They could have been what cutbacks were necessary, which budget items should have been funded, and which items were not critical. Historically many decisions have been made based upon the business concept of a loss leader and Human Capital Theory. That is the idea that certain items were expendable for the greater good in education and society (Rodriguez & Rolle, 2007).

Funding could be denied when an administrator’s violence report caused their school to be declared unsafe. The NCLB legislation enabled school districts to self report instead of relying on outside reporting. As a result, little or no violence was reported because it was handled internally or through school discipline. This created a false public perception about the lack of violence on school campuses. Another issue related to not reporting violence on school campuses and NCLB has been a clause forbidding the denial of students who requested transfers to perceived safe schools; that was possible when their school was labeled unsafe. This label once earned required schools to transport students to alternate campuses that were designated safe upon request and it also meant that the transportation was at the school district’s expense (Lawrence, 1998/2007). Ultimately little or no attention was placed upon an issue that could intentionally be kept quiet.
Counselors’ Response to School Violence

Marshal and Oliva (2006) pointed out that the existing educational systems were layered and intricately structured so that problems related to major social issues such as freedom from psychological fear, were immediately channeled downstream to specialists such as counselors. When difficult social justice issues like the ones described in California policy were diverted to specialists such as counselors; educators consider the problem fixed. Marshall and Oliva elaborated that educators had not questioned whether the specialist has the training to fix the problem or not. Riley and McDaniel (2000) expanded this theme by saying educators have sent students to counselors because there was a commonly held belief that counselors were trained in human behavior and they have been the logical staff members to conduct assessment and intervention, whether true or not. Marshall and Oliva challenged future leaders in social justice to realize when trying to intervene and fight for schools that are psychologically safe, the new leaders must be prepared with abundant training practice as well as reinforcement.

*Freedom from Psychological Fear*

Social Justice on a school campus evoked thoughts of inclusion and children safely attending schools free from aggression and marginalization. One theme significantly related to school violence that has been repeated in social justice literature is that students required an image of school safety. They must feel psychologically safe in order to focus on education. One legal precedent has established the understanding that parents send their children to school with the assumption that school staff will professionally respond in their child’s best interest and that they will protect them in the parents’ absence. That concept has been referred to as “*in loco parentis*” (Alexander & Alexander, 2004/2005, p. 433). One could infer from that concept that parents have expected the same degree of safety to be provided at school as they would have provided for their children.
Research has demonstrated, without the existence of a psychologically safe environment, it was difficult if not impossible to learn (Marshall, Oliva, Koschoreck, & Slattery, 2006). The impact of severe emotional trauma has been displayed by students fearing school attendance. Research indicates attendance drops as much as 25 to 30% after a critical incident. This may have been attributed to the fact that attending the school acts as a trigger for flashbacks associated with PTSD. Until a sense of safety has been reached by the victim, they have feared attendance (Dorn, Thomas, Wong, & Shepard, 2005). At this point it must be remembered the intent of crisis response and psychological first aid has been to return the traumatized to a sense of safety (Herman, J. 1992/1997) (Ruzek et al., 2007).

*Looking Beyond our Boundaries*

The concept of safety reached beyond school boundaries, the county, and state of California. It has extended internationally and has been repeated by the United Nations in their Declaration of Human Rights (D'Andrea, 2004). Almost every country in the world adopted the declaration. The U.N. declaration and its articles stressed the recognition of inherent dignity and equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family, to include justice and peace in the world. The declaration also stated that the highest aspiration of common people was the right to enjoy freedom from fear. More specifically they stated “Everyone has the right to education . . . No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment” (Paul & Elder, 2006, p. 24).

Student fear was not the only consideration when looking at their exposure to school violence. Parents have also feared their child’s exposure and have refrained from letting their child attend school. Kenneth Trump (2007a) in collaboration with the American School Counselor Association discussed whether school counselors were prepared to assist students’
fear of attending school. In that article, they expanded the concept to parent fear and wrote about the potential backlash from parents being angry and not willing to forgive school administrators and staff who did not prevent or appropriately respond to a school disaster or crisis.

Another author, Connie North (2008) reflected upon the relationship between counselors, social justice, and the moral reasoning behind required safety responses on behalf of school children. She concurred with research done by Lynch and Baker. Their beliefs integrated the need for counseling intervention into the educational justice paradigm. She stated that “being cared for is a fundamental prerequisite for mental and emotional well-being and for human development generally” (North, 2008, p. 1187). “In short, neither recognition nor redistribution alone can make education more socially just. Students require both respect and adequate social goods to develop, pursue, and achieve their academic and life goals” (Lynch & Baker, 2005, p. 133).

These ideals, such as the right to an education and the right to have freedom of fear have been the foundation of policy development, and crisis intervention development. The ideals demonstrated the significance of responding to fear world-wide. Judith Herman (1992/1997) repeated this concept by analyzing the historical development of trauma and recovery. She wrote that trauma or emotional crisis was not always recognized by society or responded to because it often exposed perpetrators of unethical or immoral behavior. For example, when Sigmund Freud began to publish his findings about hysteria in abused women he was ordered to recant his findings by men in political power who fought self-exposure. Even soldiers after World War I were denied the existence of combat trauma (now called PTSD) by the British Government. It was believed the soldiers would buck up and return to normal functioning if the trauma was ignored. The realization that trauma or crisis response is necessary and critical when students or
people are exposed to horrific events has been relatively new in the last decade. Judith Herman added that this awareness and acceptance of emotional trauma could be seen with the enhanced and current treatment of U.S. military combat veterans suffering from PTSD.

Policy Development

Those concepts of moral reasoning and ethical responsibility in relationship to school counselors’ crisis response skills have acted as precursors and foundational elements to school violence policy development. This section of the literature review expanded upon two school violence related issues. The first issue was the concept of Zero Tolerance for weapons possession on school campuses and its evolutionary relationship to crisis intervention. The second issue was in the area of court litigation toward weapons usage and school violence. The first response of legislators was to address school violence in a reactive manner concerning students’ physical safety and weapons usage. It did not relate to the students’ emotional well-being. That reactive stance aligned with the established first phase of crisis response, i.e., that is to remove impending threat. Only when physical safety has been established and the elimination of impending threat could the school or counselors respond with psychological triage and first aid. During the last 15 years of federal and academic research into school violence response, the focus has evolved from a reactive position to a preventative stance addressing the emotional component of school violence.

Historically three sequential laws defined and solidified the incorporation of Zero Tolerance laws into school life. Those laws included: The Gun-Free School Zones Act of 1990, The Safe and Drug Free Schools and Committees Act of 1994, and The Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994 (Yell & Rozalski, 2000). Each of these laws was designed to prevent or address gun-related violence on school property. Federal legislation was enacted as a result of a series of deadly
school shootings, litigation relating to the escalation of school aggression in the 1990s, school districts’ investigative powers, and the apprehension/prosecution of violent school offenders. One of the goals established in the 1994 Drug Free Schools and Communications Act, was goal seven. It directed that by the year 2000, all schools in the United States would be free of drugs, violence, and the unauthorized presence of firearms. It is clear that objective has not been met (Lawrence, 2007).

For the purpose of continuity, the stages of policy development will be divided into pre-school shootings and post-school violence history. Policy evolution related to violence on school campuses began in 1967 with the presentation of a report by the President’s Commission on Law Enforcement & Administration of Justice. Their study entitled Task Force Report: Juvenile Delinquency and Youth Crime, Deviance and Disorder in Schools described ways in which schools could assist in the reduction of youth delinquency (Lawrence, 1998/2007). Public concern was represented in Congressional hearings, conjuring images of deviance and disorder in U.S. schools. During this time in United States history, school unrest and demonstrations such as anti-war protests were becoming commonplace across America. Court litigation was beginning to outline how students’ rights were protected and diluted. Although this was a violent period in U.S. History, school violence tended to be directed toward national issues and not toward students themselves.

As violence and crime escalated on school campuses, it seemed that litigation increased in the courts. Each of the following cases by themselves did not stop school violence. They did give school districts the power and legal support to fight elements involved in escalating reports of school violence and eventually led the way for passage of federal legislation. In 1969, the case of Tinker v. Des Moines School District defined a school’s authority to stop student’s
expressions that interrupted school operations or activities (Alexander & Alexander, 2004/2005). This finding enabled schools to stop activities such as student demonstrations if they interfered in school activities (Yell & Rozalski, 2000).

Having the authority to stop student behavior problems was litigated many times under the issue of “In Loco Parentis.” This concept, dating back to English Common Law allowed school representatives to act in the place of parents when conducting school investigations. Many arguments defining “In Loco Parentis” worked their way through the courts from the late sixties to the present. Cases such as Commonwealth v. Dingfelt, (1974), and Doe v. Renfrow (1981), established a school’s authority to discipline and search students. “The courts have recognized that in order for teachers to address the diversity of expectations placed upon them, they must be given sufficient latitude in the control of the conduct of the school for an appropriate reason” (Alexander & Alexander, 2004/2005, p. 402).

This latitude has evolved and has been redefined to allow students to be searched and have their property searched without parental consultation. The relaxation of students’ rights did not curtail the students’ right of due process. All students have maintained the right to be informed of the crime they are being investigated for, the process involving them, as well as the right to state their side of the story. This right was reaffirmed in the Supreme Courts’ decision Goss v. Lopez (1975) (Yell & Rozalski, 2000; Alexander & Alexander, 2004/2005).

In spite of relaxing student’s rights, the courts have established a school representatives’ right to search for contraband or weapons when justified. In New Jersey v. T.L.O. (1985), the Supreme Court allowed schools to be held to a lower standard when exercising searches upon students. The schools have been required to have reasonable cause for search and seizure at the inception. Those findings did not allow for extreme search measures such as strip searches to
take place unless deemed necessary, i.e., such as suspicion of carrying a gun (Lawrence, 1998/2007; Yell & Rozalski, 2000). These litigations have helped schools address the suspicion of weapons or drug concealment on campus.

All of these cases reflected school districts’ immediate physical efforts to stop violence from occurring on their campuses. The litigation also developed the framework for individual school districts to establish their own anti-violence policies. It seemed as though each time a school tried to remove a criminally active student from school or tried to find ways to investigate school crime, their efforts were thwarted and inhibited by laws and students rights. In 1992, a twelfth grade student admitted to carrying a .38 caliber handgun to school. Under the pretext that it was a violation of federal law to carry a weapon on campus he was arrested. His parents fought the federal charges levied against their son and won. The federal charges were based upon recent legislation entitled The Gun-Free School Zones Act of 1990. This law was a federal mandate which directed the states to adopt zero tolerance discipline policies for students carrying weapons (Lawrence, 1998/2007).

The parents won their claim not because it wasn’t wrong, but because technically carrying a weapon on campus was legal. The charges were dropped because The Supreme Court found that the federal government did not possess jurisdiction over U.S. schools. That court ruling led to changes in school gun laws. In 1994, Congress passed the Gun-Free Schools Act that tied federal educational IASA funding to the passage of zero-tolerance policies in each of the 50 states and territories. Within one year all states had passed their own laws mandating the expulsion of any student in possession of weapons on school grounds. The year of 1994 was a hallmark year for the passage of school violence legislation. The violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act provided grant funding to community-school cooperatives targeting youth
crime prevention. The Safe Schools Act of 1994 also provided funding for more community based school crime prevention (Lawrence, 1998/2007).

In spite of the implementation of zero tolerance related laws during the 1990s, violence and crisis continued to manifest itself on school campuses. Immediately following the reported incidents of on-campus shootings, Congress and the Department of Education heard the public outcry for better prevention and response. Studies on the causes of school violence were demanded and continue. The initial and primary response was a series of three investigations by the United States Secret Service in conjunction with the United States Department of Education including such reports as Prior Knowledge of Potential School-Based Violence: Information Students Learn May Prevent a Targeted Attack (2008), Threat Assessment in Schools: A Guide to Managing Threatening Situations and to Creating Safe School Climates (2002), The Final Report and Findings of the Safe School Initiative: Implications for the Prevention of School Attacks in the United States(2000). These studies have made recommendations to state-governed school boards that go beyond penalty oriented policy. They instead recommended targeting and developing new policy addressing identification, intervention and prevention of targeted school violence (Fein et al., 2002; Pollack, et al, 2008, Vossekull et al., 2002).

*Expectations of Response / Cause of Crisis*

This section of the literature review will discuss typical ways in which school counselors may already have exposure to students experiencing emotional crisis. School counselors are expected and have been first responders to victims and the emotional components of trauma and violence (Fein, Carlisle, & Issacson, 2008; Jaksec III, 2007/2007; Trump, 2007). This exposure was demonstrated dramatically during the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina when approximately 240,000 students were displaced from their regular school settings and relocated to other schools.
School counselors were among the first responders during the immediate phase and during the move to and adjustment to new school settings. They also assisted when students experienced PTSD sometime after the disaster had passed (Hebert & Ballard, 2007).

Often students who have experienced emotional trauma, whether school violence or a natural disaster, also have had delayed emotional responses (Kirk & Madden, 2003). During that period when students have been presented to school counselors, the students may have been manifesting a range of PTSD symptoms to include: anxiety, sleep disruption, and behavior changes in class (Roberts-Dobie & Donatelle, 2007). These delayed responses to a crisis could have been triggered by situations, comments, people, or objects the students’ encounter later and they can be triggered multiple times. For example, when students were exposed to damp and moldy environments after living through Hurricane Katrina, they may have developed an anxious response. These types of flashbacks and responses have lasted up to a year or longer (Herman, J., 1992/1997). When students who witnessed a shooting were exposed to loud noises, they became hyper-responsive or very agitated. It was during these types of crisis situations and other immediate incidents where counselors have provided the “first line of intervention for persons in psychological and emotional crisis” (McAdams III & Keener, 2008, p. 388). In addition, school counselors have been the referral source for staff concerned about a student’s general well being. Not knowing the specifics of a general referral, counselors have been required to assess a student’s needed level of mental health intervention and make referrals to appropriately indicated specialists (Roberts-Dobie & Donatelle).

Suicide

School counselors have been referred another category of student, this has been a student who has displayed suicidal ideation (Zenere & Lazarus, 2009; Heath, Leavy, Hansen, Ryan,
Lawrence, & Sonntag-Hansen, 2008). This situation beyond the immediate concern of suicide has been a potentially more significant situation that of planned violence directed toward others (Vossekull et al., 2002). It has been documented that suicidal ideation has paralleled the planning process of students intending to commit violent acts such as Columbine and Virginia Tech (McAdams III & Keener, 2008; Jones, 2001).

Youth suicide has remained an issue that has impacted all schools and potentially all school counselors. Records indicated as many as 8.2 out of every 100,000 adolescents committed suicide each year (Youth Suicide Fact Sheet, 2006). That has equated to as many as 5,000 completed suicides by United States youth per year. Firearm use has been the most prevalent form of execution. The rate of youth suicide has increased 400% since 1950. For every homicide committed by young people in the United States during 1999, James Garbarino estimated a total of 2,300 completed juvenile suicides took place that year (2000). According to the American Association of Suicidology at least 16.5% of students ages 15-19 have thought of the means in which they would commit suicide and the rate of suicide completions among 9 to 14 year-olds has increased by 50%. Those statistics inferred that large numbers of U. S. school counselors would encounter one or more suicidal students and potentially violent students in their career.

Various studies indicated that the majority of the school counselors felt unable to assess a potentially suicidal student and a comparable percentage felt inadequately prepared to manage violent behavior (McGrady Mathai, 2002; McAdams III & Keener, 2008). Allen reported as many as one third of newly employed counselors have entered the counseling profession with no crisis training (Allen et al., 2002). Social worker and crisis intervention author Charles Jaksec III (2001) stated that poorly executed crisis intervention procedures could “prevent or delay the
school’s return to a normal level of functioning” and have also contributed to “behavioral maladjustment with long-lasting ramifications for students” (p. 1).

Some of the problems associated with the utilization of outside or volunteer counselors for crisis debriefing were that the counselors may not have viable experience with children, they may have religious affiliations that have influenced their therapy, and they may not have any legitimate training (Fein, Carlisle, Issacson, 2008, pp. 3-5). Another concern related to outside counselors entering a school community to assist in crisis response and debriefing was that outside professionals have difficulty understanding the individual school culture. They were often perceived as outsiders and were incorrectly responsive. In some situations, it has been reported that outside counselors became a burden requiring additional coordination and communication which has also lead to territorial competition among school staff (Allen & Ashbaker, 2004).

Prevalent Theme

A prevalent theme in school crisis literature recounts that the violence, the hatred, and anger needed to be stopped. This reality of escalating violence whether it has resulted in death, harm, or terror has constituted a social injustice of the greatest magnitude; especially when anyone, students, parents, or staff, become afraid of their school campus paralyzing them with fear until they avoid attending school. James Shaw (2000) wrote in his book that many middle school students wonder if they will live to high school and the number one fear of students in grade school through twelfth grade “is for their physical safety and survival” (p. 81). Reflecting upon the reality of school violence, researcher and counselor Pamela Riley describes the dilemma succinctly. She stated: “violence is only a symptom: hatred is the disease . . . that’s a
critical point we all must understand if we hope to find a cure, instead of a band aid” (Riley, 2006, p. 2).

The magnitude of school related violence has demonstrated the need for current state directives of California school counselors to respond to, and attempt to prevent issues of social unrest, racism, school violence, antisocial behavior and gang activity. It is with the documented understanding that school violence exists, that the social impact of school violence on students and staff is significant, and that school counselors are an integral component in responding to a school crisis that this study has been conducted. Until the violence is stopped, it would be logical and ethical to ensure counselors are trained to professionally respond as expected in state policy. As Judith Herman (1992/1997), author of *Trauma and Recovery*, stated “In the absence of strong political movements for human rights, the active process of bearing witness inevitably gives way to the active process of forgetting” (p. 9). Remembering to be prepared and not to forget lessons learned is essential.

**Summary**

In summary, this literature review has demonstrated the existence of juvenile violence on school campuses and surrounding campuses. It has documented that students as well as staff members have been victims of serious crimes in the decade since Columbine. The evolution of policy and crisis response were described as having transitioned from just an individual reflex to the need for a planned response allowing for effective, professional, and consistent treatment of victims and perpetrators of school violence. In addition, research literature has demonstrated a gap between policy dictates and school counselor organizations declarations for the need of crisis training.
CHAPTER 3

Methodology

This chapter will outline the methodology used to research school counselors’ crisis response preparedness. It was determined that an internet survey would provide the most accessible, confidential, comfortable, and cost efficient means to obtain data.

Research Questions

1. Are school guidance counselors formally trained responders to crucial crisis situations as stipulated in state policy such as racial conflict, crisis situations related to gang activity, violence, suicide, and antisocial behavior as well as terrorism?

2. Do school guidance counselors feel prepared to be first responders first to school-wide trauma caused by policy related social justice issues and terrorism?

3. Is additional training of guidance counselors necessary to prepare them for a response to social justice foundation of issues mandated in state policy as well as terrorism?

Delimitations

- Sample (population) of the study (who): All guidance counselors employed in a California county
- The scope of the study (where): Via Internet Survey
- The timeframe of the study (when): Apr/May 2010

Variables

- Dependent: Perceptions of counselor’s anxiety regarding the training and attitude towards being a first responder to a school crisis.
Independent: Male/female, outside training, years of service, size of response population, honesty of respondents, prior experience, culture, familiarity with weapons, physical size of respondent, philosophy.

*Hypotheses*

The expected three outcomes of this study will be:

1. School counselors are not prepared to be first responders to crucial social justice related crisis situations as stipulated in state policy such as racial conflict, crisis situations related to gang activity, violence, suicide, and antisocial behavior as well as terrorism.
2. School counselors are anxious and do not feel prepared to respond first to social justice related crisis issues mandated in state policy.
3. Additional training of school counselors is necessary to prepare them for school-wide crises and trauma.

*Description*

This study was a quantitative analysis of counselor preparation. Research involved in this study included three phases of investigation. The first phase was a very informal questioning of five colleagues. The second phase was an informal pilot test given to 20 counseling colleagues and counseling committee members. The first phase of informal conversations with colleagues indicated school counselors experienced frustration when expected to respond to critical incidents with little or no appropriate training. During informal conversations with counseling colleagues, it became apparent many counselors did not feel prepared to respond to school-wide crisis or policy requirements. This type of dialogue prompted inquiry to see if the anxiety was an anomaly or a consistent fear among counselors. One counselor who wanted to remain anonymous, stated: “I am always called out to supervise during periods of anticipated school
violence or lock downs, like when gang activity is on the increase. But I don’t know what is going on when I am called and I don’t know what they expect me to do if the violence occurs.”

The second phase was more detailed. The informal pilot survey given to 20 colleagues asked the counselors about their history of crisis response training, their anxiety levels related to expected response, and their knowledge of state policy recommendations. The intention was to provide basic information about current school counselor crisis response training and the need for further research. It would also provide greater insight on what research methods would be needed to conduct detailed research. Both the informal conversations and pilot survey provided information that indicated the counselors’ desire for more specific training and their experiences of moderate to severe anxiety levels when expected to respond to potential crisis events at their schools. The survey and conversations provided the incentive to continue this research with a much larger pool of participants and a much more detailed and subject-specific survey.

The final research tool for this study was a descriptive survey. It included a purposeful sampling of school counselors. The sample of California school counselors worked within the boundaries of a Southern California county during the 2009/2010 school year. All participants were contacted via their work site e-mail addresses. The survey instrument was created with the consultation of statisticians. In addition, an existing survey instrument created by McGrady Mathai (2002) during her Ph.D. research at the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University was reviewed (McGrady Mathai, 2002). This survey appeared to be the most relevant research aligned with this study.

The survey population e-mail addresses were collectively researched and compiled between the cooperative efforts of the County Office of Education and this researcher. A primary list was trimmed of non-active and retired e-mail destinations as well as schools no longer in
Counselors’ Response to School Violence

existence. Middle school and elementary school counselors were added from the districts known to have such counselors on staff. The e-mailing distribution took place from this researcher’s work email address during April and May of 2010. It was discussed the use of this address might prevent refusal from various district spam functions and fire-wall obstacles. Permission to use the e-mail address was given by the participating District Superintendent.

All participants were advised the survey was not created or endorsed by the XXXX County Office of Education and the School District providing e-mail usage. All participants were e-mailed a survey form preceded with an e-mailed letter discussing the purpose of the survey, the potential use of survey findings, an acceptance of participation, and the promise of confidentiality. The participants were advised their choice to answer the survey questions demonstrated their informed consent and agreement to participate in this e-mail survey. They were also advised findings of this study would be available to them by an e-mail request after July 31, 2010. The survey instrument was e-mailed twice. Two weeks after the first e-mail survey a second e-mail was sent thanking the respondents and addressed other counselors who had not responded. The non-responding counselors were asked again to participate and advised that it would be appreciated if they did answer the survey as the window of accepted responses was closing a week later. Attached to the third e-mail request was an offer of participation for a drawing thank you dinner gift certificate. That offer drastically increased the response rate and the gift certificate was awarded to a veteran counselor retiring in two weeks.

The format of the survey included a combination of 43 closed and open-ended questions. Questions began with basic demographic information such as sex, years of employment as a counselor, work experience related to crisis response, and certification. The remainder of the survey went into areas of crisis response knowledge, crisis exposure, perception of crisis
preparedness, level of confidence/anxiety, recommendations of future crisis training, and policy knowledge. The delivery choice of e-mailing surveys instead of United States mail was the increased percentage of response, the speed of response, accessibility of accurate addresses, and acceptance of survey monkey formats in the existing e-mail server as well as a reduction of cost. The survey document was created using Survey Monkey format, its distribution mechanism, and data collection.
CHAPTER 4
Findings

This study utilized a simple descriptive survey that collected a vast amount of data relating to school counselors’ perceptions of crisis response preparedness, exposure, crisis response anxiety levels, and understanding of state policy. Because of the very large production of data, several research questions were eliminated from review. Some of that data can be used for later research. The basis for survey question elimination was their strength of relationship to the study’s research questions and whether the questions were overlapping in nature.

As noted in chapter three, 101 participants completed the survey. This was a 27% response of the valid e-mail counselor population. This chapter will summarize the results of the study in six sections: demographics/job training, policy understanding, crisis plan development, exposure, crisis response anxiety, and finally desired counselor training.

Demographics / Job Training

In this first section of research findings, there were 16 questions related to demographics and job training. Survey question one asked: Are you currently working as a K-12 school counselor in XXXX County? Only one respondent answered no and was eliminated because that disqualified the respondent’s participation. All remaining 101 school counselors that completed the survey worked within the Southern California County being researched.

Survey question number two asked: How many years have you worked as a guidance counselor? Their years of employment were broken into 5-year increments. Of the 101 respondents, the largest percentage (36%) of employed counselors had been working in the county for a period between one and five years. By adding 3 years to the minimum years of service brackets, a mean was calculated to be 10.3 years of service. The smallest categories of
workers fell in the two longest periods of service with 6.9% working between 16 to 20 years of service (N=7) and 12.9% of counselors working 21 or more years (N=13). The table below visually demonstrates those findings.

Table 1

**Question 2: How Many Years Have You Worked as a Guidance Counselor?**

Survey question three asked respondents to check all types of professional degrees they had completed. Ninety-nine percent of the 101 respondents answered they had a Pupil Personnel Services Credential (PPS). This is the traditionally required credential for school counselor employment in the county. Seventeen respondents (16.8%) answered they had an administrative credential. Six respondents (5.9%) answered they had a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist License (LMFT). Five respondents (5.0%) answered they had a School Psychologist’s Credential. Five counselors (5.0%) answered they also had a Special Education credential. No participating counselors possessed a Clinical Social Worker License.

Thirty-four respondents filled in comments in the category labeled other. The intent was to learn about other education related credentials that are known to have some type of crisis
response training beyond a PPS credential. Thirty of the 34 respondents noted they had some form of a teaching credential in addition to their counseling credential. The remaining four respondents in the other category listed the following additional certificates.

1. MFT Intern-Not Licensed
2. National Certified Counselor
3. Probation Officer/Family Court Counselor Training
4. Business Management B.A.

The table below reveals the results of question three.

Table 2

*Question 3: Please Check all Types of Professional Credentials or Degrees You Have Completed*

When given a choice of whether the respondents worked in a public or private school, all respondents in question four answered they worked in a public school. This may be due to the fact that the mailing list was a collaborative effort with the County Office of Education that oversees the operation of public schools within the county. It is not known how many private schools employ school counselors in the county.

One hundred respondents to question five indicated what type of school they work in. Working at a comprehensive high school, seventy counselors (70%) were the largest segment.
There were no responses to the magnet school category, non public school category, residential, or correctional facility categories. The smallest four categories of work places were the middle school column with 14 respondents, the alternative high school column with nine respondents, the elementary school column with five respondents, and the charter school column with two respondents. Two respondents answered in the other category. One indicated while they worked at a comprehensive high school they also worked at a district alternative school. The second response in the other category stated they worked at a Community Day School. Question five results are demonstrated in the following table.
In question six, 101 respondents answered if they were male or female. Males responded at a rate of 23.8% and females responded at a rate of 77%. This amounts to a rounded ratio of 3:1 of female counselors to male counselors employed in the county.

Question seven represented which counselors may have worked and received crisis training via on-the-job training at schools or outside of their education background. It asked: Please mark the following emergency or medical response certificates you have earned. Only 15 of 101 respondents answered this question. Of the 15 respondents, eight answered they had worked on an emergency response team, six worked in law enforcement, three worked in the Armed Forces, two worked in the medical field, and one had worked in a fire department. This meant that 81 respondents indicated they did not have experience in these crisis related areas. The following table demonstrates those findings.
Table 4

*Question 7: Please Mark All Categories of Experience, if you have*

Ten respondents added comments in the other category. Two served on school crisis teams and received training. One worked as an Emergency Medical Technician. Others not mentioned answered with descriptions later discussed and questioned in the survey.

Question nine asked the respondents to indicate which of five types of emergency or medical training they have received. Ninety of the 101 counselors responded to this question with eight answers in the other category. Five counselors (4.9% of total survey pool) marked they had received Certified Emergency Response Training and one respondent said they had received the Red Cross Natural Disaster School Responder Training. In the CPR column, there were 69 earned certificates of training as well as 53 certificates of training in First Aid. The other comments that were included were the following.
1. Although I've earned these in the past, they are not current
2. American Red Cross Mental Health Volunteer
3. I am an Eagle Scout and know first aid and CPR
4. EMT
5. International Critical Incident Stress Management: Group Crisis Intervention
6. Certificate in community mental health
7. LPS Designation
8. "School shooting life savers' workshop"

The table below depicts findings in question nine.

Table 5

*Question 9: Please Mark the Following Emergency or Medical Response Certificates you have Earned*

![Bar Chart]

Question twelve asked counselors to mark the areas in which they have received formal training. Eighty-five of 101 respondents answered this question with 22 possible answers. This
question focused on crisis issues that might occur on school campuses. The categories in this question that directly apply to this study’s research questions will be discussed. The largest amount of training the counselor population has received was in the category of child abuse at 84.7%. One must remember educators are mandated child abuse reporters.

When looking at the three categories related to suicide, the amount of training parallels the progression of suicidal completion. Counselors reporting training in response to suicidal ideation, that is a presentation of suicidal thought, were 77.6%. Those reporting training in response to suicidal gestures where one displays attempts toward unsuccessfully committing suicide, were 66.1%. Finally the training rate drops significantly with counselors trained to respond to a completed suicide to 27.1%. Reading that rate in reverse would indicate 72.9% of the respondents have not been trained in a response to completed suicide.

Just over half of the responding counselors (58.8%) indicated they had formal training in critical incident debriefing. Looking at the reverse of this answer, it indicates that 41.2% of the counselors have not been trained in critical incident debriefing which is the most immediate and one of the most critical components of Psychological First Aid. In areas related to policy response issues such as social unrest, antisocial behavior, school violence and racial conflict, the percentages of formally trained counselors decreased. Counselors trained in antisocial behavior equaled less than half of the population at 43.5%. Rape response training registered at 38.8% or inversely, it indicated 61.2% have not had formal training in addressing rape. Counselors trained in response to student and staff homicide amounted to 24.7% and 18.8%. Social unrest and terrorism training amounted to 18.8% and 12.9% of the responding counselors. In the column representing counselors working with a student released from a correctional facility after serving time for felony charges indicated one of the lowest percentages of formal training at 16.5%. 
Finally in terms of formal training related to natural disaster response, counselor training amounted to 37.6% and untrained to 62.4%. See the table below for a more detailed demonstration of findings in question twelve.

Table 6

*Question 12 (Part 3): Please Mark All Areas in Which You Have Received Formal Training*

Looking at the two categories listed below, the categories labeled somewhat and not at all had a combined response of 43.9%. Looking in reverse, just a little over 50% (56.1%), feel adequately,
well, or very well prepared to respond to school violence/homicide or attempted suicide. The

Table below visually details those findings in question 31.

Table 7

Question 31: In Your Opinion, How Well Prepared are You to Act as a First Responder to
School violence/homicide or an attempted suicide?

Question 32 asked the counselors: How prepared do you feel if confronted with an area-
wide natural disaster such as an earthquake or tornado should the student release last several
hours or days and local crisis response teams are overwhelmed and unavailable? Ninety eight out
of 101 respondents completed this question with the same answer options as question 31. In the
combined categories of well prepared and very well prepared, there was a 19.2% answer rate. In
the combined categories of less than adequately prepared, somewhat prepared, and not at all
prepared 43.9% responded. A combined group of 50.3% answered they felt adequately prepared,
well prepared, and very well prepared. It can be inferred from these results that one half of the
counselor population does not feel adequately prepared to deal with a major natural disaster such
as an earthquake. The table below reveals the data discussed above.
Table 8

*Question 32: How Prepared Do You Feel if Confronted with an Area-Wide Disaster Such as an Earthquake or Tornado Should the Student Release Last Several Hours or Days and Local Crisis Response Teams are Overwhelmed and Unavailable*

![Bar chart showing preparedness levels.](chart.png)

In question 38, counselors were asked: Does your school rehearse crisis response scenarios? Of the 95 respondents, 58.9% of the respondents answered yes and 40.1% responded no, their school did not rehearse crisis response scenarios. The table below depicts those findings.
Table 9

*Question 38: Does Your School Rehearse Crisis Response Scenarios?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>58.9%</td>
<td>41.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 40 asked counselors: Do you participate in a rehearsal or drill simulating the school counselor’s mental health response to school crisis? Ninety six respondents completed the question. Only 19.8% of the respondents stated they participated in a yearly rehearsal simulating a school counselor’s response. Combining the two categories, no they did not participate (38.5%) and never had that kind of simulation (417%), the rate of response was 80.2%. The following table presents the findings in question 40.
Counselors’ Response to School Violence

Table 10

*Question 40:* Do you participate in a rehearsal or drill simulating the school counselor’s mental health response to school crisis?

![Bar chart showing participation in simulations](chart.png)

Question 41 had 96 respondents. It referred to the situation known as an all-call. This typically is when a school-wide announcement is made requesting staff to exit their rooms for complete staff supervision of the school campus. The question asked if counselors had been trained to respond to a school wide all-call for immediate student supervision. A response of 40.6% showed they had been trained if a crisis erupts and 3.1% said they were not required to respond. The majority, 57.3% answered they had not been trained to respond if crisis erupts. The following table reveals the findings of question 41.
Table 11

*Question 41: Please check the Following Applications to an “All Call” Requesting All Staff to Immediately Report Outside for Student Supervision*

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The last category in the Demographics / Job Training section of chapter four is question 42. It asked school counselors: Have you been trained in your expected response to students and staff during a lock-down situation? A lock-down situation can be called for a multitude of reasons such as an intruder alert, school fights, etc. . . . Ninety eight respondents answered the question. A slight majority, 63.3% of respondents answered yes. More than one third (37.6%) of the respondent population, answered they had not been trained in an expected response to a lock down situation. Those comparisons in question 42 are demonstrated in the following table.
Table 12

*Question 42: Have You Been Trained in Your Expected Response to Students and Staff during a Lock Down Situation?*

As stated earlier in the introduction and literature review, California Education State Policy stipulates that the focus of a counseling program would include responding to social unrest, racial conflict, and crucial crisis situations related to gang activity, school violence, potential suicides, and antisocial behavior. When the counselors were asked in question 43 if they were aware of these policy mandates, 98 of 101 respondents answered and 59% stated no. Findings from question 43 are demonstrated in the following table.
Table 13

Question 43: Are You Familiar with Current California Education Policy that States Counselors are Expected to Respond to School Related Social Unrest, Racial Conflict, Crucial Crisis Situations Related to Gage Activity, School Violence, Potential Suicides, and Antisocial Behavior?

Crisis Plan Development

This section of chapter four is focused on the existence and formation of crisis plans at the counselors’ schools, the inclusion of counselors in the planning, and counselor team membership as well as the components of the plans. The questions are not presented in numerical order; instead they are grouped by category.

Question 34 was answered by 98 respondents. It asked: Has your school published a detailed crisis response plan? There were three possible answers to this question: yes, no, and I don’t know. This was developed to demonstrate even if a plan exists, do the counselors even know about it. The percentage of counselors answering yes their school had published a detailed crisis response plan are 41.8%; 39.8% answered they didn’t know of a plan and 18.4% said their school did not have a plan. The combined percentage of counselors who did not know of a plan and did not have a plan totaled 59.2%. Findings from question 34 are demonstrated in the following table.
Table 14

*Question 34: Has Your School Published a Detailed Crisis Response Plan?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>I don't know</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>41.8% (41)</td>
<td>29.8% (29)</td>
<td>18.4% (18)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 35 asked counselors: If there is a crisis response plan at your school site, did a school counselor participate in the development of that plan? The percentage of the 91 respondents who answered yes was 38.5%. The majority response was the respondents who answered no at 45.1% and 16.5% answered there was no crisis plan at my school. Their responses to question 36 are revealed in the following table.
Table 15

*Question 35: If there is a Crisis Response Plan at Your School Site, Did a School Counselor Participate in the Development of that Plan?*

![Bar chart showing responses](chart)

Question 37 asked if there was a designated crisis response team at the counselor’s school site, and did it include a school counselor. The majority of the 85 respondents (66.0%) answered yes that there was a school counselor on their crisis team. Combining the percentage of no answers and there is no crisis team at my school site gives a 34.0% rate or one third of the represented schools without a counselor on their team or an absence of a crisis team. Responses to question 37 are shown below.
Questions 24 and 25 focused on whether the participating counselor’s school crisis plan includes components of policy mandated crisis response issues. Five response categories included: social unrest, racial conflict, crucial crisis situation (CCS) related to gang activity, CCS related to school violence, CCS related to potential and or committed suicide, CCS related to antisocial behavior and the final response was no plan. Question 24 asked the counselors to: please check all of the following categories which specifically address the mental health role of a school counselor in your school’s crisis response plan. All of the positive responses in each category amounted to less than 50% of the schools crisis plans including elements of California Policy mandates. If these numbers were calculated with the 101 respondents and included those counselors who did not have a school plan, the percentage would be even lower. The 85
counselors who responded positively to this question of policy inclusion are indicated in the chart below as well as adjusted percentages if calculated by the original population of 101 respondents.

Table 17

*Percentage Comparison of Between Question Completers and Entire Response Pool*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category Q24</th>
<th>Percent and number of 85 question completers and percentage not aware of plan</th>
<th>Percent of total 101 response pool</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gang Activity</td>
<td>22.4% (N=19) 77.6%</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Unrest</td>
<td>30.6% (N=26) 69.4%</td>
<td>25.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antisocial</td>
<td>30.6% (N=26) 69.4%</td>
<td>25.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Conflict</td>
<td>32.9% (N=28) 67.1%</td>
<td>27.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School violence</td>
<td>43.5% (N=37) 56.5%</td>
<td>36.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suicide</td>
<td>48.2% (N=41) 51.2%</td>
<td>40.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t Have a plan</td>
<td>38.8% (N=33)</td>
<td>32.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although the rate of 38% of question completers indicated they did not have a plan, it is unknown if other responders, who chose not to answer, were missing a plan as well or if they had a plan that didn’t include policy components. The following table visually demonstrates the counselors understanding of specific crisis response categories.
Counselors’ Response to School Violence

Table 18

*Question 24: Please Check All of the Following Categories which Specifically Address the Mental Health Role of a School Counselor in Your School’s Crisis Response Plan*

Question 25 asked counselors: if there is a crisis response plan in place at your school site, please check all of the following categories that you are completely familiar with. The majority of the 80 respondents again answered their categories below the 51st percentile. A comparison of percentages between Question 25 and 24 indicate in most categories reflecting state policy; the percentage of counselors stating a response plan exists is noticeably higher than their familiarity with the plan. Table 19 displays the percentage of response, the inverse percentage of respondents who were not completely familiar with policy components and adjusted percentages if calculated by the original population of 101 respondents. It also displays comparisons between question 25 and 24. The category of being completely familiar with their school crisis plan protocol in the area of school violence had the largest demonstrated gap between awareness of a policy component and being completely familiar with that component.
Counselors’ Response to School Violence

with comparative percentages of 26.6% (Q25) and 43.5% (Q24). The next largest gap occurred in the Social Unrest category with comparative percentages demonstrating a 10.3% spread. Those comparative findings are listed in the table below.

Table 19

*Differences between Being Aware of a Plan and Being Familiar with Plan Contents*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Q 25: Percent and number of 80 question completers and not familiar</th>
<th>Q24: percent of 85 completers and aware of plan</th>
<th>Q 25 / Q 24: Percent of gap between responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Unrest</td>
<td>20.3% (N=16) 79.7%</td>
<td>30.6% (N=26)</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25.7%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gang Activity</td>
<td>20.3% (N=16) 79.7%</td>
<td>22.4% (N=19)</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18.8%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Conflict</td>
<td>25.3% (N=28) 74.7%</td>
<td>32.9% (N=28)</td>
<td>27.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>27.7%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antisocial Behavior</td>
<td>26.6% (N=21) 73.4%</td>
<td>30.6% (N=26)</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25.7%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Violence</td>
<td>26.6% (N=31) 73.4%</td>
<td>43.5% (N=37)</td>
<td>30.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>36.6%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suicide</td>
<td>50.6% (N=40) 49.4%</td>
<td>48.2% (N=41)</td>
<td>39.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>40.5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No plan</td>
<td>32.9% (N=26) 67.1%</td>
<td>38.8% (N=33)</td>
<td>25.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>32.6%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
As Table 20 shows, in question 25, the low percentage of responding counselors stated they were most familiar with the protocols for response to suicide (50.6%), least familiar with gang activity (20.3%), and social unrest (20.3%). Gang activity (22.4%) and social unrest (22.4%) categories also demonstrated the lowest response categories in question 24. In addition, the largest categorical response in both questions 25 and question 24 was the same category. It was potential and/or committed suicide.

Table 20

*Question 25: If there is a Crisis Response Plan in Place at Your School Site, Please Check all of the Following Categories that You are Completely Familiar*
Exposure

Question number 10.1 and question 11.2 related to the types of crises exposure experienced by school counselors and the numbers of exposure. The multiple categories of response represented types of school violence, felony activity, natural disaster, terrorism, and issues represented in state policy mandates for counselors. The purpose of having so many categories of answers was to create a thorough picture of crises that occur on school campuses county-wide. It also provided information for later research.

Question ten asked counselors to indicate what crisis situations they had experienced as a Guidance Counselor. All survey participants answered this question. The largest amount of exposure experienced by counselors was to the child abuse category at a rate of 95.0%. The lowest amount of exposure was to man-made disasters. These results are not an indication of impact intensity. For example the British Petroleum man-made oil rig spill in the gulf coast may be one incident but the impact has been catastrophic.

Looking at the counselors experience with core components related to state policy, the percentages were: suicide ideation (92.1%), suicide gesture (71.3%), completed suicide off campus (31.7%), completed suicide on campus (5.0%), racial conflict (75.2%), antisocial behavior (75.2%), critical incident debriefing (58.4%), working with a student released from a correctional facility (58.4%), social
unrest (40.6%), and student homicide (39%). This indicates six of the ten categories related to policy mandates that have already been experienced by more than 50% of the respondents. A more detailed image of answers to question ten are revealed in the table below.

Table 21

*Question 10 (Part 1): Please Mark the Type of Situations You Have Experienced as a Guidance Counselor*

Question 11 was more specific about counselor incident exposure. The design of this question led to more variables than expected. For instance, when asked to describe how often a counselor experienced a certain situation, the responses were open ended. Some counselors
answered with responses such as several and numerous. In each of these situations, a number was assigned consistently and multiplied by the respondent’s years of service. Each respondent’s answers were looked at for patterns relating to their descriptors and then replicated when possible. Many categories were left unanswered in the open-ended response. This may have been because the respondents were able to answer multiple categories but did not have to give a zero value to those categories not experienced. The following table is a breakdown of exposure rates declared by the 98 respondents. Although ranked in different order due to the number of exposures, the top ten categories of exposure in questions ten and eleven are identical.

Table 22

*Breakdown of Exposure Rates*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 11: Category</th>
<th>Total number of exposures from 98 respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child Abuse</td>
<td>1,983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suicide Ideation</td>
<td>1,715</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antisocial Behavior</td>
<td>1,625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Felony Release from Corr. Facility</td>
<td>964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suicide Gesture</td>
<td>765</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Incident Debriefing</td>
<td>385</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Conflict</td>
<td>297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Death</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rape</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fatal Accident Student</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Unrest</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Homicide</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event Type</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accident Multiple People Involved</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug/Alcohol Fatality</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suicide Completed off Campus</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Disaster</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Member Arrest</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fatal Accident Staff</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Homicide</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terrorism</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suicide Completed on Campus</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

_Crisis Response Anxiety_

Questions 27 and 28 focus on counselors’ anxiety levels when anticipating their response to potential crises. Question 27 asked counselors to mark the categories if they felt anxiety about their level of preparedness or training in response to anticipated crisis situations. Question 27 had 86 completions of 101 original respondents (85%). Terrorism was the number one response category with 58 respondents. That number of terrorism respondents equaled 67.4% of question 27 respondents and 57.4% of the total respondent population.

One category, counselor liability, was added to this question. This was added because counselors are liable for lack of professional performance response as mentioned in chapters one and two. It was also needed for comparable statistics. Two categories in which counselors could feel personally threatened fell into the top five response categories of anxiety. They were counselor liability at 62.8% and homicide of a staff member at 57.0% of question completers.

Of the anxiety categories related to policy mandates, the following percentages of responses were recorded based upon 86 responders: completed suicide on campus (64.0%), off
campus (40.7%), homicide of a student (57.0%), homicide of a staff member (57.0%), racial conflict (43.0%), natural disaster (38.4%), working with a felony student released from correctional facility (36.0%), antisocial behavior 27.9%, and suicide gesture / ideation (26.7% / 19.8%). The category registering the smallest amount of anxiety responses was child abuse.

What was not asked or determined in this study was whether the greater amount of exposure to various forms of violence / crises reduced anxiety levels. The following table indicates all responses to question 27.
Table 23

Question 27 (Part 1): Please Mark the Categories that Apply: If You Feel Anxiety about Your Level of Preparedness or Training in Response to the Following Anticipated Campus Crisis Situations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>Anxiety Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vandalism</td>
<td>64.0% (55)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confrontation</td>
<td>57.0% (49)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harassment</td>
<td>57.0% (49)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Assaults</td>
<td>41.9% (36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Harassment</td>
<td>40.7% (35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health Interventions</td>
<td>40.7% (35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing Persons</td>
<td>38.4% (33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suicide Prevention</td>
<td>37.2% (32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unselected</td>
<td>36.0% (31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>antibiotics</td>
<td>36.0% (31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firearms</td>
<td>36.0% (31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volkstidec</td>
<td>36.0% (31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign visitors</td>
<td>36.0% (31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaplains</td>
<td>36.0% (31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local split-group</td>
<td>36.0% (31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteers</td>
<td>33.7% (29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Directors of school</td>
<td>31.4% (27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principals</td>
<td>27.9% (24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>25.7% (22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>19.8% (17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteers</td>
<td>15.1% (13)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 28 (2) asked respondents to: mark anxiety levels they experienced when anticipating a response to school crisis situations. Ninety-six respondents completed the question with 24 categories and a Likert Scale of five anxiety level ratings. The Likert scale levels included the following options and values: (1) Very high level of anxiety, (2) High level of anxiety, (3) Moderate level of anxiety, (4) Small level of anxiety, and (5) No anxiety / Confident.
The rating average (mean) of anxiety levels was calculated for each category and is represented in the table below. None of the category averages fell into the small amount or no anxiety range with a score of 4 or higher. The largest category of very high anxiety was registered in the completed suicide on campus row at 30.1% response rate with a rating average of 2.48. The first nine combined anxiety ratings were specific to the study’s focus on policy related issues and terrorism. Those categories included: suicide attempts and completions, terrorism, social unrest, gang activity, racial conflict, and staff homicide. They all had ratings of 2.99 or lower indicating levels in the high and very high anxiety ranges. All of the remaining categories fell into the moderate anxiety range of 3.0 – 4.0.

Additional calculations were done to combine the moderate, high, and very high levels of anxiety. This was done because research has indicated as mentioned in Chapter two that the presence of anxiety in a counselor’s response to crisis can impair their decision making, response performance level, fatigue level, and vicarious traumatization. The following results were calculated with that combination of anxiety ratings. The two largest percentage groups of anxiety experienced when anticipating crisis response were completed suicide on campus at 77% and homicide of a student at 57.0%. These two categories as mentioned in the literature review have similar psychological profiles. Although placements changed, the top ten combined anxiety level categories were policy related categories and terrorism. The remaining categories all fell between combined percentage values of 31.5% and 58.1% of the counselors experiencing moderate to very high levels of anxiety. The following tables list a complete representation of question 28.
Table 24

**Modified Anxiety Rating Levels**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category Q28: Perceived Anxiety Levels</th>
<th>Response percentage combining Moderate, High, and Very High Levels of Anxiety</th>
<th>Number of combined respondents (N=)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Completed Suicide on Campus</td>
<td>77.50%</td>
<td>(N= 72)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Homicide of a Student</td>
<td>66.30%</td>
<td>(N= 63)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Social Unrest (Large Scale)</td>
<td>66.00%</td>
<td>(N= 60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Racial Conflict (Large Scale)</td>
<td>65.50%</td>
<td>(N= 61)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Completed Suicide off Campus</td>
<td>65.30%</td>
<td>(N= 62)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Gang Activity</td>
<td>65.30%</td>
<td>(N= 62)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Homicide of a Staff Member</td>
<td>65.20%</td>
<td>(N= 60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Terrorism</td>
<td>63.30%</td>
<td>(N= 57)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Attempted Suicide on Campus</td>
<td>59.80%</td>
<td>(N= 55)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Counselor Liability</td>
<td>59.20%</td>
<td>(N= 55)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. School Accident Multiple Students</td>
<td>58.10%</td>
<td>(N= 54)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Rape</td>
<td>56.40%</td>
<td>(N= 53)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Man-made disaster</td>
<td>55.20%</td>
<td>(N= 46)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Natural Disaster</td>
<td>54.40%</td>
<td>(N= 52)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Attempted Suicide off Campus</td>
<td>54.30%</td>
<td>(N= 50)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Drug / Alcohol Fatality</td>
<td>49.50%</td>
<td>(N= 45)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Antisocial Behavior</td>
<td>49.00%</td>
<td>(N= 46)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Fatal Staff Accident</td>
<td>46.70%</td>
<td>(N= 43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Fatal Student Accident</td>
<td>45.70%</td>
<td>(N= 42)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Child Abuse</td>
<td>37.30%</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Suicide Ideation</td>
<td>34.80%</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Student or Staff Natural Death</td>
<td>34.50%</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Working Felony Student Release</td>
<td>32.60%</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Response to Staff Arrest/Conviction</td>
<td>31.50%</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Table 25**

*Question 28 (Part 2): Please Mark the Level of Anxiety You Experience when Anticipating a Response to the Following School Crisis Situations*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crisis Event</th>
<th>Anxiety Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Completed suicide on campus</td>
<td>2.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed suicide of student or staff off campus</td>
<td>2.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social unrest (large scale)</td>
<td>2.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homicide of a staff member</td>
<td>2.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homicide of a student</td>
<td>2.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School-related accident or event involving multiple students (e.g., fire)</td>
<td>3.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural disaster (earthquake, wild fire, flood, tornado, etc.)</td>
<td>3.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attempted suicide of student or staff off campus</td>
<td>3.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rape</td>
<td>3.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man-made disaster (building collapse)</td>
<td>3.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fatal accident involving a staff member</td>
<td>3.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antisocial behavior</td>
<td>3.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response to arrest/conviction of staff member</td>
<td>3.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with a student released from a correctional facility after a...</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Desired Counselor Training**

This section of Chapter four focused on whether school counselors want more training in crisis and trauma response and if they felt training would relieve their perceived anxiety when anticipating a response to school violence or crisis. Two survey questions will be reviewed in this section. Both questions were asked prior to the final survey question asking if counselors...
were aware of policy mandates including subjects as social unrest, racial conflict, gang activity, school violence, suicide, and antisocial behavior.

The first question, number 30 asked: If you experience anxiety at the prospect of responding to a school-wide crucial crisis situation: would additional training in school crisis response reduce your anxiety. Of the 98 respondents, an overwhelming majority (87.8%) responded yes more training would reduce their anxiety. Only 9.2% responded no and 3.1% said they have absolutely no anxiety. The table below demonstrates the differences discussed in question 30.

Table 26

*Question 30: If You Experience Anxiety at the Prospect of Responding to a School-wide Crucial Crisis Situation, would Additional Training in School Crisis Response Reduce Your Anxiety?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>87.8% (86)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>9.2% (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absolutely no anxiety</td>
<td>3.1% (3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 13 asked for counselors to mark all the areas they would like more training in. Ninety-six respondents completed the question. The number one category that counselors wanted more crisis response training in was Counselor Liability with a 75.0% response rate. Nine of the
top eleven response rates included social justice related issues or components of issues mandated in state policy. The range of those responses were demonstrated to be between 45.8% (Student Homicide) and 75.0% (Counselor Liability). One category that appears in the top ten levels of response in terms of anxiety, wanting more training and exposure is racial conflict. The table below demonstrates question 13 in more detail.

Table 27

*Question 13 (Part 4): Please Mark All of the Areas in which You Would Like More Training*
Hypothesis Test

A select group of data from the survey results were used for hypotheses validation. In all three hypotheses, only questions and data that specifically related to state policy response preparedness as well as terrorism and natural disaster responses were utilized. Terrorism and natural disaster categories were added to most survey questions because they have generated increasing levels of state and national attention since implementation of the 1995 education policy. For hypotheses one and three, raw data was used for validation. Hypothesis two was validated with the use of statistical analysis utilizing Pearson chi correlations and probability analysis obtained between two variables. In addition when applicable, Ordered Probit Regressions were calculated between multiple variables. All statistical calculations were requested by this study’s researcher and performed by Dr. Johaness Moenius using the Acttwovar program. Data analysis and conclusions were performed by this study’s researcher.

Hypothesis one stated: school counselors are not prepared to be first responders to crucial crisis situations including gang activity, racism, natural disaster, terrorism, school violence, and suicide. Question twelve in the survey instrument asked counselors to mark all areas in which they had formal training. If a counselor has never had formal training in these policy mandated areas, they cannot be expected to respond in a coordinated and consistently standardized professional manner. An error was made in the design of question twelve where gang activity was omitted and not listed as a category. Although not listed specifically, components of gang activity were included such as: racial conflict, social unrest, and other subjects related to youth violence.

The categories that were included both in state policy and question twelve were: critical incident debriefing (a trained response protocol utilized by critical incident responders),
homicide of student and staff members (youth related violence), suicide ideation-gestures-completion, child abuse (youth related violence), rape (youth related violence), racial conflict, social unrest, working with a student released from a correctional facility after serving time for felony charges, and antisocial behavior.

The following table includes the rates of formal training declared by 85 of the survey respondents from their lowest response rate to the highest.

Table 28

*Response Rate of Formal Trainings*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Response percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Terrorism</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worked w Student Released from Correctional Facility for felony charges</td>
<td>16.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Homicide</td>
<td>18.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Unrest</td>
<td>18.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Homicide</td>
<td>24.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suicide Completed on Campus</td>
<td>27.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Conflict</td>
<td>30.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Disaster</td>
<td>37.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rape</td>
<td>38.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antisocial Behavior</td>
<td>43.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Incident Debriefing</td>
<td>58.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suicide Gesture</td>
<td>67.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suicide Ideation</td>
<td>77.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Looking at the response rates to these areas of formal training it became apparent that 10 out of 14 categories of counselor training had reported response rates of less than 50%. This alone, would indicate a severe lack of training in policy related issues of school crises within the researched county. The reverse rates of counselors indicating receipt of formal training would be that the remaining number of question completers did not have training. In the categories of terrorism, social unrest and racial conflict, the percentage of counselors who were not formally trained could be as high as 87.9%, 81.2%, and 69.4%. It is also unknown if the trained counselors are clustered and work at schools that have incorporated crisis response training into their staff training model. If this were true, then the ratio of students to prepared crisis response counselors per school would be inconsistent from school to school. It could also mean there are little to no counselors trained in crisis response at some county schools.

Hypothesis two stated that: school counselors are anxious and do not feel prepared to respond first to social justice issues mandated in state policy. Multiple questions in the survey instrument related to this hypothesis. Statistical analysis formats included calculations of Pearson Chi, Probability and Probit Regressions. Over 250 pages of data results were produced with multiple combinations of questions and variables. The final analysis was broken down into five categories related to policy issues and social justice. Those categories were crucial crisis situations related to: social unrest, racial conflict, school violence, potential and or committed suicide, and antisocial behavior.
Initially a two-way variable analysis of question 28 asking counselors to indicate their anxiety levels and question 24 asking counselors to indicate categories in their school crisis plan that address the mental health role of counselors was performed. Question 28 was designed with a 5-point Likert scale asking how anxious counselors were in anticipating a response to crisis situations. The categories of very high, high, and moderate levels of anxiety were recoded into one category. The categories of small amount of anxiety and no anxiety/confident were recoded and combined. In question 24, the last response category was, don’t have a plan. This final category was analyzed against policy issues in question 28.

In five out of five analyses of two-way variables, varying degrees of significance were obtained. Three of the calculations produced marginally significant probability results between .18 and .05. The remaining combinations produced two significant probability findings of less than .05. The following table indicates the Pearson chi and probability results.
Table 29

*Pearson chi and Probability Results*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories analyzed with Q13-School Doesn’t</th>
<th>Pearson chi² (1)</th>
<th>Probability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q28 recode: Antisocial Behavior</td>
<td>9.8866</td>
<td>0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q28 recode: Racial Conflict</td>
<td>3.3818</td>
<td>0.066</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q28 recode: Social Unrest</td>
<td>1.8061</td>
<td>0.179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q28 recode: Gang Activity</td>
<td>2.1752</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q28 recode: Completed Suicide</td>
<td>4.8677</td>
<td>0.027</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In each analysis, the results indicate that it can be assumed that the variables are related, their relationship is significant, and the null hypothesis that their patterns are random is rejected. These findings indicate that school counselors who experience moderate to high anxiety in their expected response to categories of school crises will probably also work in schools that do not have a mental health component to their crisis plans. When the counselors work in a school without a plan for the mental health component of a crisis, it can be inferred those counselors do not have established response protocols and are not prepared in their school’s response to crisis or state policy mandates. Because of these findings, the hypothesis that school counselors are anxious and do not feel prepared to respond first to social justice issues mandated in state policy appears to have validity.

The third and final hypothesis stated: Additional training of school counselors is necessary to prepare them for school-wide crises and trauma as mandated in state policy was validated in multiple components of the survey. Survey question 30 addressed the need and
benefit of counselor crisis response training. Ninety eight counselors completed this question. Of the 87.8% who completed this question, stated more training would reduce their anxiety when contemplating a response to school wide crisis. Only a combined percentage, 12.3% of the question completers, answered they had no anxiety when they would respond to school wide crucial crisis situations or that additional training would not reduce their anxiety. Understanding that crisis response anxiety reflects a lack of training or preparation, this data provides a strong indicator of needed training as perceived by the school counselors.

In addition, question 40 asks counselors if they participate yearly in a school rehearsal or drill simulating their potential mental health response to crisis. Only 19.8% responded yes. The remaining 80.2% of respondents indicated they did not participate yearly or they never had such a rehearsal. This would serve as a strong indicator that additional counselor training is necessary as research discussed in chapter two stated that the practice or rehearsal of crisis response reduces responder anxiety and increases the likelihood of a more productive and professional response to school wide trauma.

Additional significant values of Pearson Chi 2 and Probability were obtained analyzing Q28 recoded anxiety levels and Q13 want more training. The table below contains those findings.
Table 30

Additional Question 28 and Question 13 Pearson Chi 2 (1) and Probability Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of Questions</th>
<th>Pearson Chi 2 (1)</th>
<th>Probability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q 28 Recoded: Terrorism Anxiety</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wanting Terrorism Training</td>
<td>5.3591</td>
<td>0.021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 28 Recoded: Suicide Ideation Anxiety</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wanting Suicide Ideation Training</td>
<td>7.027</td>
<td>0.008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 28 Recoded: Rape Anxiety</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wanting Rape Response Training</td>
<td>7.039</td>
<td>0.008</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Again rejecting the null hypothesis, the data is demonstrating as anxiety levels increase there is a significant likelihood that the same counselors will want additional training in those areas.

A Probit Regression was used to analyze seven variables and their relationship to having natural disaster response anxiety, social unrest, and racial conflict. The relationship between Question 38 (Does your school rehearse crisis response scenarios) and natural disaster anxiety provided a significant value of .052 (P>|z|. This in combination with a negative coefficient of -.5591373 indicated a strong relationship. This data indicates that counselors who have more school rehearsals of natural disaster crisis response will probably also have lower anxiety levels to the same situation. Another Probit regression indicated a similar relationship between anxiety levels toward social unrest and the sum of outside counselor emergency or medical training. For those who had such training, it was also likely they would have reduced anxiety rates(P.|z| =
Thirdly, a probit regression of having anxiety toward racial conflict (Q27) and expressed desires for more training in response to racial conflict (Q12) was also significant with a result of $P[z] = .071$.

Finally, a Pearson Chi and Probability analysis between Question 34 asking counselors if their school had a published crisis response plan and Question 38, does your school rehearse crisis response scenarios, produced significant values. The Pearson chi totaled 10.0364 and the probability was .007. This data would indicate that counselors who work in schools with detailed crisis response plans will also work in schools that conduct rehearsals of those plans. Inversely, those counselors who work in schools with out a detailed crisis response plan will probably also work in schools that do not conduct rehearsals.

With the combination of factors; counselors wanting more training, counselors having increased anxiety without crisis response training and schools that don’t have protocols for counseling related crisis response, it is reasonable to assume the third hypothesis stating additional training is necessary is valid.
CHAPTER 5

Summary of Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Purpose

In preparing for a summary of this research, the trigger or impetus that prompted the study was revisited. A series of informal and impromptu conversations with counselors and teachers took place during 15 years of employment in education. Those conversations prompted questions about crisis response preparedness. Some comments stood out like the day a counselor stated I don’t know what to do if I am called to assist and I haven’t been trained if something bad happens. Even more significant were the comments made by colleagues who were present the day a student committed suicide on a school campus. They were asked what was done afterwards, what was the mental health response. The answer was little to nothing and no one ever followed through. Those conversations provided the motivation and catalyst to conduct this research and ask, “Are school counselors prepared adequately?”

As discussed in Chapter 1, students require a psychologically safe learning environment in which to learn. When students are confronted with debilitating trauma it is part of the school culture to refer those students to the school counselor for what is known as psychological first aid, or in layman’s terms, help. It has been documented that counselors are positioned to perform this type of activity and that one purpose of this study was to see if they were prepared for crisis response to California Policy mandates.

One purpose of this study was to see if counselors were prepared to be first responders to the social justice issues at the core of the policy mandates such as hatred, racism, physical victimization, neglect, and many others. Another component of the second purpose was to include researching related categories of terrorism and natural disaster response to the 15-year
Counselors’ Response to School Violence

old policy issues. A second purpose was to see if a gap exists between policy directives and the training required to professionally implementing them. The third purpose was to investigate the self-reported anxiety levels experienced by school counselors as they contemplate responding to school-wide crisis or violence of major proportion.

This research was done with the intent to provide a voice for school counselors and data that demonstrates the need for comprehensive crisis response training in the existing county counselor workforce and potentially the state-wide counselor workforce. With that potential implementation of crisis response training, it is hoped students and staff will circumvent or decrease the intensity of debilitating trauma and lingering psychological harm when exposed to school crisis.

Summary of Findings

This research study’s findings were based upon data gleaned from 28 of 43 survey questions. The prolific amount of data produced was sorted and reduced providing questions most germane to the study’s purpose. The findings were sorted into the following six categories: Demographics / Job Training, Policy Understanding, Crisis Plan Development, Exposure, Crisis Response Anxiety, and finally Desired Counselor Training. In the Demographics / Job Training category the data that appeared most significant was that large percentages of counselors did not have formal training in policy related issues or in terrorism and natural disaster response (Q12).

In addition, a majority of counselors acknowledged they did not feel well prepared for response to school violence, suicide, or natural disaster (Q31, 32, 40 & 41). The combination of concepts indicates large percentages of counselors do not feel prepared for crisis response, have not had formal training, and do not regularly participate in crisis response drills are reasons for concern.
The Demographic / Job Training category relates to the counselors’ awareness of California Policy directives stating school counseling programs should include: “provisions for resolving recurrent problems related to current issues such as social unrest . . . racial conflict . . . crucial crisis situations related to gang activity, school violence, potential suicides, antisocial behavior and school discipline” (California Dept. of Education, 1995, p. 1). It is not surprising that 59% of responding counselors were not aware of state policy directives when so many counselors have not been trained in related crisis response.

The findings section focusing on crisis plan development addressed whether counselors were aware of published school crisis response plans (Q34), if counselors participated in the development of school crisis response plans (Q35), if the plans addressed specific components addressed in state policy (Q24), and if the counselors were very familiar with their expected mental health role in the schools crisis response (Q25). In all areas, approximately 50% of the counselor respondents did not participate in plan development or rehearsals. The same rate of counselors did not know of or have a published school crisis plan that addressed state policy issues and even more were not very familiar with the plans if they were published.

In the area of Counselor Exposure to school violence, terrorism and natural disaster, it must be remembered that the number or rate of exposures is not indicative of the degree of trauma. Students in Southern California may be exposed to only one wildfire but the severity of impact may be catastrophic as compared to several cases of student physical fights. Each case may immobilize students, but the range and intensity of trauma can vary drastically. It is clear that as many as 50% of the responding counselors have been exposed to state policy directives and their underlying issues (Q10). As many as 50% of the respondents had been exposed to issues of suicide, child abuse, racial conflict, and antisocial behavior. The number of incidents
they were exposed to was as high as 1,715 incidents of suicide ideation and 1,625 incidents of antisocial behavior as well as 967 students with felony charges and time served in a correctional facility (Q11). This amounts to as many as 16.9 exposures of suicide ideation, 16.1 exposures of antisocial behavior, and 9.6 exposures of felony charged students returning from incarceration per counselor. As stated in the literature review, educators are exposed to large amounts of school related violence and or crisis issues whether directly or vicariously via their students. There is no prediction capability to determine when or where these issues could become catastrophic.

Questions 27 and 28 detailed the existence of anxiety among school counselors in anticipation of crisis response categories. In question 28, it was found that a minimum of 59% of responding counselors had moderate to very high levels of anxiety when anticipating a response to policy related issues. Although terrorism was not included in the 15-year-old policy as a directed response category, it registered the largest percentage of school counselors (64%) experiencing anxiety. This may be cause for investigation of adding categories to state policy directives for school counselor response. In addition, the Likert Scale combination of moderate, high, and very high categories revealed no average category response scores in the little or no anxiety categories. One area that was not discussed in detail within Chapter 4 was the counselor anxiety rates related to liability. It was a major concern of counselors with a 57% response rate. These issues have presented a voice of concern for school counselors. They may need a stronger understanding of their responsibilities and liability if not performed adequately.

The final findings category of Desired Counselor Training had a majority of counselors expressing the desire for additional training. A resounding 87.8% of the participating school counselors indicated additional training would reduce their anxiety in relation to policy directives
Seventy five percent indicated they wanted more training in their liability related to their counseling performance including the directives in California School Counselor Policy.

**Research Question 1**

The first research question stated: Are school guidance counselors formally trained responders to crucial crisis situations as stipulated in state policy such as racial conflict, crisis situations related to gang activity, violence, suicide, and antisocial behavior as well as terrorism? The data and findings have revealed that large percentages of school counselors are not prepared responders to situations stipulated in state policy. One category stood out with exception. Child abuse, which is a strong component of violence directed at youth and referred to school counselors for rendering assistance and mandated reporting, was an area where counselors indicated they had been formally trained at a rate of 84.7%. This is the only category within the study where counselors are mandated reporters and school staff members generally receive annual training during staff preparation days prior to the school year beginning. If the reporting was not mandated to all staff members, it is not known that the yearly training would have taken place.

Two other categories where counselors indicated they had significant amounts of formal training were in suicide ideation (77.6%) and suicide gestures (67.1%). Although these may be high rates of formally trained counselors compared to other categories, the percentage of untrained counselors ranging from 22.4% for suicide ideation to 32.9%, indicate multiple counselors could be guessing at their response to components of suicide. That would mean a suicidal student has a one in four chance of being referred to an untrained counselor. At this point, it must be remembered that suicidal behavior is one of the largest counselor exposure categories.
In addition, there is the understanding that a student’s suicide completion can parallel or be a component of homicidal behavior. This concern is sobering, especially with the knowledge that the percentage of formally trained school counselors responding to completed suicide is low at 27.1%. This rate would indicate that the majority of school counselors (76.1%) could be working without the knowledge of a trained response. Two additional influencing factors in this category are that counseling credential programs generally include components of suicide ideation and suicide gesture response as a standard of study. The second influencing factor could possibly be county mental health programs provide crisis response teams and training to schools at no cost upon request.

In all other categories related to policy stipulations, the percentage of formally trained counselors drop drastically from 59.8% for critical incident debriefing to 12.9% for terrorism response. This means that as much as 40.2% to 87.1% of counselors indicated they have not been trained in policy stipulated response issues. Although this survey does not represent all employed county counselors, the data indicates the likelihood of students referred to untrained counselors is great.

Research Question 2

Research question two asked: Do school guidance counselors feel prepared to be first responders to school-wide trauma caused by policy related social justice issues, natural disasters, and terrorism? Counselors were asked about another component: whether they felt prepared to respond to a catastrophic natural disaster when immediate support services would not be available and counselors would be responsible for crisis response over long periods ranging from several hours to days. Two response categories indicating that counselors felt less than adequately prepared had a combined response rate of 50.1%. That means that potentially one out
of two counselors will not be trained to provide crisis response services to policy related trauma in a consistent and professional manner county wide.

The answer to research question two in this study indicates that county school counselors do not feel prepared at varying levels of significance to respond to school crises. Those levels of response could produce inconsistent student care and potentially the concept of neglect if it is known that services stipulated in policy are not consistently included in counselor training yet the expectation of performance is recorded and published. As stated in chapter 1, counselors may be liable for underperforming an expected response.

Research Question 3

Question three asked: Is additional training of guidance counselors necessary to prepare them for a response to social justice foundation issues mandated in state policy as well as terrorism and natural disaster. The answer yes is validated with the findings indicated in questions one and two demonstrating a lack of consistent formal training, the self perception of low preparation levels in state policy stipulated areas of response, as well as the highly demonstrated desire for formal training in varying categories of crisis response.

In summary it appears that all three research questions demonstrated needs related to school counselor crisis response training.

Conclusions

In order to write an adequate conclusion to this research study, there must be two images or scenarios to compare. One image is that of a plausible catastrophic school crisis that is responded to with counselors professionally and regularly trained in critical response procedures. The ideal result of such a response would be that the severity of psychological impact would be reduced or even circumvented. It would mean that the school could return to normal activities.
and provide an environment free from psychological harm. This normal return, void of the
impact of residual trauma would allow children to return to normal cognitive functioning and
optimal learning.

The other scenario could be that untrained school counselors will perform what they
suppose to be critical incident debriefing procedures and crisis response to the emotional
component of school-wide trauma. When done incorrectly, it has been established this can cause
even more damage to students and delay the school’s community from returning to normal
productivity. The requirement of attendance could in turn continue to traumatize students instead
of providing students an environment believed to be free from psychological harm.

One plausible gang activity scenario will be described next. This topic was chosen
because of the understanding that gang activity is on the increase in Southern California to the
degree a response is stipulated in California Education Policy. It is also commonly understood to
be a security factor on school campuses in Southern California. In addition, many secondary
schools in Southern California have 2,000 or more students in attendance every day. The range
of impact could be severe and radiate beyond school boundaries into the immediate community
and even further via vicarious traumatization.

The scenario would unfold in the following manner. During lunch time with several
thousand students eating outdoors on a closed campus a racially oriented gang conflict erupts
with gunfire and or stabbings taking place. Two students are wounded and one is killed. Students
and staff are immediately traumatized and the school enters a lock down mode. Parents get text
messages from their children and become vicariously traumatized on a micro level. Then the
school counselors are called in as news broadcasters announce that the district has called in
counselors and they will be in attendance to assist. The counselors then are expected to respond
because it has been documented that outside counseling services may be rejected by the school community and cause even more trauma. The school counselors would be expected to participate in conducting critical incident debriefing, dealing in groups and individual settings with policy related issues such as racism, gang activity, social unrest, school violence, homicide, anti social behavior, psychological first aid, and manifestations of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

If the students are cared for by the counselors profiled in this survey population, they may or may not be appropriately and professionally treated. It could depend on whether their school holds trainings, conducts crisis response rehearsals for counselors, or if the individual counselor addressing their needs has extra training beyond credential requirements. It is evident anxiety is present in moderate, high, and very high levels among county school counselors and they want to be better prepared and have more training. Yet students may be subjected to random treatment from qualified or unqualified school counselors in crisis response. Returning to the concept of “In Loco Parentis” mentioned in the literature review, will parents expect the extent of randomly qualified responders demonstrated in this study? Will they or the community accept the fact that this kind of response was directed in state policy and not delivered? Will they accept the fact that financially the preventative training was deleted from education budgets? This researcher believes none of these scenarios will be accepted by the victims, their families, and their community.

This study clearly raised many issues of concern. Primarily those issues would include the demonstrated existence of social justice related issues on school campuses, the inconsistent preparation of school counselors to policy related school-wide crisis, the need for consistent and comprehensive training in crisis response, the presence of significant crisis response anxiety
levels among school counselors working in the county, counselor liability, and the desire to provide a quality, caring, and professional response to students in crisis.

It is the intent of this researcher to utilize the data generated in this study to address counselor crisis response training with county leadership in the hopes that training and rehearsals can become annual events among school counselors. The data may also provide a tool to approach state legislators for the request of mandated crisis response training for school counselors and to provide needed oversight for such training. In addition, it is hoped this study will lead to policy modification which would include categories of terrorism and natural disaster response. The ultimate hope is that this study and its findings will lead to a more socially-just counselor response to students in crisis and to stronger advocacy for traumatized and vulnerable students.

Recommendations for Further Study

Four research concepts have been conceived in relation to this study and could be recommended for further investigation. One study would be based upon this study’s data demonstration of a deficit in crisis response training. A sequel study would be to research what programs have been effective in other counties or states, would provide the most appropriate preparation, and the means of delivery for school counselor crisis response training.

A second study would be to broaden the spectrum of research by investigating an entire school’s staff fears and response to student crisis and trauma or to examine the presence of student fear among staff members.

The third recommendation would be to examine the preparation levels and response protocols of teachers in classroom lockdown settings.
The fourth and final recommendation would be to examine student fear of impending crises and their expected response.
References


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Williams, K., & Corvo, K. (2005). "That I'll Be Killed"; Pre-Service and In-Service Teachers' Greatest Fears and Beliefs about School Violence [Qualitative & Quantitative study of pre-service and in-service teachers and their fears of school violence]. *Journal of School Violence, 4*(1), 47-69.


Appendix
Appendix A

IRB

UNIVERSITY OF REDLANDS

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
APPLICATION TO USE HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH

1. Investigator's Name  Wendy Henderson-Ditchfield

   Department  Education  E-mail and Phone

If you are a student, please state the name of the faculty sponsor and the nature of your research:

Faculty Sponsor's Name  Dr. Ron Morgan Ed.D

   Department  Education  E-mail and Phone  Ronald_Morgan@redlands.edu

[ ] Master’s Thesis, Honors Thesis, or Capstone Project

[ ] Individualized (Independent) Study Project

[ ] Graduate Course Work

[ ] Undergraduate Course Work

[ x] Other  [Education, Doctoral Dissertation Proposal]

[ ] CHECK: Has all relevant personal information been provided (i.e., investigator’s name, etc)?

2. Project Title  Since Columbine has anything changed: Analyzing California Policy Expectation Verses Preparation Of School Counselors in response to School Trauma and Violence/Crisis Intervention

   [ ] CHECK: Has the project title been provided?
3. **Review Category Requested.**

Has this project been approved by the IRB before? Yes ______ No _____X____
If yes, give previous IRB Approval Number ___________________

Which type of review are you requesting? (All first time applications require full IRB review)

[ X] Full IRB Review [ ] Expedited Review [ ] Exempt from Review

If requesting expedited review or requesting to be exempt from review, include justification.

[] CHECK: Have all questions under Review Category Requested been answered?

4. **Description of Participants**

Gender [ X] Male [ X] Female

Number of each ___________________

[ ] University of Redlands’ Students [X ] Other

[] CHECK: Have all questions about the gender and number of participants been answered?

5. **Procedures for Recruitment of Participants.** Include method of selection and recruitment. Describe all pertinent characteristics of your participants.

I will ask via the internet all Public School Guidance Counselors employed XXXXXXX County to fill out an E-mail survey. The E-mail address list has been provided by the XXXXXXX County Office of Education (Dr. XXXXXXX). All addressees will have the option to refuse participation. All participants must be employed as a Guidance Counselor in a public school in XXXXXXX County and have a PPS credential.

[] CHECK: Have the procedures for recruiting participants been described?

6. **Methodology and Research Objectives.** Describe and justify the methodology. Describe the research objectives, being sure to describe and justify the conceptual, theoretical, practical, or educational of the proposed project. Also, be sure that the methodology permits the goals of the research/educational objectives to be adequately met. A stronger case can be made by citing literature related to the project and

7. **Rooting a study in unanswered conceptual, theoretical, or practical issues.**
Study Purpose/Objectives

- The first purpose of this study is to determine XXXXX County School counselors’ level of crisis response preparedness as first responders since the time period shortly prior to the Columbine shootings. The practical aspect of this research is that it will demonstrate a continuing lack of prepared staff positioned to respond to campus trauma, violence or crisis.

- The second purpose to identify the gap between government policy directives and training implementation within the context of counselors performing school trauma response and crisis/violence intervention. The practical aspect of this research is that it will demonstrate the need for mandated training specifically aligned with policy implementation.

- The third purpose of this study is to examine the presence of anxiety levels counselors experience as they contemplate the possibility of responding to a crisis/violence incident of major proportion on campus. The practical outcome of such a purpose is that it will demonstrate the correlation between inadequate training and counselor anxiety levels about facing school violence or crisis.

Study Research Questions

4. Are school guidance counselors prepared to respond first to crucial crisis situations?

5. Do school guidance counselors feel prepared to identify and respond first to school violence indicators and events?

6. Is additional training of guidance counselors necessary to prepare them for violence and crisis intervention?

Quantitative Survey utilizing Yes/No answers, likert scale and open-ended questions. Correlation analysis, percentages and numerical ranking will be determined

7. Informed Consent. Include the oral or written format of the informed consent. Justify any request for waiver of written informed consent. Adequate informed consent requires an identification of the research, a description of the study, its intent and methodology, and the approximate time required of participants. Explicitly outline participants’ right of withdrawal and refusal and explain how confidentiality and/or anonymity will be maintained.
All participants will be informed of the study’s purpose, methodology, right of refusal and explanation of right of refusal/withdrawal. They will also be advised this is not a project created for the XXXXXXX Office of Education.

April 5, 2010

Dear Colleague:

You are invited to participate in a survey intended to identify counselor preparedness as they respond to school related violence and crises. My name is Wendy Ditchfield. I am a student at the University of Redlands. This survey is solely designed for my own research. It will meet the research requirement of my doctoral dissertation. It should only take approximately 15 minutes to complete this survey.

I am hoping your participation in this study will assist in providing verifiable data regarding needed training for school counselors.

All school counselors working in XXXXXXX are invited to participate in this survey. If you know of a school counselor working at your school who has not received an invitation to participate in this survey, please feel free to forward this invitation to them. This survey has no affiliation with the XXXXXXX County Office of Education, XXXX Unified School District or the University of Redlands.

The intent of this study is to:

1. Determine counselors’ level of preparedness as first responders to school wide trauma, violence or crisis.

2. Identify the gap between government policy directives and training implementation of counselors performing a response to school trauma, crisis and/or violence.

3. Examine the presence of confidence levels counselors as they contemplate the possibility of responding to a crisis and or violence incident of major proportion on a school campus.

Your consent to participate in this survey will be understood upon your effort to answer its’ questions. At anytime you may choose to withdrawal from participation in this survey.

All responses will be kept absolutely confidential. If you would like a copy of the results in this study, please e-mail your request to me. Extreme care will be taken to make sure any information obtained in connection with this study cannot be identified you unless you specifically give permission to be quoted. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of coding each response and storing the data in a locked cabinet which only I can access. All surveys will be destroyed when the study is completed.

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact the University of Redlands Institutional Review Board (IRB) at 909-335-4010.

Thank so very much for your participation in my study.

Sincerely,
Counselors’ Response to School Violence

Wendy Ditchfield
Wditchfield@XXXXk12.ca.us

CHECK: Has informed consent been secured from sites and agencies related to the project (e.g., school, military base, business, Student Life)?

CHECK: Have the letters of consent from these sites and agencies been appended to the application?

CHECK: Has a copy of the informed consent letter for participants (or their guardians) been appended to the application?

8. **Debriefing Procedure.** Include justification of the use of deception (if any), an explanation of participants' responses in the study, the study's rationale, procedure for obtaining results of study, and the person to contact with future questions.

Non Applicable, there will be no deception.

CHECK: Has a description of the debriefing procedure been provided? Even if a study does not involve deception, participants should be informed of the purpose of the study and given a name of a person, preferably a faculty member, who they can contact for further information.

9. **Procedures for Ensuring Confidentiality of Data.**

Only demographic information such as sex, years of service, and training beyond PPS credential will be identified. The information will be kept in a locked cabinet and shredded upon dissertation completion.

All electronic correspondence will hard copied and secured in a locked file at my residence. Electronic correspondence will also be copied onto a USB stick and filed in a locked cabinet at my residence. Correspondence will be directed to my work e-mail account solely used by myself.

(Permission granted from District Superintendent Dr. XXXXXX

CHECK: Have the procedures for ensuring confidentiality been described?

10. **Analysis of Risk/Benefit Ratio.** Include any short-term or long-term risks to participants and precautions taken to minimize risks in addition to the anticipated benefits of your research.

No short term or long term risks are anticipated for participants as their identity will remain confidential. Their answers to survey questions will be secured and they will have the right to withdraw from the survey at any time.
CHECK: Have the risks/benefits of conducting the research been described?

11. **Hazardous Materials.** Will drugs or hazardous substances be used as a part of this study?
   
   Yes _____  No ____X____
   
   If yes, please read and complete Hazardous Materials Use Form.

   CHECK: If hazardous materials will be used, have the appropriate forms been completed and appended to the application?

12. **Project Materials.** Include copies of all materials used in this study (e.g., surveys), and information about the source of these instruments (e.g., who developed the instrument, reference where additional information about the instrument’s reliability and validity can be found, etc).

   CHECK: Have all project materials (e.g., questionnaires) been appended?

   This survey was created by utilizing survey monkey and conducting a preliminary field test with counseling colleagues, an updated survey review with non-counseling colleagues, consulting with Statistics professor, Ross Mitchell, administrative supervisors and my dissertation chair Dr. Ronald Morgan-Department of Education.

   The survey can be viewed as an attachment to this IRB application.

13. **Certification for Research**

   I certify that to the best of my knowledge the information provided above is complete and accurate. I agree to obtain approval from the IRB for any modifications of the above protocol as described.

   I accept responsibility for ensuring that the rights, welfare, and dignity of the participants in this study have been protected and are in accordance with applicable federal/state laws and regulations and the University’s Institutional Guidelines for the Treatment of Human Participants in Research. *I certify that this research does not unnecessarily duplicate research already published.* I ensure that all personnel conducting the work of this protocol have or will receive appropriate training in the use of human participants in experimentation.

   Signature: **Wendy Henderson-Ditchfield**
   (To be signed by Principal Investigator)

   Date 4-5-10-2010

   Signature: **Dr. Ron Morgan Ed.D**
   (To be signed by the Faculty Sponsor, if different from above)

   Date 4-5-10

   CHECK: Has the certification for research been signed by the principle investigator and a faculty sponsor (if the PI is a student)?
14. **Certification for Teaching**

Non Applicable

I certify that to the best of my knowledge the information provided above is complete and accurate. I agree to obtain approval from the IRB for any modifications of the above protocol as described.

I accept responsibility for ensuring that the rights, welfare, and dignity of the participants in this study have been protected and are in accordance with applicable federal/state laws and regulations and the University’s Institutional Guidelines for the Treatment of Human Participants in Research. *I certify that this use of human participants in instruction does not unnecessarily duplicate previous student instruction.* I ensure that all personnel conducting the work of this protocol have or will receive appropriate training in the use of human participants in experimentation.

Signature ___________________________ Date ________________
(To be signed by Principal Investigator)

Signature ___________________________ Date ________________
(To be signed by the Faculty Sponsor, if different from above)

[ ] CHECK: Has the certification for teaching been signed by the principle instructor and a faculty sponsor (if the instructor is a student)?

15. **Project Recommendation**

APPROVED _____ DENIED _____ IRB APPROVAL NUMBER ______
(will be assigned by IRB)

_____________________________ Date ________________
Chair, IRB
April 20, 2010

Dear Colleague:

You are invited to participate in a survey intended to identify counselor preparedness in response to school related violence and crises. My name is Wendy Ditchfield and I am a doctoral student at the University of Redlands. This survey is designed to complete the research for my doctoral dissertation. The survey should take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

Your participation in this study will help provide verifiable data regarding needed training for school counselors.

All school counselors working in Xxxx County are invited to participate in this survey. If you know of school counselors working at your school who have not received an invitation to participate in this survey, please feel free to forward this invitation to them.

The intent of this study is to:

1. Determine counselors’ level of preparedness as first responders to school- wide trauma, violence or crises.

2. Identify the gap between government policy directives and training implementation of school counselors performing a response to school trauma, crises and or violence.

3. Examine the presence of confidence levels experienced by school counselors as they contemplate their possible response to crises and/ or violence of major proportion.

Your consent to participate in this survey will be based upon you proceeding with this questionnaire. At anytime you may quit taking this survey and your responses will not be included in the study.
All responses will be kept absolutely confidential. If you would like a copy of the results of this study, please e-mail your request to me. Extreme care will be taken to ensure both anonymity and confidentiality. If you wish, you may specifically grant permission to be quoted. Confidentiality will be maintained by encoding of responses and secure storage of data. All surveys will be destroyed when the study is completed.

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact the University of Redlands Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chair, Dr. Catherine Salmon at catherine_salmon@redlands.edu. You may also contact my Dissertation Chair, Dr. Ron Morgan, at Ronald_Morgan@redlands.edu. Please reference the following IRB approval number with any correspondence: 2010-15-REDLANDS.

Thank you very much for your participation in my study.

Sincerely,

Wendy Ditchfield
Wditchfield@XXXXX.k12.ca.us
School Counselor Research

April 26th, 2010 Monday 3:38 PM

Dear School Counselor,

You are invited to participate in a doctoral student survey about school counselors and their response to anticipated violence, crises and trauma on school campuses in XXXX County. This survey is completely confidential.

Please click on to the attached link to participate:
http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/BBZDFDX

Thank you,

Wendy Ditchfield
Dear Counselors,

For those of you who have already helped me with my doctoral research survey I extend my deepest gratitude. For those of you who have not answered the survey, I really need your help.

I hope the results from this survey will help us as a counseling community to become better prepared for our response to future school-wide crises.

Please log on to the following link to participate.

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/BBZDFDX

Thank you,

Wendy Ditchfield
XXX High School Guidance Counselor
University of Redlands Doctoral Candidate
From: WENDY DITCHFIELD

Sent: Fri 5/14/2010 12:07 PM
To: WENDY DITCHFIELD
Subject: Counselor Research – School Violence

Hello,
I wanted to thank all counselors who participated in my crisis response survey by conducting a drawing for a $75.00 dinner gift certificate. If you want to participate please respond to this e-mail with a yes.

For those of you who have not completed the survey you may still do so by clicking on the link below. Then enter the drawing by responding yes to this e-mail. I am closing the survey/questionnaire at 2:00 p.m. Monday, May 17th.
https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/BBZDFDX

Again thank you for your time, the results have been very informative.

Wendy Henderson-Ditchfield