

SCHOOL PRAYER VERSUS SCHOOL VIOLENCE

by

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fulfillment of the requirement for the degree
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine perceptions of school administrators concerning school violence to determine whether they believed the return of school prayer would decrease school violence. The data collected from this literature review clearly demonstrates that violent crimes committed by youths have increased greatly since 1962. The review also demonstrates that returning prayer to school is still a very controversial topic. Finally this review demonstrates that there is no clear answer to the problem at hand, which is to find a way to lessen violence in public schools. Data was collected from sixteen school building administrators (principals and assistant principals) from two urban areas in Arizona. The survey contained six short essay questions concerning prayer and violence in school settings. The urban schools selected were of similar size and socio-economic status. Responses were compiled to try to determine any correlation between school violence and school prayer.

The findings overwhelmingly showed that most administrators do not perceive that the return of school prayer would decrease school violence. Most of the administrators agreed that more parental involvement and less violence in the media is a step in the right direction to decreasing school violence, not school prayer. However, further research on school violence must be conducted in order to determine whether or not the return of school prayer will decrease school violence.

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CHAPTER ONE

THE PROBLEM

Introduction

There was widespread religious enthusiasm in America in 1831. Prayer was routinely practiced in Nineteenth Century America, and very regularly since then, in various parts of the country until the United States Supreme Court decision in the case of *Engel v. Vitale* in 1962, when according to religious enthusiasts, God was “kicked” out of the public schools (Pahl, 1996).

Engel v. Vitale was the landmark case that removed prayer from the schools. In the *Engel v. Vitale* case, five families with children in the New Hyde Park School in New York felt that praying in school was offensive to their beliefs. One family was a member of the Unitarian-individual belief; another was of the Ethical Culture Society, which promoted social welfare; two were Jewish, and another was atheist (Auble, 1998).

The families representing the plaintiffs (Engel) argued that prayer is a religious activity and violated the doctrine of the separation of church and state. They also argued that teachers are public employees paid by taxes, or through the expenditure of tax dollars and therefore should not be involved in religious activities while at work. The final argument was that prayer was clearly offensive to non-Christians and atheists with the words “Almighty God” used in the beginning of the regent prayer (Auble, 1998).

Vitale and the School board argued that school prayer was not religious instruction and it was an important part of the country's rich and spiritual heritage. Most importantly, supporters of prayer in the schools argued that juvenile delinquency was on the rise and continued school prayer would help students stay on the right track (Auble, 1998).

Since 1962 until the present day, 2000, Americans are still struggling over the issue of prayer in the schools. While politicians debate the issue of school prayer, America's youth are killing each other at an alarming rate each year. This study examines whether Vitale and the school board of New Hyde Park were correct that prayer would keep youth on the right track.

Development of the Problem

According to a 1993 Children's Defense Fund report, gunfire deaths among children rose 94% from 1983-1993, and a child was hit by gunfire every 92 minute (Christian Broadcast Network, 1999). To add to the problem school shootings are becoming a common occurrence nationwide. On April 20, 1999, in Littleton, Colorado two students killed twelve students, one teacher, wounded twenty-three other students and then killed themselves. On May 21, 1998, in Springfield, Oregon a 15-year old boy killed two wounded twenty-two others and killed his parents. May 19, 1998, in Fayetteville, Tennessee, and 18 year-old man killed one student. On April 24, 1998, in Edenboro, Pennsylvania, a 14-year-old boy killed a teacher and wounded two students and another teacher. On March 24, 1998, in Jonesboro, Arkansas, an 11 year old and 13 year-old boy set off fire alarms and killed four female students and a teacher. On December 15, 1997, in Stamps, Arkansas a 14-year-old wounded

two with sniper fire. On December 1, 1997, in Paducah, Kentucky, a 14-year-old boy killed three and wounded five at a school prayer meeting. On February 19, 1997, in Bethel, Alabama a 16-year-old boy killed his principal and a classmate. On February 2, 1997, in Moses Lake, Washington, 14-year-old boy killed a teacher and two students and wounded one other (Christian Broadcast Network, 1999). The number of school shootings from 1992-1999 demonstrates that America's children are in a crisis.

Studies performed by the Center for Disease Control (1994) attribute school violence to family issues such as poor monitoring or supervision of children, exposure to violence parental drug/alcohol abuse and poor emotional attachment to parents or caregivers. However the recent school shootings in mainstream American schools demonstrates that poverty is not the only cause of school violence.

Zimring argues that the juvenile crime storm is unfounded, and reported that the 1980s jump in killings by teenagers is attributable to the availability of handguns during the high point of the crack-cocaine epidemic (Portner, 1999). However, supporters of prayer in the schools believe that society has become worse since 1962. Supporters maintain that the uprising of crime is a direct cause of lowered values and the removal of prayer from the schools (Jefferson, 1997).

Need for the Study

This study provides a better understanding of violence, examines the causes of school violence, and studies the effects that the return of school prayer might have on this growing epidemic of violence which has invaded American schools. Thus far it appears that modern

society, through its court decisions and personal preferences, has not yet accepted prayer in the schools. While society continues to debate the issue, more blood is shed in American schools. Prayer is practiced all over the world in some form or another. Thus far, American public schools have failed to suppress the growing problem of violence in schools, and research demonstrates that prayer has been a buffer to violence in public schools in the past and a true reinstatement of school prayer may determine if prayer can tame the violence in public schools today.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine perceptions of school administrators concerning school violence to determine whether they believe the return of school prayer will decrease school violence.

Research Question

Can the return of school prayer decrease school violence?

CHAPTER TWO

THE LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Chapter two reviews various topics concerning school prayer and school violence. A review of current school violence trends is examined. Cases pertaining to prayer in the school are reviewed. The views of supporters and non-supporters of school prayer are included, as well.

A study conducted by the United States Department of Education, (National Center for Education Statistics, 1991), showed that during 1996-97, about 4,000 incidents of rape or other types of sexual battery were reported in the nation's public schools. There were also approximately 11,000 reports of physical attacks. The report also indicates there were about 190,000 fights not involving weapons during 1996-97 in public schools.

A violence surveillance summary from the (National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, 1996) reported that from 1962-1994 the total number of firearm deaths increased by 130% from 16,720 in 1962 to 38,505 in 1994 among American youth. This report concluded that if the present trend continued firearm-related injuries could be the leading cause of death by the year 2003. This report stated that for those between the ages of 15-19, firearm-related injuries increased greatly and crossed all racial and gender barriers.

Violent Trends

A report performed by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (1998) showed that “the number of serious violent juvenile crimes fluctuated between 29 and 40 per 1,000 youth ages 12 to 17 between 1980 and 1990, peaked at 52 per 1,000 in 1993, and then dropped to 36 per 1,000 in 1996 (Bureau of Justice statistics, 1998a p. 1).”

Another study performed by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (1998b) revealed the following information regarding youth violence:

1. homicide victimization rates for children under age 14 have remained stable and low relative to older groups
2. the homicide victimization rate for 14-17 year-olds increased almost 150% from 1985 to 1993
3. 18-24 year-olds experienced the highest homicide victimization rates, a change from the late 1970's when 25-34 year-olds had the highest rates
4. the victimization rates have generally declined for adults ages 25-34, 35-49, and 50 and over
5. since 1993, victimization rates for teens and young adults have declined but still remain considerably higher than the levels of the mid-1980's
6. offending rates for teenagers and young adults increased dramatically in the late 1980's while rates for older age groups declined
7. the offending rates for children under age 14 changed little
8. 18-24 year-olds have historically had the highest offending rates their rates almost doubled from 1985-1993
9. the homicide offending rates of 14-17 year-olds exploded after 1985, surpassing the rates of 25-34 year-olds and 35-49 year-olds
10. since 1993, offending rates for teens and young adults have declined but still remain considerably elevated over earlier level. (p. 1)

According to the FBI 1992 Uniform Crime Report “overall violent crime by juveniles increased from 119,000 incidents in 1983 to 247,000 incidents in 1992. This attributed for

19% of the increase in violent crimes in the United States between 1983 and 1992.

However, juvenile responsibility for growth in violent crime was far greater than their contribution to the increases in the past (FBI, 1992 p. 6)."

Another study performed by the FBI determined the following results for the murder among youths:

Homicide rates for youth 18 and under have more than doubled between 1985 and 1992, while there has been no recent growth in homicide rates for adults 24 and older. Following a period of relative stability from 1970 to 1985, the rate of murder committed by young people (ages 15 to 22) increased sharply. It is estimated that for this age group 18,600 murders were committed from 1986 to 1992, or 12.1 percent of the annual average of 22,000 murders reported in those years. In one year alone (1991), this age group generated an excess of 5,330 murders, or 21.6 percent of the 24,703 murders reported in the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI's) 1991 Uniform Crime Report. The murder rate for 16-years-olds, for example, which prior to 1985 was consistently about half that of all other age groups increased 138 percent from 1985-1992. Even the murder rate for 13 to 14 year olds, which is still low enough to not be a significant contributor to the total murder rate, double between 1985 and 1992. (Blumstein, 1994 p. 7)

Foster (1997) offers his views on violence in our schools. He suggests that we consider how other leaders in the past have handled violence. He mentions great leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King and the kings of all kings Jesus Christ and their effective methods of handling violence, and suggests that schools should take heed to these past leaders methods of dealing with violence.

Foster (1997) asserts that guns are not the problem, but a symptom of our fear, anger, and rage when dealing with the simple pressures of life. Foster suggests that controlling guns would not solve the problem of violence, believing that gun control will only encourage violence to show up in many other forms. Foster believes that to control school violence Americans will have to make it a goal to change violence in schools.

Prayer and Other Points of View

Before one can clearly understand the controversy surrounding prayer, one must first examine the definition of prayer. According to Webster's Dictionary prayer is "a devout petition to God or an object of worship; a spiritual communion with God or an object of worship as in supplication, thanksgiving, or adoration" (Webster, 1998 p. 915). However, the Basic Dictionary of American English (1962) referred to prayer as: speaking to God with love, thanks, appeal, etc: a prayer for peace. The New International Version Bible refers to prayer as the relationship one has with God (Arterburn & Storp, 1998).

Former U.S. Secretary of Education William J. Bennett (1994) stated that since 1960, the U.S. population has grown 41%, yet the same 34-year period, there has been a 500% rise in violent crimes; a 400% increase in illegitimate births, a threefold increase in teenage suicides; and a doubling in the divorce rate and a drop of almost 75 points in SAT scores. Bennett (1994) states that by the end of the century, according to the reliable projections, 40% of all births and 80% of minority births will be out of wedlock.

Bennett also believes that there are three explanations for America's social regression. First a marked shift in the public's attitudes in general. According to social scientist James Q. Wilson, (1994) "The powers exercised by the institutions of social control have been constrained, and people, especially young people, have embraced an ethos that values self-expression over self-control (Wilson, cited in Bennett, 1994, p. 1)." Second, a number of pernicious ideas have made their way into the mainstream of American life. For example, it has become unfashionable to make value judgments. Bennett (1994) also stated that the nation has witnessed an expansive notion of rights and a lost sense of personal responsibility. Third, Bennett (1994) believes that failures of contemporary liberalism,

created a series of misguided social policies. For example, having a child out of wedlock has been rewarded with government subsidies in the form of welfare checks (Bennett, 1994). Bennett concluded that during the last quarter-century, the people have abandoned time-honored moral codes. The United States is now seeing the results played out in urban neighborhoods, the courts and classrooms.

Laws Pertaining to School Prayer

As the debate over prayer in the class continues, it is surprising to discover that prayer is in fact allowed in the public school system. However, it is not normally permitted in the classroom itself (Amundson, 1984). The constitution prohibits public schools from several actions and activities.

Requiring students to recite prayer in class. The main concern of the courts appears to be twofold: The compulsive nature of prayer. Although most state laws, which attempt to allow school prayer usually, permit the students to excuse themselves and wait in the hall, the courts still see an element of compulsion. By separating themselves from the rest of the class, the student risks later harassment and abuse by fellow students.

The risk of religious indoctrination: The 1st Amendment of the U.S. constitution states that there shall be no law regarding the establishment of religion. The court views prayer in the classroom to be one example of the government approving one religion over another. Even a student-selected, student-given, non-sectarian, non-proselytizing prayer still carries with it the stamp of approval of the state – i.e. the state approves of, and is seen to promote, belief in God (and whatever other religious content that the prayer might).

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled against mandated daily school prayer in *Engel v. Vitale* (1962). In 1963, it struck down laws in Pennsylvania and Maryland, which mandated Bible reading and prayer (Amudson, 1984 p. 2).

On the other side of the spectrum, the constitution does allow teachers and students to study religion and its effects on society. Religious classes are also allowed as long as one religion is not presented as being better or superior to another religion. Students are allowed

to organize prayer on school campus, but it must be outside the classroom. Students are allowed to bring Bibles to school and are allowed to pray before eating (Goeringer, 1999).

In 1999, Colin Powell recommended a simple moment of silence during which students would have the right to pray, meditate, contemplate or study (Natural Prayer Project, 1999).

Patty Jo Cornish an author and supporter of prayer writes:

We have forgotten that we are all in this together. And, we keep separating ourselves from ourselves, by color, by football teams, by clothes, by money, by creed, by greed, by boundaries, by age, and so on and on. We need something to pull us all together. Natural Prayer could be that miracle. It includes everyone, even the non-believers (Natural Prayer Project, 1999, p. 2).

There have been several landmark case decisions regarding religion in public schools. *Engel v. Vitale* disallowed a government-composed, nondenominational "Regents" prayer which was recited by students is the most well-known case in the debate over school prayer. Other cases date back as far as 1948. The U.S. Supreme Court struck down religious instruction in public schools in the *McCollum v. Board of Education* decision. In 1954, the Supreme Court let stand a lower court ruling, *Tudor v. Board of Education*, against the distribution of Bibles by outside groups like the Gideon. In 1963, in a number of major decisions for example *Murray v. Curlett* and *Abington Township School District v. Schempp*, mandatory Bible verse recitation was ruled unconstitutional (White House Press, 1998).

In 1971, in the *Lemon v. Kurtzman* case it was established that payment of salary supplements or reimbursements to non-public schools violated the clause in the First Amendment, which prohibited the government from making laws establishing religion. The case was directly responsible for creating the 3-prong test or the *Lemon Test* - the separation of church and state (Fleurdelis, 2000).

Other recent laws pertaining to school prayer have been ongoing: such as the Equal Access Act passed in 1984. This act allows religious clubs to be organized on school campus. The American-Jewish Congress challenged the law, but by a vote of eight to one in 1990 the Supreme Court declared the law constitutional. Therefore under the law students can continue to participate in religious groups, which must be treated equally to all comparable student non-religious groups. Also under the law, students are able to have equal access to school media and hold meetings during lunch period (Kickbush, 1995).

On July 12, 1995, United States President Bill Clinton said in part “nothing in the 1st Amendment converts our public schools to religion-free zones or requires all religious expression to be left at the schoolhouse door (Kickbush, 1995, p. 7).”

In 1992, the issue of beginning commencement with prayer was challenged in the *Lee v. Weisman* case. In this case it was established that prayer at public school commencements were impermissible. “The lessons of the First Amendment are as urgent in the modern world as the 18th Century when it was written. One timeless lesson is that if citizens are subjected to state – sponsored religious exercised, the state disavows its own duty to guard and respect that sphere of inviolable conscience and belief – which is the mark of a free people,” (Justice Kennedy, cited in Gaylor, 1998, p. 7).

Pro Prayer Views

Sokerka (1998) makes a valid argument on God and the United States Founding Fathers intentions. Sokerka suggests that Americans have lost the trust that their forefathers placed in God. Sokerka (1998) believes that the Supreme Court, in its attempts to be neutral on

religious issues, has become irreligious and suggests that the current line of thinking is contrary to what the nation's forefathers had in mind and that is why prayer is no longer allowed in schools. Regarding separation of church and state Sokerka (1998) stated that the Supreme Court often cited a letter written by Thomas Jefferson to a group of Baptists. Jefferson alluded that the constitution keeps the government from running the church, but it makes sure that Christian principles will never be separated from government. What Jefferson feared most is exactly what we have done – erected a stone wall between government and religion that the Supreme Court views as rock-solid from the nation's founding fathers (Sokerka, 1998).

Supporters of school prayer feel that youth have lost the respect that students before them had for their country, peers, and their own lives. Supporters believe that the U.S. society has become worse since 1962. Many feel that the uprising of crime and the lowering of values in society is a result of taking prayer out of schools (Jefferson, 1997).

Con Views of School Prayer

Non-supporters of school prayer feel that education in this country is mandatory for all children, and public schools must maintain a separation from any religion. Non-supporters maintain that our constitution clearly sets a division between the federal government and religion, and that prayer in the schools may violate some student's religion. For example, an atheist, may feel uncomfortable and left out in an organized prayer (Kramer, 1998).

Gaylor argues that, “our founders wisely adopted a secular, godless constitution, the first to derive its powers from ‘We the People’ and the consent of the governed, rather than

claiming divine authority (p. 5).” Gaylor (1999) states that prayer in schools and religion in government are no place for social ills and that it is an invitation to divisiveness.

Lott (1999) a member of the California Senate, stated “I find the best statement against public school prayer in Matthew 6:5-6 ‘And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corner, but when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray... A bible - believing Christian would appear to be required to oppose school prayer’.” (p. 2)

Summary

The data collected from this literature review clearly demonstrates that violent crimes committed by youths have increased greatly since 1962. The review also demonstrates that returning prayer to school is still a very controversial topic. Finally this review demonstrates that there is no clear answer to the problem at hand, which is to find a way to lessen violence in public schools.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine perceptions of school administrators concerning school violence to determine whether they believe the return of school prayer will decrease school violence.

Research Design

This study will use the descriptive research design. Description may include (1) collection of facts that describe existing phenomena; (2) identification of problems or justification of current conditions and practice; (3) project or product evaluation; (4) comparison of experience between groups with similar problems to assist in future planning and decision making. Its purpose is to systematically describe the facts and characteristics of a given phenomenon, population or area of interest (Merriam & Simpson, 1995).

Population

Twenty-one high school principals in the Phoenix and Tucson areas with various years of experience were sent surveys made up of six essay questions to gather their perceptions of school violence and its correlation with school prayer. Principals were randomly selected from two different school districts (Phoenix Union and Tucson Unified) with both districts

having student bodies of similar socio-economic statuses.

Assumptions and Limitations

Assumptions were that all selected principals responded with complete ideas and clearly understood the questions, and responded honestly to the questionnaire. Limitations were that there was no way to control how many principals responded and the study was limited to two school districts and therefore may not necessarily be generalizable.

Instrumentation

The instrument used in this study, was a written survey. The survey had six short essay questions pertaining to the perceptions of school administrators regarding school violence and the possible effects that the return of school prayer might have on this crisis. A copy of the survey is found in Appendix A.

Procedure

The necessary steps needed to complete this procedure were:

1. A cover letter and the survey questions were designed and approved by Ottawa faculty before the surveys were mailed.
2. Twenty-one high school principals from two different school districts were randomly selected. The Phoenix Union High School district and the Tucson Unified High School were the selected districts based on like socio-economic status of the student bodies overall. Fifteen principals were from the Phoenix Union School district and only six were from the Tucson Unified School district.

3. The surveys were sent with prepaid return addressed envelopes to the twenty-one selected principals, to try to ensure a substantial return.
4. Once the surveys were received they were thoroughly analyzed and documented in the results sections of the text.

Method of Analysis

After all surveys were received an objective analysis was performed. Results were compiled according to similarities of responses. All responses were charted to determine any correlation between school violence and school prayer. Charts are found in Presentation of the Data in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Demographics

Twenty-one principals and or assistant principals in the Phoenix Union and Tucson Unified district were surveyed. Only sixteen out of twenty-one responded and here are the results of their perceptions on school prayer and school violence. In both the Phoenix Union and Tucson Unified districts the student size was comparable at 1,500 to 2,500 students at any given school in each district. For both districts the majority of students were Hispanic and the next largest population of students was African American students. Both districts serve 9-12 graders and both districts are located in urban areas in Phoenix and Tucson.

Findings and Results

The six questions and response that follow demonstrated the perceptions of principals and assistant principals that returned the survey for this study. Perception summaries follow each question. The number of participants in the survey was sixteen.

Question 1 – How many years have you been a principal or assistant principal?

Eight of the administrators responding had four or fewer years of experience.

Only three had more than ten years of experience. And five had ten to five years of experience.

	Principal	Assistant Principal
Years		
17	x	
16		
15	x	
14		
13	x	
12		
11		
10		xxx
9		
8	x	
7		x
6		
5		xxx
4	x	
3	x	xxx
Totals	6	10

Question 2 – What are your top two beliefs concerning the apparent increase of school violence in public schools?

Glamorization of violence in the media was the top belief among the administrators. There was a tie for second place between lack of parental involvement and a violent society.

Lack of respect for self and others	XX
Lack of parental involvement	XXXXXX
Glamorization of violence in the media	XXXXXXXX
Decrease in morals	X
Violent society	XXXXXX
Dehumanization of humanity	X
Lack of preventative measures	X
Lack of discipline	X
Copy cat acts	X

Question 3 – If the return of school prayer is not an answer to decreasing school violence then what do you believe the answer might be?

The most often found response was accountability of family and creating a more nurturing and caring school setting was found to be the second most often response.

More communication with students	X
School prayer	X
Accountability of family increased	XXXXXX
Comprehensive programs on self-respect	XX
Return practice of the Golden Rule	X
More participation from religious institutions	X
Set zero tolerance rules and discipline for students	XX
More assemblies on violence	X
Less violence shown in the media	X
Create a more nurturing and caring school setting	XXXXX
Make students take ownership of school	X
Make smaller class sizes	XXX
Make teachers teach in the areas where they live	X

Question 4 – Currently efforts are being made to return the Ten Commandments to the classroom. Would you welcome or oppose this effort?

Overwhelmingly the responses demonstrate that most of the administrators would oppose the return of the Ten Commandments. Only three would welcome the return of the Ten Commandments.

Welcome

X
X
X

Oppose

X
X
X
X
X
X
X
X
X
X
X
X

Other

X

Question 5 – Do you believe the return of school prayer would change America's youth views concerning school violence?

Responses show that eleven out of sixteen administrators do not believe that the return of school prayer would change America's youth's views concerning school violence.

Agree

Disagree

Other

X
X
X

X
X
X
X
X
X
X
X
X
X
X

X
X

Question 6 – Do you believe that the return of school prayer would encourage the morality that seems to be missing in our youth’s lives and attitudes?

Only three out sixteen administrators believe that the return of school prayer would encourage the morality that seems to be missing in our youth’s lives and attitudes.

Agree

Disagree

Other

X
X
X

X
X
X
X
X
X
X

X
X

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENATIONS

Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine perceptions of school administrators concerning school violence to determine whether they believed the return of school prayer would decrease school violence. Data was collected from sixteen school building administrators (principals and assistant principals) from two urban areas in Arizona. The survey contained six short essay questions concerning prayer and violence in the school settings. The urban schools selected were of similar size and socio-economic status. Responses were compiled to try to determine any correlation between school violence and school prayer.

Conclusions

The findings also overwhelmingly showed that most administrators do not perceive that the return of school prayer would decrease school violence. In direct comparison of school violence and school prayer most administrators did not see a correlation between the two issues regarding correcting the problem of violence in schools. However, the perceptions of possible causes of school violence among the administrators were consistent with the literature reviews that school prayer is not the answer to resolving school violence. The findings in this study clearly demonstrate that administrators do not yet have a clear picture

of why school violence occurs; thereby making a solution unclear. However, what was clear was that most administrators do oppose the return of prayer in the schools. Most of the administrators agreed that more parental involvement and less violence in the media is a step in the right direction to decreasing school violence, not school prayer.

Recommendations

Unfortunately, no solution to school violence was discovered in this study. School violence is a growing problem in American schools and is a problem that will not work itself out or go away. However, this study seems to strongly suggest that without intervention by parents, administrators, teachers, and students, the problem of school violence will increase. Perhaps the return of school prayer is too complicated to deal with at this time, but educators must acknowledge that something must be done and quickly. America needs to find a way to regenerate the moral fiber that once existed in past years. There are no easy answers. Parents must become more actively involved in their children's lives; yes the media needs to stop glorifying violence. However, two questions remain: how can educators make an overworked, underpaid, or disinterested, or drug-addicted parents spend more time with their children and how do educators make the media stop glorifying violence? These are valid questions which must be addressed before an effective solution to violence can be found. Further research on school violence must be conducted in order to determine whether or not the return of school prayer will decrease school violence. At this time, the only data available is theory based and the only measurements available are flawed by the research design itself.

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APPENDIX A

SIX QUESTION SURVEY

Survey

School Prayer and School Violence

- When returning surveys please do not include your name. All responses are meant to be anonymous. Principals and/or Assistant Principals are encouraged to complete the following survey.

1. For how many years have you been a principal ____ or assistant principal ____?

2. What are your top two beliefs concerning the apparent increase of school violence in public schools.

(a)

(b)

3. If the return of school prayer is not an answer to decreasing school violence then what do you believe the answer might be? (Top two suggestions)

(a)

(b)

4. Currently efforts are being made to return the Ten Commandments to the classroom. Would you welcome or oppose this effort? Why?

5. Do you believe the return of school prayer would change America's youth views concerning school violence? Please explain your answer.

6. Do you believe that the return of school prayer would encourage the morality that seems to be missing in our youth's lives and attitudes?

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