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Development of a Needs Assessment for Youth Violence Prevention Programs in a Large Midwestern City

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Development of a Needs Assessment
for Youth Violence Prevention
Programs in a Large Midwestern City

By:
Laura Lynn Savel
2007
Development of a Needs Assessment for Youth Violence Prevention Programs in a Large Midwestern City

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Laura Lynn Savel

MASTER OF SCIENCE THESIS

Submitted to the Occupational Therapy Program at Grand Valley State University Allendale, Michigan in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE IN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

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ABSTRACT

This research project was designed to examine the relationship between the needs for violence prevention programs and the qualities of occupational therapists. A needs assessment relevant to violence prevention program could not be located. One was therefore created based on the literature available as well as professional input. A pilot study was conducted, revisions were made and the needs assessment was distributed when approval was granted. The assessment was distributed to elementary, middle and high school principals, assistant principals, occupational therapists, guidance counselors/psychologists, and support staff from two western Michigan school systems. A model program was created based on the data gathered from the needs assessment and the existing literature. Analysis and discussion of the findings are presented in addition to suggestions for further research.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background to Problem

An estimated 1.5 million violent incidents took place in public elementary and secondary schools from 1999 to 2000. Also within the same year, an estimated 61,000 serious violent incidents and 218,000 thefts took place at public schools (DeVoe et al, 2003). Three hundred and twenty-three youth were killed due to school-associated violence between July 1, 1992 and June 30, 1999 (Reza et al., 2003). In 1999 and again in 2001, students were more likely to be afraid of being attacked at school or on the way to and from school than they were outside of school (DeVoe et al, 2003). Schools should be a safe place for students to learn and not afraid of being hurt in any way. School officials must fight back and reclaim the safety they once provided to their students.

A nationwide poll done by the Washington Post in 1999 found that 78 % of all schools had some violence prevention program (Johansson, 1998-2000a). Although many organizations and school districts have violence prevention programs, most of these programs have not been well researched in regards to curriculum and effectiveness. It was previously thought that no prevention was effective, but now, this view is starting to change (Cornell, 1999). Violence prevention strategies were previously based on theoretical or ideological assumptions and not objective, scientific evidence (Cornell, 1999). This is why it was thought that nothing could be done to prevent violence. A correlation has now been found between after-school program participation and academic achievement improvement (ERIC Development Team, 1998). Now that more research is
being done, programs are beginning to be effective in preventing violence and rehabilitating students that were once violent (Cornell, 1999).

Although research on violence prevention programs and their effectiveness is limited, some studies have tested particular techniques within a program or a program in its entirety. Several components of programs are common and shown to be effective in multiple settings. Cornell (1999), states that these components include community strategies such as mentoring, supervised recreation, and community policing; family focused strategies such as parent education, family therapy, and preschool programs that teach about violence; and school based strategies including conflict resolution training, violence preemption counseling, social competence development, bullying reduction, and drug education. However, these studies also have shown that no particular strategy is effective for all youth and in all settings. The fact that there is not one particular strategy that has been proven effective for all violence prevention, makes designing the most effective program for a unique location and population challenging. Each program must be tailored to fit its unique clients in their unique setting. Adequacy of funds and competent staff also become issues when considering effectiveness of youth violence prevention programs (Cornell, 1999).

According to Cornell (1999), staff must be competent in the particular treatment method that is to be used in a particular program. Treatment programs should be specified in training manuals and staff should be guided by qualified supervising professionals who are competent with the chosen program. In order for a treatment method to be successful, all staff must be operating under the same protocol. Some programs attempt to begin new methods of treatment, failing to adequately train staff in
these new methods resulting in poor implementation and inadequate and ineffective treatment (Cornell, 1999).

In addition to the variety of staffing, components and settings of violence prevention programs, there are also a variety of professionals involved in these programs. These professionals include police officers, teachers, and psychologists (Research and Education for Solutions to Violence and Abuse, 2002). Due to the fact that programs obtain their funds through different means, different professionals are utilized.

Facilitation of youth violence prevention programs is an emerging area of practice for occupational therapy (OT) and therefore there is little information available substantiating this role. The majority of the literature found on existing violence prevention programs focused on other school officials. Karen Jacobs, past president of American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA), states that the role of OT is already established in public schools, but not yet specifically in violence prevention (Johansson, 1998-2000a). Jacobs also states that occupational therapists have an ideal position to work collectively with schools, students, and families to address psychosocial issues that lead to violent behavior as well as develop and collaboratively carry out violence prevention programs (Johansson, 1998-2000a). Many occupational therapists think that they could bring a unique contribution of occupation-based intervention as an addition to existing programs developed by others (Daunhauer & Jacobs, 1999-2005).

Research is currently being done to validate that the skills that occupational therapists possess can be utilized to improve youth violence prevention programs. The OT department at Eastern Kentucky University along with the school’s College of Law Enforcement, Education and Psychology is currently conducting research on best
practices in the safety of schools and maintenance of a statewide database on school violence (Johansson, 1998-2000b). Eastern Kentucky University is also currently conducting research on activity-based interventions in violence prevention and assisting in the review of grant proposals for school safety plans throughout the state (Johansson, 1998-2000b).

Studies have only begun to be conducted on youth violence and its prevention, and more studies are still necessary to determine where the need in these programs lies. Once these areas of need are determined, they can be further explored to determine whether OT is a good fit to fill this void. Research on this area is currently being conducted but very few studies have been published.

Studies about youth violence prevention have been done in several settings. Prevention programs have been examined on the community, family and school level (Cornell, 1999). The **Warning Signs** program conducted through the American Psychological Association (APA) and Music Television (MTV) was studied for effectiveness in 2003 in urban high schools (Schaefer-Schuimo & Ginsberg, 2003). The *U.S. Department of Education* (2002) has published several studies comparing the effectiveness of community based violence prevention programs against no program involvement.

Universities and colleges have conducted, and are currently conducting, studies about school safety as a whole and best practices in school safety (Johansson, 1998-2000b). Many OT departments of such universities and colleges have begun researching youth violence and prevention more heavily so as to investigate and authenticate the role of OT in youth violence prevention programs. Other occupational therapists, in the
hospital setting, have also begun to be active in validating this area of practice. These practitioners are working to show that OT could provide education to parents about violence, particularly how early and repeated exposure to violence affects human development (Johansson, 1998-2000b).

For the purpose of this research, the World Health Organization’s definition of violence will be used. The World Health Organization (1996) defines violence as the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or a group or community that results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, poor development or deprivation. The definition should be understood to include physical, sexual and psychological abuse, such as the significant abuse of power arising from a dependent relationship, threats, intimidation and neglect.

Problem Statement

The problem is twofold. First, to ensure the quality of a violence prevention program, a needs assessment must be implemented; however, none were identified in the literature. Second, there is a strong correlation between the skills that occupational therapists possess and qualities that prove to be the most successful in prevention programs, but there is a limited amount of literature supporting the role of OT in violence prevention (American Occupational Therapy Association, 1999-2005; Daunhauer & Jacobs, 1999-2005; Johansson, 1998-2000a; Johansson, 1998-2000b). Evidence is needed to support this emergent area of practice.
Purpose

The purpose of this research is threefold; (a) to determine the areas of need in youth violence prevention programs; (b) to create a model program based on the results of the needs assessment and the literature; (c) and to determine whether there is a role for OT in facilitation of youth violence prevention programs.

Significance of the Problem

This research paper is significant because it will help to improve existing youth violence prevention programs with the hope of decreasing youth violence. Violence of any kind is detrimental to society as a whole, and therefore anything that can be done to prevent it should be explored. This research has the potential of being an instrumental tool in decreasing youth violence. A decrease in violence among youth can then lead to decreases in youth growing up to become violent and in turn lead to a decrease in violence among adults.

Due to the fact that there is little information available concerning ways that OT can be utilized in violence prevention, this paper has the potential to provide evidence to support the involvement of occupational therapy in youth violence prevention programs. Although literature is available documenting that occupational therapists have the skills and qualities that have been associated with successful violence prevention programs, there is a limited amount of literature correlating these skills to the delivery of violence prevention programs. Since juvenile violence prevention is an emerging area of practice for OT and evidence is still needed to support this area, this research has the potential to open up a new market for OT services. In conjunction with other professionals, occupational therapists can contribute to successful youth violence prevention programs.
If OT’s involvement in violence prevention programs continues to emerge and increase, this could provide many new opportunities for occupational therapists in the future. Providing support for OT involvement could substantiate this area of practice and in turn, increase the demand for OT practitioners. Increasing the demand will increase the number of those employed in the profession, in turn creating increased awareness of the profession and its value. Support is needed to substantiate this role; this research has the potential to increase support of this role.

Research Questions

The questions this paper poses are; (a) What are the areas of need in youth violence prevention programs? Furthermore, do these areas of need vary by age of students and grade level and what methods and techniques are currently being used and what is needed? (b) and In what ways can occupational therapists be incorporated into youth violence prevention programs?
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

The questions that this study is focused on concern the role that occupational therapy (OT) can play in the prevention of youth violence, based on identified needs in the field. Since this is an emerging practice area, this review will examine the unique skills of occupational therapists and how they can be used to facilitate the prevention of youth violence. The settings in which this facilitation would be most appropriate will also be reviewed. Databases and search engines on the World Wide Web were used to research this topic. Databases used include ERIC, CINAHL, and PROQUEST. Search engines used on the World Wide Web include the search provided on The American Occupational Therapy Association’s website, www.aota.org, and the search provided by Google, www.google.com.

There are six main areas of study included in this review about OT’s role in youth violence prevention. This review has been organized from the general to the specific, beginning with background information to better understand the topics included. It will be presented in six sections; (a) Youth Violence Trends and Statistics; (b) Reasons and Risk Factors for Youth Violence; (c) Needs Assessments; (d) Needs in Violence Prevention Programs – An Integrated Model; (e) Existing After-School and Violence Prevention Programs; (f) and Occupational Therapy’s Role in Violence Prevention.
Youth Violence Trends and Statistics

An understanding of youth violence is needed to be able to appreciate the importance youth violence has in this country. In order to understand where and how occupational therapists’ unique skills could be used in this prevention, it is necessary to understand the present problem as well as the history of the problem.

Measuring and tracking violence statistics and trends can be done in several ways. The magnitude of youth violence is typically documented by official crime statistics from law enforcement agencies, arrest reports, and surveys to young people asking in confidence about violent acts they have committed, or been a victim of, during a specific time period (Department of Health and Human Services, 2000). Although these statistics can be helpful in understanding the problem of youth violence, only 63% of the United States’ population is represented in Uniform Crime Reports done by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) because not all law enforcement agencies send reports in; nationwide estimates would be more accurate and have the potential of serving a greater purpose if reporting rates improved (Department of Health and Human Services, 2000).

In crimes against juveniles, victim reports often represent between 15 and 21% more than what is included in police reports (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

Because of these varied reports, it is difficult to understand whether youth violence is actually on the rise, declining, or remaining constant. According to the Department of Health and Human Services (2000), arrest records and victimization reports show that youth violence is declining but information from self-reports indicate that youth violence has remained at a peak rate since 1993. Many statistics claim that youth violence, including arrests and homicides, is continually on the rise, but others
claim that many statistics for youth violence are declining (Brener, Lowry, Simon & Eaton, 2004 Department of Health and Human Services, 2000; Fox, 1996). It was reported that in 2003, weapon carrying and physical fighting, including that on school grounds, had declined since 1991 but there has been no significant change in being threatened or injured with a weapon on school property since 1993 (Brener et al, 2004). The U.S. Department of Education reported that from 1989 to 1995 the number of youth feeling unsafe at school has increased from 6 to 9% (Kaufman et al, 1998).

Much of the literature found on youth violence does agree that those who commit crimes in their adolescence often show signs of violence before they actually become violent (Department of Health and Human Services, 2000; Fox, 1996; Schaefer-Schuimo & Ginsberg, 2003). Adolescent killers often show signs and even plans, attempting to seek support and reinforcement from their peers (Schaefer-Schuimo & Ginsberg, 2003). Twenty to forty-five percent of males who are serious violent offenders by ages 16 to 17 started their violent behavior in their childhood (Department of Health and Human Services, 2000). Eighty-five percent of those who become involved in serious violence by age twenty-seven report that their first violent act took place between the ages of 12 and 20. By the age of 17, 30 to 40% of boys and 16 to 32% of girls have committed a serious violent offense (Department of Health and Human Services, 2000).

When taking a closer look at youth violence, it is also important to consider times in which the crimes were committed. Statistics show that most serious violent crimes committed by youth take place immediately after school, between three and four in the afternoon on school days (U.S. Department of Education, 1999). On non-school days, the crime pattern for youth is similar to that of the adult, gradually increasing in the
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afternoon, peaking between eight and 10 in the evening. The rate of juvenile violence after-school is four times the rate during curfew period (U.S. Department of Education, 1999).

**Reasons and Risk Factors for Youth Violence**

When examining ways in which youth violence prevention can be facilitated, it is important to take into consideration the reasons for, and risk factors behind, the youth violence. Knowledge of the reasons and risk factors enhance the understanding of the problem. Better prevention techniques can be implemented if the underlying factors are clearer.

According to the Department of Health and Human Services (2000), there are two theories offered as to how youth violence develops. One theory focuses on onset and frequency, patterns, and continuity over the life course; the other focuses on the emergence of risk factors at different stages of the life course. Most identified risk factors have their roots in social learning or a combination of social learning and biological processes (Department of Health and Human Services, 2000).

Risk factors can be broken down into four categories including individual, peer or school, family, and neighborhood or community (Center for Disease Control, 2005). Individual risk factors include behaviors, the nature of activities in which a child is involved, and cognition. Having ADHD/ADD, antisocial beliefs and attitudes, a history of early aggressive behavior, involvement with drugs, alcohol, or tobacco, early involvement in general offenses, low IQ, poor behavioral control, and social cognitive and information-processing deficits are all examples of risk factors on an individual level that may be characteristic of those involved in youth violence (Center for Disease Control, 2005).
Peer and school risk factors include association with delinquent peers, involvement in gangs, social rejection by peers, lack of involvement in conventional activities, poor academic performance, low commitment to school and school failure (Center for Disease Control, 2005). Although the general public believes that schools are responsible for youth violence, youth ages 5 to 14 spend up to 80% of the day out of school (Coltin, 1999). This time away out of school provides an opportunity for growth, developing social, emotional, cognitive, and physical skills, time to develop a lifelong interest and provide support (Coltin, 1999).

Family risk factors include such occurrences as authoritarian childrearing attitudes, exposure to violence and family conflict, harsh, lax, or inconsistent disciplinary practices, lack of involvement in a child’s life, low emotional attachment to parents/caregivers, low parental education and income, parental substance abuse and criminality, poor family functioning, and poor monitoring and supervision of kids (Center for Disease Control, 2005). Linda Hill, OTR/L, director of activities at Cedar Springs Hospital, a behavioral health facility in Colorado Springs, says that much of violent behavior has its roots in early experiences of abuse and neglect from parents/caregivers (Johansson, 1998-2000b).

Since the 1980s, the nuclear family has been on the decline (Brooks, 2002). Fifty-seven percent of children in the U.S. have no fulltime parental supervision either because of a single parent working fulltime or two parents with both parents working fulltime (Fox, 1996). Fulltime parenting is even an issue for many young children in the U.S. Forty-nine percent of children under the age of 6 in the U.S. do not have fulltime
parents (Fox, 1996). Relationships high in quality with parents/caregivers and other adults, accompanied with constructive uses of time, are extremely critical for healthy youth development (Patten & Robertson, 2001). Disrupted family lives and reduced parental involvement are two of the largest risk factors for youth violence (Daunhauer & Jacobs, 1999-2005). It is also argued that children have a decreased opportunity for socialization, leading to social problems such as juvenile crime and poor school performance (Brooks, 2002).

The Research Institute on Addictions states that children raised in families that are emotionally supportive and play an active part in raising their children have lower levels of problem behaviors (Patten & Robertson, 2001). It has been shown that knowing where children are, who they are with, and what they are doing relates to more academic achievement, lower levels of depression, lower levels of antisocial and delinquent behavior and lower levels of sexual behavior (Patten & Robertson, 2001).

Neighborhood and community risk factors include diminished economic opportunity, high concentrations of poor residents, high levels of transiency, high levels of family disruption, low community participation, and socially disorganized neighborhoods (Center for Disease Control, 2005). Many of the root causes in youth violence can be found in culture and society (Walker & Eaton-Walker, 2000).

Although researching risk factors and reasons behind youth violence can be helpful in designing intervention plans, there is not one single risk factor that can predict with certainty that a child will become violent (Department of Health and Human Services, 2000). Another difficulty is that some risk factors are those that individuals are born with or born into and cannot be changed. These qualities, such as being male, cannot
be helped by intervention. Risk factors are not fixed; they depend on when something occurs in development, in what social context, and under what circumstances (Department of Health and Human Services, 2000).

**Needs Assessments**

In order to create the most effective violence prevention program, as stated previously, it is important to be aware of, and incorporate, the needs of the targeted population. When addressing needs of a certain population, knowledge of needs assessments is important. This section presents information on the role of needs assessments and how they are conducted.

Needs assessments are “a systematic set of procedures undertaken for the purpose of setting priorities and making decisions about program or organizational improvement and allocation of resources” (Witkin & Altschuld, 1995, p. 4). They result in goals and objectives for identified areas of interest (King 2001). Needs assessments can provide justification for funding, can be used as part of a program evaluation, and can be used in resource allocation and decision-making to determine the best use of limited resources (Soriano, 1995; Witkin & Altschuld, 1995). Needs assessments can lead to ways to improve, guide, and change existing programs, and directly benefit the individuals for whom the needs assessment was conducted (Witkin & Altschuld, 1995).

Needs assessments are a technical, sophisticated way of bringing awareness to the scope and significance of information collected (Soriano, 1995). They are a “tool for determining valid and useful problems, which are philosophical as well as practically sound. It keeps us from running down more blind education alleys, from using time, dollars, and people in attempted solutions which do not work” (Soriano, 1995, p. xiv).
Needs assessments provide a useful and rational approach to laying the groundwork for new or improved programs, and restructuring a program to better meet the needs of its goals and participants (Flaxman, 2001; Witkin & Altschuld, 1995).

There are several different approaches that can be used in the assessment of clients' needs. Which approach is most suitable depends on the type of program being developed, the nature of the clientele, the availability of the clientele for involvement, and the resources available to the conductor (Boyle, 1981). The survey is one of the popular approaches used when the conductor of the assessment wishes to gather information from a large and dispersed group of individuals (Boyle, 1981; Witkin & Altschuld, 1995). The structure of the survey needs assessment offers less opportunity for sidetracking and irrelevant information than group interactive processes, and generates a large amount of data that can be easily processed by a computer (Witkin & Altschuld, 1995). Although surveys have many advantages, there are also disadvantages. It is possible that the survey may be used with a population that is too broad. Also, some people choose not to respond to mail surveys, and needs assessment surveys are rarely evaluated for validity and reliability (Witkin & Altschuld, 1995).

According to Witkin and Altschuld (1995), a survey needs assessment is most appropriate when there is a specific need or set of needs, issues, or concerns that cannot be gathered using any other method. These surveys generate data for specific, time-based decisions about priorities for planning, resource allocation, or program evaluation. This method allows inferences to be made about priorities and the level of criticalness of needs. The most effective type of survey asks participants for informed opinions based on personal experience, background, expertise, or knowledge or for information about
themselves and others about whom they have direct knowledge (Witkin & Altschuld, 1995).

Selecting a target population is the first step necessary to conduct a needs assessment survey. Before selecting a sample, it is important to first identify whose needs will be studied. Once the target population has been chosen, a well-chosen, random or systematic sample can be used for reliable information (Witkin & Altschuld, 1995). There is no clear cut answer as to how many subjects are an appropriate number for a particular survey (Soriano, 1995). Typically, the smaller the total group, the larger the proportion drawn for the sample (Witkin & Altschuld, 1995). Using random sampling, each individual in the population has an equal opportunity to be chosen; random numbers can be used for selection purposes (Witkin & Altschuld, 1995). In systematic sampling, every nth person is chosen for example, from an alphabetic list of the population (Witkin & Altschuld, 1995).

Once the sampling choices have been made, appropriate content and types of items must be determined. The most successful content for needs assessment surveys is information or opinions about aspects of the program under consideration or an area of concern about which the participants have personal knowledge or experience (Witkin & Altschuld, 1995). Global statements or questions about adequacy of services of programs, asking for direct statements of needs, and wording questions so as to elicit lists of solutions should be avoided when conducting these surveys (Witkin & Altschuld, 1995).

The conductor must then determine the method in which he or she will distribute the surveys. The method for distribution and administration is important to ensure the highest rate of return consistent with time and budget demands and constraints (Witkin &
Mailed surveys typically require follow-up phone calls or postcards to boost the return rate (Witkin & Altschuld, 1995). If the survey is mailed, the conductor must be sure that there is no ambiguity in the participant’s mind as to what is wanted (Witkin & Altschuld, 1995). Surveys published in magazines, newsletters, or newspapers have a potentially low rate of return and a sample of participants who may not be representative of the target population (Witkin & Altschuld, 1995). Extensive research shows that mailed surveys have a much higher rate of return if there is a self-addressed, stamped envelope enclosed (Witkin & Altschuld, 1995). A cover letter should be presented with the survey explaining its purpose, the kind of people who are being surveyed, how the data will be used, and a requested date of return (Witkin & Altschuld, 1995). Whenever possible, the survey should also include a description of the benefits to be gained and when they may know the results (Witkin & Altschuld, 1995).

The format used is another important aspect of the needs assessment survey. Typical response formats include open-ended, multiple-choice, category scales, rankings, paired comparisons, and most and least important (Witkin & Altschuld, 1995). The format and scale must be appropriate for the target population and sample.

**Needs in Youth Violence Prevention – An Integrated Model**

One major problem with violence prevention is that research is slow to be added; research should be utilized in revision of programs to make them more effective (Department of Health and Human Services, 2000). According to Flaxman (2001), youth violence prevention programs are being facilitated with more and more frequency around the country. With this increasing frequency, those that are funding these programs and policy makers are demanding more thorough evaluations of results and effectiveness.
This increase in evaluations is then increasing the demand for evidence-based practice that shows positive results (Flaxman, 2001). Best practices can be found through meta-analysis and review of evaluation research to identify general strategies that characterize effective programs (Department of Health and Human Services, 2000).

Success of any program or curriculum is by no means guaranteed and therefore, it is important that those facilitating the program thoroughly examine the curriculum to determine whether it will meet the needs of those in the program, have adequately trained staff and evaluate the effectiveness of the program (Skiba, 2000). There is not one particular approach to violence prevention that has been proven most effective in comparison with others and therefore an integrative approach, incorporating several different approaches can implement the most effective methods of each approach.

It is important to address the needs in youth violence prevention when discussing youth violence prevention programs. The needs must be addressed to create the best program possible. Those programs that best address the needs of youth have will be the most successful in preventing violence. School officials and administrators must realize that schools have more influence on students regarding violence than environmental factors and psychological makeup and therefore must be cautious when creating the most effective program for their school (Besag, 1989).

One of the first factors that must be considered concerning prevention of violent behavior and drug involvement in today’s youth is the identification of the problems, and the targeting of youth identified as at risk of becoming involved in a violent way of life (Department of Health and Human Services, 2000; King, 2001; U.S. Department of Education, 2002). Threat assessments are an incident-based method of identifying
students who may be at high risk for violence (Osher, Dwyer & Jackson, 2003; O'Toole, 2000; Reddy et al., 2001). One study done in 2004 on 188 cases of student threats in four high schools, six middle schools, 22 elementary schools, and three alternative schools, provided empirical support to threat assessments, demonstrating that they are a practical approach for schools to implement in identifying and reducing youth violence (Cornell et al., 2004).

General supervision in after-school programs can help to reduce youth crime and risk-taking behaviors by providing constructive activities and opportunities to develop healthy relationships with adults and their peers (Daunhauer & Jacobs, 1999-2005; U.S. Department of Education, 2002). Activities that encourage releasing and/or channeling anger, and other strong negative emotions, in constructive ways can help prevent violence (Johansson, 1998-2000a). Offering counseling and training to parents can also help in violence prevention (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

Prevention and intervention programs are important because getting youth out of a life of violence is better than warehousing them in prisons and training schools (Department of Health and Human Services, 2000). Vanderbilt University Professor Mark Cohen claims that preventing one high-risk youth from a life of crime saves the United States close to $1,700,000 (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

A major challenge violence prevention programs have is employing well-trained staff that understand the program and its limitations (Department of Health and Human Services, 2000; Gaustad, 1990; Skiba, 2000; Walter, Caplan, & McElvain, 2000). Training topics identified as effective include techniques to enhance youth success, building school, parent and community partnerships, conflict management and dispute
resolution skills, conducting school and community needs assessments, writing grants, and evaluating programs (King, 2001). Effective programs must have well-trained staff and volunteers, a solid structure, assessments, inclusion of the family in program planning, and an advisory board as necessary components. The structure must include defined goals, rules, regulations, and consequences (ERIC Development Team, 1998; Glover, Cartwright & Gleeson, 1998).

According to Walter, Caplan and McElvain (2000), after-school programs must keep a strong and parallel relationship with the school day. Both must operate with similar principals but not in the same manner. After-school programs are meant to enhance the material that is taught in the school day, but not be a copy of the regular school day. After-school programs need to have smaller groups than typical classrooms and have a greater emphasis on participation from all students. The students should also have an impact on the structure of the program and what topics they would like to see covered. The more ownership the students have in creating the after-school program, the more effort they will put in during its meetings, in turn making the program more successful (Walter, Caplan, & McElvain, 2000).

Functional behavioral assessments (FBAs) can be utilized in an educational program to help the facilitators to better understand their participants (Quinn et al., 2001). The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires these assessments (Kearns, Kleinert, & Kennedy, 1999; Quinn et al., 2001). IDEA requires school officials to include all members of the school, where some assessments previously did not include those with disabilities (Kearns, Kleinert, & Kennedy, 1999; Quinn et al., 2001). It also requires school officials to address the behavioral needs of students with disabilities.
rather than waiting until they are legally required to deal with the behavior (Kearns, Kleinert, & Kennedy, 1999; Quinn et al., 2001). The FBAs provide a description of the behavioral issues and their social and environmental context (Quinn et al., 2001). Previously, students who acted out or engaged in disruptive behavior were subject to some kind of disciplinary punishment such as office referrals, suspension, or expulsion (Quinn et al., 2001). Now, with the use of the information gained from the FBAs, schools can offer a better resolution to disruptive behavior (Quinn et al., 2001).

An integrative, effective youth violence prevention program needs to include academic, recreational, enrichment and cultural components (ERIC Development Team, 1998; Walter, Caplan, & McElvain, 2000). Programs must also have a balance between remedial tasks and informal learning to promote challenge and increase motivation (Coltin, 1999). Activities outside of school can help to facilitate development of skills and interests not fully developed through the school day, and provide leadership and social skills development, which can increase self-esteem and lead to higher aspirations for the youth involved (Coltin, 1999). Collaboration between community and school is essential (Gaustad, 1990). A psychosocial element is need so that the program can act as a social microcosm (Johansson, 1998-2000b).

Major changes in youth violence prevention may take time but there are smaller changes that can be made immediately to make schools safer. These changes include school architectural design, administrative practices of the school, neighborhoods within which the schools are located, and behavioral characteristics and backgrounds of the students (Walker & Eaton-Walker, 2000). A good safety plan can be extremely important. An effective school safety plan should include safety drills, regular school
safety audits to evaluate vulnerabilities of structural characteristics, consider school uniforms, develop school-wide discipline plans, close campus during lunch and other breaks, and conduct evaluations of school safety (Walker & Eaton-Walker, 2000). Schools can organize violence prevention teams to educate school personnel and parents on youth development, and provide after-school activities to engage and motivate troubled youth (Johansson, 1998-2000b).

**Existing After-School and Violence Prevention Programs for Youth**

To implement the most appropriate and functional youth violence prevention program, it is necessary to have knowledge of already existing programs. It can be helpful to be aware of existing after-school programs' strengths and weaknesses. When interested in OT's role in prevention programs, it is necessary to not only have the knowledge base of these existing programs but more importantly, how occupational therapists have functioned in the facilitation of these programs.

After-school programs provide youth with opportunities to develop caring relationships with adults and include language arts, study skills, academic subjects, tutoring, and community-based programs (ERIC Development Team, 1998; Patten & Robertson, 2001). These programs provide opportunities to develop and enhance talents and hobbies and completing homework and practice academic skills to enrich lives long term (Coltin, 1999).

Programs are typically fee-based and most accessible to middle and upper-income families, although there has been increased federal support and help from communities, grants such as such as the Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative (SS/HSI) and the US Department of Education for after-school programs (A Role for OT in Preventing School
Grants such as the SS/HSI give federal help intended to increase health and safety in the nation’s schools and communities by implementing violence prevention programs and testing for effectiveness of those already in place (Tellen et al., 2003). These grants and other forms of funding are in place to address violence and other threats to safety of students in the nation’s schools and increase the prevalence of violence prevention programs.

The Washington Post randomly polled five hundred high school teens throughout the United States about after-school violence prevention programs and found that 42% felt that the schools could do more, and 20% personally knew a student who had brought a gun to school (Johansson, 1998-2000a). Barriers to program improvement include lack of time, poor parental attitudes, and lack of school personnel support (King, 2001). It is also difficult to conduct research on types of after-school programs and those that work most efficiently because of lack of money and time (ERIC Development Team, 1998).

Several different types of after-school programs have been implemented with varied success. Warning Signs is a joint program between the American Psychological Association (APA) and Music Television (MTV) including a 30 minute video moderated by a popular MTV personality about youth violence from the perspective of the youth perpetrators, friends, friends of victims and witnesses, about what led to the acts, what could have prevented them and how to get help (Schaefer-Schuimo & Ginsberg, 2003). Following the video, a trained professional conducts a discussion and copies of Warning Signs guide to violence prevention are distributed (Schaefer-Schuimo & Ginsberg, 2003). In a questionnaire regarding effective ways of diffusing a potentially violent situation, it...
was shown that the **Warning Signs** program had no significant impact on the participants’ answers; there is no clear benefit to this particular program (Schaefer-Schuimo & Ginsberg, 2003).

Other programs show great promise in the arena of violence prevention. In a fourteen-year study of Chicago’s government funded **Child-Parent Centers**, youth not involved in the program were 70% more likely to be arrested by age 18 (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). A study in Montreal of disruptive first and second grade boys provided with a social skills training and counseling program showed that the odds of being in special classes, labeled as highly disruptive by teachers and peers, and repeating a grade were cut in half, and reduced future violence (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). The *U.S. Department of Education* (2002) has documented many of these programs that have been relatively successful. What components have made the programs successful and how these components can be incorporated into other programs is still under discussion.

**OT’s Role in Youth Violence Prevention**

In order to understand what role an OT could play in youth violence prevention, it is necessary to be aware of the unique skills that these professionals possess and in what ways these skills can most effectively be put to use. Occupational therapists can offer much to the arena of violence prevention for today’s youth. In 1999 at an AOTA conference, Carolyn Baum, PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA stated that OT was the essential connection between activity and social participation (American Occupational Therapy Association, 1999-2005). Occupational therapists can bring a unique contribution to youth violence prevention programs of occupation-based intervention as a complement to
existing programs developed by experts in the school systems (Daunhauer & Jacobs, 1999-2005). These professionals are trained to understand interactions between individuals and their environment, including school, home and the community (Johansson, 1998-2000b). Occupational therapists are well positioned and have the knowledge base to play a primary role in youth violence prevention (Johansson, 1998-2000a). They can address psychosocial issues that can lead to a rise in violent behavior and collaboratively develop family inclusive violence prevention programs that can begin with early intervention (Johansson, 1998-2000a). Occupational therapists have the tools necessary to help today’s youth develop the skills they need to effectively and safely participate in their social environment (American Occupational Therapy Association, 1999-2005).

An occupational therapist can function in a primary or secondary role of violence prevention. Primarily, occupational therapists can use peer activity groups as a preventative measure and secondarily they can use one-on-one sessions. Early stages of violence prevention can help youth structure their time in meaningful, productive ways while developing social skills and respect for diversity and culture (Daunhauer & Jacobs, 1999-2005). Because of their knowledge of development, sensory integration, and psychosocial components of behavior, occupational therapists can help school systems to establish more efficient ways to deal with emerging signs of social and emotional stress in their students.

A mental health practitioner with experience working with children and adolescents, Debra Davidson, MS, OTR/L says that occupational therapists can function to educate important school personnel to screen for, and if necessary, respond to signs

Through occupation-based and client-centered activities, occupational therapists can help plan groups centered upon motivating, esteem-building pro-social activities. They can help youth identify, express and re-channel disturbing emotions before violence becomes the only apparent alternative (Johansson, 1998-2000b). One example is Kentucky’s $15 million state initiative for the Center for School Safety, in which the OT department at Eastern Kentucky University will assist with special education aspects of violence prevention. The department faculty will also offer their expertise in activity-based interventions for students, parents, and teachers as an alternative to basic lecture and discussion interventions (Johansson, 1998-2000b). Through programs such as Associations of Service Providers Implementing IDEA reforms in Education (ASPIIRE), AOTA can raise issues that bring concerns to others, empower members through developing and providing access to materials, resources and training (Jackson, 1999-2005). AOTA’s participation in this program increases its visibility with federal and state agencies that have an interest in children’s needs, and highlighting OT’s role under IDEA complementing ASPIIRE’s efforts (Jackson, 1999-2005).
Conclusion

From these readings, it has become apparent that there is little information available concerning ways that occupational therapy can contribute to violence prevention. The majority of the literature found on existing violence prevention programs did not include the profession of OT but rather other school officials. Although there is a strong correlation between the skills that occupational therapists possess and qualities that prove to be the most successful in prevention programs, there is a limited amount of literature supporting the effectiveness of OT’s role in violence prevention. Because juvenile violence prevention is an emerging area of practice for OT, evidence is still needed to support this area. Collaborating with other professionals, occupational therapists can help to facilitate a youth violence prevention program that may be more effective than those in existence today.

Implications for this Study

This study about youth violence prevention and the role that occupational therapists can play was greatly influenced by the literature reviewed. The background information provided an understanding of the nature and course of the problem, which was necessary to begin the study. Knowledge of the reasons and risk factors for youth violence helped create a picture of the “why” behind this problem; knowing the “why” of the problem and where youth violence begins helped to create a program that better facilitates prevention.

A survey needs assessment was the most appropriate method for this study, supported by the literature. Elementary, middle, junior and high school principals, vice principals, public safety officers, guidance counselors, psychologists, support service
teachers, and occupational therapists from School District A and School District B will be used as the population. The surveys were mailed along with self-addressed stamped envelopes to increase the chance of return as the literature states.

Reading the literature helped to determine what questions concerning violence prevention would be included on the needs assessments that was used in this study and which of these areas were appropriate for occupational therapists to facilitate in a program. Topics such as staff training and types of problems the schools are faced with were included in the survey as these needs appear often in the literature. The literature found regarding reasons and risk factors for youth violence also shaped the questions asked in the survey. All four categories of individual, peer or school, family, and neighborhood or community were addressed. Due to the information about trends and statistics in youth violence, participants were asked about the sex, age, home life, and academic records of those involved in violence in their school. Information found in the literature and gathered from the survey needs assessment was put together to create an integrated model of a violence prevention program specifically geared to meet the needs of District A and District B. As the research process continued, the literature continued to shape the way in which this study was conducted.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Study Design

This study of school violence prevention utilized a mixed methods design, including both qualitative and quantitative research methods (Creswell, 2003). A survey needs assessment was conducted, which was beneficial to this research because needs assessments can help programs focus better on school wide issues and connect goals with data (Riley et al., 1998). School violence is a school wide issue and therefore conducting a needs assessment on prevention could help focus the existing programs to cover the areas that are identified as needed. An existing needs assessment of violence prevention programs could not be located and therefore, the development of this tool was instrumental in designing a youth violence prevention program. Using the needs assessment to design such a program helped to ensure that the program met the needs found in a particular school or area.

A needs assessment can lead to ways to improve, guide, and change existing programs and directly benefit the individuals for whom the needs assessment was conducted (Witkin & Altschuld, 1995). In this particular research, the assessment led to better violence prevention programs, thereby reducing the violence both in the schools and out of the schools. This reduction in violence directly benefited the participating school officials by enhancing programming for their students and demonstrating a commitment to address community problems. Needs assessments provide a useful and rational approach to laying the groundwork for new or improved programs and

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restructuring a program to better meet the needs of its goals and participants (Witkin & Altschuld, 1995).

The needs assessment used for this research took the form of a survey and included both qualitative and quantitative questions. The qualitative questions helped reduce or eliminate the tendency of the subjects to answer in socially appropriate ways and allow them to answer freely without being constrained (Soriano, 1995). The quantitative questions in the needs assessment were used to indicate the proportion of subjects who responded to particular questions in a certain manner (Soriano, 1995). Response alternatives were provided for some questions in which the participant’s answer may not fit elsewhere (Walter, Caplan, & McElvain, 2000). Some questions asked the participants to rank choices, which provided insight into priority (Walter, Caplan, & McElvain, 2000). The survey design was formatted using subheadings and spaces so that the presentation was attractive and appeared fairly easy to complete (Walter, Caplan, & McElvain, 2000).

**Study Site and Population**

For confidentiality purposes, the school systems used in this survey will be referred to as District A and District B. Both school systems are in western Michigan. District A is a larger school system with a predominantly Caucasian student body and District B is a smaller school system with a diverse student body. Elementary, middle, junior and high school principals, vice principals, public safety officers, guidance counselors, psychologists, support service teachers, and occupational therapists in the both District A and District B served as the population for this research on youth violence prevention. District A was chosen due to its recent increase in violent acts. District B was
chosen secondary to its diverse population and the steady occurrence of violence of its students. The school officials chosen were an appropriate population because of their involvement with the youth that are or would be in need of a violence prevention program or strategies.

Principals were included in this study because according to the *Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor* (2005), they provide leadership and manage the daily activities in schools. They observe in classrooms, review instructional objectives, examine learning material, and work with teachers to develop and maintain high curriculum standards and develop performance goals and objectives (*Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, 2005*). When disciplinary action needs to be taken, students are often sent to the principal’s office and the principal then must determine what corrective measures will be taken. Based on this experience, principals are involved with those students that may be involved in violence. Principals have experience with conflicts and conflict resolution and are therefore appropriate school officials to be included in this research.

According to the *Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor* (2005), vice or assistant principals of middle, junior and high schools help the principal in the overall administration of the school. These school officials are largely responsible for support services. Vice principals typically handle student discipline and attendance problems, social and recreational programs, and health and safety matters (*Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, 2005*). The qualities vice principals have demonstrate how these professionals served as an appropriate portion of the population in this research on school violence prevention.
School safety officers were an important addition to this population because of their experience with violence and those participating youth. These officers facilitate safety and security within the schools (National School Safety and Security Services, 2007). These individuals have experience with crime prevention and therefore those youth involved in violence. Safety officers also have the understanding of various laws, policies, rules, procedures, and law enforcement techniques relating to violence and violence prevention (National School Safety and Security Services, 2007).

Guidance counselors and psychologists served as an effective part of the population for this research because of their holistic knowledge of the students. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor (2005), these school officials assist students with personal, familial, educational, mental health, and career decisions and problems. School guidance counselors and psychologists help students to evaluate their abilities, interests, talents, and personality characteristics to develop realistic academic and career goals. They help students understand and deal with social, behavioral, and personal problems. School guidance counselors and psychologists use preventative and developmental counseling to help students learn the life skills necessary to deal with problems before they occur and to enhance students' personal, social, and academic growth (Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, 2005). These school officials have a unique understanding of youth and therefore served as an effective part of the population to determine where the needs may be in developing a youth violence prevention program.

In schools, occupational therapists evaluate children's abilities, recommend and implement therapy, modify classroom environment and equipment when necessary, and
help children optimally participate in school programs and activities (Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, 2005). These school officials are able to work with youth one-on-one as well as in small groups. The one-on-one experience helps the therapist to better understand the client as an individual and the group experience helps the therapist to observe interactions among clients; this combination of experience allows the therapist to learn more about them in a holistic manner. Occupational therapists have a unique knowledge of occupation and activity analysis and may be able to use these skills when determining where the needs may be in developing a youth violence prevention program. Occupational therapists’ goal is to help clients improve their abilities to perform activities of daily living in their daily living and working environments (Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, 2005). Due to the fact that one of the questions being answered by this research is whether or not occupational therapists can be incorporated into youth violence prevention programs, it was beneficial to the researcher to know if these particular professionals believe that they can be of any help.

The principals, vice principals, public safety officers, guidance counselors, psychologists, support service teachers, and occupational therapists in both typical and alternative schools that served as the population for this research were employed by District A and/or District B. There were no exclusion criteria. The researcher received 27 of 39 responses to the survey needs assessment and therefore these 27 respondents served as the participants in this study. Twenty-one of the respondents were from District A and six of the respondents were from District B.

An individualized research request form was submitted to the superintendents of both District A and District B (Appendix A). The respondents’ names and work addresses
were given to the researcher by the superintendents after obtaining approval from the schools systems.

Each respondent received a letter of introduction explaining that returning the enclosed survey would be seen as consent to participate in this research and would give the researcher permission to use the results (Appendix B). Due to the fact that this research was conducted through a survey needs assessment, the site was the respondents’ homes or work environment because the survey was completed at their leisure.

**Equipment and Instruments**

The instrument utilized in this study was a needs assessment to identify needs in youth violence prevention programs. A copy of this needs assessment is included in Appendix C. The researcher designed the needs assessment used because no existing needs assessment for violence prevention programs could be located. The needs assessment was generated from documents regarding youth violence, youth violence prevention and existing programs on youth violence prevention. Feedback from eight professionals from the pilot study as well as addition consultation from occupational therapists was used to revise the generated needs assessment before it was sent to the research participants. This helped the researcher identify areas of need in youth violence prevention programs in Districts A and B.

**Validity/Reliability**

In qualitative research, it is recommended that a minimum of two of the eight primary strategies to check accuracy of the findings within a qualitative research study be utilized (Creswell, 2003). This research included qualitative data as well as quantitative data and included a pilot study and peer review. The validity and reliability of the needs
assessment used in this research was determined through a pilot study including two of each of the professionals that served as participants research, totaling eight professionals. These professionals provided the researcher with feedback and the needs assessment was revised accordingly. The researcher also shared the needs assessment with fellow occupational therapists and these professionals read the assessment and offered feedback. The researcher again revised the needs assessment as needed.

According to Litwin (1995), pilot studies are a necessary and important component of survey development. Pilot studies help to identify errors in survey form and presentation. Errors are inevitably made by the authors because they are so involved in the project that they may overlook even the most obvious errors. A pilot study can detect problems such as typographical errors, misspelled words, sensitivities to cultural barriers, font size and style issues, inappropriate vocabulary for the participants, and many other correctable problems. A pilot study gives the author a chance to correct these errors and redesign awkward parts of the survey (Litwin, 1995).

Although formal validity could not yet be determined for the needs assessment used in this research because it was created by the researcher, many documents regarding youth violence, youth violence prevention and existing programs on youth violence prevention were used as a reference in its formation. Professionals from several universities as well as chiefs of current violence prevention programs were also consulted. The needs assessment included questions regarding components that were common to many prevention programs researched and common goals to many professionals.
**Procedure**

After the research was approved by Grand Valley State University's Human Subject Review Committee, the research was then approved by both the superintendents from District A and B. A copy of the research request forms used for these two school systems is included in Appendix A. After this research was approved by all parties involved and the names and addresses were obtained from the superintendents, the survey needs assessment created for this research and a letter explaining this study was mailed to the respondents along with self-addressed stamped envelopes addressed to the researcher. The respondents were instructed to please return the survey within two weeks. Reminder letters were sent one week before this date to encourage anyone who may have overlooked the needs assessment to complete it. Data were then collected once the needs assessments were completed and received by the researcher. Data analysis began when all surveys had been received. The quantitative data were entered into an SPSS statistical device and the semantic data were analyzed through semantics analysis. Finally, data were interpreted for final analysis of findings of this research. Once the results of the survey needs assessment had been analyzed, the researcher then paired these results with the literature to create an integrated model of a violence prevention program.

Each respondent's confidentiality was protected throughout this research. This was insured because self addressed envelopes were included with the needs assessment and no name or return address was required. Once the assessment was completed and received by the researcher, the researcher had no way of retracing the assessment to the individual respondent. A letter of introduction was included with the survey and self-addressed envelope to ensure that each participant was aware that consent for
participation in this research was implied by completion of the survey. This letter included the same required information as a separate consent form. A copy of this letter of introduction is included in Appendix B.

**Data Analysis**

There are several types of data analyses that were utilized for the purpose of this research. Nominal categorical data were gathered from the questions in the survey ending in “check all that apply.” Those questions using a Likert scale were utilized to obtain nominal ordinal data. Semantic data were obtained through those questions asking for an explanation or further justification of a response.

The quantitative data, as indicated earlier, were analyzed through the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) program. Specifically, the nominal categorical data gathered were analyzed using frequency distribution programs in SPSS such as bar graphs and tables. The semantic qualitative data were analyzed through semantics analysis. Semantic data were examined to identify relationships between each other.
CHAPTER 4
RESULTS

Following the deadline for returning the surveys, the researcher entered the quantitative data into a spreadsheet on Excel Software. The spreadsheet data were then analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), a computerized statistical program. This program offered the researcher descriptive graphs to give a visual explanation of the subjects’ answers. Qualitative data were analyzed through semantics analysis. Frequencies and percentages are illustrated in this chapter. For confidentiality purposes, the school systems used in this survey will be referred to as District A and District B. Both school systems are in western Michigan. District A is a larger school system with a predominantly Caucasian student body and District B is a smaller school system with a more diverse student body.

Demographics of Respondents

Of the 27 respondents of this survey needs assessment, six were from District B and 21 were from District A. Ages of respondents ranged from 31 to 61, with 50 being the average. Male and female respondents were almost equal at 13 males and 14 females. Twenty of the respondents had a master of art or science degree, five had a bachelor degree, one had an educational specialist degree, and one had a doctoral degree. These respondents represented six principals, six guidance counselors, five vice or assistant principals, five support services staff, two occupational therapists, two psychologists, and one teacher consultant. The respondents have an average of 22 years in their professions and an average of nine years in their current positions.
Eleven of the respondents worked in the middle and/or high school level, eleven worked in the elementary school level, and five attend all grade level schools within their school district. All of these respondents work in a public school district; additionally, one of them works in both public and private schools.

Because some of the respondents work throughout the school district, the average of students in their schools did not yield a representative average. The average number of students receiving free or reduced lunch varied significantly between the two school districts, therefore their averages were taken separately. The average percentage of students noted by the respondents in District B was 92%. The average noted by the District A respondents was 53%. The average of both school districts was 63%. The data yielded by the question regarding ethnic make-up of the schools was inconclusive. All of the respondents did not use the same method of ranking the ethnicities given, some used a ranking system and some gave percentages. Regardless of method, each respondent who answered this question noted that “Caucasian of European decent” was the largest ethnic group in their school.

**Violence Characteristics and Statistics**

**Nature of Violence**

Several areas of need related to violence prevention were identified by the respondents. When given the choices of bullying, fighting, shooting, stabbing, choking, aggravated assault, sexual assault or other, the respondents identified bullying and fighting as the most prevalent types of violence within their school (see Figure 1). Respondents were asked to rank all that apply in order of occurrence, from most to least
but some respondents used inconsecutive numbers. Only answers with consecutive numbering were used.

Figure 1.

What is the nature of violence in your school?

Sources of Violence

When asked to identify what they believed were the sources of school violence in their district, the majority of the respondents ranked gangs and community as the two
sources with the most impact on violence for the two school districts combined. For both districts, grades (poor academic grades) and early exposure were noted as having the next highest impact followed by friends, drug use, socio-economic status, family, and the media. One school official from District B wrote in, “music” and an official from the District A wrote in, “failure at life.” Early exposure was identified as the largest impact by respondents from District B, followed by family and gangs, friends, community and socio-economic status, grades and drug use, and the media. Respondents from District A identified gangs as being the most influential followed by community, early exposure, drug use, friends, socio-economic status, the media, family, and grades.

Victims & Perpetrators of Violence

The respondents of this survey needs assessments identified Caucasians and others of European decent as the most likely victim of school violence. Those with disabilities (mental, physical, or developmental) were identified the second most, followed by those whose personal style is outside the mainstream, African Americans, females and males. From most likely to least likely to be a victim of violence, District B respondents identified those whose personal style is outside the mainstream and those with disabilities (mental, physical or developmental), females and Caucasians and others of European decent, males, and African Americans. District A respondents identified Caucasians and others of European decent as most likely to be the victim of violence followed by African Americans, those with disabilities (mental, physical, or developmental), those whose personal style is outside the mainstream, males, and females. Four of the categories provided were not identified by either school.
In this survey, males were all identified as the most common perpetrators of violent acts in their schools. This was followed by females, Caucasians or others of European decent, African Americans, those with disabilities (mental, physical, or developmental) and Latinos. All officials from the District B answered this question. In District B, males were identified as the most likely to be a perpetrator followed by females, African Americans, Caucasians or others of European decent, and those with disabilities (mental, physical, or developmental). District A also identified males as the most likely followed by females, those with disabilities (mental, physical, or developmental) and Caucasians or others of European decent, Latinos, and African Americans. Four categories went unidentified among both districts.

**Program Existence**

**Violence Severity**

The severity of violence was the category in which the survey responses significantly differed from Districts A and B. On a scale of one to ten, one being not a problem and ten being an extreme problem, the average of how severe District A respondents rated their violence problem was a three. District B’s average was significantly higher at six. The overall average for both districts was four. The whole number value closest to selected numbers was used in the averages and the averages were then rounded off to the nearest whole value.

**Description of Program in Existence**

Seventy-one percent of respondents who answered whether or not their school had a violence prevention program, noted that it did. In relation to the percentage of overall survey participants, 63% acknowledged that their school had a program in place.
(see Table 1). Only seven of the respondents who answered the question noted they did not have a program. Sixty-seven percent of District B’s respondents noted that their school had a program and 72% of District A’s respondents who answered noted their school had a program (see Tables 2 & 3). The inconsistency of answers suggests that respondents are unaware of the details of the program their school or school district uses.

Table 1.

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a. School District = B

Table 3.

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a. School District = A

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The majority of the respondents who responded to whether or not their school had a violence prevention program, discussed the program in their individual school as opposed to the entire school district. Only 50% of District B’s respondents and sixty-two percent of District A’s respondents noted the age range their program served. One respondent from District B noted their program served kindergarten through twelfth grade. The other two noted that their programs served middle school aged students. One District A respondent noted their program served all ages, four noted their program served seventh and eighth graders, three noted their program served third through sixth graders, four noted their program served kindergarten through second graders, and one did not give an age range but rather noted, “DARE.” These data indicate that there may have been confusion regarding whether the respondents were to indicate those served in the program used in their particular school or in the entire school district. In addition to the confusion that the respondents may have had, they may also be uninformed regarding the details of the program their school or school district uses.

Only one respondent from District B respondents gave the duration and frequency of the program. This sole respondent answered that the program duration was three years and frequency was weekly. Fifty-seven percent of District A respondents answered this question; all noted that the program was ongoing. The respondents from District A varied in answers of frequency. Four answered “monthly,” three answered “daily,” two answered “weekly,” one answered “ongoing,” one answered assemblies once per month and classroom once per trimester, and one answered “once every six weeks.” Similar to data gathered related to age range the program served, the lack of, and inconsistency of, data regarding duration and frequency indicate that respondents may be uninformed
about their school's violence prevention program. There were inconsistencies even when examining the data by grade level of students in the respondents' schools. Information gathered by school officials involved in violence prevention from the respective school districts suggests that the programs used vary by grade level of the school but should not vary among same grade level schools within the districts.

Fifty percent of District B gave an answer for where their violence prevention program was held, who attended and who was the planner and facilitator. Fifty-seven percent of District A respondents gave usable answers to these same questions. Two respondents from District B stated that their program was held in the “classroom” and the other one stated the program was held in “small groups.” Four District A respondents stated their program was held in the “classroom,” four others gave an answer indicating everywhere, two stated the “auditorium,” and two others stated the classroom and auditorium or assemblies. Along with other properties of violence prevention programs, within the districts, they vary by grade level of the school but should not vary among same grade level schools within the districts.

All District B respondents who gave usable answers to the question of who attends their violence prevention program responded differently. One responded “all students,” another responded “all students and teachers” and the other responded “selected students.” Three District A respondents answered that “all students” attended their program, three others responded “all students and teachers,” two responded “students” and “sometimes teachers” or “some teachers”, one responded “students and teachers,” one responded “all,” one responded “all students and staff,” and one responded “varies.” The answers given by respondents varied even within grade levels of schools.
The actual programs used in each school district vary only by grade level and not by individual school. The data received indicated uncertainty of the program attendees.

The noted planners and facilitators of the schools' programs did not correlate with the grade level of students in the schools within District B but did appear to correlate within District A. The four answers given by District B respondents were "special staff," "teachers and administration," "Sheriff's department," and "D.A.R.E." Answers given by District A respondents had common threads. Counselors and teachers were the most common individuals listed among all the grade levels of students in the schools. Seven of those responding named "counselors." Six of those responding named "teachers" as one or the only individual that planned and facilitated their school's program. Four District A respondents named "principals." Two of those responding from the junior high school named the "I Will committee." "Administrators," "school improvement teachers," and "aides" were each listed once as a planner and facilitator. This data indicates that out of all the specifics of the respondents' violence prevention programs, most are aware of who is the facilitator and planner.

Several programs were noted in the answers regarding the violence prevention program the school officials depicted in their answers. Two of District B respondents did not give a description of the program but D.A.R.E. was mentioned by 50% of those who answered. Twenty-five percent of those answering respondents mentioned the Positive Behavior Support (PBS) system. Seventy-one percent of District A respondents described their school's violence prevention program. Of these respondents, 33% mentioned the PBS system, 24% mentioned the I Will program or committee, and 5% mentioned D.A.R.E. Those mentioning the I Will program were school officials in the junior high
school and those mentioning the PBS system were from elementary schools. The commonality in these answers suggests that in addition to knowledge of the facilitator and planner of the program, many respondents also know the name of the program.

Mandate of Violence Prevention Program

Many school officials in both districts indicated they did not know whether or not there was a mandated violence prevention program for their school or if it included the nature of the curriculum. Sixty-seven percent of District B respondents and twenty percent of District A respondents who answered this question checked “unknown.” The others from District B indicated there was not a mandate. Only 15% of District A respondents indicated that a program was mandated, two of whom indicated that the mandate did include the nature of the curriculum and activities to be included but the other responded negatively. The remaining 65% of District A respondents indicated there was no mandate. The fact that varied answers were received regarding a mandate, even though each district should be operating under the same regulations, the data suggest most school officials do not have a good idea of what is required.

Elements Included and How Determined

District B respondents did not clearly depict many the elements included in their violence prevention program. Only one respondent from this district answered this question and stated that their school’s program aimed to “promote positive actions - model acceptable behavior” and “teach.” This lack of data from District B suggests that either the officials were unaware or confused regarding the elements included in their program.
District A respondents elaborated more than those from District B, although forty-three percent left this question unanswered. The PBS system was identified by 10% of District A respondents. The “3 R’s – rights, responsibilities, and readiness” were also mentioned by 10% of the respondents, both from elementary schools. Consequences, anti-bullying, and proper or expected behavior were also each mentioned by 10% of the respondents. Respondents from District A noted that elements of the violence prevention programs were determined “by making changes over the past 7 years,” “based on models we have investigated,” “student surveys,” “parent advisory committee” and different grants. Michigan’s Integrated Behavior and Learning Support Initiative (MiBLSi) was mentioned by 10% of the respondents and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requirements were mentioned by 5%. Even though District A respondents yielded more answers than District B, the inconsistency and lack of data still shows there may be confusion or the officials may simply be unaware of what their program entails.

Effectiveness of Program in Curbing Violence

When asked if their school violence prevention program was effective in curbing violence, District B respondents gave inconclusive answers. Sixty-seven percent left the question unanswered. One simply stated, “somewhat.” The other respondent who answered stated their program “has not been in effect long enough to judge.” This data along with the lack of data regarding specifics of the schools’ programs suggest that officials are unaware of what the program includes along with its effectiveness.

Forty-eight percent of District A respondents left this question on effectiveness of their violence prevention program blank, leaving only 11 respondents. Of these 11, six gave definite answers that the program was effective and five gave indirect answers that
the program was effective stating that it was “helping,” they had “fewer office behavior referrals” and that the “program promotes a common language, teachers, principals supply the reinforcement.” Many of the District A respondents stated they had been tracking incidents of violence and that they had, in fact, decreased. The nature of data received from this district may indicate that many respondents are unaware of whether or not the program is effective although of those that did answer, all gave affirmative answers.

Facilitators of a Program

Respondents were asked to identify which professionals, based on their professional experience, were best equipped to lead a violence prevention program. They were given the choice of administrators, principals, assistant/vice principals, teachers, guidance counselors, support service teachers, public safety officers, or school resource officers. The respondents were instructed to check all that applied and were also given an “other” category to write in any professional they felt was not listed.

Although many of the answers given were similar between the two districts, there were some varied results. Overall, counselors and teachers were found to be the best equipped by 72% of the respondents who answered from both school districts. Principals received the second highest amount of acknowledgements with 68%, public safety officers and resource officers each were marked by 48%, administrators were acknowledged by 44%, assistant or vice principals by 36%, and support service teachers by 20% of the respondents (see Figure 2). The answers given varied even within grade levels of the schools suggesting that school officials may have different opinions of
strengths and weaknesses of different professionals as well as varied experience working with these individuals.

Figure 2.

Best Equipped to Lead a Violence Prevention Program

Independently, the two districts yielded slightly different results for the best equipped professionals to lead a violence prevention program. In District B, principals were designated as best equipped, followed by teachers and public safety officers, administrators, assistant or vice principals, and support service teachers (see Figure 3). Eighty-three percent of District B respondents noted that principals were well equipped to lead such a group. As a whole, this group was found to have the third highest number of votes. Sixty-seven percent of District B respondents noted that teachers and public safety officers were the next best equipped individuals to facilitate such a program.
Administrators were identified by 50% of District B respondents. Assistant or vice principals were identified by 33% and support service teachers by 17%.

**Figure 3.**

Best Equipped to Lead a Violence Prevention Program

The occupational therapists from District A did not respond to who was the best equipped to facilitate a violence prevention program. Other respondents who answered designated counselors as being the best equipped to run such a program followed by teachers, principals and school resource officers, administrators, assistant or vice principals, and support service teachers (see Figure 4). Ninety-five percent of District A respondents noted that counselors were the best equipped. This high percentage made this the top facilitator of a program even though none of District B’s respondents identified
these professionals. Teachers were identified by 78% of District A respondents. Principals and school resource officers were identified as the next best equipped individuals to facilitate such a program receiving 67% of the respondents’ votes. Administrators and public safety officers came in next with 44%. Assistant principals were chosen by 39% and support service teachers were chosen by 22% of the respondents from District A.

Figure 4.

Best Equipped to Lead a Violence Prevention Program

Types of Media Used & Components of the Program

Activities to be Included

The respondents were given a list of activities to determine whether or not they should be included in a violence prevention program. They were also given an “other”
category in which they could write in other important activities that were not included in the list. Respondents were instructed to check all that applied.

The results regarding activities that should be included in a violence prevention program were similar between the two districts although some differences were identified (Figure 5, 6, 7, 8 & 9). There were three activities listed that received the highest number of votes from both of the school districts. “How to increase their use of praise,” “conflict resolution techniques and how to increase their use,” and “brainstorming effective ways to deal with anger without fighting (anger management)” were the activities that received acknowledgement by 95% of respondents from both districts. All of the respondents who answered from District B and 94% of those who answered from District A chose these activities. These results suggest that the majority of the school officials share similar views regarding what activities should be included in a program. Answers also did not significantly vary based on grade level of school. This data may be a result of the officials’ similar experience with the students in their schools.
Figure 5.

Activities that Should be Included in a Violence Prevention Program
Figure 6.
Activities that Should be Included in a Violence Prevention Program

Figure 7.
Activities that Should be Included in a Violence Prevention Program
Figure 8.
Activities that Should be Included in a Violence Prevention Program

School: Elementary

Activities

Figure 9.
Activities that Should be Included in a Violence Prevention Program

School: Middle/High

Activities

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The activities receiving the second highest number of votes differed between school districts. Five of the activities received the same number of votes from District B respondents and three activities received the same number of votes from District A respondents. Overall, activities "about violence in general" and "parental involvement and/or community involvement" received the second highest number of votes, 86% of the respondents. The second highest number of votes from District B respondents was 80%, which was received by these overall second highest activities as well as "identifying and expressing feelings in an appropriate manner," "meaningful activities for enjoyment or to learn specific skills," and "how to self monitor their behavior." District A respondents also noted these overall second highest activities in addition to activities regarding "how to reduce insults." These were identified by 88% of those who answered from District A.

The third overall most noted activity was "how to reduce insults." This activity received acknowledgement by 82% of answering respondents. Within District B, this activity also received the third most votes (60%) as well as "how to effectively accept feedback" and "how to engage others in cooperative tasks." The third most identified activities by District A respondents were "identifying and expressing feelings in an appropriate manner" and "how to self-monitor their behavior," each with 76%.

"Identifying and expressing feelings in an appropriate manner" and "how to self-monitor their behavior" were the activities that were identified as receiving the fourth highest votes by both school districts (77%). Forty percent of those who answered from District B identified "conflict escalation and what can be done to prevent this" and "threat-reduction techniques" as being the fourth most necessary type of activity to be included in a violence prevention plan. District A respondents identified "how to engage
others in cooperative tasks” and “threat-reduction techniques” as being the fourth most necessary type of activity.

The fifth most necessary type of activity to be included in a violence prevention program identified by both districts’ respondents was “brainstorming effective ways to deal with anger without fighting (anger management).” Sixty-eight percent of those who answered identified this type of activity. Due to the fact that many of the activities listed received the same amount of votes, District B did not have any lower ranked activities. The fifth most necessary type of activity identified by District A respondent was “conflict escalation and what can be done to prevent this.”

“Parental and/or community involvement” activities were overall identified as the sixth most important types of activities to be included in a violence prevention program. Sixty-four percent of those who answered noted that this type of activity should be included. “How to engage others in cooperative tasks” was the type of activity that was identified by 59% of those who answered from District A.

Overall, the seventh most identified activities were “conflict escalation and what can be done to prevent this” and “how to effectively accept feedback.” These two types of activities were identified by 59% of those who answered. In District A, the seventh and least identified type of activity was “meaningful activities for enjoyment or to learn specific skills,” identified by 47% of those who answered. This type of activity was also identified overall as the eighth and least identified type of activity by the two districts.

Resources Needed

Thirty-three percent of respondents did not give an answer for the resources needed to develop and support a violence prevention program. Seventeen percent of
District B’s respondents and 38% of District A’s respondents did not answer. Several of the respondents’ answers had themes in common. Among the five District B respondents, the PBS system was mentioned by 60%, time and training were both mentioned by 40%, and MiBLSi and other sources of funding was mentioned by 20%. District A respondents identified some of the same resources as District B. Sixty-two percent mentioned staff or personnel. Of the 13 who responded to this question, 31% mentioned money and funding and 23% mentioned time. The need for guest speakers and parental involvement were each mentioned by 15%. PBS is a program the district already implements and MiBLSi is a grant the district already receives. This data suggest that the district may already have the resources it needs to have an effective program. Other data suggests that this is not a universal consensus among respondents. More time, personnel, and training were also identified as necessary resources.

District A respondents brought up several other issues that were only mentioned once. One respondent mentioned the issue of lack of space commenting, “We do not currently have any available space in our building that a counselor could use.” One mentioned that they needed passionate and dedicated leaders. Another mentioned visiting other programs and still another mentioned the importance of student involvement. The answers given by only one respondent may indicate that these are only problems for particular schools or that other respondents have not noticed these difficulties.

Espoused Models

Sixty-three percent of respondents did not answer whether or not their school’s violence prevention program had a particular model it espoused. Both schools had similar response rates, 67% unanswered for District B and 62% for District A. This high rate of
unresponsiveness suggests that the school officials are unaware of the specific model their school espouses.

One of the two District B respondents that answered simply stated, “PBS.” The other stated, “For our K-6 building the MiBLSi program is starting to work. We need to keep revisiting [it] to make the program even better.” Sixty-three percent of District A respondents who answered mentioned PBS. One of these respondents wrote MiBLSi in addition to PBS. Fifty percent answered “no” or “none known.” One of these four answered, “…not really, maybe SADD” after stating no and one other, even though stating “no,” also wrote “PBS model.” Twenty-five percent mentioned the I Will program. One respondent even mentioned that it was from Hillsbourough, Tennessee. Another District A respondent stated that they used an early on program for kids and another simply stated, “empathy, emotional management, [and] problem solving.” Both the PBS program and MiBLSi grants are used in both school districts so it was expected that these answers would be given frequently. Although the answers showed common programs, grants, and models, there was still a lack of answers making it difficult to analyze what the officials are aware of and what they simply chose not to answer.

Homework Assignments & Case Studies

Overall, 28% of those respondents who answered said that they would recommend homework assignments and case studies regarding school violence prevention. Fifty percent of those who answered from District B and 21% from District A answered affirmatively. The differences among the two school districts may be indicative of the different student populations.
Parent’s Role

The respondents were asked what the role should be of parents in violence prevention programs. Thirty-three percent of District B respondents left this question blank. All others’ answers related to support. One commented that the parents needed to participate and take ownership. Another simply stated that the parents needed to be supportive. One referred to parents as team members. Another stated that, “They are the most important element. Without [their] support it’s not going to change behavior.”

Eighty-one percent of District A respondents gave usable answers regarding the parents’ role in violence prevention programs. The majority stated that the parents were important and should be actively involved and supportive. One respondent stated that the parents “must be part of the solution.” Another stated, “I think parents need to be involved since they are usually the most influential people in a child’s life.” Data from both school districts suggests that the majority of officials feel that parents’ role in violence prevention is important.

School Resource/Public Safety Officer’s Role

The respondents were asked to identify what the role of the school resource/public safety officers was in a violence prevention program. The same 33% of District B respondents who did not answer the question regarding the parents’ role in such a program also did not answer this question. Two of those who answered stated that the school resource/public safety officer’s role needed to be that of a member of the team and understand his or her role within the district. Another respondent from District B answered that school resource/public safety officers should be active and informative and
take part in instruction and intervention. The other District B respondent commented that the school resource/public safety officer should play a role in support and follow-up.

Twenty-nine percent of respondents from District A gave unusable answers pertaining to the role of the school resource/public safety officer in a violence prevention program. Most of those who answered commented that the school resource/public safety officer’s role should be related to education and support and provide a resource to the students. Several of the respondents from District A discussed their role as a teacher and presenter of material related to violence prevention. One wrote, “1^st show they are a friend (resource) 2^nd enforce violence infractions. 3^[rd] community awareness.” The low percentages of respondents giving usable answers pertaining to the role of school resource/public safety officer in a violence prevention program suggests that many may be unaware of what the role should be.

Major Outcomes of a Program

Respondents were asked what “should be the major outcomes of a violence prevention program.” They were given choices and instructed to check all that applied. Respondents were also given the option to check “other” and describe an outcome not mentioned. None of the respondents used this option.

Overall, the most identified outcome was to “increase ability to self-monitor behavior.” This was identified by 96% of respondents who answered this question. There were three major outcomes which were the most identified by District B respondents. In addition to the overall most identified outcome, these respondents identified to “increase self-esteem” and “increase parental/community involvement.” District A respondents identified three outcomes as well including the overall most important outcome. These
other two outcomes were “significant decrease in violence” and to “improve social skills (cooperation, expressing feelings appropriately, etc.).” These three outcomes were identified by 95% of District A respondents. These responses are inconsistent with earlier responses that indicated “meaningful activities” are less significant.

To “improve social skills (cooperation, expressing feelings appropriately, etc.)” and to make a “significant decrease in violence” were two outcomes that received the second highest acknowledgement by both districts. Ninety-two percent of respondents identified these as major outcomes. These two outcomes were also identified by the second highest number (80%) of District B respondent. The outcome identified by the second highest number (74%) of District A respondents was to “increase parental/community involvement.”

The third most identified major outcome of a violence prevention program was to “increase parental/community involvement,” which was overall identified by 79% of respondents. The third most identified major outcome of District B respondents was “development of new interests,” which was identified by 40% of the respondents. To “increase self-esteem” was the third most identified major outcome of District A, identified by 68% of respondents.

The fourth most identified major outcome of violence prevention programs by both school districts’ officials was to “increase self-esteem,” identified by 75% of respondents. The fourth and least identified major outcome of District B respondents, “moderate decrease in violence,” was only identified by 20% of respondents. District A respondents identified “development of new interests” as the fourth most identified major outcome of a violence prevention program, which was identified by 37% of respondents.
Thirty-eight percent of all respondents identified “development of new interests” as a major outcome of a violence prevention program making it the fifth most identified. The overall least identified outcome was “moderate decrease in violence,” identified by 25%. This outcome was also the fifth and least identified by District A respondents. Only 26% identified it as a major outcome of a violence prevention program. Similar outcomes given by both school districts suggest that these officials have the same idea of what violence prevention programs should be accomplishing.

**Occupational Therapy**

**Occupational Therapists in the Schools**

Twenty-two respondents answered the question of whether or not their school had an occupational therapist. Of these responding 22, 55% answered affirmatively. Individually, 33% of respondents from District B and 63% from District A answered affirmatively. Most of the schools in both districts have students who are seen by an occupational therapist. The results do not reflect this therefore, many officials may be unaware of the presence of the occupational therapist among their staff.

In addition to being asked if there was an occupational therapist in their school, respondents were also asked to identify his or her responsibilities. Only 33% of District A and 33% of District B respondents answered. One respondent from District A answered, “unsure.” Thirty-six percent of District A respondents with useable answers mentioned the intermediate school district. One wrote, “Provide OT, serve on student assistance teams, provide evaluation of [students] for service.” Another mentioned the therapist’s awareness of their PBS program and assistance when the therapist is in the building. Twenty-one percent who answered mentioned the occupational therapist’s role of
consultation. One respondent from District B stated that he or she worked through the 
intermediate school district with students on coordination skills. The other stated that 
they primarily worked with special education students doing evaluations and service 
provision. The lack of data related to occupational therapy responsibilities and 
inconsistency among the answers given suggest that many school officials are unaware of 
what occupational therapists are educated to do.

Occupational Therapist Responsibilities

Of the six respondents from District B, essentially none answered the question 
pertaining to what other activities/responsibilities were they aware of in which 
occupational therapists engaged. Sixty-seven percent of District A respondents left the 
question essentially unanswered. Those who did answer left brief responses. One simply 
stated, “work in elementary schools.” Another wrote, “working with students with fine 
motor difficulties and at times developing organizational skills.” Others from District A 
answered regarding documentation for the court system, evaluations for those with 
autism, and working with special education students. As stated previously, this low level 
of responses suggests that school officials have little knowledge of the responsibilities of 
occupational therapists in the school district.

Occupational Therapist Skills & Assets

Respondents were asked what skills or assets they thought an occupational 
therapist could bring to a violence prevention program. Sixty-seven percent of the 
respondents from District B did not answer this question, leaving only two that 
responded. Fifty percent left the answer space blank and 17% wrote in “don’t know.” 
One of the respondents from District B stated that occupational therapists could work
“...with students on their self-esteem, helping students become more self-assured in everyday skills.” The other respondent from District B stated that occupational therapists could “[t]each calming skills, sensory info re: what stress/fear does to bodies/brains.”

Many of the respondents from District A also did not respond to this question. Sixty-seven percent left this question essentially unanswered. One District A respondent wrote, “social emotional awareness/training.” Sensory needs and redirection related to behavior were also mentioned by three of the other respondents. Another respondent stated, “knowledge, enthusiasm, compassion, contacts in the community, abilities to relate well to all ages.” Problem solving, role modeling and being supportive of the programs used were also mentioned. Although many officials did not answer this question, those answers given were congruent with what an occupational therapist could bring to a violence prevention program. This suggests that those who did answer appear to have an accurate understanding of occupational therapy.

Summary

Several areas of interest were noted in these results related to the research questions of this paper. The most significant findings related to the nature of violence, violence severity, existence of violence prevention programs, who is best equipped to plan and facilitate a violence prevention program, activities to be included, and knowledge and responsibilities of occupational therapists.

The most frequently identified types of violence were bullying and fighting and the most frequently identified sources of violence were gangs, community, poor academic grades and early exposure to violence. These types and sources will be examined so that they are taken into consideration in construction of a model program.
The varying severities of violence between the two school districts will also be taken into consideration when creating the model. This variance may be due to the differences in socio-economic status and make-up of the student body between the two schools.

The lack of answers and possible confusion regarding details in the programs already in existence will also be addressed. Most respondents did not even know whether or not a program was mandated. The data received about effectiveness is also troublesome. Most respondents did not answer whether or not their program was effective, although of the respondents that did answer, all gave affirmative answers. These issues of the program and its effectiveness will be incorporated into the model program and ideas for activities to be included will be taken into consideration. Activities will be chosen by the respondents’ feedback as well as the literature and officials in the model program will be more informed.

The majority of the respondents shared similar views regarding what activities should be included in a program. Activities identified did not seem to vary between the school districts or grade levels. This suggests that the officials may have similar experience with the students in their schools.

Many respondents indicated resources their schools already had as the resources needed for an effective program. Other data indicate that more time, personnel, and training are needed. The high rate of unresponsiveness regarding the specific models their school espoused may indicate that the respondents are unaware of the particular model. Although the answers showed common programs, grants, and models, there was still a lack of answers making it difficult to analyze of what the respondents were aware and
what they simply chose not to answer. These data also support the fact that officials must be informed about their school’s program.

The majority of respondents commented that parents should have an important role in a violence prevention program. The low percentages of respondents giving usable answers pertaining to the role of school resource/public safety officers in a violence prevention program suggests that many may be unaware of what the role should be. Roles in an effective program must be clearly defined and all involved must know what each individual’s role is so that each can be most effective in his or her role. Although the respondents did not seem to have a clear understanding of role delineation, similar outcomes given by both school districts suggest that these respondents have the same idea of what violence prevention programs should be accomplishing.

Related to occupational therapy, most of the schools in both districts have students who are seen by an occupational therapist but the results do not reflect this therefore, many officials may be unaware of the presence of the occupational therapist among their staff. The lack of data related to these professionals’ responsibilities and inconsistency among the answers given suggest that many respondents are unaware of what occupational therapists do. Despite the lack of data, those answers given related to occupational therapists’ possible role in violence prevention program were congruent with what an occupational therapist could bring to a program. This suggests that those who did answer appear to have an accurate understanding of occupational therapy. The meaning of these data will be explored further in chapter five.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Purpose

The purpose of this research was threefold; (a) to determine the areas of need in youth violence prevention programs; (b) to create a model program based on the results of the needs assessment and the literature; (c) and to determine whether there is a role for occupational therapy (OT) in facilitation of youth violence prevention programs. The first two purposes were achieved through this research process and are explained below. The third purpose was not directly determined but through the interpretation and comparative analysis with the literature, the researcher believes this purpose was addressed.

Discussion of Findings

The results may not be representative of the respondents as a whole and individually in their school systems because answers that were incomplete or ambiguous were not used in analysis. Overall, most questions were answered similarly regardless of different location, grade level, socio-economic status, and diversity of the two school systems. This suggests that students’ experiences in school are similar regardless of location, grade level and background of the student body.

Types, Sources & Prevention of Violence in Schools

Bullying and fighting were, by far, the most frequently identified types of violence. Gangs, community, poor grades and early exposure to violence were the most frequently identified sources of violence. These most frequently identified types and sources should be a main focus in the construction of a model violence prevention
program. The Center for Disease Control (2005) identifies similar sources of violence or risk factors. They identified categories of risk factors including; (a) individual; (b) peer or school; (c) family; (d) and neighborhood (Center for Disease Control, 2005). Those sources of violence identified in this research are related to all of these categories. Gangs are an example of a peer or school risk factor. The community acts are an example of a neighborhood or community risk factor. Poor academic grades are an example of an individual risk factor and early exposure to violence is an example of both a family and individual risk factor.

The varying severities of violence found in the two school districts suggest that a model program should be adapted for a school district based on its level of severity. District B respondents rated their school’s level of violence as a six out of ten, one being not a problem and ten being an extreme problem. District A respondents rated their school’s level of violence significantly lower at a three. A great deal of the literature discusses the need to target those identified as at risk for becoming involved in a violent way of life (Department of Health and Human Services, 2000; King, 2001; U.S. Department of Education, 2002). Schools with a lower severity of violence may not need to target students prone to violent behavior but schools with a higher severity of violence may need to target such students. The school’s violence prevention plan must clearly define whether or not they will be targeting students prone to violent behavior based on their school’s needs. Regardless of these varying levels of severity, both school districts’ answers were similar in all other qualities of a violence prevention program.

The lack of answers regarding details and regulations of existing programs needs to be addressed in a new model program. Most respondents were also unaware of the
specific model their school’s program espoused, and when asked to explain resources their school needed for an effective program, they indicated resources their schools already had. Other respondents said that more time, personnel, and training were needed. The answers showed common programs, grants, and models, but there remained a lack of answers making it difficult to analyze whether respondents were unaware of the answers or simply chose not to answer.

In order for a program to be successful, all school officials, students, and parents must be involved. The curriculum must be thoroughly examined to determine whether it meets the needs of those in the program (Skiba, 2000). The lack of data regarding the details of the schools’ violence prevention programs suggests confusion; a program cannot be effective if school officials who are supposed to be part of the program are unaware of exactly how it functions. They are then unable to inform students and enforce the regulations. A new model program must have well trained staff who keep themselves informed (Department of Health and Human Services, 2000; Gaustad, 1990; Skiba, 2000; Walter, Caplan, & McElvain, 2000).

Schools must also be able to evaluate program effectiveness to provide evidence of value. Programs and policy makers are demanding more thorough evaluations of results and effectiveness (Flaxman, 2001). If a violence prevention program’s value is not clearly documented, the program will most likely lose its funding. The school must also be able to prove its program is effective to increase parental involvement. Both the data and literature clearly indicate that parents should play an important role in a violence prevention program (Patten & Robertson, 2001). Parents must be emotionally supportive
and play an active part in raising their children and teaching them about violence both in and outside of school.

The majority of the respondents shared similar views regarding activities for a violence prevention program, which suggests that the officials may have similar experience with the students in their schools. Regardless of their differences, students are encountering similar educational experiences related to violence prevention. Activities should be chosen based on feedback from school officials, parents, and the students; this way, activities will be student-centered for their particular district. Those activities most frequently identified are listed in the model program found at the end of this section that was created from the data of this research and the literature available.

Violence Prevention Program Facilitators

The data showed that counselors and teachers were the most frequently identified as effective facilitators of a violence prevention program. The answers given varied even within school districts and grade levels, suggesting that school officials may have different opinions of strengths and weaknesses of various professionals. The answers varied regarding who was currently facilitating their school’s program within grade levels and school districts. These data add support to the notion that school officials are less than well-informed regarding their school’s violence prevention program.

Although most of the schools in both districts surveyed have students who are seen by an OT, the data do not reflect this. Many respondents checked that they did not have an occupational therapist in their school. This suggests that many are unaware of the presence of the OT among their staff. Furthermore, the lack of data related to these professionals’ responsibilities, as well as inconsistency among the answers given, suggest
that many respondents are also unaware of what occupational therapists do, which is consistent with the literature (Gutman, 1998). Despite this lack of data, those answers given related to occupational therapists' possible role in violence prevention programs were congruent with what an OT could bring to a program (American Occupational Therapy Association, 1999-2005; Daunhauer & Jacobs, 1999-2005; Johansson, 1998-2000a; Johansson, 1998-2000b). This information gathered regarding what OT could bring to a program suggests that those who did answer may have an accurate understanding of OT. The low response rate and brevity of answers suggests that even though some respondents had an accurate idea of what an OT could bring to a violence prevention program, these professionals may not consider an OT as a facilitator.

The low percentages of respondents giving usable answers pertaining to the role of school resource/public safety officers also indicates that many may be unaware of what the role should be. Literature agrees that there is a lack of understanding regarding a school safety or security officer’s role in the school district and violence prevention programs (National School Safety and Security Services, 2007). Again, all involved with a program must be informed of the details of the program, regulations, and roles that each individual is to play. Roles in an effective program must be clearly defined so the respective professionals can fulfill their role to the best of their ability. Also, clearly defined roles are necessary to allow people to provide best practice; if there is confusion about your role and someone assigns you to a task you have no interest in or knowledge about, you will not perform at your best.

Most individuals have experience with teachers and administrators. Due to this experience, most individuals have an understanding of the role they play within the
school district. The number of school resource/public safety officers and occupational therapists within a school district is significantly smaller than that of teachers and administrators. The fewer the number of professionals in these roles, the fewer the opportunities for interaction with others. These professionals are also not always represented in staff meetings because they typically work in several schools and therefore their schedules do not allow them to attend all staff meetings. Staff meetings allow school officials a time to discuss what is going on in the school and if these professionals are not present at the staff meeting, the other school officials may not be aware of what they are doing.

Due to schedule conflicts for occupational therapists and school resource/public safety officers, a paper document may help keep other school officials informed of what these professionals are doing in the school district even though they may not be present at staff meetings. This document could be a brief summary of the role that these professionals play in the students' academic careers. These roles related to a violence prevention program would also be explained within the model. All staff involved in the school district should receive a copy of the model program. It could be distributed via school mail or e-mail and also briefly addressed during staff meetings.

In order for a violence prevention program to be successful, it must be effectively facilitated. A descriptive and cohesive model is necessary so the school district has a plan to implement, but in order for the program to operate with optimal success, the facilitator must possess certain qualities and have the appropriate knowledge base. Several qualities were common to both the literature related to violence and prevention program as well as the data from the needs assessment. Because violence prevention is the goal of such a
program, a background in this field is vital to effective facilitation. The facilitator(s) must be aware of the rules and regulation pertinent to violence.

Respondents noted that a violence prevention program needed activities to demonstrate appropriate behavior and inform the students of the specifics of violence. Self-esteem and motivation were also noted in the data as important characteristics to foster in the students of a violence prevention program. A professional with a background in mental health would have the knowledge necessary to appropriately include these feelings in a program.

Although it was not directly identified, the data suggests that occupational therapists may be effective facilitators of violence prevention programs, and this is well-supported in the literature (American Occupational Therapy Association, 1999-2005; Daunhauer & Jacobs, 1999-2005; Johansson, 1998-2000a; Johansson, 1998-2000b). In addition to the mental health background that counselors, psychologists, and social workers may have, an occupational therapist has the knowledge of activity based therapy. These other professionals may use talk-based therapy, but the use of activities can make the program more meaningful and purposeful to the students. For example, the literature demonstrates how occupational therapists could design activities centered on motivation and self-esteem building (Johansson, 1998-2000b). These types of activities were identified in the data as important for a violence prevention program. Activities working toward increasing the use of praise, conflict resolution techniques and increasing their use, and brainstorming effective ways to deal with anger without fighting (anger management) were the most frequently identified in the data. Daunhauer & Jacobs (1999-2005) note that occupational therapists offer the unique contribution of designing
occupation-based interventions as an addition to existing programs in collaboration with experts in the schools. Occupational therapists have the ideal background to work collectively with schools, students, and families to address psychosocial issues that lead to violent behavior as well as develop and collaboratively carry out violence prevention programs (Johansson, 1998-2000a).

The data gathered discussed the need for a team approach to violence prevention. It was also suggested that parents need to be an important part of violence prevention programs. Occupational therapists could make sure that parents are integrated into the program and that their feedback is used in revision of the program. Occupational therapists could help students structure their time in productive, meaningful ways and further develop their social skills and respect for others (Daunhauer & Jacobs, 1999-2005). Respecting diversity in others was identified as a problem by several of the respondents.

The idea of “meaningful activities for enjoyment or to learn specific skills” was the least identified type of activity to be included in a violence prevention program however, the data did indicate the need for programs to improve self-esteem and social skills (Christiansen & Baum, 1997). This data indicates that respondents have limited awareness of the importance of meaningful activities and the correlation to building self-esteem and social skills. There has been a connection found between engaging in meaningful occupations and self perception; time spent engaged in personally meaningful occupations can create or restore a sense of value and purpose in an individual’s life (Vrkljan & Miller-Polgar, 2001; Mee & Sumsion, 2001). Occupational therapists recognize that success in positive, meaningful activities is a key to building self-esteem.
Meaningful activities should be incorporated into a violence prevention program.

Occupational therapists can work with students to develop their self-esteem and self-monitor their own behavior through the use of meaningful activities. These activities can include mutual compliment exercises where students are paired and take turns complimenting each other, creating affirmation lists regarding their strengths or accomplishments, or constructing a personalized calendar with a short activity under each day that the student enjoys doing. There are an endless number of meaningful activities that could be used and adapted to the students' needs. The occupational therapist must get to know his or her students and then identify what types of activities would be meaningful to them, as this is different for everyone. Many different activities can be used to reach similar objectives. Specific objectives for a youth violence prevention program are clearly defined in the program model.

When the objectives of the program have been met, students will begin to demonstrate better behavior. In demonstrating better behavior, these students will be modeling their behavior for the other students in their school. These students can act as mentors for the other students. Students are influenced by their peers. Peer mentors can provide a unique support that other relationships cannot (Veith, Sherman, Pellino, & Yasui, 2006). Mentoring can be a useful tool for facilitating adjustment.

Group work is another method that a violence prevention program could implement to foster behavior changes. Studies have shown that groups facilitated by an occupational therapist may be more effective than independent work, especially when related to mental health issues (Analay, Ozcan, Karan, Diracoglu, & Aydin, 2003;
Chesney, Chambers, Taylor, Johnson, & Folkman, 2003; Fung, & Chien, 2002). Some of these studies showed that groups could offer psychosocial support that group members can not find elsewhere (Fung, & Chien, 2002). Decreased stress and anxiety as well as increased self-efficacy are benefits that have been identified in group therapy (Chesney, Chambers, Taylor, Johnson, & Folkman, 2003). An occupational therapist could help facilitate group process within the violence prevention program, thereby fostering these benefits.

An occupational therapist may effectively facilitate a violence prevention program in collaboration with a school safety officer. Safety officers already facilitate safety and security within the schools and have experience with crime prevention and therefore those youth involved in violence. Safety officers have an understanding of various laws, policies, rules, procedures, and law enforcement techniques relating to violence and violence prevention (National School Safety and Security Services, 2007). Safety officers can enhance campus supervision, offer assistance with disruptive students, and coordinate with law enforcement officials (National School Safety and Security Services, 2007). The data gathered from the needs assessment suggest that knowledge of the rules and regulations as well as the ability to make activities student-centered and incorporate all staff, students, and families into the program is necessary in a youth violence prevention program. The pairing of an occupational therapist and school safety officer could facilitate these objectives.
Violence Prevention Program Model

Background

As shown in the literature and through this study, school violence is becoming a serious issue and all schools need to deal with it at some level. This model has the potential of being an instrumental tool in decreasing youth violence. Participation in this program may foster better behavior among students. Students are influenced by their peers. Those demonstrating better behavior will act as role models and mentors for other students.

The program is to be both proactive and reactive. Using a proactive approach will limit violence before it begins. A reactive approach will be used for disciplinary action of students who commit violent acts. The consequences will be clearly stated so that students know the repercussions for their actions before they commit any sort of violent act.

Facilitation & the Collaborative Team

Considering skills identified in the literature and this study as necessary in violence prevention program facilitation and professional backgrounds, an occupational therapist and school safety officer will facilitate this program model together. Both professionals are not always used in the most effective ways, but facilitating a violence prevention program will make best use of their individual skills and abilities. Their unique abilities and experience will create a unique and effective way of making the violence prevention program student-centered, meaningful, and age appropriate. The safety officer will share his or her background in dealing with violence and the
occupational therapist will share his or her ability to tailor activities to the students so that they are educational, fun, and meaningful.

The occupational therapist and school safety officer will facilitate the program and act as leaders of the team but everyone will be involved in the content to be covered. All school officials and parents must have a clear understanding of the program and its details. Students will be involved in program revision so that they can demonstrate ownership. Parents will also be involved in program revision so that they can stay involved in their children’s lives.

Program Duration & Session Length

Each topic will be covered over the duration of one week. The frequency and duration of sessions will be determined by grade level. Lower elementary students will participate in shorter sessions than the older junior high and high school students. Schools are given the freedom of determining an appropriate length of session for their students. It is suggested that lower elementary students participate in sessions that are approximately 20 minutes in length and junior high and high school students participate in sessions that are approximately one hour in length. Students’ attention spans must be taken into consideration. Session length may be addressed in feedback meetings with students, faculty, and parents.

Adaptations

The program will be modified based on the severity of violence in the school district.

Topics covered will initially be determined by a needs assessment and the literature. Once the program model has been in place, schools can determine if the
activities covered need to be revised. Meetings with students, faculty, and parents will help to determine the changing needs of the school district.

The program will be slightly adapted for grade levels but there should be continuity throughout the students' scholastic career within the school district. The topics covered will be similar for all grade levels but the methods in which they are covered will be different along with the depth of coverage. Topics may be repeated over the years but as the program will be under constant revision from feedback and research, the topics will be slightly different each time they are covered. This will ensure that even though students may go through sessions with the same overall topic, what is covered will be different.

Methods used will be tailored to the students. Due to the occupational therapist's background in client-centered therapy, meaningful activities, and the just-right challenge, he or she will be able to adjust the program as needed based on varying make-up of the students, their backgrounds, and needs. The program for the younger students will incorporate puppet shows, movie clips, short stories, and other more appropriate methods of teaching and learning for shorter attention spans and less sophisticated minds. The program for the older students will use case studies, role plays, brainstorming, and other more advanced methods of teaching and learning suitable to develop critical thinking and reasoned judgment.

Program Objectives

This violence prevention program is designed to foster continuity in violence prevention throughout the entire school district, among all professionals involved. Students will not be targeted to participate in this program, rather all students in the
school district will participate. Those committing violent acts will be subject to clearly defined consequences in addition to participation in this program. Consequences will increase in severity as the student's participation in violent acts continues to occur. All students will learn a variety of information regarding and methods to prevent violence. This program will work to decrease violence, specifically targeting bullying and fighting, in school aged children so they learn how to more appropriately deal with their anger. This new way of dealing with their problems will hopefully translate into their lives as adults, decreasing violence in the area. This model will help create a more positive environment.

The core objectives this program model will strive to achieve are as follows:

- Students will be able to articulate a basic understanding of violence.
- Students will be able to articulate examples of increasing their use of appropriate praise.
- Students will be able to articulate conflict resolution techniques and how to increase their use.
- Students will be able to identify sources of violence.
- Students will be able to describe methods they can use to counteract these influences. Sources initially identified as most influential include:
  - Gangs
  - Community influences
  - Poor grades
  - Early exposure to violence
• Students will be able to brainstorm effective ways to deal with anger without fighting (anger management).

• Students will be able to articulate ways to reduce insults and be more respectful of others.

• Students will be able to express their feelings in an appropriate manner.

• Students will be able to demonstrate ways in which they can self-monitor their behavior.

• Students will be able to model new behaviors.

• Students will be able to share self-esteem building activities with new participants in the program.

Program Evaluation & Revision

Students will not be graded in this program although evaluations of the program will take place on a regular basis. Monthly parent meetings will take place in which a faculty member involved in the program will describe what has transpired in the past month. The parents will then discuss aspects of the program they felt were effective and ways the program and its activities could be changed to become more effective. The parents and faculty will also discuss ways to assure the program is being carried over at home.

Student meetings will be held monthly as well with at least one faculty member present so that the students can offer their feedback in relation to what has and has not been effective in the past month. They will also be able to offer suggestions for new topics or activities. The entire student body will be given periodic program evaluations.
regarding the violence prevention program. This will give all students an opportunity to contribute to the revision of the program.

Faculty will discuss the progress of the program briefly during their monthly staff meetings. The facilitators of the program will meet monthly to discuss feedback from the parents, students, other faculty as well as the literature and changing statistics related to violence. The facilitators will then make the appropriate revisions and additions to the program. The improved program model will foster better behavior from the students which will in turn foster a decrease in number and severity of violent acts present within the school district.

Facilitators will keep records of violent incidents, attendance, and reported changes from faculty members. These records will also be used in the constant revision of the program.

A visual diagram of how feedback will be used in revision is shown below:
List of Topics

Although the areas of violence prevention that will be covered will be constantly changing based on feedback, there will be a list of overarching themes initially provided to the facilitators as a starting point. The facilitators have the freedom to adapt their program as necessary as long as continuity throughout the school district ensues. The overarching themes are as follows:

- Background information on violence in general
- How to reduce insults
- How to increase use of praise
- Conflict escalation and what can be done to prevent this
- Conflict resolution techniques and how to increase their use
- How to effectively accept feedback
- How to engage others in cooperative tasks
- How to effectively deal with anger without fighting (anger management)
- How to identify and express feelings in an appropriate manner
- How to self-monitor behavior
- Threat-reduction techniques
- Mentorship

Examples of Activities

A variety of activities can be used to work toward the objectives of this model program. Here is a list of examples:

Younger students

- Puppet shows and stories can be used to teach appropriate behaviors.
• Short plays can be used to demonstrate appropriate behaviors and alternative methods of dealing with various situations.

Older students

• Role plays can be used to teach appropriate behaviors and alternative methods of dealing with various situations (i.e. conflict resolution and anger management).

• Case studies can be used to assess what the students have learned regarding appropriate behavior.

• Brainstorming and discussion can be used to identify ways to effectively deal with negative situations.

Sample session

This model program suggests that a program must be continuous throughout a school district but also must be adapted to the different grade levels. All grade levels should cover similar topics but the detail in which these topics are covered will vary based on the grade level. The duration, frequency, and time of day for the sessions may also vary by grade level. A sample session for kindergarteners is given below:

*How to Reduce Insults (for kindergarten students)*

Background

• This topic will consist of two 20-minute sessions.

• Sessions will take place in the gym directly after the students’ lunch period.

• All kindergarten classrooms will take place in the sessions together.

• Teachers will be present to assist if needed and make sure their individual class members are paying attention.
• An occupational therapist and safety officer will facilitate the sessions.

Overview of sessions

• Session 1
  o Tuesday
    o Puppet show - demonstrating how insults can hurt people’s feelings
    o Students are asked to raise their hands if they can identify the different ways the puppets make each other feel badly or if they can give other examples of ways people’s feelings can be hurt
    o Facilitators explain that insults make people feel badly

• Session 2
  o Thursday
    o Facilitators discuss the importance of manners
    o Role play - students are asked to help in a play re: manners
      ▪ Facilitator insults the student
      ▪ Student is instructed to give a constructive reply (i.e. the student can tell the facilitator that they hurt their feelings)
    o Facilitators explain that students don’t like it when others hurt their feelings so they should be aware of others and try not to hurt their feelings

*How to Reduce Insults (for high school students)*

Background

• This topic will consist of one hour-long session.
• Sessions will take place in the gym, auditorium, or large classroom directly after the students’ lunch period.

• All high school students will take place in the session with their respective grade level.
  o Freshmen – Monday
  o Sophomores – Tuesday
  o Juniors – Wednesday
  o Seniors – Friday

• Teachers will be present to assist if needed and make sure the students are paying attention and behaving themselves.

• An occupational therapist and safety officer will facilitate the sessions.

Overview of session

• Session 1
  o Facilitators initially give a brief background re: insults and how they can be damaging to individuals’ self-esteem and self-image
  o Case studies – students are divided in small groups and given a case study re: insults for 20 minutes
    ▪ Students are instructed to brainstorm ways to deal with different situations re: insults
    ▪ Facilitators walk around the room to make sure students are on the right track and offer input
  o Students share the examples they have come up with to reduce insults in their particular situations
Facilitators select groups to act out their ideas for their classmates

- Other students give feedback re: things done well and other ways to improve the situation

Application to Occupational Therapy Practice

Recent occupational therapy literature has discussed the role of occupational therapists as effective facilitators of youth violence prevention programs, however little information exists supporting this claim. The researcher found literature comparing qualities of effective facilitators of a violence prevention program with those that occupational therapists possess but no research was found specifically documenting this correlation and supporting this role (American Occupational Therapy Association, 1999-2005; Daunhauer & Jacobs, 1999-2005; Johansson, 1998-2000a; Johansson, 1998-2000b). A need exists for further investigation to substantiate this role.

Involvement in youth violence prevention programs has been identified as an emerging practice area for the field of occupational therapy (American Occupational Therapy Association, 1999-2005). The results of this research may be used to lay the foundation for support of this role as gathered from the needs identified in the assessment paired with documented qualities and skills of an occupational therapist. The needs identified can be used by occupational therapists to collaborate with other professionals to implement a new or revise an existing youth violence prevention program. With these identified needs, therapists should be able to make the program more effective, at least for the two school districts used in the research. The occupational therapist, with his or her knowledge of the school district as a whole, could independently or collaboratively...
facilitate a program that is specific to the needs of the students and the district while making the activities meaningful and enjoyable.

Limitations

The researcher encountered some limitations during the data collection process. Initially, due to the fact that the needs assessment used in this research was created by the researcher, there is no formal reliability or validity. A pilot study was conducted and feedback was received from several individuals whose professions related to violence prevention and occupational therapy. Revisions were made from this feedback to increase the validity of this study even though formal reliability and validity could not be determined.

This research was intended to be conducted within a larger school district and therefore one school district would have been used as the sample instead of the two districts actually used. The two school districts were close in location but unique in socio-economic status and diversity of the student body. This served partly as a limitation because the results were from the two different districts but also as an asset because the data represented a larger geographical area with a more diverse population of students. Due to the fact that two school districts were used, no statistical significance could be determined.

Suggestions for Further Research/Modifications

During this research process, the researcher was unable to locate an existing needs assessment for violence prevention programs. The researcher therefore created such a needs assessment but formal validity and reliability were not established. Increased use of
this assessment could lead to a research study determining validity and reliability making the results of the assessment more credible for further use.

Future studies should test the effectiveness of the model program created by the researcher from the data and literature. Although this model may be successful with the school districts used in this research, it may not be effective in other areas. If the needs assessment is distributed to other school districts and similar results are found, this model program may be effective. If different results are found, the program may need to be adapted. Further research could also test the model program’s effectiveness in the school districts used in this research.

There was very little literature related to violence prevention and occupational therapists even though it has been termed an emerging practice area (American Occupational Therapy Association, 1999-2005; Daunhauer & Jacobs, 1999-2005; Johansson, 1998-2000a; Johansson, 1998-2000b). Although, as stated previously, occupational therapists possess many of the qualities that have been found effective for a facilitator of a violence prevention program, there is no research directly linking these qualities. Evidence is needed to support this emergent practice area. Research supporting the role of occupational therapists as facilitators of violence prevention programs would substantiate this area of practice and in turn create a new market for OT services.

Conclusion/Summary

There are many needs in a youth violence prevention program. Effective facilitation is vital as these programs are important to decreasing violence. If violence decreases among youth, this decrease may result in a decrease among all ages as these youth mature and age. Who is the best suited to facilitate these programs as well as what
areas should be covered, what should be the duration and frequency, and who should
attend still remains a challenge for many school districts. The results of this research
supported this fact and led to the idea that occupational therapists have the potential to be
effective facilitators of youth violence prevention programs. More research is needed to
further substantiate this role and the findings of this study.
References

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APPENDIX A

RESEARCH REQUEST

Title of the Project: Development of a Needs Assessment for Youth Violence Prevention Programs in a Large Midwestern City

Researcher's Name: Laura Savel
Phone: (231) 690-9550

Researcher's Affiliation: Occupational Therapy Master of Science student at Grand Valley State University

Targeted Starting Date: February 2007 Ending Date: 2 weeks later

Purpose of the Study:
The purpose of this research is threefold: to determine the areas of need in youth violence prevention programs and to determine whether there is a role for occupational therapy in facilitation of youth violence prevention programs, and to develop a model program from the literature and data obtained from this research.

Benefits of the Research/Project to the School/Community:
This research paper is significant because it will help to improve existing youth violence prevention programs with the hope of decreasing youth violence. Violence of any kind is detrimental to society, as a whole and therefore anything that can be done to prevent it, should be explored. This research has the potential of being an instrumental tool in decreasing youth violence. The needs assessment will be used to create a model for a violence prevention program which, upon completion, District x will be given access to for use in their own schools.

Due to the fact that there is little information available concerning ways that occupational therapy can be utilized in violence prevention, this paper has the potential to provide evidence to support the involvement of occupational therapy in youth violence prevention programs. Although literature is available correlating the skills and qualities that OT’s possess that have been shown to be the most successful in violence prevention programs, there is a limited amount of literature supporting OT’s role in violence prevention. Due to the fact that juvenile violence prevention is an emerging area of practice for OT, evidence is still needed to support this area. In conjunction with other professionals, occupational therapists may have a significant impact on youth violence prevention programs.

Types of Data to be Collected and Data Collection Time Points:
A survey including qualitative and quantitative questions will be distributed to the participants of this research. Participants will be given two weeks to return the survey in a self-addressed stamped envelope that will be enclosed with the survey. A letter of introduction and consent to the study will also be enclosed providing information about the study and explaining that return of the survey will be seen as consent to participate in this study. Please see attached forms for more detail. The researcher would like to begin this study in February 2007, pending and depending on approval.
How will confidentiality and security of the data be maintained at all times? Each subject’s confidentiality will be protected. This will be insured because self addressed envelopes will be included with the needs assessment and no name or return address will be required. Once the assessment is filled out and mailed to the researcher, the researcher will have no way of retracing the assessment to the individual subjects.

Locations where the data will be held and all individuals that will have access to this data (paper and/or electronic)

Once the study is completed, it will be kept by the occupational therapy program of Grand Valley State University and the Grand Valley State University library for use by future students and faculty.

Population Elementary, middle and high school principals, assistant principals, occupational therapists, guidance counselors/psychologists and support staff in District x

Assistance Needed from District x Provision of names and school addresses of elementary, middle and high school principals, assistant principals, occupational therapists, guidance counselors/psychologists and support staff in District x

Estimated cost to District x less than $5 in copies

I ____________________ superintendent of District x in xxxxxxx, MI, approve for this survey research to be conducted in my school district.

_________________________________________ Date:_________________
Letter of Introduction and Consent to Participation

Dear Principals, Assistant Principals, Occupational Therapists, Guidance Counselors/Psychologists, and other Support Staff:

I am an Occupational Therapy graduate student at Grand Valley State University. One of the components of our curriculum is to carry out research. Because violence prevention is an emerging area of practice in occupational therapy, this is the area of study I selected. The purpose of my research is threefold to: a) determine the areas of need in youth violence prevention programs in District x, b) to determine whether there is a role for occupational therapy in facilitation of youth violence prevention programs, and c) to develop a model program from the literature and data gathered from this survey.

This research will be significant because it will be able to be used to help improve existing youth violence prevention programs with the hope of decreasing youth violence. Violence of any kind is detrimental to society, as a whole and therefore anything that can be done to prevent it, should be explored. I selected principals, assistant principals, occupational therapists, guidance counselors/psychologists, and support staff in elementary, middle, and high schools as the population for this research because of their involvement with the youth that are, or would be, in need of a violence prevention program or strategies.

Completing this survey and mailing it in will serve as consent to be included in this research study. Confidentiality will be protected for each participant. This will be insured because there will be no collection of personally identifying information and self-addressed envelopes are included with the survey, requiring no return name or address. This will ensure that there is no way of retracing the survey to the individual participant or his/her school.

If you have any questions regarding this survey or another aspect of this research, please contact myself, Laura Savel via telephone at (231) 690-9550 or via the Internet at lo_savel14@hotmail.com or Cynthia Grapczynski, EdD, OTR, at (616) 331-2734. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, feel free to contact Paul Reitemeier, PhD, chair of Grand Valley State University’s Human Research Review Committee via telephone at (616) 331-3417.

Thank you for your time and efforts. Please return the enclosed survey by March 9.

Sincerely,

Laura Savel, OTS
APPENDIX C

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Youth Violence Prevention
Program Needs Assessment

For the purpose of this survey, violence will be defined as the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation. The definition should be understood to include physical, sexual and psychological abuse (such as the significant abuse of power arising from a dependent relationship, threats, intimidation and neglect). – definition by the World Health Organization (1996)

Demographic Data

1. What is your current position?
   - Principal
   - Vice/assistant principal
   - Guidance counselor
   - Support service teacher
   - Occupational therapist
   - Public safety officer

2. In which type of school do you hold your current position?
   - Elementary
   - Middle
   - High

3. Is the school in which you hold your current position private or public? Please circle one.
   - Public
   - Non-public

4. Please rank, by percentage, the ethnic make-up of your building.
   - Caucasian of European decent
   - Latino
   - Pacific Islander
   - Asian American
   - Native American
   - African American
   - Other

5. How many students are in the school where you are currently working (or spend most of your time)?

6. What is the approximate percentage of students in your school who receive free or reduced lunch? Please leave blank if you are unaware. _____ %

7. How long have you been in your current profession _____ years
   How long have you held your current position? _____ years

8. What is your age? _____

9. What is your gender? M or F

10. What is the highest level degree you have earned? Please circle one.
    - BA/BS
    - MA
    - PhD
*Please respond to the following questions using a time frame of occurrence in the last 12 months.*

**Violence Characteristics & Statistics**

11. What is the nature of violence in your school? Please rank all that apply in order of occurrence, from most (1) to least (7 or higher). Leave those blank that you feel are not applicable.
   - Bullying and other forms of psychological abuse (including verbal abuse, mocking, threatening)
   - Fighting
   - Shooting
   - Stabbing
   - Choking
   - Aggravated assault
   - Sexual assault
   - Other

12. What do you suspect/believe are the sources of school violence in your school district? Please rank all that apply in order of occurrence, from most (1) to least (9 or higher). Leave those blank that you feel are not applicable.
   - Family
   - Friends
   - Community
   - Socio-economic status
   - Early exposure to violence
   - Grades
   - Drug use
   - Gangs
   - Media (TV, movies, computer games)
   - Other

13. Who typically are the victims of school violence in your area? Please rank all that apply in order of occurrence, from most (1) to least (10 or higher). Leave blank those that do not apply.
   - Males
   - Females
   - Those with disabilities (mental, physical, or developmental)
   - Those whose personal style is outside the mainstream
   - Caucasian of European decent
   - Latino
   - Pacific Islander
   - Asian American
   - Native American
   - African American
   - Other

14. Who are the perpetrators of the violent acts in your school? Please check all that apply. If you are not aware of this information, please check unknown.
   - Males
   - Females
   - Those with disabilities (mental or physical)
   - Caucasian of European decent
   - Latino
   - Pacific Islander
   - Asian American
   - Native American
   - African American
   - Other
   - Unknown
Program Existence

15. How severe an issue has violence in your school been in the past year? Please rank the level of severity on a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being not a problem and ten being an extreme problem?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

16. Does your school have a violence prevention program?
   □ Yes
   □ No
   If yes, please describe the program
   What is the age range your program serves______________________________
   Duration of program__________________________________________________
   Frequency of delivery__________________________________________________
   Where held____________________________________________________________
   Who attends (all students, selected students, parents, teachers, etc.)__________
   Who plans and facilitates the program (teachers, parents, special staff, other)____

17. Is a violence prevention program mandated for your school?
   □ Yes
   □ No
   □ Unknown
   If yes, does the mandate include the nature of the curriculum and activities to be included?
   □ Yes
   □ No
   □ Unknown

18. If your school does have a violence prevention program, what elements does it include and how did you determine what to include in the program?

19. If your school does have a violence prevention program, from your perspective, is the program effective in curbing school violence? Please elaborate.

20. Based on your professional experience, which professionals do you think are best equipped to lead a violence prevention program? Please check all that apply.
   □ Administrators
   □ Principals
   □ Assistant/vice principals
   □ Teachers
   □ Guidance counselors
   □ Support service teachers
   □ Public safety officers
   □ School resource officers
   □ Other ________________________________
Types of Media Used & Components of the Program

21. What activities should be included in a violence prevention program? Please check all that apply.
   - About violence in general
   - How to reduce insults
   - How to increase their use of praise
   - Conflict escalation and what can be done to prevent this
   - Conflict resolution techniques and how to increase their use
   - How to effectively accept feedback
   - How to engage others in cooperative tasks
   - Brainstorming effective ways to deal with anger without fighting (anger management)
   - Identifying and expressing feelings in an appropriate manner
   - Meaningful activities for enjoyment or to learn specific skills
   - How to self monitor their behavior
   - Threat-reduction techniques
   - Parental and/or community involvement
   - Other ____________________________

22. What resources did you/would you need to develop and support a violence prevention program? Please include financial, personnel, site for program delivery and anything else you perceive important to carry out the program.

23. Is there a particular violence prevention program model that you espouse (philosophy, approach, experts involved)?

24. Do you recommend homework assignments and case studies about school violence for participants?
   - Yes
   - No

25. What is the role of parents in a violence prevention program?

26. What is the role of school resource/public safety officers in a violence prevention program?

27. What should be the major outcomes of a violence prevention program? Please check all that apply.
   - Significant decrease in violence
   - Moderate decrease in violence
   - Development of new interests
   - Increase self-esteem
   - Improve social skills (cooperation, expressing feelings appropriately, etc.)
   - Increase parental/community involvement
   - Increase ability to self-monitor behavior
   - Other ____________________________
Occupational Therapy

28. Do you have an occupational therapist working at your school?
   □ Yes
   □ No
   If yes, what are his/her responsibilities?

29. What other activities/responsibilities are you aware of in which occupational therapists engage?

30. What skills or assets do you think an occupational therapist could bring to a violence prevention program?

Other

31. Please feel free to make any comments relevant to this survey and research that may not have been discussed in this survey.

Thank you for completing this survey!