Chapter 9

Conclusion: Implications and Addressing School Bullying and Inequality

Abstract In the concluding Chap. 9, we discuss why ameliorating violence and victimization should be a priority. Of course, addressing bullying victimization that occurs within schools for all youth is paramount toward sustaining a system that is supposed to facilitate educational progress and sustainability. There is a persistent history of disparities linked to socioeconomic and social status, family cohesion and interactions, sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression, race, ethnicity, immigration, and religion, and disabilities and special health needs in the U.S. school system. The social problem of bullying within U.S. schools is both complex and diverse. It is clear that the sources and factors associated with the vulnerability and marginalization of youth to being victimized at school presented in this book also intersect. Although homes, schools, and neighborhoods may never be completely bully-free environments, there are several ways to assist students in breaking the bullying and peer victimization cycles. The information presented in this book is also one calling for advocacy, which will suggest that if policymakers, school administrators, and community stakeholders are seeking to address and ameliorate bullying within schools, it is vital to consider the significance of various forms of social inequality.

Keywords Bullying prevention · Theoretical implications · Policy implications

Introduction

In this concluding chapter, we discuss the implications of and how to address social inequality (i.e., socioeconomic and social status, family cohesion and interactions, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression, race, ethnicity, immigration, and religion, disabilities and special health needs, and court involvement) with school bullying. As discussed throughout this book, most school bullying research has focused on the differential patterns of victimization. In this book, however, we have presented the importance of considering inequality when understanding, researching, and addressing school bullying. In this chapter, we will first discuss the implications of the role inequality should have as educational faculty,
staff, administrators, and policymakers seek to address and ameliorate bullying for marginalized and vulnerable youth in U.S. schools. We then discuss the implications of inequality for commonly practiced school safety and anti-bullying policies such as zero-tolerance and social control, Schoolwide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports programs (SWBIS), communal schools, Olweus bullying prevention, and restorative justice programs. We then highlight the importance of considering the symbiotic relationship between educational success, progress, and well-being with the safety of marginalized and vulnerable youth in U.S. schools. We then conclude with some final takeaways from this book toward understanding, researching, and addressing school bullying and inequality.

**Implications for Educational Faculty, Staff, Administrators, and Policymakers**

Throughout this book, we have highlighted how the U.S. socio-political landscape contextualizes the social inequality of bullying and the lives of marginalized and vulnerable youth. Researchers have suggested that because differential privilege is perpetuated by the process of schooling, teachers, and administrators committed to educational equality and providing healthy and safe learning environments must take responsibility. This means that school personnel should consider the role of social inequality in association with their behaviors, actions, stereotypical images and myths, and policy enforcement, and to work to change attitudes and practices. School faculty, staff, administrators, and policymakers should prioritize the pursuit of educational equity for disadvantaged and vulnerable students to break the cycle of marginalization. A goal of schools should be to consider implementing practices and policies based on inclusion, empathy, understanding, and protection with their learning as well as socialization.

As presented throughout this book, vulnerable and marginalized students often learn from their teachers and peers that they are “outsiders” and sometimes not welcomed. Vulnerable and marginalized youth have school relationships that are shaped by broader social, cultural, and political discourses and practices on various forms of social inequality. For example, LGBTQ students and their parents were taunted by school staff, teachers, and students who called them homophobic slurs [1–5]. It is also evident that some teachers and administrators punish, discipline, or publicly humiliate LGBTQ students [1, 5, 6]. It is in this type of a school climate, researchers indicate homophobia as an increasing and serious problem for LGBTQ youth in U.S. schools which has detrimental effects on learning and safety [1–5]. In general, teachers and administrators who are concerned with addressing the harassment directed at vulnerable and marginalized students should not only respond to such forms of violence and harassment, they must also be proactive by establishing and sustaining a school climate of inclusion and tolerance.
In multicultural societies, schools play a powerful role in promoting broader, societal discourses that define the necessary qualities and limits of citizenship and social belonging. This suggests that faculty, staff, administrators, and educational policymakers aimed at reducing violence against vulnerable and marginalized youth, as well as ensuring their safety, should recognize the transactions between the macro-political context and micro lived experiences of vulnerable and marginalized youth to create new dispositions and identities, and more inclusive notions of belonging [1, 7, 8]. Without an examination of the relationship between emotions, shifting demographics, and negative embodied practices directed at vulnerable and marginalized students, possibilities for faculty, staff, administrators, and educational policymakers who create healthy climates, equitable schools, and safe classrooms will be lost. Moreover, faculty, staff, administrators, and educational policy makers who continue to separate emotion from pedagogical practices and multicultural competencies are inadequate to address change within an increasingly diverse world. If educators and policymakers wish to prepare faculty, staff, and administrators to challenge and change existing societal inequities for vulnerable and marginalized students, the preparation of school personnel must include opportunities for individual and collective self-reflection and the examination of the blurring of emotions and harassment.

Instead of treating harassment against vulnerable and marginalized youth as a one-off incident that can adequately be addressed through disciplinary sanctions, faculty, staff, administrators, and educational policymakers should prepare students to identify how the broader socio-political context around social inequality can be embodied in the day-to-day interactions of school life, and to explore possibilities that are opened up for interrupting practices that exclude others. Some have proposed that a curriculum of discomfort engages students to analyze the emotional dimensions that frame and shape habits and routines complicit with the marginalization and vulnerabilities endured by disadvantaged students [6, 9, 10]. Preventing violence and harassment against, as well as ensuring the safety of, vulnerable and marginalized students while in school requires educating faculty and administrators to interrogate the feelings that maintain particular forms of relationality between “us” and “them.” Educational strategies must be augmented by a consideration of teaching, administrating, counseling, and working with students and families should be “informed by emotion that resists unjust systems and practices as well as emotion that helps create a more fair and just world in our classrooms and everyday lives” [10, p. 174].

Moreover, for harmful actions that maintain boundaries between us and them, educational policymakers should help prospective teachers and administrators recognize the ways that xenophobia, homophobia, sexism, racism, classism, and the like structure their own experiences as well as vulnerable and marginalized youth’s experiences at school. Some propose that learning about citizenship occurs in a complex interplay of interests and power would benefit all students [1, 7, 11, 12]. The formation of citizenship identities is socially embedded within learning processes that could facilitate potential teacher and administrator candidates to socialize and educate all students to dismiss or be critical of discourses of exclusion and
enhance inclusive interactions and criteria for belonging. For example, on March 23, 2016, an Act to Provide for Single-Sex Multiple Occupancy Bathroom and Changing Facilities in Schools and Public Agencies and to Create Statewide Consistency in Regulation of Employment and Public Accommodations, or what is commonly known as HB2 became law in North Carolina. Prospective teachers and administrators should consider the implications for LGBTQ youth. When such acts are enacted alongside instances of backlash against LGBTQ youth, teachers and administrators could encourage students to question the larger environment, examine the constant dynamic between discourses and practices of exclusion, and produce alternative realities. Thus, in general, educational policymakers who seek to address the violence and harassment against vulnerable and marginalized students in schools should develop a curriculum that trains teachers’ and administrators’ understanding of larger patterns of exclusion, xenophobia, homophobia, sexism, racism, classism, and the like by fostering democracy and inclusion.

**Implications for Zero-Tolerance and Social Control**

Foucault [13] is often referred to as conceptualizing this sociological shift toward a “disciplinary society” where he is cited as stating, “factories, schools, barracks, hospitals, which all resemble prisons?” [p. 228]. Moreover, Simon [14] argues that “the technologies, discourses, and metaphors of crime and criminal justice have become more visible features of all kinds of institutions” [p. 4]. These social institutions, including schools, have incorporated policies, mechanisms, techniques, and an overall culture of social control [15–19]. Thus, the influence of governing through crime and violence in nationwide policies, such as a requirement of zero-tolerance policies, as well as financial incentives to schools for police and other security measures, such as those provided in the “Secure Our Schools” Act of 2000 has become a pervasive response to address the public concern and fear of youth violence within schools. As noted, Simon [14] illustrates how governing through violence has influenced rules and practices in schools across social strata; he states that “the very real violence of a few schools concentrated in zones of hardened poverty and social disadvantage has provided a ‘truth’ of school crime that circulates across whole school systems” [p. 210]. However, there are raising concerns about the expanding use of zero-tolerance and social control within schools because of unintended consequences for youth who attend highly controlled and securitized schools. Research also denotes that surveillance and security, such as police, cameras, and metal detectors create a “prison-like” institutional atmosphere or environment, especially for schools located in disadvantaged or urban areas [15–20].

Although highly securitized schools and zero-tolerance are school safety policies intended to protect students and ensure a safe learning environment, many argue that these social control policies have disproportionately punished vulnerable and marginalized students [15–21]. Disproportionate punishment (e.g., referral, suspension, expulsion) could steer students toward social exclusion, educational failure,
and life-long economic hardship [15–21]. Addressing this educational and justice inequality of disproportionate punishment for vulnerable and marginalized students is essential. Of course, we do not discount the argued importance of disciplining adolescents who engage in deviant, delinquent, or violent behavior. However, Muschert and Peguero [22] also argue, “the difficulty in understanding the catalysts for school antiviolence policy development is that the line between caring and undue control is unclear” [p. 123].

There are four recommendations associated with social inequality that should be considered by schools that incorporate zero-tolerance and stringent social control policies. First, administrators should recognize the possibility of criminalization in their efforts to secure school safety. It is not unreasonable to believe that the vulnerable and marginalized students are learning lessons of social inequality. Kupchik [23] stressed that vulnerable and marginalized youth in U.S. schools may be learning the “wrong” lesson when it comes to school discipline practices by suggesting that “this lesson encourages passivity and uncritical acceptance of authority, which bodes poorly for the future of democratic participation” [p. 7]. Thus, faculty, staff, administrators, staff, and security personnel should consider that disadvantaged students are vulnerable to the impact of expulsion and exclusion as they administer sanctions. Second, schools should function and look like educational institutions rather than quasi-prisons. Students recognize larger structural inequalities evident in society, and securitizing schools with metal bars, metal detectors, cameras, and school resource officers creates a disjunction and can alienate students. Worse than alienation, school securitization can lead some students to internalize their role in society as future criminals when they know that schools (like society) cannot trust them to be responsible citizens. Also, when teachers are not focusing on personal safety, teachers can focus on educating students. This is particularly relevant when vulnerable and marginalized students are in heightened fear of their safety while students, faculty, staff, and security personnel use xenophobic, homophobic, sexist, racist, classist, and other forms of biased treatment as a form of control. Third, since security measures can have positive impacts on safety, keeping cameras and surveillance techniques is understandable as a means of monitoring; however, it is encouraged that security guards and school resource officers be trained to understand the complexities and vulnerabilities of disadvantaged youth. As recommended by many, school resource officers should be entering school with specialized training that does not reflect one of crime or social control but rather one of community engagement, conflict resolution, mentoring, and education [22, 24, 25]. Fourth, as noted in this book, vulnerable and marginalized youth and their parents often face socioeconomic, social, cultural, and legal barriers when interacting with school administrators. This can be problematic for school sanctions because contacting and discussing school expulsion and suspension typically requires contacting students’ parents; however, faculty, staff, administrators, staff, and security personnel should be thoughtful of socioeconomic, social, cultural, and legal barriers that the parents of vulnerable and marginalized students face when interacting and communicating with school personnel.
Implications for Schoolwide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports Programs

Schoolwide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS) is a comprehensive and proactive approach to behavior management in schools [26–30]. SWPBIS is being widely disseminated by the U.S. Department of Education and several state departments of education as well as an estimate of more than 9000 schools across the U.S. that implemented this safety policy. SWPBIS is based on the assumption that actively teaching and acknowledging teacher, school, and behavioral expectations can improve the extent to which students expect appropriate behavior from themselves and each other [26–31]. SWPBIS is a universal prevention strategy that aims to alter the school environment by creating improved systems that promote positive change in staff behaviors, which subsequently alter student behaviors. SWPBIS draws on behavioral, social learning, and organizational behavioral principles, which were traditionally used with individual students but have been generalized and applied to an entire student body consistently across all school settings [26–30]. When consistent, positive expectations are established by all adults in a school, the evidence exists that the proportion of students with serious behavior problems will be reduced and the school’s overall social climate will improve.

The procedures that define SWPBIS are organized around three main themes: prevention, multi-tiered support, and data-based decision making [26–30]. Investing in the prevention of problem behavior involves: (1) defining and teaching a set of positively stated behavioral expectations to students, teachers and parents (e.g., be safe, respectful, responsible); (2) acknowledging and rewarding those behaviors (e.g., compliance to school rules, safe and respectful peer to peer interactions and academic effort/engagement); (3) systematically supervising students in classrooms and common areas; and (4) establishing and implementing a consistent continuum of corrective consequences for problem behavior. Schools are encouraged to reduce the use of out of class referrals and out of school suspensions as a response to problem behavior [26–30]. The goal is to establish a positive social climate, in which behavioral expectations for students are directly taught, consistently acknowledged, and actively monitored.

There are three recommendations associated with social inequality that should be considered by schools that incorporate SWPBIS practices. First, research suggests that different SWPBIS effects might be observed in schools that are resistant to adopting the model [26–28]. As noted, vulnerable and marginalized students typically attend poorer schools with a higher teacher and administrator turnover; therefore, disadvantaged schools face a serious challenge of having the resources to successfully implement SWPBIS. Second, on a related note, SWPBIS training and sustainability for faculty, staff, and security personnel are vital for program success. Third, implementing school safety practices and rules that are believed to be fair and just by their students are fundamental; however, there is evidence that vulnerable and marginalized students believe that their schools are already unfair and
unjust [7, 18, 19, 32–34]. Thus, schools that incorporate SWPBIS should be mindful of the educational inequities vulnerable and marginalized students endure and experience daily.

Implications for Communal Schools

Gottfredson, Payne, and colleagues [35–40] suggest that creating strong communal school organization is an effective, efficient approach toward providing a safe and healthy school climate for students. Defined as the organization of a school as a community, key characteristics include supportive relationships among teachers, administrators, and students all of whom share a common set of goals and norms, collaboration, and involvement [37–40]. Strong communal school organization is found to reduce disorder, violence, and bullying as well as increase academic interest, motivation, and achievement [35–40]. “Healthy” relationships between school administrators, teachers, and students positively influence the climate and effectiveness of that school [35–40]. Schools that implement programs that promote social issues awareness can yield positive results, such as increased school attachment, bonding, attendance, and engagement among all members of the school community [35–40]. School administrators, faculty, and staff who focus on establishing a learning climate that strives for academic excellence often positively influence the school’s cultural attitude toward learning. The pursuit of academic excellence is argued to be “contagious” among students, teachers, and administrators in schools that promote such scholastic virtue [35, 36, 38]. The relationships between the school administrators, teachers, staff and students, directly and indirectly, promote learning and safety. Policies and programs that focus on promoting the importance of educational achievement, attainment, and success improve the overall school climate as well as making it safer.

Although there is evidence that communal schools can be effective toward ameliorating violence as well as improving safety, school administrators face several barriers toward establishing communal schools in disadvantaged and urban areas. Even though strong student–teacher relationships, extracurricular activities, and effective collaborations between administrators and faculty can be identified as key elements for communal schools, the resources available to create and sustain a communal school are not always available. High administrator and teacher turnover, limited extracurricular activities, large classrooms, disorder, and low student expectations are historically and persistently evident within disadvantaged and urban schools [41–45]. Although in an ideal sense, communal schools can help establish healthy, safe, and effective learning environments, structural barriers and inequalities restrict stakeholders from building communal schools, particularly in disadvantaged communities.

There are three recommendations associated with social inequality that should be considered by communal schools. First, communal school initiatives should focus on cultural awareness and sensitivity among students. This may be a fruitful
avenue for improving school-based safety and fostering the social integration of vulnerable and marginalized students. More specifically, programs that promote open communication among peers and parents of socially and culturally diverse backgrounds, as well as extracurricular activities designed to combat intolerance, are effective at building culturally competent schools [5, 26, 46]. Second, communal school initiatives designed to promote prosocial behavior and student safety must give careful consideration to the changing demographic profile of today’s elementary and secondary school populations and the unique challenges faced by vulnerable and marginalized youth. For example, immigrants with limited English proficiency are more likely to report victimization as well as feelings of being unsafe while in school [47–51]. Research suggests that programs aimed at rapid English language acquisition, such as those outlined in Title III of the No Child Left Behind Act, may improve peer relationships as well as facilitate reporting of violence and victimization. Third, vulnerable and marginalized students’ participation in extracurricular activities are often encouraged by school faculty, counselors, and administrators to ameliorate persistent educational inequalities and provide educational opportunities for success [5, 46, 52]. However, as noted in this book, it appears that providing those valuable opportunities, such as academic and athletic extracurricular activities, may be a risk factor for violence and victimization that could negate any educational benefits gained from participation in these activities for vulnerable and marginalized youth. It is important to emphasize that we are not recommending that extracurricular activity involvement should be discouraged. On the contrary, involvement in extracurricular activities has been consistently found to have many educational benefits. What we are suggesting is that administrators and educational policymakers should consider the situational context of students who are involved in these beneficial activities, such as in bands, orchestras, academic clubs, plays, student government, and alike, while considering school policies that attempt to ameliorate students’ exposure to school violence and victimization. If a communal school approach is to promote and advocate participation in academic and athletic extracurricular activities as a way to promote or facilitate educational success, addressing the overarching reality of the prevalence of discrimination and educational inequality within the school system must be addressed. Although these initiatives provide a solid footing from which to build more communal schools, there remains a critical dearth of research on how American schools are being reshaped by social and cultural diversity.

**Implications for Olweus Bullying Prevention Programs**

The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP) is a school-based program designed to prevent or reduce school bullying by identifying and focusing on three aspects of a school: schoolwide, classroom, and the individual. At the school level, the first step of the program is to identify bullies and bullying victims [53–55]. School faculty and staff administer the OBPP questionnaire to students to assess the
prevalence and characteristics of bullying occurring among the student body [53–55]. Then, the school staff establishes a committee to implement training for all faculty and staff members to address bullying. Finally, faculty and staff develop curricula for all students that highlight the schoolwide rules against bullying, while promoting the importance of mutual respect and healthy relations among students.

Within the classroom, teachers deliver several anti-bullying lessons or oversee student meetings about school bullying and peer relations [53–55]. Teachers also extend communication and discussions about school bullying with parents. At the individual level, students may be individually identified as a bully or bullying victim to having regularly scheduled meetings to discuss and address why the bullying is occurring and what can be done to resolve the violence. Via these mechanisms, the OBPP attempts to reorganize the school to decrease the occurrence of bullying.

Although the OBPP is generally viewed by school administrators as successful, there have been limited studies that examine the effectiveness and the limitations of anti-bullying programs, and inconsistent findings in these studies are common [see e.g., 56–58]. Because the definition of bullying is complex and relative [53, 59, 60], the OBPP may not address all forms of perceived bullying. In this context, the perception of violence, injury, and victimization is primarily based on adult definitions and understandings of bullying, which may lead to under- or over-monitoring of violent student behavior [59–62]. In other words, a school administrator, faculty, and staff interpretations may influence the utilization of bullying prevention policies. Intimidation based on race, ethnicity, gender, religion, socioeconomic status, social class, physical ability, and sexual orientation are sometimes excluded from definitions of bullying and are therefore not addressed by anti-bullying policies [53, 59, 60]. Of course, this may be complicated by the relative and subjective definitions of each student, teacher, administrator, and parent’s view of bullying.

There are three recommendations associated with social inequality that should be considered by schools that incorporate OBPP practices. First, for OBPP to be successful, administrators and teachers must be trained to understand and identify behavioral problems and detrimental treatment in their classrooms; however, vulnerable and marginalized students are more likely to attend disadvantaged schools that are less likely to have well-qualified teachers who could properly address the problems of bullying [59, 60]. Second, as noted throughout this book, vulnerable and marginalized students are more likely to attend schools with increased levels of disorder, violence, and crime. Therefore, community disorder, violence, and crime may impose serious limitations on the effectiveness of OBPP practices because bullying is often constructed as “minor” and not pressing in such schools [59, 60]. Third, cultural disparities could pose a hurdle for OBPP practices. As discussed, inconsistent definitions of school bullying, as well as the complexities associated with misinterpreted interpersonal behaviors, are embedded with social and cultural understandings [59, 60]. Thus, OBPP facilitators should consider and knowledgeable of the social and cultural distinctions associated with defining and responding to school bullying.
Implications for Restorative Justice in Schools

Originally applied to the criminal justice system, restorative justice interventions have attempted to repair the harm caused by criminal offenses while preventing further violence and crime; this is generally accomplished through mediation and conferences that reconcile the conflict between offenders, victims, and other community members [63–66]. The importance of communication between offenders, victims, and the community affected by the violence is perceived as a resolution that facilitates closure for the victim and responsibility taken by the offender [63–66]. Allowing the offender to emphasize, discuss, and take responsibility for the violence or harmful act is an important aspect of the restorative justice process as well as minimize the reoccurrence of such behavior [63–66]. Communication between the victim and offender allows the offender to see how violence harms others and as well as enable the victim, offender, and community stakeholders impacted by the violent act to make a collaborative decision toward addressing the injury [63–66]. Restorative justice practices are gaining attention and utilization within schools as an alternative for stringent school punishment practices [63, 65, 66].

Instead of excluding and punishing, restorative justice in schools sees violence as a form of conflict and acts proactively to find alternative ways to handle conflicts, such as peer mediation, or other forms of settlement-directed talking, such as restorative conferencing and peacemaking circles [63, 67, 68]. Completely contrary to the disciplinary practice of student exclusion, restorative approaches in schools focus on relationships, shifting from punishment and isolation to reconciliation and community [63, 67, 68]. Some argue that restorative justice is best applied to the school context because of the nature of relationships where students see each other day after day, where encounters can turn dangerous if not adequately managed [63, 67, 68]. Within a restorative justice perspective, misbehavior is viewed as a violation of the relationship between teachers, administrators, and/or other students [63, 67, 68]. To restore the harm of such a violation, the offending student and the individual whose trust was violated must reconcile and relationship mended. The importance of building and maintaining positive relationships, especially between members of a school community, is continually stressed [63, 67, 68]. Primary restorative practices involve the entire school community and aim at establishing a values ethic, as well as skill base, for developing relational ecologies and resolving differences in respectful and caring ways. Secondary restorative practices address specific behaviors that disrupt the harmony and social relations of classrooms (e.g., problem-solving circles), hallways (e.g., corridor conferences) and playgrounds (e.g., peer mediations). Tertiary restorative practices are the most intensive, often responding to serious harm, and involve all those affected (including families, professionals, fellow students, and others affected) in a face-to-face restorative justice process [67].

There are three recommendations associated with social inequality that should be considered by schools that utilize restorative justice practices. First, because restorative justice often includes community stakeholders, such as parents, siblings, and the like, school administrators should be mindful of the community attitudes
and beliefs about socioeconomic and social status, family cohesion and interactions, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, race, ethnicity, immigration status, religion, disabilities, and special health needs. As noted throughout this book, it is plausible that xenophobia, homophobia, sexism, racism, classism, and the like could be reflective of the community environment and parental beliefs that may be transmitted through youth aggression. Second, because communication and empathy are essential toward successful restorative justice practices between all parties involved, socioeconomic, social, and cultural barriers and misunderstandings may impede the restorative justice process between participants. Third, as presented throughout this book, school administrators and teachers should be mindful of the potential tensions and conflict between affluent and poor students, heteronormative and LGBTQ students, White and racial/ethnic minority students, native and foreign-born students, etcetera, because these social and cultural inequalities and disparities could result in harassment, victimization, and aggression. School administrators and faculty should learn the nuances and complexities associated with the challenges and tensions that marginalized and vulnerable youth face at school.

### Considering Educational Success, Progress, and Well-being with Safety

Any pursuits of ameliorating violence and ensuring the safety of marginalized and vulnerable youth within a school, it is essential to also ensure the educational success and progress of this disadvantaged student population. Historical and contemporary research examines the ongoing debate about stratification and inequality and their influence on U.S. public education [41–43, 45]. Although these studies describe the role of schools in preserving and reproducing cultural, social, and economic inequalities, they have not sufficiently accounted for the role of school safety in perpetuating and/or disrupting such inequities. Schools are potentially a stage in the process of incorporation and stratification. Marginalized and vulnerable students’ experiences with school safety help to facilitate this process, increasing the odds of maintaining the already existing status quo. If schools are charged with being safe havens that nurture the potential for all youth to shape their world, then understanding marginalized and vulnerable youth experiences with school safety are imperative. In this section, we highlighted how school safety approaches (i.e., zero-tolerance and control, schoolwide positive behavioral interventions and support, communal schools, Olweus bullying prevention, and restorative justice) could benefit from including factors associated with social inequality to pursue marginalized and vulnerable students’ safety and well-being while at school.

Although we discussed important factors associated with social inequality for distinct school safety approaches or programs, three fundamental factors matter across school safety programs, and that warrant highlighting, listed below. First, the hurdles and barriers that marginalized and vulnerable youth face at school in terms
of their safety and learning intersect with the inequities linked to religion, gender, sexual orientation, race and ethnicity, immigration, and socioeconomic and social status. The identities that the children of immigrants encapsulate are dynamic and complex. School safety program leaders often should be mindful not to stereotype or homogenize the children of immigrants but consider the myriad of disadvantages that marginalized and vulnerable students endure at school. Second, the social, cultural, and political debate about if and how to address social inequality is often heated and controversial. Unfortunately, the unintended consequences may make the marginalized and vulnerable students susceptible to additional harassment and victimization from faculty and administrators who are responsible for all students’ safety. School safety program leaders should be mindful of such social and cultural biases. Third, because schools are a site of education and socialization for marginalized and vulnerable students, the effect of school violence and victimization as well as punishment and discipline could have disproportional negative effects for this disadvantaged youth population.

**Highlighting Conclusions**

This book sought to highlight how inequality is important to consider understanding, researching, and addressing school bullying and ensuring safe learning environments for all youth. The research presented in this book reveals that there are important advances to the field that can be achieved by attempting to better understand the correlates, contexts, and consequences of social inequality in the relationship between school bullying, victimization, violence, safety, and educational progress and success. We will summarize the highlight of each of the chapters of this book.

In Chap. 2, “The Relevance of the Social-Ecological Model and the Significance of Inequality,” we detailed how inequality matters when utilizing the social-ecological framework. We highlighted the significance of social stratification and inequality when investigating the connections between social environment and youth development. We laid the conceptual groundwork for us to consider how (1) social position (e.g., race, class, and gender), (2) social stratification (e.g., biased treatment), (3) promoting or inhibiting environments (e.g., school), (4) adaptive culture and current demands (e.g., assimilation or acculturation), (5) youth characteristics (e.g., age, psychological characteristics), and (6) family (e.g., structure, functioning) are important when understanding the role inequality has in school bullying.

In Chapt. 3, “Status Matters: How Socioeconomic and Social Statuses are Associated with Bullying,” we demonstrated how inequalities in socioeconomic and social statuses are associated with bullying victimization. A student’s popularity and friendships or social networks can be linked to the likelihood of the student experiencing bullying victimization and aggression at school. Additionally, characteristics correlated to student social status also influence the likelihood of school bullying victimization.
In Chap. 4, “The Role of the Family: Parents/Guardians, Siblings, Cohesion and Interactions,” we depicted how the inequality associated with the role of the family, specifically parents/guardians, siblings, cohesion, and interactions are linked with the likelihood of being bullied. For example, on the one hand, bullied youth who have strong and intimate bonds or relationships with their parents/guardians might have more favorable adjustment outcomes than would otherwise be the case. On the other hand, family factors, such as negative adult and sibling influences, lack of parental involvement, bullying among siblings, and lack of parental support, maltreatment, and unhealthy family interactions are associated with bullying victimization.

In Chap. 5, “Sex, Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Gender Expression: Definitions and Implications for Marginalization,” we demonstrated that the inequalities associated with sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression contribute to being bullied at school. For instance, LGBTQ students experience increased levels of physical harassment, verbal intimidation, and social isolation, as well as biased treatment from faculty, administrators, and staff.

In Chap. 6, “The Color of School Bullying Victimization: Race, Ethnicity, Immigration, and Religion,” we explained how racial, ethnic, immigration, and religious inequality are associated with school bullying. We also highlighted the ways that social, cultural, and political climate or school contexts also impact students’ experiences with bullying. For example, since the events of September 11, 2001, Muslim and Arab American youth have reported a dramatic increase in bullying victimization, harassment, and verbal and physical threats while in school.

In Chap. 7, “Bullying and Youth with Disabilities and Special Health Need: Victimization Students with Physical, Emotional, and Learning Disorders,” we discussed how inequality linked to disabilities and special health needs contributes to an increased likelihood of being bullied in school. For example, bullying incidents involving youth with disabilities are difficult to identify because these youth are less likely to have learned about abuse awareness and potential responses, which makes detection and reporting of bullying among this population a serious concern.

In Chap. 8, “Bullying and Victimization of Youth in the Court System,” we discussed the experiences of bullying and peer victimization of youth who are involved in the juvenile justice system and youth who are involved in the child welfare system. We highlighted how societal, community, institutional, group, and individual contexts might impact the bullying experiences of these adolescents.

**At the Current Historical Moment**

As we are completing this book for submission, we would like to acknowledge the current historical moment by discussing three significant socio-cultural events directly connected to our book about school bullying and inequality: COVID-19; Black Lives Matter movement; and, the 2020 Supreme Court Ruling on DACA. This section will provide a brief discussion about how this current
A historical moment could mark a turning point that highlights the need to address the vulnerabilities that the children daily endure in communities and schools in regards to bullying.

There are three overarching factors in thinking about how COVID-19 is relevant to this topic of school bullying and inequality: the US justice system, education, and hate crime. Miller and colleagues’ [69] provide a broad overview of how COVID-19 is influencing the relationship between immigration and the US justice system. In essence, they argue that the vulnerabilities and inequalities immigrants and their children faced prior to COVID-19 are only being exacerbated. Concerns have been raised about aggressive policy changes, enforcement actions, immigrant detention, and deportation practices in response to and during the COVID-19 outbreak [69]. All of these actions are having detrimental consequences on immigrants and their children in regards to their safety, health, and overall well-being. Second, Viner and colleagues’ [70] offer a broad overview how COVID-19 is influencing educational systems in the US and globally. They describe how schools have basically been shut down. At this moment, it remains unknown when and how public schools will even reopen. It is easy to predict that how we understand “school safety” in regards to violence and crime will now include conceptualizations of public health and well-being for the entire school community in a post COVID-19 era. Third, Tessler and colleagues’ [71] offer a broad overview how COVID-19 is exacerbating Asian American vulnerabilities associated with hate crimes and negative biases. It is evident that COVID-19 has elevated the risks of Asian Americans to hate crimes and business vandalism to their businesses. Asian Americans have historically been viewed as perpetually foreign no matter how long they have lived in the US. It is therefore argued that present-day socio-cultural beliefs constructing Asian Americans as foreign and diseased are historical and persistent [71]. The hate crimes and negative biases against Asian Americans in the time of COVID-19 highlight how additional burdens of anxiety, economic instability, and the risk of violence and victimization are imposed upon Asian Americans. Of course, understandings of school safety and how we pursue such understandings in a post-COVID-19 context remain unknown, especially in regards to the implications for the children of immigrants.

The social and cultural protests around the recent tragic deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery and the calls for racial justice have been magnified through civil unrest throughout the US and world. Such protests have centered around the “Black Lives Matter” movement. Taylor [72] offer a broad overview of the “Black Lives Matter” movement; however, the civil unrest and protest within the US has re-centered historical and systemic social problems about racial/ethnic inequality and oppression within justice systems, including the growing presence of law enforcement in schools. As noted in this book, discriminatory treatment and inequitable access to educational resources for racial/ethnic minority students are historical and persistent with detrimental consequences. Social, public, and media discourses about defunding law enforcement and terminating the utilization of school resource officers across US schools have emerged from the protests about racial/ethnic inequity. Without a doubt if law enforcement is defunded and police and school resource offi-
cer presence within schools are ended, this would have profound, fundamental, and unclear implications for school safety overall, especially for racial/ethnic minorities.

In June 2020, the Supreme Court blocked the Trump administration’s attempt to end DACA, citing efforts to end the program as “arbitrary and capricious.” DACA beneficiaries breathed a sigh of relief as the Supreme Court decision allowed them to continue to stay in school, work, and remain with relatives while being protected from deportation. However, the Supreme Court decision also paved the way for the Trump administration to try and end DACA once again as long as they follow the appropriate process. It remains unknown if the administration will pursue ending the program during an election year, particularly given bi-partisan support for DACA. Within schools, the court’s decision leaves undocumented students, as well as the children of immigrants, with uncertain futures. As noted, attempts to repeal DACA combined with heightened immigration enforcement have had chilling effects on students, families, and schools. As the US edges closer to the next presidential election, it will important to explore the implications of DACA and its potential repeal for the children of immigrants.

We have noted throughout this book that social, cultural, and political contexts frame how we understand the associations between education, safety, and school bullying and inequality in the US. It is uncertain if and how COVID-19, the “Black Lives Matter” movement, and the 2020 Supreme Court Ruling on DACA will influence the evident vulnerabilities that the children of immigrants daily endure in communities and schools. Nevertheless, we have a duty and responsibility to highlight these historic events in regards to immigration and school safety.

Conclusion

We encourage future research to further expand our understanding of social inequality, bullying, victimization, violence, safety, and justice for marginalized and vulnerable youth. The increasing diversity of students provides both a challenge and an opportunity for the U.S. educational system. As marginalized and vulnerable youth graduate high school and college, enter the labor force, become voters, form families, and ultimately lead the United States into its future, research on such future work promises to provide important opportunities for theoretical advancement on democracy, education, and justice.

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