ABSTRACT

ASSOCIATION BETWEEN SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT, HELP-SEEKING BEHAVIOR, AND SCHOOL VIOLENCE AMONG LATINO ADOLESCENTS

By

Rocio Elizabeth Muñoz

May 2015

The purpose of this study was to examine the association among Latino adolescents' demographic factors, school engagement, help-seeking behavior, and their involvement in school violence. Secondary data obtained from the 2011 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS) was utilized. A Chi-Square analysis was used to examine statistically significant associations among the variables. The study found a significant association among gender, grade, participation in sports, days gone to physical education (PE), speaking with a teacher, and the number of times students fought; age, gender, grade, participation in sports, days gone to PE, speaking with a teacher, and the number of times students fought at school; age, gender, participation in sports, speaking with a teacher, and the number of times students were injured; age, gender, grade, ethnicity, participation in sports, days gone to PE, speaking with a teacher, and the number of times students were threatened with a weapon; and age, gender, and the number of days students carried a weapon.

ASSOCIATION BETWEEN SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT, HELP-SEEKING BEHAVIOR, AND SCHOOL VIOLENCE AMONG LATINO ADOLESCENTS

A THESIS

Presented to the School of Social Work

California State University, Long Beach

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Social Work

Committee Members:

Janaki Santhiveeran, Ph.D. (Chair)
Jo Brocato, Ph.D.
Marilyn Potts, Ph.D.

College Designee:

Nancy Meyer-Adams, Ph.D.

By Rocio Elizabeth Muñoz

B.A., 2013, California State University, Long Beach

May 2015

AKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I want to dedicate my thesis to my siblings, Norma and Jose Muñoz, because they inspire me to better myself every day. I want to thank them for all of their love and support. I especially want to thank my parents for instilling in me the importance and the value of an education. It is because of you that I am passionate about my education and the education of others.

I would also like to thank my boyfriend whose unconditional love, support, and encouragement helped me complete this project. I hope you know that you kept me grounded when I was pulled in so many different directions and you never let me quit when it got difficult. Words cannot express how grateful I am for all that you have done for me.

I would also like to thank my thesis advisor, Janaki Santhiveeran, Ph.D., and committee members, Jo Brocato, Ph.D., and Marilyn Potts, Ph.D., for your feedback, guidance, and assistance throughout this process. My accomplishment would not have been possible without your valuable experience and patience. I also want to thank CalSWEC Child Welfare project coordinator, Joy Rubin, MSW, for her words of encouragement. Thank you for believing in me when I did not believe in myself. I want to thank Karina, Noemi, Mayra, Dolores, Cecy, and Lesley for all of your support. Do not think of this as ending, but as a new beginning. We did it!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER Page

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

School violence is a social problem that predates one of the deadliest school shootings in America, the Columbine High School shooting massacre in Littleton, Colorado in 1999 (Skiba, 2013). School violence became a public concern in the late 1980s and early 1990s. There were various attempts aimed to alleviate school violence at the federal and local levels. The Gun-Free School Act of 1994 attempted to resolve this public concern. According to the legislation, students caught with weapons that can cause physical harm and deaths are mandated to have a 1 year expulsion. This law became the foundation for the zero-tolerance policies and the presence of law enforcement on school grounds, metal detectors, and random searches of students and their property (Skiba, 2013).

Verdugo (2002) reported that public schools in urban areas with a high concentration of minority students and a large percentage of students receiving free or reduced cost lunch have stricter uniform and school building policies than schools in non-urban areas. Drug searches, metal detector checks, and law enforcement presence are also more common in urban public schools than schools in non-urban areas. These elements have not made public schools any safer nor have improved the behavior of students (Skiba, 2013). According to Skiba (2013), there is no research substantiating the reduction of school violence through locker searches and surveillance of schools.

Moreover, no significant differences exist between schools with and without metal detectors regarding threats or fights on school grounds (Skiba, 2013). According to a review by Verdugo (2002), the presence of law enforcement yielded mixed findings. For instance, law enforcement that bonded with the students had a positive effect on them. Other findings suggested that law enforcement presence potentially exacerbated violence in public schools because they do not have the proper training to work effectively with youth. Most importantly, their presence in schools has not been shown effective in minimizing crime and violence in schools (Verdugo, 2002).

On the contrary, these practices contributed to the increase in students' suspension and expulsion for minor infractions, lower graduation rates, and higher dropout rates among ethnic minority students (Skiba, 2013). African American students are the most affected since their suspension rate is 2 to 3 times greater than other ethnic minority students. These students are at greater risk of involvement in the juvenile justice system (Skiba, 2013).

It costs the United States approximately $8 to $21 billion each year to keep youth incarcerated (Petteruti, Schindler, & Ziedenberg, 2014). The billions of dollars include the cost of recidivism, the loss of future earnings, tax revenue, Medicare/Medicaid spending, and services for youth who are sexually assaulted during confinement. The financial impact does not take into consideration the financial costs of involving law enforcement, prosecutors, the courts, detention centers, residential facilities, and probation departments. In the state of California, the cost to confine youth per day was estimated to $570.79, $51,371 for 3 months, $102,742 for 6 months, and $208,338 per year. The loss of economic potential was estimated to $4.7 trillion for the 6.7 million

incarcerated youth between the ages of 16-24. Confined youth are more likely to be employed in low paying jobs, earn approximately $4,100, and generate around $750 in tax revenue than youth in the general population who earn an average of $13,900 and generate an estimated $2,430 in tax revenue per year (Petteruti et al., 2014).

Youth in the juvenile justice system were estimated to receive $360 more for housing and food assistance programs (Petteruti et al., 2014). It costs on average $16 billion in health care costs for the 28% of youth on Medicare due to their chronic health conditions. Confined youth are at high risk of developing mental health problems and for their mental health problems to worsen because of overcrowding conditions. With overcrowding conditions, the likelihood of being harmed by staff or other peers increases (Petteruti et al., 2014). It is no wonder that with more youth entering the juvenile justice system, the costs of building and maintaining new facilities increases (Tyler, Ziedenberg, & Lutke, 2006). The average cost to build state facilities for incarcerated youth was $100,000 per cell while the operation of those facilities costs an average of more than $60,000 per cell (Tyler et al., 2006). It is evident that the juvenile justice system is not made to house youth adjudicated for non-violent offenses, in particular school infractions.

In the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) report card for the 2013-2014 school year (2015), students who received free or reduced cost lunch had the highest incidence of school suspension (n = 6,091), followed by male students (n = 5,441), students with disabilities (n = 2,089), and English learner students (n = 1,563). Of the students who were suspended for the 2013-2014 school year, the majority were Hispanic (n = 4,172) and African American students (n = 2,308) when compared to

Caucasian students (n = 48). A total of 11,487 instructional days were lost due to these suspensions. In May, 2014, 113 students were arrested on campus. Fifty-one students were arrested for crimes against a person, 14 were arrested for property crimes, and 48 students were arrested for other types of crime. From August 2013 to June 2014, 110 students were expelled for possessing, selling, or furnishing a firearm; brandishing a knife on another person; unlawful selling of a controlled substance; or sexual assault/battery (LAUSD, 2015).

Despite attempts to ameliorate violence in schools, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2012) demonstrated that 12% of youth in the 9th through 12th grade reported being in a physical altercation on school grounds. More male students (16%) than female students (7.8%) reported being involved in a fight in school. Five percent of students reported carrying a weapon to school. Seven percent of students experienced threats or injuries with a weapon during school hours. Six percent of youth did not go to school on 1 or more days because they did not feel safe in school. Many youth between 10 to 24 years old (n = 707,212) were treated for injuries sustained from physical assaults. Four percent of students in the 9th to 12th grade reported being in a physical fight resulting in injuries that had to be treated (CDC, 2012).

An area requiring further exploration is how to engage students in school and how these methods impact school violence as opposed to school exclusion by punitive means including suspensions and expulsions. According to Aud et al. (2012), 40% of students in the 12th grade participated in athletics as an extracurricular activity. Students in the 12th grade reported their participation in other club activities (32%), performing arts (23%), academic clubs (14%), newspaper and yearbook (10%), or student council (9%). There

was a 4% increased participation in sports and a decrease in student council participation (11% to 9%) from 1990 to 2010. Female students increased their involvement in sports from 28% in 1990 to 36% in 2010. However, female students participated more in yearbook (13%), performing arts (28%), academic clubs (18%), student council (12%), and other club activities (41%). Students who planned to go to college were more likely to participate in structured school activities than students who did not plan to attend college (Aud et al., 2012).

The financial burden violence places on public schools needs to be meticulously considered (Phillips, 2010). Schools rely on the reimbursement rate they receive from the government when students go to school. This is known as the *Average Daily Attendance*. When students get suspended, expelled, or are mainstreamed out of the public education system and into an alternative education placement, the schools lose a source of their funding. Students' attendance and grades suffer when students stop attending school because they do not feel the school is an emotionally and physically safe place, truancy, dropping out, or their Post-Traumatic Stress symptomology interferes with their learning (Phillips, 2010).

The subjects that schools tend to eliminate first are those courses that enhance school engagement (Phillips, 2010). With no appropriate outlet and classroom overcrowding, many students resort to violence and vandalism to express their frustrations, fears, anger, and powerlessness. Not only does school violence cause injury and death, in the long run it can increase the cost of health care, decrease property values, and increase the costs of social services available to communities affected by school violence. For these reasons, it is important to measure the severity of school violence

among students from ethnic minorities and a low socioeconomic background since they are the most affected (Phillips, 2010). Efforts should focus on making the school environment the target of change rather than focusing solely on *pushing out* students labeled *troublemakers* or students perceived to have a low chance of succeeding in school.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the present study was to explore the relationships between Latino adolescents' school engagement, help-seeking behavior, and their involvement in school violence. This study also examined demographic factors associated with school violence. The findings may be helpful in reducing school disengagement, enhancing help-seeking behavior, and developing preventative measures to reduce the potential impact of school violence among youth including special groups such as foster care youth.

Research Questions

This study answered the following research questions:

1. Is there a relationship between demographic characteristics (age, gender, grade, and ethnicity) and school violence (number of times in a physical fight, physical fights on school property, physical fights resulting in injury, being threatened or injured with a weapon on school grounds, and carried weapon[s] on school property)?

2. Is there a relationship between Latino adolescents' school engagement (involvement in sport teams and PE) and school violence (number of times in a physical fight, physical fights on school property, physical fights resulting in injury, being threatened or injured with a weapon on school grounds, and carried weapon[s] on school property)?

3. Is there a relationship between help-seeking behavior of Latino adolescents (speaking with a teacher or an adult) and school violence (number of times in a physical fight, physical fights on school property, physical fights resulting in injury, being threatened or injured with a weapon on school grounds, and carried weapon[s] on school property)?

Definition of Terms

Hispanic/Latino: A person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

School engagement: Being behaviorally connected with school, such as class participation (i.e., attending PE class) and extracurricular involvement (i.e., playing sports; Chase, Hilliard, Geldhof, Warren, & Lerner, 2014).

Help-seeking behavior: Communicating (i.e., with a teacher or an adult) to receive understanding, information, and support about a problem or an experience causing distress (Rickwood, Deane, Wilson, & Ciarrochi, 2005, p. 4).

School violence: Behaviors that are used intentionally against another person which can lead to physical or psychological harm. Such behaviors include threats, fighting (i.e., punching, slapping, kicking, etc.), and the use of weapons (i.e., gun, knife, or club) on school property (CDC, 2014).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviewed the research on demographic factors associated with school violence, Latino adolescents' school engagement, help-seeking behavior, and their involvement in school violence. This chapter also reviewed the research on foster youth's school engagement, help-seeking behavior, and association with school violence.

Demographic Characteristics and School Violence

Researchers investigated the demographic trends among youth who received intentional injuries in and out of school when they visited the emergency room (Amanullah, Heneghan, Steele, Mello, & Linakis, 2014). The data were gathered between 2001 and 2008. The researchers found that there were 44,721,462 injury-related emergency room visits for youth between 5 to 19 years old. Among these injuries, approximately 13% (n = 7,397,301) occurred in schools. There were more intentional injuries taking place outside of school than inside the school. The researchers also found males between the ages of 10 and 19 and who identified as Hispanic, African American, and or American Indian were at greater risk of being intentionally injured in the school setting. Females between 15 and 19 years old were at greater risk of being intentionally injured outside of school. The common types of injuries requiring an emergency room visit occurring in school settings included fractures, traumatic brain injury, strain/sprain, and assault (Amanullah et al., 2014).

In another study, researchers investigated how gender placed adolescents more or less at risk of being victimized in school (Wilcox, Tillyer, & Fisher, 2009). The sample was collected from 2001 to 2004. The sample consisted of 10,522 students from 111 middle and high schools in Kentucky. The findings illustrated that both male and female students were equally likely to be victims of theft when they were involved in sports, were impulsive, and self-reported criminal and delinquent behavior. Males were less likely to be victims of assault when they had a good grade point average, were attached to non-delinquent peers, and were involved in sports at school. White males of higher socioeconomic status were found to be more vulnerable to assaults. Females were less likely to be victims of assault when they had an attachment to their parents and peers (Wilcox et al., 2009).

Kaufman, Hall, and Zagura (2012) investigated the geographic location, sex, race and ethnicity among student victims and offenders of 125 school-related homicides. The results illustrated that more than half (54%) of school-related homicides happened in urban areas in comparison to 31% of school homicides in suburban and 15% in rural areas. Forty-five percent of gang-related homicides occurred in urban areas than in suburban areas (26%) and rural areas (5%). However, school homicides motivated by romantic disputes were higher in rural areas (21%) and in suburban areas (18%) than in urban areas (9%; Kaufman et al., 2012).

Thirty percent of homicide victims in all of the incidents were females (Kaufman et al., 2012). In rural areas, 26% of school homicides involved more than one victim in contrast to suburban areas (8%) and urban areas (8%). In all incidents of school-related homicides, 87% of offenders were male. Urban areas had a higher incidence of involving

more than one offender (28%) and were African American (60%). Caucasian offenders were highest in rural areas (42%). There was an equal distribution of male offenders and Latino across the three geographic areas. In 90% of the incidents, the victim and offender shared the same sex. Seventy-eight percent of victims and offenders were from the same sex in urban areas. Fifty-two percent of homicides involved female victims and male offenders and 74% shared the same ethnicity in rural areas (Kaufman et al., 2012).

Twenty-six percent of school homicides involving Caucasian offenders also involved more than one victim (Kaufman et al., 2012). Forty-eight percent of incidents involving Caucasian offenders also involved males murdering females. The majority of incidents involving African American (80%) and Latino (88%) offenders had the same sex with of the victims. Forty-eight percent of incidents where African American offenders were involved were motivated by disputes. However, 47% of incidents involving Latino offenders were gang-related (Kaufman et al., 2012).

Felix, Furlong, and Austin (2009) investigated the victimization trends among grade, gender, and ethnicity. The data were retrieved from the California Healthy Kids Survey. The sample consisted of 70,600 students in the 7^{th}, 9^{th}, and 11^{th} grade. The results demonstrated that 48% of students experienced sexual harassment, 44% had rumors or lies spread about them, 39% were made fun of for the way they looked/spoke, 37% were victimized physically by a peer, 27% had property damaged or stolen, 22% were afraid of being physically victimized at school, and 5% were physically victimized by their dating partner (Felix et al., 2009).

Sexual harassment (53%) and rumors or lies spread about them (48%) were common among females (Felix et al., 2009). Males had higher percentages for physical

victimization (46%), property stolen/damaged (31%), witnessing someone carrying a weapon and or being threatened or injured with a weapon (11%). Physical victimization by a peer or dating partner and teasing decreased as the students' grade level got higher. However, sexual harassment increased with the grade level. Forty-one percent of students in the 11th grade were sexually harassed more than the other grade levels. Students in the 7th grade were victimized more than one time (44%) and physically victimized (53%). Native American, African American, and Latino students had higher percentages across all levels of victimization. Students who reported being victimized more than once demonstrated worse grades and feelings of depression. Students who experienced sexual harassment had higher incidence of truancy and not feeling safe in school (Felix et al., 2009).

School Engagement and School Violence

Peguero and Popp (2012) explored how ethnicity, race, and gender influenced the participation of youth in school activities and school victimization. The final sample consisted of 10,440 students who went to 580 public schools. The data was retrieved from a longitudinal survey conducted by the Research Triangle Institute for the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) of the U.S. Department of Education. Of the sample, 1,190 adolescents identified as Asian, 1,630 identified as African American, 1,730 identified as Latino, and 5,890 identified as White (Peguero & Popp, 2012).

Peguero and Popp (2012) found that 26% of female adolescents reported being victimized at school compared to 60% of male adolescents who were victimized. However, Latina females were less likely to experience victimization in school when compared to African American, Asian, and White females. Female adolescents were

more likely involved in activities connected with academics rather than sports. Higher levels of academic achievement and involvement in academic activities acted as a buffer against school victimization, whereas misbehavior placed females at greater risk for victimization in school. The results demonstrated that African American males were more likely victimized when compared to Latinos, Asians, and Whites. Playing on a sports team acted as a buffer against school victimization for White adolescents and was a risk factor for African Americans, Latinos, and Asian males (Peguero & Popp, 2012).

Jiang and Peterson (2012) investigated the relationship between adolescents' extracurricular activities among first-, second-, and third- generation immigrants and the influence immigration status had on the engagement in violence. They used a national longitudinal survey of adolescent health. The participants were adolescents between 7th and 12th grades. A total of 200 students were selected from 132 high schools across the United States. The results demonstrated that 34% of youth who participated in extracurricular activities were involved in violence when compared to 41% of youth not involved in extracurricular activities. When looking at each generation alone, 29% of first-generation adolescents were involved in violence in comparison to 38% of second-generation and 36% of third-generation (Jiang & Peterson).

The findings also illustrated that participation in more than one school-related activity was found more likely among second-generation students (Jiang & Peterson). For example, first-generation students were more likely to participate in non-sport activities whereas second- and third-generations were more likely involved sports and non-sport activities. Also, third-generation students who participated in non-sport activities or both sports and non-sports activities had lower levels of participation in

violence. However, the more the first- and second-generation adolescents participated in extracurricular activities, the more likely they were to engage in violence (Jiang & Peterson, 2012).

Veliz and Shakib (2012) investigated whether participation in sports and academic engagement reduced the incidence of serious crime, minor crime, and school suspensions that lasted 5 days. The data were obtained and merged from the School Survey on Crime and Safety, the Civil Rights Data Collection, and the Common Core of Data. The sample consisted of 1,200 high schools for the 2003 to 2004 and 2005 to 2006 school years. The results demonstrated that 2% of students reported their involvement in a violent crime. Participation in sports and enrollment in advanced placement for math were negatively associated with the incidence of serious crime. As the rate of participation in sports and enrollment in advanced placement increased by 10%, the rate of serious crime involvement was reduced by .05% in 2003-2004 and .29% in 2005-2006 (Veliz & Shakib, 2012).

There was a negative association between participation and advanced placement enrollment with the incidence of suspensions (Veliz & Shakib, 2012). As the incidence of participation in sports and advanced placement math courses increased by 10%, the incidence of suspensions was reduced by .1% in 2003-2004 and .6% in 2005-2006. However, participating in athletics and enrolling in advanced placement did not reduce the rates of minor crime (Veliz & Shakib, 2012).

Kreager (2007) found an association between participation in athletics and physical fighting. Among the sports youth participate in, football increased the risk of engaging in a physical fight by over 40%. Youth who participated in wrestling were 45%

more likely to engage in a physical fight when compared to non-athletic youth. Playing tennis minimized the risk of engaging in a fight by 35%. Basketball and baseball were not shown to have an association with fighting. Contact sports and sports that are male-dominated increased the youth's risk of violence. The results also demonstrated that youth with friends who played football were 38% more likely to engage in a fight when compared to other youth whose friends were not participating in football. Males who reported having all of their friends play football had a 45% chance of getting involved in a physical fight. This finding was 8% higher than youth without football friends and 20% higher than male youth whose friends were involved in tennis. Youth with friends who engaged in physical fights were 38% more likely to get into a physical altercation (Kreager, 2007).

Sherwood (2013) reported that incidences of violence in a PE class occur frequently in the locker room and or behind the gym after school hours where there is minimal or no adult supervision. When there is a hierarchy or distinctions created among students with minimal or no athletic skills and those who do increases the likelihood of physical victimization during PE class.

Help-Seeking Behavior and School Violence

Syvertsen, Flanagan, and Stout (2009) investigated the role of the school environment on adolescents' willingness to seek help. Nearly 2,000 students were recruited from 13 schools to participate. They were given a scenario in which they knew a classmate planned to do something dangerous and asked if they would directly intervene, tell a principal or teacher, discuss with a friend but not an adult, or do nothing. The results showed that students in high school were less likely to speak with a teacher

but more likely to discuss their concerns with a friend and ignore the incident. Students who had a supportive school environment, such as a democratic structure, good relationships with school administrators, belief in not getting in trouble for discussing their concerns, belief in taking responsibility for each other, and identification with the school, were more likely to report to an adult their knowledge of a classmate's dangerous plan (Syvertsen et al., 2009).

Implications for Public Child Welfare

The participation of foster youth in school has implications for public child welfare in three areas: school engagement among foster youth, help-seeking behavior among foster youth, and foster youth and school violence.

School Engagement among Foster Youth

Conn, Calais, Szilagyi, Baldwin, and Jee (2014) investigated how the participation in activities, whether it was structured or unstructured, affected the social and mental health outcomes among a national representative sample of youth in foster care, kinship care, group homes, and residential care. The data were obtained from the National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being II (NSCAWII). The sample included 134 youths between 11 and 18 years old who were in out-of-home care at the initial interview and 18 months later. Among the participants, 40% were involved in structured group activities, 76% participated in unstructured activities, and 26% participated in both (Conn et al., 2014).

Conn et al. (2014) found that youth who were not involved in structured activities scored on the loneliness and the social satisfaction scale 6 points higher, 1 point higher on the Car, Relax, Alone, Forget, Friends, and Trouble (CRAFFT) scale, and 4 points higher

on the depression scale than youth who participated in structured activities. Youth who were not in structured activities were more likely to suffer from isolation, have more difficulties with peers, and demonstrate signs of drug use and depression. Youth who were not involved in unstructured/physical activities were also found to have lower scores for social skills, whereas youth who participated in both activities scored 10 points higher for social skills and received lower scores on the CRAFFT scale. It was also found that youth placed out of the home for a longer time, youth identifying as a minority, and males were less likely to participate in structured activities. The researchers also compared the participation rate in structured activities among youth in the general population who shared similar characteristics of the study. They found that 91% of youth in middle school and 87% in high school participated in some structured activity after school in comparison to 40% of the foster youth (Conn et al., 2014).

Success in school requires focus/attention, organization, ability to remember and comprehend information, and emotional-regulation skills (West, Day, Somers, & Baroni, 2014). However, children and youth with a history of maltreatment often exhibit the inability to regulate their emotions (i.e., anger, aggression, and other impulses) and behaviors; memorize, communicate, and organize information; cognitively process information; and form relationships with peers and adults. These challenges place them at greater risk for school failure (West et al., 2014).

According to Overstreet and Matthews (2011), more than half of children and adolescents in the United States experience more than one traumatic event a year. Exposure to frequent traumatic events impairs the youths' executive functioning, which is responsible for organizing thoughts and activities, prioritizing tasks, time management,

and decision-making. Having symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) such as intrusive thoughts, hyper arousal, and a constant sense of danger make it difficult for youth to remain focused on school work. Not to mention that PTSD and depression make it difficult for youth to get the recommended amount of sleep. Fatigue due to lack of sleep also interferes with school work (Overstreet & Matthews, 2011).

West et al. (2014) explored behaviors often witnessed by court-involved youth in school and the experiences leading to those behaviors from the youth's point of view. The sample size consisted of 39 court-involved females enrolled in a public charter school in the Midwest. The participants were between 14 and 18 years old, 69% were African American, and 46% were in the 10^{th} grade. Among the participants, 44% were involved in the juvenile justice system because of juvenile delinquency and 56% were in the foster care system. All of the participants had a history of child maltreatment. The participants reported seeing frustration, irritability, pressure, and anger outbursts from other students in addition to identifying these behaviors in themselves in class and on school grounds. The participants stated seeing and participating in verbal fights, aggressive attitudes, and resorting to violence as a means of resolving conflict (West et al., 2014).

The participants explained that their negative behaviors in school were behaviors they learned from individuals outside of the school environment, such as peers, family members, and other members from their community (West et al., 2014). In addition, their classmates' negative behaviors influenced the participants' negative behaviors, such that observing a classmate being sent home after disrespecting a teacher was viewed more as a reward than as a punishment. Lastly, some of the participants' negative

behavior in the classroom and in school were due to triggers in the environment that reminded them of a traumatic incident such as a scent, sight, sound, word, and touch (West et al., 2014).

Scherr (2007) investigated additional educational experiences of youth in foster care after comparing their educational outcomes with the outcomes of youth not in foster care. The researcher used primary and secondary sources of data for youth who were between birth and 21 years old. The results demonstrated that many youth in foster care were eligible for special education services. Twenty-four studies reported that 27% to 35% of youth in foster care were eligible or received special education services. When comparing youth in foster care (n = 14,757) with youth in the general population (n = 1,796,516), foster care youth were 5 times more likely than their peers to need special education services. Sixteen studies reported that 24% to 45% of foster youth were held back a grade at least once. Forty-three youth formerly in foster care were compared to 1,600 youth in the general population. Forty-one percent of former foster youth were held back a grade at least once in comparison to 9% of youth in the general population (Scherr, 2007).

An additional 10 studies reported that approximately 15% to 36% of foster youth were suspended or expelled at least one time. A sample of 819 former foster youth were compared with 67,865 non-foster youth and found that approximately 32% of former foster youth were suspended or expelled in comparison to 13% of students in the general population. Youth in group homes are especially at risk since they are 3 times more likely than the general student population to face school disciplinary action (Scherr, 2007). Bowman-Perrott et al. (2011) found that students with emotional and behavioral

disorders were more likely to be suspended and expelled, followed by students with Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and those with a learning disability. Male and minority students, especially African American, are at greater risk for school exclusion than other students (Bowman-Perrott et al., 2011).

Approximately 399,546 of children and youth were in foster care in 2012 (National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections [NRCPFC], 2014). These youth experienced living on average in 2.8 different homes. There were about 249,107 school-age children and they were 2 times more likely to be absent from school than the other students. Approximately 56% to 75% of youth in the child welfare system changed schools when they entered foster care for the first time. On average, 34% of 17 and 18 year olds experienced five or more school changes. This age group was 2 times more likely to face school suspension and 3 times more likely to experience school expulsions than their peers. Foster youth are 3 to 4 times more likely to be receiving special education than the general population of students. Seventeen and 18 year olds in foster care have a 7th grade reading level on average. Half of the foster youth graduate high school by age 18; however, 84% want to go to college. Only 20% of foster youth who graduated high school enroll in college. Out of the 20% who enroll in college, between two percent to nine percent of foster youth obtain a bachelor's degree (NRCPFC, 2014).

Font and Maguire-Jack (2013) investigated the impact of foster care status on school engagement and performance. The data were obtained from the NSCAW II from 2008 to 2009 and 18 months after that. The sample consisted of 1,130 children who were 6 years and older. Among the participants, 448 remained in their home, 109 were in

foster care from 2008 to 2009 but were reunified 18 months later, 83 remained in the home during Wave 1 but were removed in Wave 2, and 390 remained in foster care during both waves. The results demonstrated that children removed during the second wave had higher levels of emotional (i.e., enjoyed being in school, school work not difficult to understand, and interesting classes) and cognitive school engagement (i.e., doing their best in school work, completing homework, listening carefully/paying attention in class) than children who remained in their home during both waves. Hence, children in foster care showed higher academic performance than the other groups. However, it is important to consider that the findings are based on self-reports made by the participants and as such, the participants may have misjudged their engagement and school performance. Another important consideration is that this study did not take into account the long-term outcomes of being in foster care and its impact on academic performance and school engagement (Font & Maguire, 2013).

Sullivan, Jones, and Mathieson (2010) investigated the impact of school mobility on academic progress and behavioral problems among foster care youth residing in congregate care. The sample consisted of 159 foster youth enrolled in a public school on-site where the focus was on education as opposed to treatment. Structured interviews and service files were used to gather the data. The majority of the participants were female (55%), Caucasian (57%), approximately 15 years old, had entered foster care at the age of 9, were in foster care for about 7 years, and had on average 23 different placements. Among the participants who reported having behavioral problems, 18% had internalizing problems and 45% had externalizing problems. Of the respondents, 42% estimated changing schools four to seven times and 40% reported going to eight or more different

schools (the average was six school changes). Twenty-nine (41%) of the respondents reported having B's for grades, 79 (50.3%) of the respondents age matched their grade level, and 69 (44%) reported they were behind academically 1 year in comparison to 50 (31%) who were academically behind because they repeated a class, and 54 (34%) reported they were suspended from school (Sullivan et al., 2010).

Sullivan et al. (2010) did not find a statistically significant association between school mobility and grade point average, days gone to school, and age-grade appropriateness. However, there was a statistically significant association between the number of times a youth changed schools and being held back for the academic year. Clinical/borderline scores on the externalizing scale were associated with the number of school changes in high school, number of school changes in a year, the total number of school changes, and age-grade appropriateness. Youth who scored in the clinical/borderline range of the internalizing scale tended to have more school changes. Males were more likely to be suspended from school, whereas females were more likely to have changed elementary schools and to have attended more high schools compared to males. Foster youth in group homes experienced higher suspension rates from school and were more likely to be older than their grade level than youth in other out-of home-care placements (Sullivan et al., 2010).

Zorc et al. (2013) investigated the effects of placement experience on school absenteeism and school mobility among younger children in entering foster care for 2 years. In addition, the researchers compared the experiences of children who remained in foster care with the experiences of children who were reunified and looked at each group's rate of absenteeism and school changes. The sample consisted of 209 children

between 5 and 8-years-old who went to school for at least 90 days. The majority were African American (79%), 55% were placed in kinship care, and half of the children were reunified during the study. Among the children who were not reunified, half were in stable housing within 45 days of entering foster care. One-third of the sample had abnormal scores on the Child Behavior Checklist and one-fourth were previously placed in foster care. The sample missed an estimated 25 school days, in which 13% of those missed days were due to not being enrolled in school. Forty-nine of the foster children missed 1 to 230 days in school due to not being enrolled in school. Among the sample, 20% of the children were suspended from school but this accounted for only 4% of the missed days from school. Males, those with abnormal behavior when entering foster care, and placement instability had higher rates of absenteeism (Zorc et al., 2013).

Zorc et al. (2013) found that the children in their sample attended an average of three schools with 20% of the children attending four or more schools during the 2 years of the study. Students with placement instability went to four schools during the 2 years when compared to students who had placement stability who went to two schools. In addition, 46% of the students who were placed with kin achieved early stability when compared to 15% of the students who were placed in non-kinship foster care. Children with normal scores on the Child Behavior Checklist (37%) achieved early stability in comparison to 22% of children who scored in the abnormal range. The results demonstrated that after controlling for several variables, children with a history of placement instability (37%) were more likely to be absent from school than children with stable placements. Children who were reunified during the study missed 28 days of

school (6 weeks) per year which was more than the number of school days missed by children in stable placements (Zorc et al., 2013).

The children who were not reunified, but had placement stability, who were absent for 16 days when compared to children who changed placements frequently were absent 22 days (Zorc et al., 2013). Children with unstable placements went to 4 different schools on average during the 2 years following foster care placement. Children who were reunified had fewer school changes in comparison to children with unstable placements. Children in kinship care went to 3 schools when compared to 7 schools for those in non-relative care. Being placed out of the home a previous time minimized the youths' opportunity for reunification and increased placement instability. Type of maltreatment (i.e., sexual abuse) was also associated with a greater likelihood of placement instability. The researchers also found that the rates of absenteeism were highest during the first weeks of entering foster care and during the first week of placement change (Zorc et al., 2013).

Zetlin, MacLeod, and Kimm (2012) investigated how beginning teachers working with foster care youths found out about their students' foster care status, challenges they display in the classroom, services and supports available to themselves and those students, the Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) process for foster youth, and supports or training needed for effectively working with foster care youth. The final sample size consisted of 91 general and special education teachers interning in schools working towards becoming certified (Zetlin et al., 2012).

Zetlin et al. (2012) found that general and special education teachers learned about the foster care status of their students through other sources of information;

however, this information was not likely to come from the children's social worker. For instance, 38% of general education teachers and 15% of special education teachers reported learning the foster care status of youth from the youth themselves. Thirty-eight percent of general education teachers and 20% of special education teachers reported finding out this information from the caregivers. Thirty-five percent of special education teachers reported they learned this information during the IEP process. Nineteen percent of general education teachers and 22% of special education teachers reported being given this information from another teacher, a staff administrator, other students, or the bus driver. Less than 6% of general education teacher and special education teachers learned this information from recognizing the group home address, when they reported suspected child abuse, and from the youth's social worker (Zetlin et al., 2012).

The general education teachers and special education teachers reported the number of foster youth entering their classroom during the academic year and the length of their stay (Zetlin et al., 2012). For example, 60% of the general education teachers and 69% of special education teachers reported that foster care youth remained in their classrooms for the entire school year. Twenty percent of the general education teachers and 4% of the special education teachers reported that foster youth entered during the middle of the semester and left 2 to 4 months after. Six percent of general and 18% of special education teachers reported that foster youth entered during the middle of the semester but left at the end of the year (Zetlin et al., 2012).

Special education teachers had more information about the foster care youth available to them than general education teachers (Zetlin et al., 2012). For example, 33% reported having the caregiver name, 20% reported having the social worker's name, 17%

reported having some background information, and 7% reported having the name of the holder of the child's educational rights. Fifty-five percent of special education teachers reported having some background information, 45% reported having no background information, 44% reported having the caregiver's name, 27% reported having the social worker's name, 15% reported having the name of the holder of the child's educational rights, 6% reported knowing the child's attorney but not their contact information, and 1% worked with a CASA volunteer (Zetlin et al., 2012).

Both general education and special education teachers discussed the learning, behavioral, and caregiver difficulties they observed foster care youth experience (Zetlin et al., 2012). Both general education and special education teachers reported that their foster care students lacked a strong academic foundation. These students were behind at least one-grade level in all subject areas. They experienced a difficult time keeping up with the other students. Foster youth displayed difficulty adjusting to the classroom routine. The teachers reported that foster youth were more hyperactive and exhibited anger, temper tantrums, aggression, and challenges getting along with their peers. They were easily distracted. Foster youth had poor attendance and tardiness due to court dates and visits with their birth parents. They reported that these behaviors got worse following the weekend after visiting with their birth parents (Zetlin et al., 2012).

The teachers also reported behavioral problems they observed in foster care students (Zetlin et al., 2012). Both general education teachers and special education teachers reported that these youth's behaviors were unpredictable. One moment their behavior was explosive and aggressive yet in other moments they would shut down, become withdrawn, or depressed. These teachers also stated observing foster youths

having difficulty socializing with peers because they were either too shy or lashed out in anger at their peers (i.e., hitting). The teachers expressed having to watch over their foster youth students so they would not engage in physical fighting. Some foster youths intimidated other students to do what they wanted or disclosed too much about themselves or isolated themselves (Zetlin et al., 2012).

General education teachers and special education teachers expressed other challenges they experienced with the foster youths' caregivers (Zetlin et al., 2012). The instructors reported that they had a hard time locating them when the foster youth's behavior became uncontrollable or when they would not complete their homework assignments or the class assignments. Some of these caregivers would not go to the IEP meetings or parent-teacher conferences. If the caregivers went to the IEP meetings, they did not understand what was going on which made it difficult to provide these youth with the services they needed. The IEP process was difficult at times because some foster parents were not the holders of the education rights of the youth and the IEP had to be signed by the birth parents. This process delayed the youth receiving services. One-third of the children's social workers would attend the IEP meetings as reported by the instructors. Both groups of teachers reported having some form of support at their school; 15% of general education teachers and 24% of special education teachers stated receiving support from counselors or psychologists and the administration (Zetlin et al., 2012).

Help-Seeking Behavior among Foster Youth

Unrau, Conrody-Brown, Zosky, and Grinnell (2006) reported that the literature on the help-seeking behaviors among foster care youth is scarce. Overall, youth in the foster

care system experience many physical and mental health problems. However, foster youth are not likely to seek help for these problems for reasons such as these problems going undetected because they were not assessed early, they were referred for services in an untimely manner, or they were referred to services but those services did not math their needs. These factors can impact their help-seeking behaviors in the future. The authors reported that seeking help involves three stages: recognizing a problem exists, deciding to seek help, and having a network of support and the pattern of using services. Whether a foster youth recognizes the existence of a problem is determined by an assessment of need, perception of need, and structural and family characteristics. The decision to get help, access a network of support, and services are affected by foster youth's demographic characteristics, values and beliefs, community, economic factors, social networks, characteristics of services, and policy (Unrau et al., 2006).

One aspect of help-seeking behavior that should be considered for foster youth is that seeking help can go either way (Unrau et al., 2006). On one end of the continuum, foster care youth may be aware of their needs and because they have access to professionals, they can ask and receive help. On the other end, foster youth may not seek help because of the stigma attached to being in foster care or perhaps they had negative experiences looking for help in the past. Thus, the likelihood of seeking help in the future decreases. Another aspect to consider is that the older the youth is the more likely he or she will seek help from peers. Minority youth tend to seek help from informal sources and females are more likely to seek help than males (Unrau et al., 2006).

Unrau et al. (2006) also reported that adolescents rely on their peers and friends for help when they are faced with a problem. However, youth entering the foster care

system are separated from their family of origin, peers, and friends because more often than not youth in the system move to a different community. Being disconnected from those social networks can interfere with seeking assistance. Lastly, schools can be a great opportunity for foster youths to develop their social networks and build long-term social ties. When youth face placement instability and consequently have to change schools, the helping network established becomes obliterated. This relational instability among youth who experience several placement moves impacts their seeking help in the future (Unrau et al., 2006).

Foster Youth and School Violence

Duke, Pettingell, McMorris, and Borowsky (2010) investigated the relationship between physical and sexual abuse, alcohol use, drug use, and intimate partner violence within the family with the risk of perpetrating violence as adolescents. The results showed that 29% of the sample reported 1of the 6 adverse childhood experiences. The majority of the participants (n = 18,913; 14.5%) reported alcohol use within the family. Among the female participants, the risk of interpersonal violence (i.e., delinquency, bullying, physical fighting, dating violence, and carrying weapon in school) and violence directed towards oneself (i.e., self-mutilation, suicide ideation, and suicide attempt) increased from 38% to 88% as they experienced more than one adversity in childhood. Among the male participants, the risk of interpersonal violence (i.e., delinquency, bullying, physical fighting, dating violence, and carrying weapon in school) and violence directed towards their self (i.e., self-mutilation, suicide ideation, and suicide attempt) increased from 35% to 144% as they experienced more than one adversity in childhood (Duke et al., 2010).

Lewis et al. (2007) investigated the relationship between child maltreatment and weapon-carrying among 12 year old youth (n = 797). The results showed that 81 male participants and 93 female participants were abused physically in comparison to 51 male participants and 69 female participants who were sexually abused. Males were 8 times more likely to carry a weapon than girls. Youth who were physically abused were 3 times more likely to report carrying a weapon. Youth who were sexually abused were 4 times more likely to carry a weapon. Male participants were 2 times more likely to report a perceived need to carry a weapon. Youth who were physically abused were 3 times more likely to report needing to carry a weapon. Youth who were sexually abused were 4 times more likely to report needing to carry a weapon. The youth who felt they needed a weapon for protection were 10 times more likely reported carrying a weapon (Lewis, 2007).

Finkestein, Wamsley, and Miranda (2002) investigated the experiences of foster youth in schools that interfere with their educational experiences. They found that among the 25 foster youth who were interviewed, 12 reported having a suspension for engaging in defensive fighting. Fighting and violence were part of the school experience for these youth whether they attempted to avoid the violence, were involved, or witnessed it. The majority of the youth reported that fighting was frequent in their schools and had seen at least one person seriously injured. More than half of the youth in foster care were reluctant to disclose their foster care status because of the stigma attached, which makes them susceptible to teasing (Finkestein et al., 2002).

Crooks, Scott, Wolfe, Chiodo, and Killip (2007) investigated whether child abuse, neglect, and the environmental characteristics of the school predicted youth's

involvement with delinquency 4 to 6 months later. The most important connection the researchers sought to understand was how the characteristics of the schools' environment reduced or exacerbated the likelihood of engaging in delinquency among youth with childhood maltreatment backgrounds. A sample of 1,897 students was recruited. The sample was drawn from 23 schools in Ontario, Canada, who participated in a larger study involving an evaluation of a violence prevention program. More than half of the participants were female and 80% identified themselves as White (Crooks et al., 2007).

Crooks et al. (2007) found that the results supported previous research that students likely to participate in delinquency were male, had experienced more than one form of child maltreatment, had poor relationships with their parents (i.e., the parents were not nurturing, they did not supervise, and or they rejected their children), and were less connected with their schools and communities. Schools located in urban areas had more adolescents reporting delinquency than schools in small towns and rural areas. In addition, students who went to a school they perceived as safe were less likely to engage in delinquency even when the youth experienced more than one incidence of child maltreatment (Crooks et al., 2007).

Gallegos and White (2013) made an important connection concerning how youth in the foster care system are impacted by the zero-tolerance policies. The researchers reported that the behavioral and emotional difficulties displayed by the youth, a lack of school and peer connections due to their frequent mobility, educators not having the necessary knowledge of their specialized needs, and their potential targeting by school administrators and educators based on previous experiences or biases makes foster youth

more vulnerable to school exclusionary practices under the zero-tolerance policies than the general student population (Gallegos & White, 2013).

Gaps in the Literature

The literature review revealed a strong association among age, grade, gender, ethnicity, school engagement, help-seeking behavior, and school violence. However, research investigating factors supporting the notion that attending PE class contributes to school violence is lacking. For these reasons, the present study explored further these associations.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Research Analysis

This study is quantitative and descriptive in nature. The researcher utilized secondary data obtained from the CDC's 2011 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System Survey (YRBSS; CDC, 2011a). The 2011 YRBSS was used to analyze the relationship between school engagement, help-seeking behavior, and school violence participation among Latino high school students.

Sampling

The data were retrieved from the 2011 YRBSS, which contained information on youth from September 2010 through December 2011. A non-probability, purposive sampling procedure was used in the selection of participants for this study. A subsample of 2,959 Latino adolescents was selected for the present study: (1) students who attended private or public schools in the United States, (2) students who self-identified as being Latino, and (3) students enrolled in high school at the time of the data collection.

The CDC contracted with ICF Macro, Inc. (CDC, 2011b). This organization was responsible for selecting the sample. This agency was also responsible for obtaining the proper clearances to conduct the survey in schools. Working with the selected schools to choose the classes where the participants were drawn, scheduling a date for the data collection, obtaining parental permission, and hiring and training the data collectors were

additional responsibilities of ICF Macro, Inc. In order to obtain a national representative sample of United States students enrolled in public and private high schools, the CDC used a three stage cluster sample design. The first stage involved dividing the larger counties into smaller counties. The next step involved sorting out and assigning the schools to the selected counties. The second stage involved the selection of the schools from a list compiled by the Market Data Retrieval database. The third and final stage required the selection of one or two classes from each school and grade level that were previously selected. All of the students in the selected classes participated (CDC, 2011b).

Data Retrieval

Because the data used were obtained from an existing database from the CDC, there was no need to administer questionnaires or surveys to the participants. The researcher selected variables from the 2011 YRBSS. The variables consisted of the following: demographic characteristics, school engagement, help-seeking behavior, and school violence. The demographic characteristics gathered included age, grade, gender, and ethnicity (see the Appendix).

The school engagement variables were based on these questions: In an average week when you are in school, on how many days do you go to physical education classes? During the past 12 months, on how many sports teams did you play? The help-seeking behavior variable was based on the question: During the past 12 months, did you talk to a teacher or other adult in your school about a personal problem you had? The school violence variables were based on these questions: During the past 12 months, how many times were you in a physical fight? During the past 12 months, how many times were you in a physical fight on school property? During the past 30 days, on how

many days did you carry a weapon such as a gun, knife, or club on school property? During the past 12 months, how many times were you in a physical fight in which you were injured and had to be treated by a doctor or nurse? During the past 12 months, how many times has someone threatened or injured you with a weapon such as a gun, knife, or club on school property?

Social Work Ethics

The use of existing data ensured anonymity of the participants as the database was available in the public domain without any individual identifiers (CDC, 2011b). The data were used solely for the purpose of this study. The primary data collectors took precautions and ensured that the participants were not coerced to participate in their study. The primary data collectors obtained parental consents. Precautions were taken to minimize physical and psychological harm to the participants. The participants completed the responses to the questionnaires in a booklet or on an answer sheet. The desks were spread apart to ensure that no student saw other students' responses. The participants were given an envelope or a sheet of paper to cover their responses and their responses were placed in an envelope before being turned in (CDC, 2011b).

In accordance with the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics, the present study attempted to shed some light on the topic of school violence with the hope that the findings would help allocate funding for needed diversion programs to reduce the incidence of violence in schools instead of imposing tough-on-crime policies. The present study also attempted to empower youth facing school violence by strengthening their sense of emotional, physical, and social connections

amongst themselves and their schools as a means of challenging social injustice (NASW, 2008).

Relevance to Children, Youth, and Families

The Hispanic/Latino population is the fastest growing ethnic group in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2010), out of 308.7 million people living in the United States, 50.5 million (16%) are Hispanic/Latino. This was an increase from 35.3 million (13%) in 2000. Individuals with a Mexican origin account for three-fourths of the total Hispanic population and are the fastest growing subgroup living in the United States. The Census Bureau (2012) expected that in 2060 the Hispanic population will double, increasing from 53.3 million to 128.8 million from 2012 to 2060 in comparison to non-Hispanic whites who were expected to experience a 197.8 million increase in 2024 and a decrease to 20.6 million from 2024 to 2060. African Americans were expected to increase by 61.8 million, American Indian/Alaskan Natives by 6.3 million, Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander by 1.4 million, and individuals who identify with two or more races by 26.7 million (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012).

In 2012, the Social, Economic and Housing Statistics Division of the U.S. Census Bureau reported that 25% of school districts had a population size of 20,000 or more students. Eighty-one percent of all school-aged children in the United States were within these school districts. Out of these school-aged children, 82.4% lived in poverty (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). In 2012, 33% percent of Hispanic students between the ages of 5 and 17 were in families living below the poverty line (Kena et al., 2014). Among Hispanic students, 38% of Dominican students under the age of 18 experienced higher

rates of poverty in contrast to 35% of Mexican/Puerto Rican students and 19% of South American students (Kena et al., 2014). This means that the lack of opportunities, support, and resources associated with poverty places the Hispanic/Latino youth at a higher risk for school failure and subsequently at a higher risk of involvement with the juvenile justice system, especially if they are in the foster care system.

Relevance to Social Work and Multicultural Social Work Practice

It is important to understand how poverty affects the school climate and how it affects vulnerable ethnic populations, with special attention to Hispanic/Latinos. Kena et al.'s (2014) report on *The Condition of Education*, schools with high poverty rates represented 21% of all public schools for the 2011-2012 school years. Thirty-four percent of students who went to city schools were enrolled in a high-poverty school in contrast to 15% of students who went to town schools, 13% who went to suburban schools, and 10% who went to rural schools. Among the students who were between the ages of 5 and 17, 33% of Hispanic students who attended these public schools lived in poverty. The Hispanic/Latino students attending public schools increased from 8.2 million to 11.8 million from fall 2001 to fall 2011. This population's enrollment rate is expected to increase from 12.2 million in 2012 to 15.6 million by 2023 (Kena et al., 2014).

The victimization rate among students in public schools where there is a high rate of poverty increased in 2012 (Kena et al., 2014). Students between 12 and 18 years old experienced approximately 1,365,000 incidents of theft and violent crime at school in comparison to 991,000 incidents of away from school. Twenty-nine per 1,000 students

experienced violent victimization at school in comparison to 20 per 1,000 students away from school (Kena et al., 2014).

Limitations of the Study Methodology

This study had its limitations. For example, the data came from 2011 YRBS and were somewhat outdated. There were also limitations in the validity of this study since the variables were originally defined and used differently from how the researcher in this study defined them. The primary data collectors collected the data for a different purpose than that of the present study. The 2011 YRBSS did not specify whether the participants in the sample were in the foster care system, which adds another limitation to the study because the findings cannot be generalized to this particular population. Only inferences can be made as to how the findings of this study can enhance knowledge of youth in the foster care system.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Demographic Characteristics of the Study Sample

A demographic profile of the study sample is presented in Table 1. The study subsample consisted of 2,959 Hispanic/Latino high school students. Among the high school students, 25.9% (*n* = 765) were 17-years-old, 51.3% (*n* = 1,517) were females, and 50.9% (*n* = 1,505) were Hispanic/Latino. The majority of the students were in the 11^{th} grade (*n* = 812; 27.4%).

Table 2 illustrates the frequencies for the study variables on the five items concerning school violence: (a) number of times the students were involved in a physical fight in the last 12 months, (b) number of times the students were in a physical fight at school in the last 12 months (c) number of times the students were injured in a physical fight in the last 12 months, (d) number of times the students were threatened at school in the last 12 months, and (e) number of times the students carried a weapon at school in the past 30 days. Among the sample, 14.9% (*n* = 441) of high school students reported being involved in one physical fight within the last 12 months, 7.7% (*n* = 227) reported being in a physical fight at school at least one time within the last 12 months, 3.5% (*n* = 103) reported being involved in a physical fight that resulted in a one-time injury within the last 12 months, 2.8% (*n* = 84) reported being threatened at least one time at school in

the last 12 months, and 2% (n = 58) reported carrying a weapon at school for 6 or more days.

Table 3 illustrates the frequencies for the study variables on the two items concerning school engagement: (a) number of sport teams the students participated in the last 12 months and (b) number of days the students went to PE class. In the sample, 25.3% (n = 750) reported joining a sports team within the 12 months and 32.8% (n = 972) reported going to PE class for 5 days during each week.

Table 4 illustrates the frequencies for the study variable on help-seeking behavior. The majority of the participants (72.5%, n = 2, 146) reported not speaking to a teacher or an adult at school about a personal problem.

Characteristics, School Engagement, Help-Seeking Behavior, and Physical Fights

A chi-square analysis was utilized to find associations between demographic characteristics, school engagement, help-seeking behavior, and school violence. Table 5 illustrates the associations between these variables. The study found a statistically significant association between gender and the number of times students participated in a physical fight, χ^2 (1) = 73.848, p = .005. Among the male participants, 59.4% participated in one or more physical fights in comparison to 40.6% of the female participants. The study found a statistically significant association between grade and the number of times students participated in a physical fight, χ^2 (3) = 20.280, p = .005. Among students in the ninth grade, 28.1% participated in one or more physical fights in contrast to 27.2% of students in grade 11, 24% in grade 10, and 20.7% in grade 12. The study showed a statistically significant association between the number of sport teams students participated in and the number of times students participated in a physical fight,

χ^2 (1) = 22.647, p = .005. Among the students who participated in one or more sport teams, 58.1% reported being involved in one or more physical fights in comparison to 41.9% of students who did not participate in sports.

TABLE 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Study Sample (N = 2,959)

Characteristics	f	%
Age		
12 or younger	4	0.1
14	281	9.5
15	663	22.4
16	750	25.3
17	765	25.9
18 or older	496	16.8
Gender		
Female	1,517	51.3
Male	1,442	48.7
Grade		
9th	736	24.9
10th	669	22.6
11th	812	27.4
12th	742	25.1
Ethnicity		
Hispanic/Latino	1,505	50.9
Multiple-Hispanic	1,454	49.1

The study found a statistically significant association between the number of days the students attended PE class and the number of times students participated in a physical fight, χ^2 (1) = 5.542, p = .019 (Table 5). Among students who went to PE class on 1 or more days, 53.5% participated in a physical fight on one or more occasions than 46.5% of students who never attended PE class.

TABLE 2. School Violence (*N* = 2,959)

Aspect of School Violence	*f*	%
Number of Times in a Physical Fight		
0	1,908	64.5
1	441	14.9
2 or 3	344	11.6
4 or 5	93	3.1
6 or 7	50	1.7
8 or 9	21	0.7
10 or 11	14	0.5
12 or more	88	3.0
Number of Times in a Physical Fight on School Property		
0	2,564	86.7
1	227	7.7
2 or 3	111	3.8
4 or 5	18	0.6
6 or 7	9	0.3
8 or 9	2	0.1
10 or 11	3	0.1
12 or more	25	0.8
Number of Times Injured During a Physical Fight		
0	2,820	95.3
1	103	3.5
2 or 3	21	0.7
4 or 5	3	0.1
6 or more	12	0.4
Number of Times Threatened With a Weapon on School Property		
0	2,740	92.6
1	84	2.8
2 or 3	69	2.3
4 or 5	18	0.6
6 or 7	15	0.5
8 or 9	4	0.1
10 or 11	1	0.0
12 or more	28	0.9
Number of Days Carried a Weapon on School Property		
0	2,080	94.9
1	46	1.6
2 or 3	34	1.1
4 or 5	13	0.4
6 or more	58	2.0

TABLE 3. School Engagement (*N* = 2,959)

Aspect of School Engagement	*f*	%
Number of Sport Teams Played		
0	1,413	47.8
1	750	25.3
2	454	15.3
3 or more	342	11.6
Number of Days Attended PE Class		
0	1,463	49.4
1	74	2.5
2	87	2.9
3	226	7.6
4	137	4.6
5	972	32.8

TABLE 4. Help-Seeking Behavior (*N* = 2,959)

Aspect of Help-Seeking Behavior	*f*	%
Speak With Teacher/Adult about a Personal Problem		
Yes	813	27.5
No	2,146	72.5

The study demonstrated a statistically significant association between speaking with a teacher or an adult in the school about a personal problem and the number of times students participated in a physical fight, χ^2 (1) = 17.227, p = .005. Among students who did not speak with a teacher or an adult about a personal problem, 67.9% reported getting involved in one or more physical fights in contrast to 32.1% of students who spoke with a teacher or an adult. There was not a statistically significant association between age and the number of times students participated in a physical fight, χ^2 (5) = 6.626, p = .250

(Table 5). There was not a statistically significant association between ethnicity and the number of times students participated in a physical fight, χ^2 (1) = 2.744, p = .098.

TABLE 5. Characteristics, School Engagement, Help-Seeking Behavior and Number of Times in a Physical Fight

	Physical Fight						
	0 Times		1 or More Times				
	f	(%)	*f*	(%)			
Predictors					*χ2*	*df*	*p*
Age							
12 or younger	2	(0.1)	2	(0.2)	6.626	5	.250
14	176	(9.2)	105	(10.0)			
15	414	(21.7)	249	(23.7)			
16	471	(24.7)	279	(26.5)			
17	509	(26.7)	256	(24.4)			
18 or older	336	(17.6)	60	(15.2)			
Gender							
Female	1,090	(57.1)	427	(40.6)	73.848	1	.005
Male	818	(42.9)	624	(59.4)			
Grade							
9th	441	(23.1)	295	(28.1)	20.280	3	.005
10th	417	(21.9)	252	(24.0)			
11th	526	(27.6)	286	(27.2)			
12th	524	(27.5)	218	(20.7)			
Ethnicity							
Hispanic/ Latino	992	(52.0)	513	(48.8)	2.744	1	.098
Multiple-Hispanic	916	(48.0)	538	(51.2)			
Number of Sports Teams							
0	973	(51.0)	440	(41.9)	22.647	1	.005
1 or more	935	(49.0)	611	(58.1)			
Number of Days Attended PE Class							
0	974	(51.0)	489	(46.5)	5.542	1	.019
1 or more	934	(49.0)	562	(53.5)			
Speak with Teacher/Adult							
Yes	476	(24.9)	337	(32.1)	17.227	1	.005
No	1,432	(75.1)	714	(67.9)			

Characteristics, School Engagement, Help-Seeking Behavior, and Physical Fights on School Property

Table 6 illustrates the associations between demographic characteristics, school engagement, help-seeking behavior, and school violence. The study found a statistically significant association between age and the number of times students participated in a physical fight on school property, χ^2 (5) = 23.286, p = .005. Of the students who were 15-years-old, 30.9% were involved in one or more physical fights in school than .3% of 12-year-olds, 10.4% of 14-year-olds, 13.4% of 18-year-olds, 20.8% of 17-year-olds, and 24.3% of 16-year-olds. There was a statistically significant association between gender and the number of times students participated in a physical fight on school property, χ^2 (1) = 44.239, p = .005. Among male students, 64.3% fought in school one or more times in comparison to 35.7% of female students. A statistically significant association was noted between grade and the number of times students participated in a physical fight on school property, χ^2 (3) = 35.521, p = .005. Of the students who were in grade 9, 35.2% participated in one or more physical fights in school than 16.7% of students in grade 12, 23.5% in grade 11, and 24.6% in grade 10.

A statistically significant association was found between the number of sport teams students participated in and the number of times students were involved in a physical fight on school property, χ^2 (1) = 21.274, p = .005 (Table 6). Of the students who were in one or more sport teams, 63% were involved in one or more fights in school in comparison to 37% of students who were not in sports. There was a statistically significant association between the number of days students attended PE class and the number of times students participated in a physical fight on school property, χ^2 (1) =

17.143, p = .005. Among students who went to PE class on 1 or more days, 60.3% were in one or more physical fights in school when compared to 39.7% of students who never attended PE class. A statistically significant association was found between speaking with a teacher or an adult in the school about a personal problem and the number of times students participated in a physical fight on school property, χ^2 (1) = 6.145, p = .013. Among students who did not speak to a teacher or an adult about a personal problem, 67.3% reported being involved in one or more physical fights on school property than 32.7% of students who spoke with a teacher or an adult.

The study did not find a statistically significant association between ethnicity and the number of times students participated in a physical fight on school property χ^2 (1) = 1.147, p = .284 (Table 6).

Characteristics, School Engagement, Help-Seeking Behavior, and Injured During a Physical Fight

Table 7 illustrates the associations between demographic characteristics, school engagement, help-seeking behavior, and school violence. The study found a statistically significant association between age and the number of times students participated in a physical fight that resulted in an injury, χ^2 (5) = 22.373, p = .005. Among the 17-year-old students, 28.8% of them were injured during a physical fight on one or more occasions in contrast to 1.4% of 12-year-olds, 7.9% of 14-year-olds, 18% of 18-year-olds, 18.7% of 16-year-olds, and 25.2% of 15-year-olds. A statistically significant association was found between gender and the number of times students participated in a physical fight that resulted in an injury, χ^2 (1) = 16.349, p = .005. Among male students, 65.5%

reported being injured on one or more occasions in comparison to 34.5% of female students.

TABLE 6. Characteristics, School Engagement, Help-Seeking Behavior and Number of Times in a Physical Fight on School Property

	Physical Fight						
	0 Times		1 or More Times				
	f	(%)	*f*	(%)			
Predictors					χ^2	*df*	*p*
Age							
12 or younger	3	(0.1)	1	(0.3)	23.286	5	.005
14	240	(9.4)	41	(10.4)			
15	541	(21.1)	122	(30.9)			
16	654	(25.5)	96	(24.3)			
17	683	(26.6)	82	(20.8)			
18 or older	443	(17.3)	53	(13.4)			
Gender							
Female	1,376	(53.7)	141	(35.7)	44.239	1	.005
Male	1,188	(46.3)	254	(64.3)			
Grade							
9th	597	(23.3)	139	(35.2)	35.521	3	.005
10th	572	(22.3)	97	(24.6)			
11th	719	(28.0)	93	(23.5)			
12th	676	(26.4)	66	(16.7)			
Ethnicity							
Hispanic/ Latino	1,314	(51.2)	191	(48.4)	1.147	1	.284
Multiple-Hispanic	1,250	(48.8)	204	(51.6)			
Number of Sports Teams							
0	1,267	(49.4)	146	(37.0)	21.274	1	.005
1 or more	1,297	(50.6)	249	(63.0)			
Number of Days Attended PE Class							
0	1,306	(50.9)	157	(39.7)	17.143	1	.005
1 or more	1,258	(49.1)	238	(60.3)			
Speak with Teacher/Adult							
Yes	684	(26.7)	129	(32.7)	6.145	1	.013
No	1,880	(73.3)	266	(67.3)			

A statistically significant association was found between the number of sport teams students participated in and the number of times students were involved in a physical fight that resulted in an injury, χ^2 (1) = 15.149, p = .005 (Table 7). Of the students who participated in one or more sport teams, 68.3% were injured in a physical fight on one or more occasions than 31.7% of students who were not in sports.

There was a statistically significant association between speaking with a teacher or an adult in the school about a personal problem and the number of times students participated in a physical fight that resulted in an injury, χ^2 (1) = 12.015, p = .001. Of the students who did not speak to a teacher or an adult about a personal problem, 59.7% reported being injured as a result of their involvement in one or more physical fights in comparison to 40.3% of students who spoke with a teacher or an adult.

The study did not find a statistically significant association between grade and the number of times students participated in a physical fight that resulted in an injury, χ^2 (3) = 2.232, p = .526 (Table 6). The study did not find a statistically significant association between ethnicity and the number of times students participated in a physical fight that resulted in an injury χ^2 (1) = 2.285, p = .131. The study did not find a statistically significant association between the number of days the students attended PE class and the number of times students participated in a physical fight that resulted in an injury, χ^2 (1) = .224, p = .636.

Characteristics, School Engagement, Help-Seeking Behavior, and Threatened with a Weapon

Table 8 illustrates the associations between demographic characteristics, school engagement, help-seeking behavior, and school violence. A statistical association was

TABLE 7. Characteristics, School Engagement, Help-Seeking Behavior, and Number of Times Injured During a Physical Fight

	Injuries						
	0 Times		1or More Times				
	f	(%)	*f*	(%)			
Predictors					χ^2	*df*	*p*
Age							
12 or younger	2	(0.1)	2	(1.4)	22.373	5	.005
14	270	(9.6)	11	(7.9)			
15	628	(22.3)	35	(25.2)			
16	724	(25.7)	26	(18.7)			
17	725	(25.7)	40	(28.8)			
18 or older	471	(16.7)	25	(18.0)			
Gender							
Female	1,469	(52.1)	48	(34.5)	16.349	1	.005
Male	1,351	(47.9)	91	(65.5)			
Grade							
9th	697	(24.7)	39	(28.1)	2.232	3	.526
10th	640	(22.7)	29	(20.9)			
11th	770	(27.3)	42	(30.2)			
12th	713	(25.3)	29	(20.9)			
Ethnicity							
Hispanic/ Latino	1,443	(51.2)	62	(44.6)	2.285	1	.131
Multiple-Hispanic	1,377	(48.8)	77	(55.4)			
Number of Sports Teams							
0	1,369	(48.5)	44	(31.7)	15.149	1	.005
1 or more	1,451	(51.5)	95	(68.3)			
Number of Days Attended PE Class							
0	1,397	(49.5)	66	(47.5)	.224	1	.636
1 or more	1,423	(50.5)	73	(52.5)			
Speaking with Teacher/Adult							
Yes	757	(26.8)	56	(40.3)	12.015	1	.001
No	2,063	(73.2)	83	(59.7)			

found between age and the number of times students were threatened with a weapon on school property, χ^2 (5) = 16.664, p = .005. At age 16, 26.5% were threatened with a

weapon in school on one or more occasions in contrast to .9% of 12-year-olds, 13.2% of 14-year-olds, 14.2% of 18-year-olds, 21.9% of 17-year-olds, and 23.3% of 15-year-olds.

A statistically significant association was found between gender and the number of times students were threatened with a weapon on school property, χ^2 (1) = 27.424, p = .005 (Table 8). Of the male participants, 65.8% were threatened with a weapon in school on one or more occasions than 34.2% of the female participants. A statistically significant association was found between grade and the number of times students were threatened with a weapon on school property, χ^2 (3) = 17.085, p = .001. Among 9th graders, 32.4% were threatened with a weapon in school on one or more occasions in contrast to 15.5% of 12th graders, 24.7% of 11th graders, and 27.4% of 10th graders. The study found a statistically significant association between ethnicity and the number of times students were threatened with a weapon on school property, χ^2 (1) = 11.735, p = .001. Among students with diverse Hispanic backgrounds, 60.3% were threatened with a weapon in school on one or more occasions than 39.7% of students who were Hispanic/Latino only.

A statistically significant association was found between the number of sport teams students participated in and the number of times students were threatened with a weapon on school property, χ^2 (1) = 6.107, p = .013 (Table 8). Among the students who participated in one or more sport teams, 60.3% were threatened with a weapon on one or more times in school than 39.7% of students who were not involved in sports. A statistically significant association was found between the number of days students attended PE class and the number of times students were threatened with a weapon on school property, χ^2 (1) = 5.228, p = .022. Of the students who went to PE class on 1 or

more days, 58% were threatened with a weapon in school one or more occasions than 42% of students who never attended PE class.

TABLE 8. Characteristics, School Engagement, Help-Seeking Behavior and Number of Times Threatened With a Weapon on School Property

	Threatened with Weapon						
	0 Times		1 or More Times				
Predictors	*f*	(%)	*f*	(%)	χ^2	*df*	*p*
Age							
12 or younger	2	(0.1)	2	(0.9)	16.664	5	.005
14	252	(9.2)	29	(13.2)			
15	612	(22.3)	51	(23.3)			
16	692	(25.3)	58	(26.5)			
17	717	(26.2)	48	(21.9)			
18 or older	465	(17.0)	31	(14.2)			
Gender							
Female	1,442	(52.6)	75	(34.2)	27.424	1	.005
Male	1,298	(47.4)	144	(65.8)			
Grade							
9th	665	(24.3)	71	(32.4)	17.085	3	.001
10th	609	(22.2)	60	(27.4)			
11th	758	(27.7)	54	(24.7)			
12th	708	(25.8)	34	(15.5)			
Ethnicity							
Hispanic/ Latino	1,418	(51.8)	87	(39.7)	11.735	1	.001
Multiple-Hispanic	1,322	(48.2)	132	(60.3)			
Number of Sports Teams							
0	1,326	(48.4)	87	(39.7)	6.107	1	.013
1 or more	1,414	(51.6)	132	(60.3)			
Number of Days Attended PE Class							
0	1,371	(50.0)	92	(42.0)	5.228	1	.022
1 or more	1,369	(50.0)	127	(58.0)			
Speak with Teacher/Adult							
Yes	726	(26.5)	87	(39.7)	17.812	1	.005
No	2,014	(73.5)	132	(60.3)			

There was a statistically significant association between speaking with a teacher or an adult in the school about a personal problem and the number of times students were threatened with a weapon on school property, χ^2 (1) = 17.812, p = .005 (Table 8). Among the students who did not speak with a teacher or an adult about a personal problem, 60.3% reported being threatened with a weapon on school property on one or more occasions in comparison to 39.7% of students who spoke with a teacher or an adult.

Characteristics, School Engagement, Help-Seeking Behavior, and Carried Weapon

Table 9 illustrates the associations between demographic characteristics, school engagement, help-seeking behavior, and school violence. A statistically significant association was found between age and the number of days students carried a weapon on school property, χ^2 (5) = 20.098, p = .001. Among the 15-year-old participants, 27.2% carried a weapon on school property on 1 or more days in contrast to 1.3% of 12-year-olds, 9.3% of 14-year-olds, 13.9% of 18-year-olds, 21.9% of 17-year-olds, and 26.5% of 16-year-olds. A statistically significant association was found between gender and the number of days students carried a weapon on school property, χ^2 (1) = 52.646, p = .005. Among males, 77.5% carried a weapon on school property on 1 or more days than 22.5% of females who carried a weapon.

A statistically significant association was not found between grade and the number of days students carried a weapon on school property χ^2 (3) = 6.689, p = .082 (Table 9). There was not a statistically significant association between ethnicity and the number of days students carried a weapon on school property χ^2 (1) = .940, p = .332. There was not a statistically significant association between the number of sports teams

students participated in and the number of days students carried a weapon on school property, χ^2 (1) = 1.838, p = .175.

TABLE 9. Characteristics, School Engagement, Help-Seeking Behavior and Number of Days Carried a Weapon on School Property

	Carried Weapon						
	0 Days		1 or More Days				
	f	(%)	*f*	(%)			
Predictors					χ^2	*df*	*p*
Age							
12 or younger	2	(0.1)	2	(1.3)	20.098	5	.001
14	267	(9.5)	14	(9.3)			
15	622	(22.2)	41	(27.2)			
16	710	(25.3)	40	(26.5)			
17	732	(26.1)	33	(21.9)			
18 or older	475	(16.9)	21	(13.9)			
Gender							
Female	1,483	(52.8)	34	(22.5)	52.646	1	.005
Male	1,325	(47.2)	117	(77.5)			
Grade							
9th	689	(24.5)	47	(31.1)	6.689	3	.082
10th	629	(22.4)	40	(26.5)			
11th	778	(27.7)	34	(22.5)			
12th	712	(25.4)	30	(19.9)			
Ethnicity							
Hispanic/ Latino	1,434	(51.1)	71	(47.0)	.940	1	.332
Multiple-Hispanic	1,374	(48.9)	80	(53.0)			
Number of Sports Teams							
0	1,349	(48.0)	64	(42.4)	1.838	1	.175
1 or more	1,459	(52.0)	87	(57.6)			
Number of Days Attended PE Class							
0	1,386	(49.4)	77	(51.0)	.153	1	.696
1 or more	1,422	(50.6)	74	(49.0)			
Speaking with Teacher/Adult							
Yes	770	(27.4)	43	(28.5)	.080	1	.777
No	2,038	(72.6)	108	(71.5)			

There was not a statistically significant association between the number of days students attended PE class and the number of days students carried a weapon on school property, χ^2 (1) = .153, p = .696 (Table 9). There was not a statistically significant association between speaking with a teacher or an adult in the school about a personal problem and the number of days students carried a weapon on school property, χ^2 (1) = .080, p = .777.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Summary of Findings

This study analyzed the association of demographic characteristics, school engagement, and help-seeking behavior on school violence. The study found statistically significant associations between age and the number of times students participated in a physical fight on school property, the number of times students participated in a physical fight that resulted in an injury, the number of times students were threatened with a weapon at school, and the number of days students carried a weapon in school. Although the youth between 15 and 17-years-old were at-greater risk for school violence, those who were15-year-olds were at-greater risk for fighting and carrying a weapon to school. However, 16-year-olds were at-greater risk of being threatened with a weapon and 17-year-olds were at-greater risk of being injured during a fight.

Statistically significant associations were found between gender and the number of times students participated in a physical fight, the number of times students participated in a physical fight on school property, the number of times students participated in a physical fight that resulted in an injury, the number of times students were threatened with a weapon in school, and the number of days students carried a weapon on school property. Although exposure to violence in the school setting affected male and female students equally, males were at-greater risk of being involved in

physical fights, being injured, being threatened with a weapon, and carrying a weapon to school.

Statistically significant associations were found between grade and the number of times students participated in a physical fight, the number of times students got involved in a physical fight on school property and the number of times students were threatened with a weapon on school grounds. It appeared that being in the 9th grade represented a risk factor for engaging in school violence. The study presented a statistically significant association between ethnicity and the number of times students were threatened with a weapon on school property. Although minority students witnessed and experienced school violence at a higher rate than other students, students with diverse Hispanic backgrounds represented a vulnerable population.

The study also found statistically significant associations between the number of sport teams students participated in and the number of times students were involved in a physical fight, the number of times students were involved in a physical fight in school, the number of times students were involved in a physical fight resulting in an injury, and the number of times students were threatened with a weapon on school grounds. The more sports team youth were involved in, their risk of getting into a fight, being injured as a result, and threatened with a weapon increased.

Other statistically significant associations were found between the number of days students went to PE class and the number of times the students participated in a physical fight, the number of times the students were involved in a physical fight on school grounds, and the number of times the students were threatened with a weapon on school

property. Going to PE class presents a risk of engaging in a physical fight and being threatened at school with a weapon.

Lastly, the study demonstrated statistically significant associations between speaking with a teacher or an adult in the school about a personal problem and the number of times students were involved in a physical fight, the number of times students participated in a physical fight on school property, the number of times students participated in a physical fight that resulted in an injury, and the number of times students were threatened with a weapon on school property. When students do not perceive that they can speak with a teacher or another adult about a personal problem, this increases their risk of being involved in a physical fight, being injured during a fight, and being threatened with a weapon at school.

Comparisons with Prior Research

Certain demographic characteristics such as age, gender, and ethnicity were supported as risk factors for school violence as supported by the literature. Amanullah et al. (2014) reported youth that males between the ages of 10 through 19 and who identified as an ethnic minority (i.e., Hispanic, African American, or American Indian) were more at-risk of being intentionally injured in the school setting. The gender findings are consistent with the literature. This study revealed that youth with diverse Hispanic backgrounds were more at-risk of being threatened with a weapon in school than youth identifying as only Hispanic/Latino. This study also revealed that youth in the 9th grade were at risk of participating in fights, participating in fights in school, and being threatened with a weapon in school. This is also supported by Felix et al. (2009).

Despite other evidence suggesting the participation in sports reduces serious crime and school suspensions (Veliz & Shakib, 2012), the findings of this study revealed that the number of sports played increased the likelihood of participation in one or more fights, participating in one or more fights in school, being injured during a fight on one or more occasions, and being threatened with a weapon in school one or more times. Because these students are more likely to spend more time in school, it may be possible that the more time they spend in school increased their likelihood of being victimized at school. However, Kreager (2007) found that the type of sport played is more likely to lead to participation in violence. The researcher found that youth who participated in physical contact and predominantly male sports (i.e., football and wrestling) were more likely to engage in physical fighting in school than non-athletic youth (Kreager, 2007). This study revealed that the number of days youth went to PE class was associated with their participation in one or more fights, fighting in school, and being threatened with a weapon. Although this was supported by a personal account (Sherwood, 2013), research on how physical education contributes to school violence. It is likely that since PE is not required for most juniors and seniors, it may be possible that attending PE class increased the participation in school violence among 9^{th} and 12^{th} graders.

The literature supported the view that students who had a supportive school environment, as demonstrated by having a democratic school structure and a relationship with school administrators, having a belief they would not get in trouble for discussing their concerns with an adult, having a strong identification with the school, and having a belief in taking responsibility for each other, were more likely to report having knowledge of a classmate's dangerous plan to an adult (Syvertsen et al., 2009). This

study supported those findings since youth who did not speak with a teacher or another adult in school about a personal problem tended to be engaged in more than one physical fight, to participate in fights at school, to be injured as a result of fighting, and to be threatened with a weapon in school. This study revealed that there was not a statistically significant association between speaking with a teacher or another adult in school about a personal problem and carrying a weapon in school.

Implications for Social Work Practice and Policy

Himes (2015) reported that among the 640,000 students enrolled in LAUSD schools, approximately 8,278 are in the foster care system. The highest concentration of foster youths is found in Board District one with 1,553 foster youth enrolled in schools, 1,258 foster youth in Board District six, and 1,678 of foster youth in Board District seven. Approximately, $9.9 million of state funding will go directly to assist students in foster care by conducting academic assessments right away in order to reduce school absenteeism and suspensions, increase school stability, increase their performance on state testing, and provide psychological services. The city of Los Angles, California, provided an additional $1 million to staff caseworkers in 13 urban centers in neighborhoods affected by poverty hoping to increase access to mental, health, and medical services among foster families and youth (Himes, 2015).

Another article reported that LAUSD is moving away from zero-tolerance policies (LA Times, 2014). Under the new plan, students involved in non-serious altercations, petty thefts, and minor vandalism will be referred for counseling services and school administrators will be responsible for implementing disciplinary action. However, youth involved in more serious offenses, such as fighting, carrying a weapon or

altercations that warrant the use of force to break up the situation by a police officer will continue to require police intervention (LA Times, 2014).

Although it is encouraging to see education becoming a priority among stakeholders, it is important for child welfare workers to be informed about the educational challenges faced by foster youth. Without a strong educational foundation, 51% of former foster youth become unemployed, 40% end up on public assistance, more than 33% become homeless after turning 18, and one in five will be incarcerated at some point in their lives within the first two to four years after emancipating from the child welfare system (Zetlin, Weinberg, & Shea, 2010). Child protection and treatment are the primary concerns for child welfare agencies. Once immediate safety has been established, it is important to focus efforts on the long-term safety that a solid education can provide.

Assembly Bill 490 was passed in 2004 so that students in foster care have access to the same academic resources, services, and extracurricular and enrichment activities available to all students (National Center For Youth Law, 2015). This law calls for school placement stability and placement in the least restrictive educational setting needed to their academic progress. The law requires foster youth to remain in the same school until the school year ends when the home placement changes. Immediate enrollment in school is required regardless of whether the new school has the youths' school transfer records or not. School districts must accept partial credits of foster youth transferring in the middle of a semester. In addition, social workers have the right to access the foster youth's school records and disclose that information with other stakeholders involved in the youth's educational attainment, such as the foster youth

education liaison. Child welfare workers have the responsibility to notify the local educational agency the youths' last day of attendance and request they be transferred to the prospective school. Each local education agency has to have a foster care educational liaison. The foster care educational liaison is responsible for ensuring proper educational placement, school enrollment, and checkout from school. They also assist with the transfer of grades, credits, and records when there is a school change within two days (National Center For Youth Law, 2015).

Despite stepping forward in the right direction, foster youth continue to experience enrollment gaps estimated up to 230 days of missed school (Zorc et al., 2013). Youth in foster care are more likely to be absent, tardy, repeat a grade, and receive special education services (Zetlin, Weinberg, & Luderer, 2004). Shea, Zetlin, and Weinberg (2014) found additional educational barriers foster youth face from interviewing 94 AB 490 school liaisons. Some of the barriers were due to a lack of communication between the child welfare agency and the local education agency, such as the child welfare agencies not completing the form requesting the transfer of the foster youth, difficulty contacting child welfare workers, and not providing the school with sufficient information regarding the students' educational background. A gap in the students' academic background makes it difficult for school administrators to identify the students in foster care. School administrators cannot enroll foster youth in the appropriate educational programs to meet their educational needs. Additional barriers included: no information given as to who has the right to make education decision for the student, lack of funding to transport the student from the new placement to school, lack of funding to pay needed services (i.e., tutoring, counseling, or special education

services), and working in schools where administrators refuse to give partial credit for courses already taken (Shea et al., 2014).

The transferring of school records in a timely manner is another concern. The lack of school records or those with minimal information provided prevents foster youth from receiving the services they need to succeed in school. Not to mention that missing school records often leads to foster youth repeating classes they have already taken or getting immunized again. Often times not having the students' school records means these youth go without their Individual Education Plan. Even when the school assesses the students' to determine their eligibility for special education services, the concern then becomes that the youths do not stay long enough to receive the services because he or she changed homes and schools.

For these reasons, there needs to be further collaboration between the child welfare and foster care educational liaisons to enhance the educational outcomes of foster youth. In addition, child welfare workers need to ensure that foster care youth are matched with capable foster parents to ensure placement stability. There needs to be trauma-informed trainings included in certification programs for teachers in order to increase their knowledge about how trauma impacts foster youths' behavior in the classroom. Lastly, there should be alternatives to school exclusion such as sending foster youth with behavioral and emotional problems to staff trained in counseling and trauma interventions, where the trained staff can work directly with the youths to deescalate their emotions and enhance their coping skills.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future studies should continue to research the impact of foster care status on help-seeking behavior among foster youth because the research in this area of focus is lacking (Unrau et al., 2006). It is important to further develop and understand how relational disruption due to placement instability affects foster youths' seeking help. It may be that the more access foster youth have to at least one person with whom they can establish a long-term relationship can increase their free will to seek and receive needed services. There should also be more research looking into how school violence directly or indirectly impacts foster youth's engagement in school. Links were made between maltreatment and potential involvement in school violence; however, more definitive evidence is needed to determine how school violence affects foster youths' academic performance; school connectedness; and mental, physical, and emotional well-being. Even if foster youth are not participating in school violence directly, exposure to more violence can exacerbate their mental and physical needs.

There should be further research following school exclusionary practices among foster youth. Most importantly, further research needs to focus on the reasons for the high rates of exclusionary disciplinary policies with youth in foster care. There also needs to be research documenting the long-term impact of zero-tolerance policies on youth in foster care. Finally, research on possible explanations as to how PE classes increases youths' risk of involvement in school violence in the general student population and youth in foster care.

APPENDIX

DATA RETRIEVAL FORM

Appendix: Data Retrieval Form

2011 National Youth Risk Behavior Survey

1. How old are you?
    A. 12 years old or younger
    B. 13 years old
    C. 14 years old
    D. 15 years old
    E. 16 years old
    F. 17 years old
    G. 18 years old or older

2. What is your sex?
    A. Female
    B. Male

3. In what grade are you?
    A. 9th grade
    B. 10th grade
    C. 11th grade
    D. 12th grade
    E. Ungraded or other grade

4. Are you Hispanic or Latino?
    A. Yes
    B. No

5. During the past 30 days, on how many days did you carry a weapon such as a gun, knife, or club **on school property**?
    A. 0 days
    B. 1 day
    C. 2 or 3 days
    D. 4 or 5 days
    E. 6 or more days

6. During the past 12 months, how many times has someone threatened or injured you with a weapon such as a gun, knife, or club **on school property**?
    A. 0 times
    B. 1 time
    C. 2 or 3 times
    D. 4 or 5 times
    E. 6 or 7 times
    F. 8 or 9 times
    G. 10 or 11 times

H. 12 or more times

6. During the past 12 months, how many times were you in a physical fight?
   A. 0 times
   B. 1 time
   C. 2 or 3 times
   D. 4 or 5 times
   E. 6 or 7 times
   F. 8 or 9 times
   G. 10 or 11 times
   H. 12 or more times

7. During the past 12 months, how many times were you in a physical fight in which you were injured and had to be treated by a doctor or nurse?
   A. 0 times
   B. 1 time
   C. 2 or 3 times
   D. 4 or 5 times
   E. 6 or more times

8. During the past 12 months, how many times were you in a physical fight **on school property**?
   A. 0 times
   B. 1 time
   C. 2 or 3 times
   D. 4 or 5 times
   E. 6 or 7 times
   F. 8 or 9 times
   G. 10 or 11 times
   H. 12 or more times

10. In an average week when you are in school, on how many days do you go to physical education (PE) classes?
   A. 0 days
   B. 1 day
   C. 2 days
   D. 3 days
   E. 4 days
   F. 5 days

11. During the past 12 months, on how many sports teams did you play? (Count any teams run by your school or community groups.)
   A. 0 teams
   B. 1 team
   C. 2 teams

D. 3 or more teams

12. During the past 12 months, did you talk to a teacher or other adult in your school about a personal problem you had?
    A. Yes
    B. No

REFERENCES

REFERENCES

Amanullah, S., Heneghan, J.A., Steele, D.W., Mello, M.J., & Linakis, J.G. (2014). Emergency department visits resulting from intentional injury in and out of school. *Pediatrics*, *133*(2), 254-261. doi:10.1542/peds.2013-2155

Aud, S., Hussar, W., Johnson, F., Kena, G., Roth, E., Manning, E., . . . Zhang, J. (2012). *The Condition of Education 2012* (NCES 2012-045). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch

Bowman-Perrott, L., Benz, M.R., Hsu, H.Y., Kwok, O.M., Eisterhold, L.A., & Zhang, D. (2011). Patterns and predictors of disciplinary exclusion over time: An analysis of the SEELS national data set. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*, *21*(2), 83-96. doi: 10.1177/1063426611407501

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2011a). *Adolescents and school health: Data files and methods*. Retrieved from http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/yrbs/data/

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2011b). Methodology of the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System-2011. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, *62*(1), 1-20.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2012). *Youth violence: Facts at a glance*. Retrieved from http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/YV-datasheet-a.pdf

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2014). *Injury Prevention and Control: Division of Violence Prevention: About school violence*. Retrieved from http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/youthviolence/schoolviolence/index.html

Chase, P.A., Hilliard, L.J., Geldhof, G.J., Warren, D.J.A., & Lerner, R.M. (2014). Academic achievement in the high school years: The changing role of school engagement. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, *43*, 884-896. doi: 10.1007/s10964-013-0085-4

Conn, A-M., Calais, C., Szilagyi, M., Baldwin, C., & Jee, S.H. (2014). Youth in out-of-home care: Relation of engagement in structured group activities with social and mental health measures. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *36*, 201-205.

Crooks, C.V., Scott, K.L., Wolfe, D.A., Chiodo, D., & Killip, S. (2007). Understanding the link between childhood maltreatment and violent delinquency: What do schools have to add? *Child Maltreatment, 12*(3), 269-280.

Duke, N.N., Pettingell, S.L., McMorris, B.J., & Borowsky, I.W. (2010). Adolescent violence perpetration: Associations with multiple types of adverse childhood experiences. *Pediatrics, 125*(4), e778-e786. doi: 10.1542/peds.2009-0597

Editorial: LAUSD moving away from zero-tolerance policies (2014, August 20). *The Los Angeles Times*. Retrieved from http://www.latimes.com/opinion/editorials/la-ed-discipline-lausd-20140821-story.html

Felix, E.D., Furlong, M.J., & Austin, G. (2009). A cluster analytic investigation of school violence victimization among diverse students. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 24*(10). 1673-1695. doi: 10.1177/0886260509331507

Finkestein, M., Wamsley, M., & Miranda, D. (2002). *What keeps children in foster care from succeeding in school? Views of early adolescents and the adults in their lives*. New York, NY: Vera Institute of Justice. Retrieved from http://www.vera.org/pubs/what-keeps-children-foster-care-succeeding-schools-views-early-adolescents-and-adults-thier

Font, S., & Maguire-Jack, K. (2013). Academic engagement and performance: Estimating the impact of out-of-home care for maltreated children. *Children and Youth Services Review, 35*, 856-864.

Gallegos, A.H., & White, C.R. (2013). Preventing the school-justice connection for youth in foster care. *Family Court Review, 51*(3), 460-468.

Himes, T. (2015, January 16). LAUSD hires social workers, counselors to help students in foster care. *Los Angeles Daily News*. Retrieved from http://www.dailynews.com.

Jiang, X., & Peterson, R. (2012). Beyond participation: The association between school extracurricular activities and involvement in violence across generations of immigration. *Journal of Youth & Adolescence, 41*(3), 362-378. doi: 10.1007/s10964-011-9736-5

Kaufman, J.M., Hall, J.E., & Zagura, M. (2012). Sex, race/ethnicity, and context in school-associated student homicides. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 27*(12). 2373-2390. doi: 10.1177/0886260511433516

Kena, G., Aud, S., Johnson, F., Wang, X., Zhang, J., Rathbun, A., … Kristapovich, P. (2014). *The Condition of Education 2014* (NCES 2014-083). Washington: DC:

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch

Kreager, D. A. (2007). Unnecessary roughness? School sports, peer networks, and male adolescent violence. *American Sociological Review, 72*, 705-724.

Lewis, T., Leeb, R., Kotch, J., Smith, J., Thompson, R., Black, M. M., ... Coyne-Beasley, T. (2007). Maltreatment history and weapon carrying among early adolescents. *Child Maltreatment, 12*(3), 259-268.

Los Angeles Unified School District. (2015, February). *Student discipline data reports: 2013-2014 school years*. Retrieved from http://schoolinfosheet.lausd.net /budgetreports/disciplinereports.jsp

National Association of Social Workers. (2008). *Code of ethics of the National Association of Social Workers*. Washington, DC: NASW Press. Retrieved from https://www.socialworkers.org/pubs/code/code.asp

National Center For Youth Law. (2004, December). *Ensuring Educational Rights and Stability for Foster Youth: AB 490 summary*. Retrieved from http://www.youthlaw .org/events/trainings/ab_490_ensuring_educational_rights_for_foster_youth/

National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections. (2014). *Fostering success in education: National factsheet on the educational outcomes of children in foster care*. Retrieved from http://www.fostercareandeducation.org/ DesktopModules/Bring2mind/DMX/Download.aspx?Entryld=1279&Command= Core_Download&method=inline&Portalld=0&Tabld=124

Overstreet, S., & Matthews, T. (2011). Challenges associated with exposure to chronic trauma: Using public health framework to foster resilient outcomes among youth. *Psychology in the Schools, 48*(7), 738-754. doi: 10.1002/pits.20584

Peguero, A.A., & Popp, A. (2012). Youth violence at school and the intersection of gender, race, and ethnicity. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, *40*(1), 1-9. doi:10.1016/ j.jcrimjus.2011.11.005

Petteruti, A., Schindler, M., & Ziedenberg, J. (2014). *Sticker shock: Calculating the full price tag for youth incarceration*. Retrieved from the Justice Policy Institute website http://www.justicepolicy.org/uploads/justicepolicy/documents /sticker_shock_final_v2.pdf

Phillips, R. (2010). The financial costs of bullying, violence, and vandalism. *Principal Leadership, 11*(1). Retrieved from http://www.nassp.org/Content.aspx?topic=The _Financial_Costs_of_Bullying_Violence_and_Vandalism_Web_only_

Rickwood, D., Deane, F.P., Wilson, C.J., & Ciarrochi, J. (2005). Young people's help-seeking for mental health problems. *Australian e-Journal for the Advancement of Mental Health*, *4*(3), 1-34. Retrieved from http://www.ausienet.com/journal/vol4 iss3suppl/rickwood.pdf

Scherr, T.G. (2007). Educational experiences of children in foster care: Meta-analyses of special education, retention, and discipline rates. *School Psychology International*, *28*(4), 419–436. doi: 10.1177/0143034307084133

Shea, N.M., Zetlin, A., & Weinberg, L.A. (2014). Improving school stability: An exploratory study of the work of the AB 490 liaisons in California. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *32*, 74-79. doi: 10.1016/j.childyouth.2009.07.013

Sherwood, S. (2013). Physical education. *Clearing House*, *86*(1), 27-31. doi: 10.1080/00098655.2013.729443

Skiba, R.J. (2013). Reaching a critical juncture for our kids: The need to reassess school-justice practices. *Family Court Review*, *51*(3), 380-387. doi:10.1111/fcre.12034

Sullivan, M.J., Jones, L., & Mathiesen, S. (2010). School change, academic progress, and behavior problems in a sample of foster youth. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *32*, 164-170. doi: 10.1016/j.childyouth.2009.08.009

Syvertsen, A.K., Flanagan, C.A., & Stout, M.D. (2009). Code of silence: Students' perceptions of school climate and willingness to intervene in a peer's dangerous plan. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *101*(1), 219-232. doi:10.1037/a0013246

Tyler, J.L., Ziedenberg, J., & Lotke, E. (2006). *Cost-effective corrections: The fiscal architecture of rational juvenile justice systems*. Retrieved from the Justice Policy Institute website http://www.justicepolicy.org/uploads/justicepolicy/documents/06-03_rep_costeffective_jj.pdf

Unrau, Y.A., Conrady-Brown, M., Zosky, D., & Grinnell, R.M., Jr. (2006). Connecting youth in foster care with needed mental health services: Lessons from research on help-seeking. *Journal of Evidenced-Based Social Work*, *3*(2), 91-109. doi: 10.1300/J394v03n02_05

U.S. Census Bureau. (2010). *The Hispanic population: 2010*. Retrieved from http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-04.pdf

U.S. Census Bureau. (2012). *U.S. Census Bureau projections show a slower growing, older, more diverse nation half a century from now*. Retrieved from https://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/population/cb12-243.html

U.S. Census Bureau, Social, Economic and Housing Statistics Division (SAIPE). (2013). *Small area income and poverty estimates: 2012 highlights*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Retrieved from http://www.census.gov/did/www/saipe/data/highlights/files/2012highlights.pdf

Veliz, P., & Shakib, S. (2012). Interscholastic sports participation and school based delinquency: Does participation in sport foster a positive high school environment? *Sociological Spectrum, 32*, 558-580. doi: 10.1080/02732173.2012.700837

Verdugo, R.R. (2002). Race-ethnicity, social class, and zero-tolerance policies: The cultural and structural wars. *Education and Urban Society*, 35(1), 50-75. doi: 10.1177/001312402237214

West, S.D., Day, A.G., Somers, C.L., & Baroni, B.A. (2014). Student perspectives on how trauma experiences manifest in the classroom: Engaging court-involved youth in the development of a trauma-informed teaching curriculum. *Children and Youth Services Review, 38*, 58-65.

Wilcox, P., Tillyer, M., & Fisher, B.S. (2009). Gendered opportunity? School-based adolescent victimization. *Journal of Research in Crime & Delinquency, 46*(2), 245-269. doi: 10.1177/0022427808330875

Zetlin, A., MacLeod, E., & Kimm, C. (2012). Beginning teacher challenges instructing students who are in foster care. *Remedial and Special Education, 33*(1), 4-13. doi: 10.1177/074193251036

Zorc, C.S., O'Reilly, A.L.R., Matone, M., Long, J., Watts, C.L., & Rubin, D. (2013). The relationship of placement experience to school absenteeism and changing schools in young, school-aged children in foster care. *Children and Youth Services Review, 35*, 826-833.