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Cyberbullying in schools: A research study on school policies and procedures

Brian Wiseman
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

CYBERBULLYING IN SCHOOLS: A RESEARCH STUDY ON

SCHOOL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

by

Brian Wiseman

Bachelor of Arts
Northern Illinois University
DeKalb, IL
1999

Master of Educational Leadership
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Las Vegas, Nevada
2005

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Brian Wiseman

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Pamela Salazar, Committee Chair

Robert McCord, Committee Member

James Crawford, Committee Member

Porter Troutman, Graduate Faculty Representative

Ronald Smith, Ph. D., Vice President for Research and Graduate Studies
and Dean of the Graduate College

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ABSTRACT

Cyberbullying in Schools: A Research Study
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by

Brian Wiseman

Dr. Pamela Salazar, Ed.D., Examination Committee Chair
Professor of Educational Leadership
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

A mixed-methods research design first using quantitative then qualitative data was

used in order to explore what cyberbullying policies are being employed by principals in

the state of Nevada. Electronic surveys were given to all 118 middle school principals in

Nevada. Middle school was chosen because it is the age where cyberbullying behaviors

are most prevalent. Out of the 118 surveys that were deployed, 66 principals responded.

A series of independent t-tests and a chi-squared analysis was conducted using the survey

data. The survey concluded by asking principals if they were willing to participate in a

one-on-one interview regarding the cyberbullying policies at their schools. Ten

principals agreed to participate in interviews, and three were randomly chosen. Results

of the quantitative portion of the study revealed that student education, parent

communication, school climate, language about off-campus behaviors, a known

continuum of disciplinary consequences, formal procedures for investigating incidents,

consequences for wrongful accusations, procedures for reporting cyberbullying,

procedures for notifying parents of victims and perpetrators, procedures for referring

victims and perpetrators for counseling, procedures for providing parent education,

procedures for notifying the parents of the steps being taken to ensure the safety of their

children, and signs being posted throughout the school should all be a part of an effective cyberbullying program.

Results of the qualitative portion of the study identified the following six major themes as being essential to an effective cyberbullying program: the importance of a reporting procedure; curriculum integration; student-centered productions through mediums such as Broadcast Journalism; a focus on prevention rather than solely on punishment; the importance of punishment as a part of an effective policy; and keeping up with changes in technology. Although the concept of cyberbullying is relatively new, at the present time, it already occurs in a different fashion than it did when it initially surfaced. With advances in technology, especially with the capabilities of Smart Phones, educators must understand all of the current trends in technology if they want to effectively face this problem.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In today's technological era, the reliance upon the Internet for business and for personal recreation has become commonplace for the vast majority of people. From checking the score of the ballgame during work to researching information for a school project, nearly everyone has incorporated the information superhighway into their lives to some degree. Gindin (1999) estimated that employees with Internet access at work spend between five to ten hours per week at work either sending personal e-mails or searching for information not related to their jobs. In addition to using the Internet for personal use, it has become a nearly indispensable tool used in business, education, government, and in the entertainment world (Shannon, 2009). The evolutionary process that has taken place to get the Internet to its current form has been astounding; as it continues to evolve, it's anyone's guess as to what tools the Internet may offer us in the future. When discussing technological advances over 40 years ago, Zais (1968) stated that, "Change is so fast that yesterday's dream is today's necessity – and tomorrow's fond memory" (p. 2). While it may not be possible to predict what technological advances will take place even ten or twenty years from now, it is estimated that all of the technical knowledge we work with presently will represent only about 1% of the technical knowledge that will be available in the year 2050 (Cetron & Davies, 2008).

While the Internet has become a major part of the daily lives for millions of adults, so too has it become a part of the lives of children. In 2001, it was estimated that 17 million youth between the ages of 12 and 17 used the Internet (Lenhart, Rainie, & Lewis, 2001). Ybarra (2004) estimated that 97% of today's youth are connected to the Internet.

Although this informational source is invaluable when considering its educational capabilities, social networking and online communication have become major conduits in teenager's relationships with their friends, family, and school (Lenhart et al., 2001). Teenagers primarily use the Internet as a tool to enhance social status by maintaining friendships and building new ones (Gross, 2004). One of the reasons that the Internet has become such a commonly used tool in the development of social relationships is the ease with which children can make new friends and correspond with existing ones (Bargh, McKenna, & Fitzsimons, 2002).

Although the anonymity afforded to children by the Internet may be a very useful social crutch for those who are less sociable in person, it also opens up a door for the misuse of technology as children can say or do things that they would not normally do in person with little chance of having their identity revealed. While harmless in many occasions, this new method of technological interaction can lead children to experiment with aggressive behaviors (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004). Simply put, despite the many wonders of the Internet, a new form of bullying, commonly referred to as cyberbullying, has become a new a growing problem in today's society.

Cyberbullying is still a relatively new phenomenon, but the little data currently in existence indicate that the negative effects of cyberbullying are at least similar to those of more traditional forms of bullying (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004). Because of this, it is important to take a look at the effects of traditional bullying in order to gain a better understanding of cyberbullying. Despite the infancy of cyberbullying, traditional bullying has long been a deeply embedded problem in schools throughout the world (Roland & Isdoe, 2001).

Bullying was originally looked upon as something that was irrelevant as victimization helped toughen up children (Cartwright, 1995). Olweus (1993, 1995) described a bullying victim as someone who is subjected to aggressive actions from someone who is more dominant than they are, and someone is bullied when they are repeatedly and over time exposed to negative actions by one or more students. As bullying research has continued to grow, it has become evident that the negative effects of bullying can range anywhere from relatively minor to extremely severe. The list of physical and emotional effects of bullying includes headaches, stomachaches, tiredness, depression, anxiety, delinquency, truancy, social isolation, sleep disorders, and possibly even suicide (Baldry, 2004; Cullerton-Sen & Crick, 2005; Kahtri, Kupersmidt, & Patterson, 2000). Despite the fact that the prevalence of bullying decreases as children grow older, victims who have not properly addressed their problems that have arisen due to bullying have higher incidents of academic failure (Leff & Kupersmidt, 1999). These emotional and physical effects do not always remain in adolescence; they can often carry on into adulthood as well (Batsche & Knoff, 1994).

The unfortunate part of bullying is that few children ever report that problem (Bauman, 2009; Hinduja & Patchin, 2009; Mitchell, Wolak, & Finkelhor, 2004 . Because of this, school officials are often unaware of the prevalence of bullying on their own campus (Unnever & Cornell, 2004). Children in middle school often fail to report bullying behaviors because they believe that it will not solve the problem (Cannon, Hayward, & Gowen, 2001). This may be attributed to the perception of many children who believe that bullying behaviors are often tolerated or ignored by school officials (Peterson & Skiba, 2001), or to the fact that teachers rarely detect or intervene in

incidents bullying (Skiba & Fontanini, 2001) despite the fact that bullying often takes place right in the classroom (Newquis, 1997). There is clearly a disconnect between students, teachers, and administrators, which only highlights the need for attention and action on this topic. Although many ridicule the need to address bullying, students feel less safe and less satisfied in schools in which high incidents of bullying are reported (Olweus & Limber, 1999).

As technology has become fully integrated into the lives of children, the negative effects of life online are becoming more clearly identified. Excessive time spent online can lead to increased loneliness and depression (Kraut et al., 1998; Nie & Ebring, 2000), and the more time spent in cyberspace, the more likely that children are to lose contact with their social environment (Nie & Ebring, 2002). These emotional changes can lead to online victimization, now referred to as cyberbullying, which became widespread around 2004 (Phillips, 2004). Cyberbullying was defined by Beasley (2004) as the "use of information and communication technologies such as e-mails, cell phone and pager text messages, instant messaging (IM), defamatory personal Web sites, and defamatory online personal polling Web sites, to support, deliberate, repeated, and hostile behavior by an individual or group, that is intended to harm others" (p. 8).

Although researchers have not yet fully examined the nature of cyberbullying (Beran & Li, 2005), its anonymous nature often lends to interchangeable roles where individuals can be a bully and a victim (Ybarra, 2004). Even though these acts of cyberbullying usually take place away from school, they are a growing problem for schools because actions that had taken place online previously often play out in person the next day (Lacey, 2007). The alarming statistics indicate that incidents of cyberbullying are

becoming quite common. In a survey of 1,500 students in grades 4 – 8 regarding online

bullying, i-Safe America (2004) reported that 42% of children had been bullied online,

35% of children had been threatened, 21% had received threatening messages, 58% had

mean things said to them, 53% admit to saying something mean to someone online, and

58% did not report it to an adult.

Cyberbullying can be more devastating than traditional forms of bullying due to the

much larger audience online (Strom & Strom, 2005) and because children now cannot

even escape their bullies by going home to a safe environment (McClung, 2006).

Additionally, the anonymity afforded by the Internet can allow a bully to be even more

abusive online than they would be in person (Strom & Strom, 2005). While information

is becoming more readily available regarding the prevalence of cyberbullying, there is

limited research indicating the best way to deal with it. This limited research base

highlights a great need for research on cyberbullying among adolescents (Bullen & Hare,

2000).

One of the primary reasons that cyberbullying has received so much attention

recently is because the news is starting to report more cases of teenage suicide as a result

of incessant cyberbullying. While rare, incidents of suicide due to cyberbullying offer a

sobering dose of reality and call attention to a dire need for action. Perhaps increased

awareness on this topic will help to ensure that stories such as those of Ryan Patrick

Halligan and Megan Meier are not repeated in the future (Halligan, n.d.; ABC News,

2007).

Ryan Patrick Halligan was a typical 13-year-old boy who was trying to make his

way through the troubling adolescent years. He had encountered on-again, off-again

bullying problems since about the fifth grade. His parents helped him through those problems, and despite one fist fight, they believed that the problem was normal and under control. Like most kids his age, Ryan loved being online. But during the summer of 2003, it was noticed that he was spending a great deal of time online, in his room, instant messaging. Ryan had briefly befriended one of the students who had previously bullied him, but he made the mistake of sharing something that had happened to him that was somewhat embarrassing with this student. This student then took this information and began spreading rumors throughout school and throughout the Internet that Ryan was gay. Subsequently, he endured quite a bit of teasing and taunting from many students. Ryan then befriended a girl from his school online to help with the rumors, but in person, she called Ryan a loser and told her friends that she was only joking online. This girl and her friends apparently befriended Ryan online as a means of getting him to share some personal and embarrassing things about him. She then shared this information with many of her classmates. As a result, the bullying and cyberbullying got so intense that Ryan began discussing his suicide plans with others online. On October 7, 2003, while Ryan's father was away on business and everybody else in the house was sleeping, he hanged himself in the family's bathroom. Following his death, using a computer program, Ryan's father was able to obtain the transcripts of some of his online conversations. In addition to the nonstop online bullying, there were conversations with other students in which suicide was encouraged. Despite a loving and supportive family, Ryan's online social life ended up causing his death (Halligan, n.d.).

Megan Meier was a girl with low self-esteem who liked to socialize on the Internet. She became very excited when a cute boy named Josh Evans befriended her on the

popular MySpace network, and the two established a relationship for more than a month. Despite some red flags, things were going well between Megan and Josh until one message started a bad chain of events. Someone using Josh's account began posting cruel messages on message boards about Megan, calling her "fat" and saying that she is a "slut". As the taunting increased, Megan, who had a history of depression, was unable to cope with these problems and hanged herself in a bedroom closet. Following her death, Megan's parents discovered that Josh Evans never existed. Josh was a fake online personality created by the mother of a former friend of Megan's in order to determine what Megan was saying about her daughter (ABC News, 2007).

Unfortunately, stories similar to those of Ryan Patrick Halligan and Megan Meier are becoming more common for teens. Although not all cases of cyberbullying end up with such severe endings as suicide, the literature supports the fact that the negative effects of cyberbullying are numerous, the problem is steadily becoming more severe, and schools need to find ways to address the problem in order to help their students (Raskauskas & Stoltz, 2007; Ybarra et al., 2007).

<center>Problem Statement</center>

The problem regarding cyberbullying in schools is that school and district leaders do not have a firm grasp on how to effectively deal with the problem so that students see a decrease in both prevalence and the negative effects (Ybarra et al., 2007). While an increase in cyberbullying awareness is certainly evident, there is a lack of sound research to provide schools with proactive steps that can be taken to combat the problem. The majority of children in schools were born into a culture where technology use has always

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been a constant in their lives. Internet use and social networking occupies a great portion

of the time of children as they move into adolescence. Although there are many benefits

to Internet use, adolescents primarily log on to the Internet to socialize (Media Awareness

Network, 2001). As the quantity and popularity of social networking continues to soar,

so do the opportunities for the misuse of technology. Because of this, cyberbullying is a

phenomenon that is drastically increasing in prevalence. While cyberbullying research is

still in its infancy, the research that is in existence suggests that the negative outcomes

associated with cyberbullying are similar to those of more traditional forms of bullying

(Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004a). Consequently, there is a strong link between cyber bullying

and psychosocial maladjustment for both bullies and victims (Ybarra, Alexander, &

Mitchell, 2003; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004a; Ybarra & Mitchell 2004b).

Not all victims of cyberbullying report serious effects, but according to one study,

34% of cyberbullying victims felt frustrated, over 30% felt angry, and nearly 22% felt sad

(Patchin and Hinduja, 2006). Although these behaviors don't initially occur at school,

their emotional effects often accompany students when they do come to school. Because

these emotions can lead to increases in violence, increases in truancy, and decreased

academic performance (Beran & Li, 2005), schools have a vested interest in dealing with

issues related to cyberbullying.

<p align="center">Purpose of Study</p>

The purpose of this study was to obtain evidence from school-based leaders who

have effectively dealt with cyberbullying behaviors. A mixed-methods approach was

used to obtain this information. The first portion of the mixed-methods study was to

conduct a quantitative study to identify those leaders who employ effective cyberbullying

policies at their respective schools. A follow-up qualitative study was then conducted

with principals who have been identified as having effective cyberbullying policies in

order to gain a deeper understanding of the practices that are in place and that are

working. Since little research on cyberbullying currently exists, school personnel, district

leaders, and policy makers are unsure on the most effective means of combating this

problem (Beran & Li, 2007; Belsey, 2006; Ybarra et al., 2007). Since the term

"effective" can be very subjective, it is important to define this term so that it can be

understood throughout the study.

   This study will examine the perspective of school leaders, so "effectiveness" of

cyberbullying prevention or intervention programs will have to be clearly defined for

those leaders. From the perspective of educational leaders, issues of cyberbullying being

addressed effectively will mean that through the actions of school leaders that are directly

related to cyberbullying, there has been a decrease in the negative effects observed by

victims due to cyberbullying.

Research Questions

1. What school procedures are in place to address cyberbullying?

2. Of the cyberbullying procedures that are in place, which are reported as being

    effective by school leaders?

3. What are schools who are effectively addressing cyberbullying doing

    differently than those who are not effectively addressing cyberbullying?

4. Are school cyberbullying policies being evaluated to determine their effectiveness?

Conceptual Framework

The Stage Model of the Policy Process

While the stage model of the policy process is intended to explain the stages of a policy from its political inception through its grassroots implementation, Fowler's (2004) description of this process can be applied to the creation and implementation of a cyberbullying policy at a school level. There are six sections to Fowler's (2004) version of the stage model:

1. Issue Definition – although society has numerous social problems, only a few are ever identified as public policy problems. Because of that, most problems are not addressed. Problems are often addressed due to political support or pressure.

2. Agenda Setting – not all problems defined as an educational policy issue are acted on. An item must be placed on the policy agenda in order to have a chance at becoming a policy. This policy agenda is usually set by those who are in power.

3. Policy Formulation – before a policy can be formally adopted, it must be expressed in written form. Proposed policies are presented and often go through several drafts. Rules and regulations are written after the policies have been adopted, and they too pass through several drafts.

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4. Policy Adoption – in order for a policy to take effect, its written formulation must be adopted by authorized officials.

5. Implementation – after a policy is adopted, it must be implemented at the grassroots level by educators who may not necessarily be enthusiastic about it. Successful implementation depends upon motivating educators to implement the policy and to provide them with resources to do so.

6. Evaluation – a form of applied research designed to determine if polices work the way they are supposed to.

Although the implementation of a policy at a school does not always follow such a strict political process, the theoretical stages of issue definition, policy adoption, implementation, and evaluation will be used to synthesize the data received from school leaders in this study. This model asserts that as policies go through the process, they often get left in the earlier stages without being seen through to implementation and evaluation (Fowler, 2004). Similarly, it is theorized that due to extensive media attention, more schools are identifying bullying, harassment, and cyberbullying, as issues in need of policy. In surveying and interviewing school leaders, the researcher hopes to discover how far in the process schools get. If Fowler's (2004) model can be fully applied to school policies on cyberbullying, then the data may indicate that many schools are putting cyberbullying policies into place due to recent media coverage, but they may not be fully implementing them and evaluating them for effectiveness.

<div align="center">Significance of the Study</div>

Although school bullying has been around for decades, the issue of cyberbullying is still very new to researchers and educators. As a result, there are few cyberbullying

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research studies available on the topic, and intervention strategies have not had time to be properly evaluated (Smith et al., 2008; Beran & Li, 2007). Due to media attention, the popularity of social networking, the Internet, and the increased capabilities of cell phones, the issue of cyberbullying has shot to the forefront of agendas in schools and communities because of its increased prevalence and subsequent negative emotional and physical effects (Hinduja & Patchin, 2007). Even though a dramatic spike in cyberbullying awareness has been seen, educators, policy makers, and scholars have yet to determine the most appropriate means of resolving this phenomenon (Belsey, 2006).

This study is significant because it aims to provide school leaders and policy makers with information on how to proactively create policies that decrease the prevalence and negative effects of cyberbullying. School officials are still struggling on how to properly intervene when made aware of instances of cyberbullying, and a great deal of that struggle centers around their hesitance to take action on behaviors that do not occur on the school campus (Ybarra et al., 2007; Feinberg & Robey, 2009). Even though the majority of these cyberbullying instances occur off campus, the disruption that many of them bring to the school campus is cause for school personnel to take action (Agatson et al., 2007).

A gap clearly exists between the technological abilities of today's youth versus those of previous generations. Until that gap narrows, it may be extraordinarily difficult to earn the trust of adolescents so that schools, students, and parents can work collaboratively to combat cyberbullying (Juvonen & Gross, 2008). It is known that cyberbullying can undermine a school's climate and negatively effect the emotional and physical well-being of many students, but more research is needed to identify strategies for schools and

school communities to prevent or reduce the many forms of cyberbullying (Feinberg & Robey, 2009; Raskauskas & Stoltz, 2007).

Research Design and Methodology

This research study was conducted using a mixed methods explanatory design (Creswell & Clark, 2007). The explanatory design has two phases: phase one consisted of collecting quantitative data; phase two consisted of collecting qualitative data that connects to the data from phase one (Creswell & Clark, 2007). The participant selection model of the explanatory design was used. In this model, the quantitative data obtained from the first phase of the study was used to purposefully select the participants for interviews in the qualitative portion of the study (Creswell & Clark, 2007).

The quantitative data obtained in this study came from cross-sectional surveys issued to middle school principals in the state of Nevada. Cross-sectional surveys collect all data at a single point in order to record data about present views on the issue (Creswell, 2008). The surveys aim was to determine which educational leaders believe their actions related to cyberbullying have been effective. Since the term *effective* is very subjective, a working definition of the term for the context of this study was provided to each participant. Once all of the data were received, three principals who identified their schools as having effective cyberbullying policies and who agreed to participate in a one-on-one interview were selected to complete the qualitative portion of this study (Creswell & Clark, 2007). Principals from three schools were selected to participate in phase two of this study.

The qualitative data obtained in this study came from interviews conducted by participants who were identified during the first phase of the study. The participants in phase two were selected through purposeful sampling since their survey data indicated an existing effective policy related to cyberbullying (Creswell, 2008). A phenomenological approach was employed in order to gain a full understanding of the essence of the phenomenon by each individual (Creswell, 1998). Each of the participants selected engaged in a one-on-one interview with the researcher. The interview consisted of open-ended questions related to their approach to cyberbullying. Open-ended questions were used so that each participant was able to fully explain their stories without restriction (Creswell, 2008).

Limitations

1. Up until recently, schools did not keep disciplinary statistics related to cyberbullying. There still may be schools and districts that do not delineate cyberbullying as a specific disciplinary infraction. Consequently, it is unlikely that there will be discipline data to statistically support or disclaim the effectiveness of any cyberbullying program.

2. Responses by school administrators will be based off of their personal reaction to their experiences rather than by research-supported evidence.

3. No research has evaluated the extent to which programs designed to curb cyberbullying have in fact done what they intended to do (Hinduja & Patchin, 2007).

4. In the quantitative section of this study, the cross-sectional design that will be used will limit the data to one specific point in time. As social networking

and other technological advances continue to be introduced to youth, it is

plausible to presuppose the cyberbullying will take on an entirely different

form in the near future.

5. The term effectiveness, which is a very subjective term, is used frequently in

this study. Although a working definition of effectiveness was provided to all

participants, the subjective nature of this term serves as a limitation.

6. The researcher of this study has experienced bullying as a child and has dealt

extensively with bullying and cyberbullying as a professional. These

experiences may serve as a limitation to the study.

7. A limitation is that since few cyberbullying instances are reported to school

personnel, administrative responses may represent the minority of

cyberbullying cases.

8. The two instruments used for the quantitative portion of the study have not

been tested for reliability or validity.

Delimitations

1. Surveys will be administered to administrators and in one specific state.

2. The purposeful sampling that will be used in the study will be collected from

middle school administrators and middle school students and may not be

generalized to other grade levels.

Assumptions

1. It is assumed that respondents are completely honest when filling out the survey.

2. It is assumed that the information received by the survey participants can be generalized to schools with varying demographic populations.

3. It is assumed that school leaders are aware of cyberbullying and have taken some action to address the problem.

Definition of Terms

AUP (Acceptable Use Policy): A written agreement signed by students, parents, teachers, and school administrators that outlines the terms and conditions of Internet use. An AUP delineates acceptable use and penalties for violations (Classroom Connect, 1995).

Bully: A person who, either through physical or psychological means, intentionally attempts to or successfully inflicts harm on someone else (Olweus, 2003).

Bullying: A student is being bullied when they are repeatedly exposed to negative actions by one or more students who have more power than the student who is being bullied. Bullying occurs when that power is used in a hostile manner which may cause physical or psychological damage (Olweus, 2003; Case-Cannon, Hayword, & Gowan, 2001).

Bystander: Students who are aware of or witness bullying or cyberbullying but do not take action to stop the behavior from occurring (Dunn, 2001).

Cyberbully: A person who engages in the act of cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying: "willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell

    phones, and other electronic devices" (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009, p. 5).

Cyberspace: The virtual space created by the Internet (Cothran, 2002).

Direct Bullying: Direct bullying involves either verbal or physical attacks on a victim

    (Atals & Pepler, 1998).

Indirect Bullying: Indirect bullying involves more subtle forms of harassment, such as

    social isolation or excluding others (Atlas & Pepler, 1998).

Instant Messaging: Instant messaging, or "IM", involves a virtual conversation while two

    individuals are online at the same time. Rather than speaking, the conversation is

    held through typing (Precise Cyber Forensics, 2006).

Internet Service Provider (ISP): A service that provides a portal through which users can

    access the Internet (Cothran, 2002).

Non-Victim: A person who is neither a victim nor a witness to bullying or cyberbullying.

Threat: "A communicated intent to inflict harm or less on another or on another's

    property; especially one that might diminish a person's freedom to act voluntarily or

    with lawful consent" (Garner, 2004, p. 1519).

Victim (or Target): a person who is exposed to the negative actions of a bully or a

    cyberbully.

Summary

    Bullying is a problem that has plagued students in school for many years. Recently,

some high profile teen suicides have thrust issues of bullying into the media spotlight.

Due to this newfound attention, researchers have started exploring issues related to

bullying and have found it to be a very serious issue in today's society. Bullying has also evolved with the rest of society as it has now been integrated with technology.

This new form of bullying, known as cyberbullying, is still very new to the educational community. While there is a fair amount of research directly related to bullying, very little research exists that is specific to cyberbullying. This study aims to provide information to practicing educators on how to address cyberbullying in order to decrease the prevalence of cyberbullying incidents and its subsequent negative effects that are often carried on to their respective school campuses.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Children today are born into a world where a variety of technological tools have been at their dispersal since their earliest memories. They are being raised in an Internet-dominant world where digital interaction often is the primary means through which they interact with one another (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009). While the majority of today's youth are using the Internet as a healthy venue for social interaction, the sharing of ideas, and schoolwork (Dowell et. al., 2009), there is a very clear negative side that has recently arisen. Cyberbullying, which has been defined by Hinduja & Patchin (2009) as the "willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices" (p. 5), has come to the forefront of media outlets and the agendas of schools and communities due to the negative impact to which victims can be subjected (Hinduja & Patchin, 2007). And as the use of networked computers and mobile phones continues to increase among young people, the potential for cyberbullying only appears to increase (Smith et. al., 2008). While research on cyberbullying is at an early stage (Smith et. al., 2008), this emerging form of bullying appears to pose a serious threat to the social and emotional development of children (Raskauskas & Stoltz, 2007).

The dilemma for school personnel in dealing with cyberbullying is determining who has authority in dealing with this serious issue since it often happens off-campus and outside normal school hours (Feinberg & Robey, 2009). But, despite the typical off-campus derivation of these harassing acts, some instances of cyberbullying come to the attention of teachers, counselors, and administrators because they cause a significant disruption to the school day (Agatson et. al., 2007). Because of the impact that

cyberbullying has on normal school functioning, educators, parents, policy makers, and

researchers are quickly looking for the best way to deal with this newest form of

harassment (Belsey, 2006).

Since so few studies on cyberbullying have been conducted to date, the full

consequences or most appropriate means of dealing with this new phenomenon are not

yet completely known (Hinduja & Patchin, 2007; Beran & Li, 2007). This review of the

literature provides an in-depth look at what research on cyberbullying currently exists, its

effect on the lives of today's children, and will serve as a foundation in identifying areas

in need of further research so that schools and communities are able to proactively work

with children to reduce the negative effects felt by victims.

Victims and Prevalence

The issue of cyberbullying is difficult to fully understand because of how recently

this phenomenon has surfaced.   It has become a hot topic for school administrators,

parents, and lawmakers, but the little data that has been collected thus far has mostly

provided an underdeveloped picture of the prevalence of the problem (Hinduja &

Patchin, 2008). Cyberbullying has become particularly alarming because the perpetrators

are able to permeate into areas where victims previously were able to escape torment,

making adolescents feel as though they have no escape from the harassment (Dempsey et

al., 2009). Although there is a debate over who has jurisdiction in dealing with instances

of cyberbullying, there is a persistent belief that schools are obligated to address the issue

since these acts of harassment do affect the educational environment (Feinberg & Robey,

2009; Juvonen & Gross, 2008; Smith et al., 2008). In fact, providing further justification

for schools' involvement in cyberbullying is a small body of research indicating that students who are victims of cyberbullying perceive a poorer climate or culture at their schools then those students who have not been victimized by cyberbullying (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009).

While the issue of students who are actual cyberbullies will be examined more thoroughly later in this chapter, it is important to note that most cyberbullies are individuals who have an actual personal relationship with their victims (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009). In fact, a study of 770 adolescents by the National Children's Home (2005) showed that 73% of cyberbullying victims knew their harasser. Another study by Ybarra et al. (2007) showed that only 13% of victims did not know the identity of their online harasser. It is also important to note that many victims of cyberbullying are also likely to use technology to bully others (Beran & Li, 2007; Raskauskas & Stoltz, 2007). Most of these cyberbullies perform their acts while they are at home by themselves, and their preferred method of harassment is usually in forums such as text messages, e-mails, and social networking sites such as MySpace and Facebook (Juvonen & Gross, 2008; Hinduja & Patchin, 2009). The primary predictors in determining the probability that an individual will engage in cyberbullying appear to be age, computer proficiency, and amount of time spent online; sex and race have not been identified as predictors (Hinduja & Patchin, 2007).

While it is known that many cyberbullying victims are also likely to engage in cyberbullying behavior themselves (Beran & Li, 2007), many victims have also been identified as victims of traditional, face-to-face bullying (Smith et al., 2008; Hinduja & Patchin, 2009). These are students who may feel isolated, misunderstood, depressed, or

lack the traditional support and guidance of a good family (Wells & Mitchell, 2008).

Over one third of victims of cyberbullying felt threatened or embarrassed because

information was spread to others about them (Ybarra et. al., 2006). And though there

appear to be many reasons that adolescents may be victimized by cyberbullying, religion,

disability, and sexual orientation do not appear to be contributing factors towards

victimization (Cassidy et al., 2009). These victims become so sad and depressed about

their situation that they are prone to hurt themselves and they are much more likely to

report having brought weapons to school for protection or retaliation (Hinduja & Patchin,

2009). Among cyberbullying victims who report retaliating, the majority of them

reported that they were significantly more likely to retaliate at school and not in

cyberspace (Juvonen & Gross, 2008).

Several research studies have been conducted to determine how much of a role age

and gender play in cyberbullying. The majority of this research centers on gender, but

there have been some studies that have indicated that electronic forms of bullying tend to

peak in older students, which is in contrast to traditional forms of bullying (Seals &

Young, 2003; Wolak, Mitchell, & Finkelhor, 2007; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2007; Williams &

Guera, 2007). The most significant increase in the prevalence of cyberbullying occurs

between the 6th and 7th grades, with very little cyberbullying being reported by students in

elementary school (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009).

The research on gender influences in cyberbullying has been inconclusive. Some

researchers have reported significant differences in gender, with girls being much more

likely to be subjected to cyberbullying, and others have found that gender is not a factor

in determining victimization. A study of 1,378 students by Hinduja and Patchin (2008)

found no significant differences between girls and boys as victims (32% of males and 36% of females were victims). Finkelhor, Mitchell, and Wolak (2005) also have found that boys and girls were about equally targeted for Internet harassment. Conversely, Kowalski and Limber (2007) found that while boys and men prefer to engage in more direct forms of aggression, girls are over-represented as both victims and perpetrators of cyberbullying. And in contrast to their 2008 study, Hinduja and Patchin (2009) looked more deeply at the issue of gender and found that girls are more likely to cyberbully and be cyberbullied because of the fact that cyberbullying is more text based. Additionally, girls are more likely to feel frustrated because of cyberbullying than males, but they are less likely to feel scared because of it (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009).

Although many issues related to cyberbullying remain unknown or unclear, the majority of studies currently available are related to the prevalence of the problem. While the percentages vary, and often significantly, it is clear that cyberbullying is an extraordinarily prevalent factor in the social lives of today's youth. In a study by Hinduja and Patchin (2007) of 384 teens, 30% reported being victims of online bullying, 11% reported bullying others online, and 47% have reported witnessing cyberbullying. Beran and Li (2007) surveyed 432 adolescents and found that 58% have experienced cyberbullying at least once. Ybarra and Mitchell (2008) studied 1,588 youth and found that 33% reported being harassed online in the past year. Even though those numbers vary, there is some evidence suggesting that the prevalence of cyberbullying is increasing as adolescents become more accustomed to various forms of technological communication. For example, a study in 2001 found that only 11% of students reported being victims of cyberbullying, and 13% reported being bullies themselves (Nansel et.

al., 2001). Hinduja and Patchin (2004) found the approximately 30% of students were victims of cyberbullying, but when they replicated the same study later on with a larger sample size, they also found that number to increase (Hinduja & Patchin, 2004; Hinduja & Patchin, 2008a).

There is a body of evidence that also suggests that a large number of victims are victims of more than one form of harassment. In a study of over 1,500 adolescents, 73% of the teens that reported being victims of cyberbullying also reported being an offline victim at least once (Ybarra, Mitchell, & Finkelhor, 2007). A study of 1,454 teens between the ages of 12 and 17 by Juvonen and Gross (2008) found that of the 72% who reported at least one incident of online bullying, 85% also experienced bullying at school.

Effects of Cyberbullying

Despite the fact that extensive research has yet to be conducted to help fully understand the effects of cyberbullying, scholars have concluded that, at the very least, children who are targeted by cyberbullying display negative reactions that are similar to those of children who are victims of traditional bullying (Beran & Li, 2007). In fact, it could be argued that the effects of cyberbullying are even more damaging than those of traditional bullying since victims cannot as easily escape the wrath or their tormentors (Brown, Jackson and Cassidy, 2006). Since these cyber attacks become permanent once they have been introduced to the online world, students may in fact experience a prolonged sense of victimization because of continually revisiting the incident, thus leading depression and other types of mental disorders (Brown et al., 2006).

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Researchers have concluded that adolescents who are socially well adjusted and who have strong parental support are much less likely to feel the more extreme effects of cyberbullying; the students who struggle with more severe cases of cyber victimization are those who also have problems with social adjustment (Feinberg & Robey, 2009; Dempsey et al., 2009). These students are ones who feel the major effects because they do not feel as though they have any power to stop the harassment, which ultimately makes them feel severely humiliated even if there are no other witnesses to the attack (Raskauskas & Stoltz, 2007; Beran & Li, 2005).

Cyberbullying has been linked to multiple maladaptive emotional, psychological, and behavioral outcomes (Hinduja & Patchin, 2006). The physical and metal effects of cyberbullying vary depending on the victim, but the consequences include low self-esteem, anxiety, feeling sad, being scared, feeling embarrassed, depression, anger, truancy, decreased academic achievement, an increased tendency to violate others, school violence, and suicide (Willard, 2006; Beran & Li, 2005; Hinduja & Patchin, 2007; Hinduja & Patchin, 2009). There is a relationship between Internet harassment and depressive symptomatology, with targets of online harassment reporting more frequent cases than non-targets (Ybarra, Mitchell, & Finkelhor, 2007; Ybarra, 2004).

Raskauskas and Stoltz (2007) studied 84 adolescents about cyberbullying, and they found that 93% of those who were identified as victims believed that their experiences had negatively affected them. While this may be a higher percentage than most other studies, researchers are continually seeing a high number of students who experience one or more of the negative effects associated with cyberbullying victimization. For example, in a study of 384 students, Hinduja and Patchin (2007) found that 42.5% of the

cyberbullying victims felt frustrated, 40% were angry, 27% were sad, and 31.9%

experienced repercussions at school. Mitchell, Wolak, and Finkelhor (2004) found that

of over 1,500 youth surveyed, approximately one-third felt at least one negative effect

because of a cyberbullying incident. Another study found that 38% of cyberbullying

victims felt very or extremely upset or afraid, with some becoming very jumpy or

irritable because they were unable to stop thinking about an incident (Wolak et al., 2006).

Because of the pervasive effects felt by cyberbullying victims, there are often

behavior, academic, or attendance problems that permeate into the school environment.

Since this happens with relative regularity, cyberbullying is an issue that schools are

forced to address. Students who are victims of cyberbullying report having unfavorable

attitudes towards school, they demonstrate behavior problems while at school, they have

higher rates of substance abuse problems, and report higher frequency of peer aggression

(Hinduja & Patchin, 2007; Ybarra, 2004; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004a). They are less likely

to come to school, have difficulty concentrating while at school, receive lower grades

than students who are not victims, have elevated levels of distress, and are more likely to

encounter instances of face-to-face bullying while at school (Juvonen & Gross, 2008;

Beran & Li, 2007). These students are also more likely to have received detentions and

suspensions from school, and most alarmingly, students who have been targets of Internet

harassment were eight times more likely to report carrying a weapon to school in the past

month (Burgess & Cavanaugh, 2009; Ybarra et al., 2007).

Effects of Traditional Bullying

Traditional, or face-to-face bullying, has been a concern of adolescents for generations. Because of its history, researchers know much more about the effects of traditional bullying. Since the preliminary research on cyberbullying has indicated that its effects are at least similar to those of traditional bullying (Beran & Li, 2007), it is important to also be aware of what the research has discovered in relation to traditional bullying.

Like cyberbullying, consequences of bullying include psychological and psychosomatic distress and severe emotional problems (Natvig, Albreksten, & Quarstrom, 2001; Rigby, 2003; Roland, 2002; Seals & Young, 2003). Even so much as a single incident of bullying at school can have negative effects, with children suffering from such maladaptive outcomes as heightened levels of anxiety, loneliness, sadness, insecurity, substance abuse, delinquent behavior, post-traumatic stress disorder, sexual disorders, eating disorders, risky sexual behavior, and risk for re-victimization (Nishina & Juvonene, 2005; Frost, 1991; Hawker & Boulton, 2000; Saunders, 2003). Adolescents who report more than one type of victimization (e.g. sexual abuse, physical abuse, peer victimization) have proven to have significantly higher rates of symptoms such as anxiety or depression than adolescents who experience only one single type of victimization (Finkelhor et al., 2007).

Victimization of bullying can disrupt adolescents' emotional and social development even as they move on into adulthood (Raskauskas & Stoltz, 2007). Being a victim of traditional bullying increases the chances of experiencing suicidal thoughts in adults by approximately 20 percent (Van der Wal et al., 2003), and it is clearly linked to other

deviant behaviors such as vandalism, shoplifting, dropping out of school, drug use, and violent behavior such as fighting (Ericson, 2001; Olweus et al., 1999a; Patchin, 2002; Rigby, 2003).

Differences Between Traditional Bullying and Cyberbullying

While face-to-face bullying has been studied in-depth for quite some time, the research on cyberbullying is still very new. Little research has been performed that has adequately examined the relationship between bullying at school and cyberbullying, so its similarity to traditional bullying remains relatively unknown (Raskauskas & Stoltz, 2007; Beran & Li, 2007). Hinduja and Patchin (2008) postulate that one main difference between the two forms of harassment is that where physical power is an essential component of traditional bullying, computer proficiency alone is enough to empower one to commit such acts online. Brown, Jackson, and Cassidy (2006) concur with this belief when they stated "since there is seemingly very little supremacy difference in cyber-bullying, students who are disempowered in the real world or are victims of face-to-face bullying, may resort to aggression through anonymity or fake identities" (p. 6).

Because cyberbullying does not take place in person, it can occur at any time. The fact that electronic bullying messages can be distributed to such a wide audience in such a short amount of time certainly heightens children's perceptions of vulnerability (Kowalski & Limber, 2007). The anonymity that accompanies such distribution can be a difference for both the perpetrator and the victim, because the aggressor cannot immediately see the reaction of their victim and their audience, and the victim may not be aware of the assault or the extent of the assault until a later time (Bauman, 2009). Since

the aggressors cannot immediately see a reaction from their victims or their audience, cyberbullying may in fact be worse than face-to-face bullying because the perpetrators often increase the intensity and frequency of their attacks without fully realizing the ramifications of their actions (Feinberg & Robey, 2009).

How Cyberbullying Occurs

Cyberbullying can take place in many shapes and in many locations. Willard (2004) identified seven distinct categories of common cyberbullying: flaming, which is sending angry or rude messages about a person to an online group; online harassment, which is repeatedly sending private messages to another person; cyberstalking, which is online threats that include threats of harm or excessive intimidation; denigration, which is sending shameful, untrue, or cruel statements about a person to other people; masquerading, which is pretending to be someone else and posting information to make someone else look bad; outing, which is sending sensitive material about someone else which may be embarrassing; and exclusion, which is cruelly and intentionally excluding someone from an online group. These types of behaviors can occur in numerous places. Cyberbullies can commit their acts through e-mail, instant messages, text messages, picture messages, posts on online bulletin boards or social networking web sites such as Facebook or MySpace (Juvonen & Gross, 2008; Hinduja & Patchin, 2009). Additionally, students can create virtual worlds, voting or rating web sites, or they can hack into other students' computers and spread private information that was not meant to be seen by others (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009; Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2009).

The topic of text messaging has yielded some research with contradicting results. Where Cassidy, Jackson, and Brown (2009) believe that cyberbullying does not occur through text messaging, and where Hinduja & Patching (2007) have indicated that fewer than 5% of cyberbullying incidents occurred via cell phone, many other researchers have identified cell phones and text messaging as the primary means through which cyberbullying occurs. In one study, it was determined that phone calls and text messages were the most common forms of cyberbullying (Smith et al., 2008). Raskauskas and Stoltz (2007) concurred with this finding when they surveyed 84 middle school students and found that the most common form of electronic bullying occurred via cell phone. Since most youth have their own cell phones, and since most of these phones possess text, picture, and video capabilities, the ability to send malicious information through the cell phone increases tremendously (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009). Unfortunately, these advanced cell phones have taken cyberbullying to another level as there have been increased instances of students photographing or videotaping other students in the bathroom or in locker rooms and then distributing the photos to other students in school (Raskauskas & Stoltz, 2007). In fact, despite the intense popularity of web sites such as Facebook and MySpace, Bauman (2009) conducted a study that indicated that cyberbullying occurs more often via text messaging than it does through these and other types of social networking web sites.

Despite the growing body of literature supporting text messaging as the primary means through which cyberbullying occurs, there remain numerous researchers whose studies have indicated that parents, students, school officials, and lawmakers must remain concerned about a variety of different avenues for cyberbullying. In a study of 1,588

youth, Ybarra and Mitchell (2008) found that 55% of cyberbullying occurs through instant messaging and 27% occurred through social networking web sites. Mitchell, Wolak, and Finkelhor (2004) conducted a study that concurred with these results when they found that roughly 65% of Internet harassment occurred through instant messaging and chat rooms. There appears to be no increase or decrease in cyberbullying prevalence when comparing private schools to public schools (Dowell, Burgess, & Cavanaugh, 2009), but there is enough evidence to believe that the majority of cyberbullying acts , aside from texting, are committed outside of the school day and off of the school campus (Agatson, Kowalski, & Limber, 2007).

Students Who Cyberbully

Although the primary focus of cyberbullying research initially centered around its effects on victims, there is an increase in the attention given to the psychology behind why the aggressors of this behavior perform their acts. Research is beginning to show that cyberbullying is typically a reaction to something that has happened at school, usually when a student retaliates through digital media to an event in which they were victimized themselves in some way while at school (Cassidy, Jackson, & Brown, 2009; Brown et al., 2006). In fact, nearly three quarters of students surveyed about cyberbullying stated that it most likely was a result of something that happened at school and then continued on into home (Cassidy et al., 2009).

The current research surrounding students who engage in this type of behavior shows that cyberbullying typically reaches its peak in middle school students. Bauman (2009) found significant increases in the frequency of cyberbullying between the 5th and 6th

grades, with 5th grade students much less likely to engage in such behavior than middle or high school students. And while middle school in general seems to be the peak time for cyberbullying, the 6th grade in particular has been identified as a key age when adolescents begin engaging in various forms of deviant behavior (Bauman, 2009; Mustacchi, 2009). The validity of this research has been questioned, however, because although there have been higher reports of cyberbullying behaviors in middle school, older adolescents are much less likely to report being involved in or being victimized by such behavior (Raskauskas & Stoltz, 2007). Brunner and Lewis (2009) concur with this assumption, as they believe that older children simply become sneakier with their deviant behaviors, acting out when there is less of a chance for adult supervision.

Where age has seemingly been identified as a major factor in determining which students are at risk for engaging in cyberbullying, gender has not. Ybarra, Mitchell, and Finkelhor (2007) found that nearly half of cyber aggressors are male. Dowell, Burgess, and Cavanaugh (2009) conducted a study of 404 adolescents and found that 29.5% of boys and 27.8% of girls reported that they had posted at least something online that was rude or aggressive. Since such a simple demographic was not very useful identifying who performs these acts and why they are performed, another factor has been repeatedly identified by researchers.

Parental guidance, quality of home life, and subsequent juvenile delinquency has clearly been identified as a major fact in identifying students who engage in cyberbullying. Ybarra and Mitchell (2004b) found that weak emotional relationships between children and caregivers, along with drug use, are significant characteristics of online bullies. Furthermore, teens that have experienced negative events in their personal

lives, who are depressed, or who are alienated from their parents are at higher risk for inappropriate online behaviors (Mitchell et al., 2007; Mitchell et al., 2001; Wolak et al., 2003). Bauman (2009) uncovered a telling fact in determining that students who are cyberbullies are almost four times less likely to share their online passwords with their parents or guardians. Additionally, bullies are more likely than non-bullies to engage in fighting, drinking, tobacco use, they are more likely to perform worse in school, and their dropout rates are much higher (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004b).

Since identifying students who cyberbullying cannot be done strictly through demographic information, it is important to explore what researchers have identified as other reasons why these behaviors occur. One study found that 14% of students who cyberbullied did so simply because they did not like the person, 13% did it because that person upset them, 10% did it in retaliation to being bullied themselves, 9% did it because their friends did it, and 7% did it simply because it was fun (Cassidy et al., 2009). Other studies have determined that revenge, being bullied in person, and doing it because the other person deserved it were the primary reasons for cyberbullying to occur (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009; Raskauskas & Stoltz, 2007). The perceived anonymity of life online may embolden students because it takes less courage to victimize others, and they are able to conduct their acts to a much larger audience (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009; Dempsey et al., 2009).

Beran and Li (2006) believe that adolescents engage in cyberbullying behaviors because of the anonymity involved, because a child who sends such harassing information has time to think about their message in order to maximize the potential damage, and they are able to do so with little or no immediate fear of physical or verbal

retaliation. While some acts of cyberbullying are significantly less malicious than others, researchers have identified such conscious efforts to cause harm as reason for great concern. There are a growing number of teens that seek the pleasure or perceived social benefits from causing significant harm to other students (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009).

While some students seek recognition for their acts of malevolence, there are a large number of adolescents who engage in online harassment because they believe their identities will remain concealed. In fact, some cyber aggressors may even be more volatile due to this misconception (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006). However, Juvonen and Gross (2008) published a study where they surveyed 1,454 students and found that 73% of cyberbullying victims were at least pretty sure who their aggressors were. Kowalski and Limber (2007) believe that some of these aggressors can essentially protect themselves from the knowledge that they are even doing anything wrong since they are unable to immediately see the harm they are causing their targets. On the other hand, other students go to great lengths to be able to determine exactly how much damage they are causing. Another online behavior that is becoming frequently prevalent is online interaction where individuals assume a false identity. A recent study showed that 52% of adolescents revealed that they often pretend to be someone else online (Cassidy et al., 2009). Gross (2004) conducted a study of 175 participants and found that 41% reported that they pretended to be someone else online a couple of times, and 10% reported that they did it either occasionally, pretty often, or all the time.

Reporting Cyberbullying

One of the potential reasons for researchers not having a comprehensive grasp in addressing cyberbullying behaviors could be because of the litany of research supporting the notion that adolescents are extremely reluctant to report their experiences to anyone at all. Cassidy et al. (2009) conducted a study and found that about half of the students they surveyed would not report cyberbullying to school personnel, 74% stated that they would in fact tell their friends, and 57% indicated that they would tell their parents. Additionally, nearly a quarter of those students indicated that they would not tell anyone at all, and they indicated that police action was the least likely course of action in cases of victimization (Cassidey et al., 2009).

Juvonen and Gross (2008) studied 1,454 students and found that an alarming 90% of students did not tell an adult about cyberbullying instances. Hinduja and Patchin (2007) found similar results in their study when they found that although 56% of students felt comfortable talking to their friends about their experiences, fewer than 9% of victims reported it to a teacher or an adult. Fortunately, positive trend could be emerging as people become more conscious about this phenomenon. In 2004, a study of over 1,500 adolescents found that only 6% of victims reported cyberbullying to an adult (Mitchell et al., 2004). While Hinduja and Patchin's (2007) study yielded similar results, a study two years later by the same researchers showed that 40% of victims did in fact report their experiences to an adult (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009). However, Bauman (2009) conducted a study in which only 12% of victims reported cyberbullying to an adult, with only 9% informing their parents of their experiences. A telling statistic that highlights the need for parents to become more aware of cyberbullying is that although only 9% of students

indicated that they had informed their parents about cyberbullying victimization, an astounding 84% of parents believe that their child would talk to them if they had experienced cyberbullying (Bauman, 2009).

Reporting instances of cyberbullying has become a major concern of researchers, and there are studies suggesting that age is a key demographic indicating the likelihood of students sharing their experiences with an adult. Younger victims are much more likely to report instances of cyberbullying to school personnel than high school students, and students who have witnessed cyberbullying are more likely to report it than are students who have been actual victims (Cassidy et al., 2009). Hinduja and Patchin (2009) attribute the trends of younger students becoming more willing to report cyberbullying to the fact that messages about Internet safety have had a positive impact.

There are many reasons why adolescents have remained so hesitant to report cyberbullying to adults, but one of the primary reasons that keeps surfacing in the research is because they feel that if they tell their parents about their experiences, their parents will subsequently restrict their access to the Internet and cell phones (Cassidy et al., 2009; Bauman, 2009; Agatson et al., 2007). The fear of parental intervention was most prominent among 12- to 14- year old girls (Juvonen & Gross, 2008). Other reasons for not reporting instances of cyberbullying also include the fact that some teens simply feel that they have to learn to deal with it on their own, and many fail to make reports out of fear of retaliation (Cassidy et al., 2009; Juvonen & Gross, 2008; Brunner & Lewis, 2009).

The majority of research on reporting cyberbullying to adults has centered on the issue of why students fail to report their experiences specifically to school personnel.

Cassidy et al.'s (2009) study found that 30% of students don't report their experiences to school personnel due to fear of retaliation, 29% don't believe it is the school's problem, 27% don't believe school personnel are able to help, 26% believe it could get their friends in trouble, and 20% indicated that they did not want to be labeled as "rats". Agatson et al. (2007) also found that students fail to report instances to school personnel because the majority of them happen at school via cell phone, so they will end up getting their phones confiscated since cell phone usage is a violation of school policy. Other reasons that victims fail to report their experiences to school personnel include the belief that adults are not able to help them, the belief that adults will actually make the situation worse, and the belief that adults will either not believe the report or that the incident will be extensively trivialized (Brunner & Lewis, 2009; Agatson et al., 2007; Hinduja & Patchin, 2009; Campbell, 2005).

Solutions to Cyberbullying

Unfortunately, there is no magical bullet that will protect all adolescents from cyberbullying, but there are steps that can be taken to reduce its frequency and impact (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009). Given the fact that the majority of teens do not feel that adults are capable of stopping cyberbullying from occurring, educators need to begin by communicating an awareness of the problem, a willingness to help, and by showing some action and fostering the self-esteem of youth (Feinberg & Robey, 2009; Cassidy et al., 2009). Schools are not able to reasonably solve the problem by merely blocking all access to technology, so such an approach would not be an appropriate course of action (Brown, Cassidy, & Jackson, 2006; Hinduja & Patchin, 2009). Instead, it is

recommended that schools take a proactive, educational approach towards dealing with cyberbullying.

It's not necessarily a lost cause to provide Internet education to juniors or seniors in high school, but since students begin exploring life online around the 4th or 5th grade, Internet education needs to begin at a very early age (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009; Dowell et al., 2009). Some studies have suggested that setting up anonymous means of reporting and punishing aggressors are effective, but providing education remains the key factor in reducing the prevalence of cyberbullying (Cassidy et al., 2009; Hinduja & Patchin, 2009; Dowell et al., 2009). Beran & Li (2007) assert that cyberbullying intervention plans require the efforts of administration, teachers, students, parents, and community members alike. Students should be exposed to a climate that actively identifies cyberbullying as a behavior that is not tolerated, and they should be exposed to curricular enhancements and assembly programs that support the school's belief towards appropriate use of technology (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009). An additional suggestion is to identify student leaders who can provide peer mentoring where they teach younger students about reacting to and preventing cyberbullying (Mustacchi, 2009).

An aspect of this recommended initiative for schools to remember is to teach students how to respond to experiences when they do not have school personnel who can immediately provide them with assistance. Since students will eventually be exposed to inappropriate content at some point while online, it makes sense to provide them with the tools to properly address those situations before they occur (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009). Some popular strategies that students have identified include blocking instant messages, changing e-mail addresses, changing phone numbers, ignoring minor instances, not

responding to the bully, and logging all evidence of bullying (Smith et al, 2008; Hinduja & Patchin, 2009; Feinberg & Robey, 2009). In fact, nearly 65% of adolescents have reported having to use instant messenger blocking at least once (Dwyer, 2007). Not only should this type of education be provided to students, but it imperative that parents and guardians are also educated on the topic (Bauman, 2009).

Teen Internet Use

In a period of time where nearly 100% of teenagers have access to the Internet (Beran & Li, 2007), it appears natural that aggressive behavior would migrate towards the digital world. With its limitless amount of information and instant means of communication, the Internet provides teens with a means of establishing their own identity through the use of exploring (Bullen & Hare, 2000).

The percentage of teens using the Internet has increased dramatically since the year 2000 (Mitchell et al., 2007). A 2006 study of 935 teenagers found that 55% have online profiles and that 49% post personal information (Lenhart & Madden, 2007). A random telephone survey of 700 teenagers in 2007 found that 94% of teens in America use the Internet, 63% do so daily, 35% log on multiple times per day, and 93% access the Internet from more than one location (Lenhart et al., 2008). Mitchell et al. (2004) also found that a large percentage (84%) of youth access the Internet from locations other than home. It also appears as though adolescents are beginning to spend an exorbitant amount of time online, as teenagers spend an average of about 18 hours per week on the Internet (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008). Wells and Mitchell (2008) concur with statistic as they

studied nearly 1,500 adolescents and found that approximately one-third of them reported very high levels of Internet and chat room use.

As is consistent with cyberbullying victimization, researchers tend to differ in their reports of gender as a factor in Internet usage. Bullen and Hare (2000) do not believe that there are any major differences in Internet usage between genders, ethnic groups, or socioeconomic groups. Gross (2004) agrees with this assertion in a study of 261 youth that showed no major differences in the percentage of boys and girls who use the Internet. However, Dowell et al. (2009) conducted a study of 404 youth and found that girls spend a significantly larger amount of more time on the computer than boys. Girls use e-mail, write on blogs, comment on blogs, visit web sites, use instant message, and find the Internet as more important than boys, while boys use the Internet more for games and instant messaging (Dowell et al., 2009; Bauman, 2009; Ybarra et al., 2007). Along with gender, age is another factor that significantly impacts Internet usage as older students are much more likely to use the Internet and cell phones than students in elementary school (Bauman, 2009).

A final demographic characteristic that research has identified as an important factor in Internet use and habits is the amount of parental involvement and support at home. Research has shown that adolescents whose parents are active and aware of their children's' Internet habits are more able to protect themselves online (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010). Additionally, high-risk youth are more likely to use the Internet at a friend's house, and more than 40% of risky online behavior occurs when teens are using the Internet with their friends (Wells & Mitchell, 2008; Ybarra et al., 2007).

Social Networking

Social networking, a concept that was scarcely heard of until fairly recently, has

exploded into becoming a central part of the social lives of the majority of adolescents

today. Internet-based communities such as MySpace, Facebook, and Twitter have risen

in popularity from 500,000 users worldwide in 2004 to 212 million in 2007 (Hinduja &

Patchin, 2009). The explosion in social networking popularity has continued to soar with

nearly 800 million users in 2011 connected to at least one of the three major social

networking communities (Schonfeld, 2010, Carlson, 2011, & Bercovici, 2010). There are

many positive aspects of the social networking world as teens have opportunities to keep

in touch with family and friends regardless of geographic location, and students can often

obtain a different perspective of life as a result of social interactions that they otherwise

would not have had (Hinduja &Patchin, 2009; Brown et al., 2006). In fact, nearly half of

all adolescents communicate with friends and meet new friends via online social

networking web sites (Lenhart & Madden, 2007).

The primary avenue for younger teens to engage in social networking was originally

through MySpace. In late 2007, nearly 80% of online networking was done via MySpace

(Reuters, 2006). However, a dramatic shift has occurred in recent years with Facebook

exploding in popularity and the number of MySpace users dwindling rapidly. As of

January 2011, Facebook had approximately 600 million users (Carlson, 2011). As of

July 2010, Twitter had approximately 190 million users (Schonfeld, 2010). Strikingly,

the number of MySpace users has been difficult to pinpoint exactly, but Bercovici (2010)

estimates that the number falls well below 100 million, perhaps as low as 18 million.

One study of social networking found that 21% of adolescents do it several times a day,

58% do it at least occasionally, and only 16% of adolescents do not visit any type of social networking web sites (Dwyer, 2007).

With the exploding popularity of social networking comes the importance of information that is made available to the public via individual profiles. Hinduja and Patchin (2010) believe that the majority of youth are demonstrating common sense when it comes to posting personal content that is available for public view, with only a small percentage of adolescents using inappropriate language or demonstrating use of illicit substances. However, other studies do not agree with this assertion. Pierce (2007) conducted an analysis of 700 MySpace profiles that found that although most profiles did not contain personal information such as phone numbers or addresses, 59% of the profiles found pictures with sexual poses, 28% had partial male frontal nudity, 17% had partial female frontal nudity, 2% had full male nudity, and 6% had full female nudity. A 2008 study of over 8,000 MySpace profiles found that males are more likely to use inappropriate language on their profiles, females are more likely to be looking for friendship, and males are more likely to be interested in romantic or sexual relationships (Thelwall, 2008b).

These findings provide evidence that although there are many benefits to social networking, the importance of Internet safety continues to increase. MySpace has adopted a number of measures to protect their users, such as airing public-service announcements, using rotating web banner ads, and hiring a chief security officer whose job is to work on criminal behavior (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010). And while social networking sites have taken measures to ensure the safety of their visitors, none of these measures are foolproof (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009).

Cell Phones

Although previous research studies showed inconsistencies regarding the role cell

phones play in cyberbullying, it appears evident, especially with the introduction of smart

phones with access to MySpace, Facebook, and Twitter that cell phones will continue to

be an increasing means through which adolescents demonstrate aggressive behavior

(Agatson et al., 2007). In 2005, approximately half of all students had personal cell

phones that had text messaging capabilities (Lenhart et al., 2005). That number increased

to approximately 65% in 2007 and 72% in 2008 (Raskauskas & Stoltz, 2007; DeAvila,

2008). Dwyer (2007) found that of 42% of teens text all the time, 11% text frequently,

42% text occasionally, and only 5% of teens do not text at all. With the newest

capabilities of cell phones including pictures and videos, educators need to be aware of

the potential for serious harmful uses of cell phones (Bauman, 2009). Since completely

banning these items is an ineffective and inappropriate approach (Hinduja & Patchin,

2009), schools must devise ways to incorporate technology, including cell phones, into

the daily lives of students.

Sexting

Sexting, which is sending or forwarding nude or provocative photos of oneself

through a cell phone or e-mail, was listed on *Time* magazine's top buzzword of 2009

(Stephey, 2009). The recent emergence of sexting by adolescents has caused a great deal

of concern by school administrators, teachers, and parents (Manzo, 2009). Unfortunately,

while adults seem to have a more complete grasp of the ramifications of sexting, its rise

in popularity suggests that teens do not (Taylor, 2009). Even though many adolescents

may have innocent intentions when sending or distributing these images, the act of distributing nude or sexually explicit photos of underage children is in fact considered felony use of child pornography (Taylor, 2009). As instances of sexting become more prominent in the news, Taylor (2009) hopes that the embarrassment that continues to be portrayed in the media will begin bring a halt to such behavior.

As has been seen in other forms of cyberbullying, it is imperative for school officials and personnel to learn about the issue of sexting and work with parents and law enforcement officials in hopes of getting through to teens the seriousness of the issue (Taylor, 2009). In fact, legal experts stress that without policies and protocols for dealing with sexting, educators themselves could get into trouble in certain cases and should therefore incorporate more precise rules around cell phone use (Manzo, 2009). However, stories of teenagers being arrested or suspended as a result of possessing some form of pornography obtained through sexting are becoming much more common (Taylor, 2009). Some of those students have faced legal consequences as severe as jail time and being forced to register as a sex offender (Manzo, 2009).

Siegle (2010) reports that 24% of 14- to 17- year olds have been involved in some type of naked sexting. Other reports found 20% of teenagers and 33% of young adults have reported sending nude or partially nude photos of themselves to someone else (Manzo, 2009). A study of 1,200 teens showed that nearly 40% of teens have admitted to having sent sexually revealing information to others (National Campaign, 2008). Researchers are discovering that females are much more likely to send nude photos of themselves to others, with over 60% reporting having done so because they felt pressured by someone else (Siegle, 2010). Unfortunately, the increase in prevalence of such

behavior has also seen a corresponding spike in severe consequences. In addition to jail

time and registering as a sex offender, cases of suicide as a result of sexting are becoming

more common (Manzo, 2009). Zetter (2009) told the story of an Ohio girl who

committed suicide after her ex-boyfriend shared nude photos she had sent him with

others following a break up. The photo was so widely shared, and the embarrassment she

faced on a daily basis was so severe, that she eventually felt compelled to take her own

life (Zetter, 2009). While this example is but one of many, cases similar to this are

occurring much more frequently as this epidemic moves forward.

<div align="center">Information for Parents</div>

The issue of cyberbullying is especially daunting for parents since many of them are

unfamiliar with the technologies used by their own children (Lenhart et al., 2006). But

this is all the more reason for parents to get involved in all facets of their children's

technological lives, because their parents' ignorance makes it that much easier for them

to engage in such behaviors with little fear of being caught (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009).

Compounding the problem is the fact that a large percentage of youth report being

completely unsupervised while online (Bullen & Hare, 2000).

Since there are so many benefits as well as dangers, and since so many children have

such superior technological knowledge than their parents, the best approach for parents

and guardians appears to be ongoing education and caution (Bullen & Hare, 2000).

Juvonen and Gross (2008) believe that both parents and youth would benefit from

increasing their knowledge of the variety of tools available to them through the Internet

and cell phones. In addition to becoming more familiar with the digital social lives of

their children, parents need educating on cyberbullying so that they themselves are able to teacher their children how it can be avoided, how to react when it happens, and how to properly react so that the situation is appropriately resolved (Brunner & Lewis, 2009).

In addition to increasing their knowledge base, parents need to establish and maintain open and honest dialogue with their children regarding their lives online. Guidelines should be established for Internet behavior, and these behaviors should be at least communicated regularly to ensure that they remain appropriate (Kowalski & Limber, 2007). Since prohibiting Internet use outside of the home may be nearly impossible, this type of communication and education remains the most integral tool a parent has (Bullen & Hare, 2000). If these are established, children will find it much easier to approach their parents for help when confronted with instances of cyberbullying (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009). And while many parents are primarily concerned about the use of MySpace and Facebook, only 27% of cyberbullying occurs on social networking web sites (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2008). Instead, parents should also focus on cell phone use, e-mails, instant messaging, and simply the people with whom their children associate socially (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2008).

Another factor that may often be overlooked is that of privacy. There are many ways that parents can monitor their child's online social life, but it is very important to be in proximity while they are online, to go online with their children, and to inquire about the people with whom they associate (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009). Parents are encouraged to ensure that none of their child's online actives remain private. Information that supports this notion lies in the fact that students who cyberbully and victims of cyberbullying are almost four times more likely to not share their online passwords with their parents

(Bauman, 2009). The issue of being open and honest, however, remains a two way street. Many parents have seen fit to incorporate some sort of filters or tracking software so that they can monitor their children's behaviors. Despite the fact that many children, especially boys, are able to override or manipulate filters or blocking systems (Dowell et al. 2009), this can be an effective method if approached properly. It is recommended that parents who do this be upfront and honest with their children about their filtering because covert and spying behavior, if discovered, will significantly increase the distrust and ultimately make the problem worse (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009).

Finally, parents should be aware of the warning signs that could potentially signify the fact that their child is either a bully or a victim. Telltale signs that a student may be a cyberbullying victim include a sudden stoppage of computer use, becoming nervous when receiving a phone call, e-mail, or text, being afraid to go to school, acting unhappy or depressed after being on the computer, or becoming suddenly withdrawn (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009). Although much of the research for parents addresses how to react when their child is a victim, it is important for parents to be realistic and understand that their child may also be a bully themselves. If parents notice their children laughing or acting strangely while online, suddenly minimizing or exiting out of programs when they walk by, or become upset or defensive when asked what they are doing online, then they should really consider the fact that their child may be engaging in some sort of destructive online behaviors (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009).

School Responses to Cyberbullying

Although school officials are becoming more familiar with the term of cyberbullying and its effects, many are still puzzled regarding how to respond when instances of cyberbullying are actually reported to them. Although suspension, expulsion, or police involvement are rarely the most appropriate reaction, school officials owe it to the student reporting the instance to act swiftly and appropriately so that they student's stress may be alleviated by seeing that the school does take these cases seriously (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009). Since merely telling students to turn a computer or cell phone off are not practical and not realistic, schools need to implement written policies that systematically outline a consistent approach to dealing with these problems (Campbell, 2005; Hinduja & Patchin, 2009).

When school officials are made aware of a case of cyberbullying, Hinduja and Patchin (2009) suggest that schools should first ensure the safety of the victim, then gather as much information as possible regarding the case, involve all parents and law enforcement if necessary, enforce discipline, and contact legal counsel if considering long-term removal from the school campus. As more adults become aware of cyberbullying and its impact on a school campus, hopefully there will be fewer instances of adults laughing off or thinking these cases are infantile or silly. Campbell (2005) stresses that in order to improve the likelihood that students will report their experiences; schools should take all reports seriously and work diligently with parents and students to adequately resolve the problem.

School Policy

As cyberbullying has gained attention through the media, many school districts have responded by adding cyberbullying into their district policies. Since schools and districts cannot simply ban or ignore cell phones and the Internet, they have a responsibility to protect themselves from liability by having a comprehensive policy that clearly defines, prohibits, and outlines consequences for cyberbullying and other forms of electronic harassment (Smith et al., 2008; Hinduja & Patchin, 2009). While some maintain that schools and districts cannot monitor cyberbullying behavior because it takes place off campus, policies must be in place to educate students and assist victims since the consequences of online harassment often arise at school the next day (Brown et al., 2006). Schools who maintain a proactive approach to cyberbullying, and whose policies include providing education, counseling, and pro-social outlets, are going to be much more successful in reducing the prevalence of cyberbullying and its subsequent effects (Hinduja & Patchin, 2007).

In order to gain the trust of students, school policies must strictly state and enforce intolerance of any form of harassment or intimidation (Juvonen & Gross, 2008). The climate of the school can greatly impact the effectiveness of proactive schools. Schools should provide an empathetic, understanding environment where students feel comfortable talking to adults (Hinduja & Patchin, 2007). A generation gap currently exists due to lack of understanding technology, and many teens are not comfortable working with adults when it comes to instances of cyberbullying. Until that gap narrows, teens are going to remain hesitant about talking openly to authority figures (Juvonen & Gross, 2008). Victims who go to a school where it has been openly communicated that

adults will take their experiences seriously report being much more likely to tell adults about their experiences than students who do not have this type of confidence in their teachers or their administration (Hinduja & Patchin, 2007).

The problem with many initial school and district policies is that they simply ban cyberbullying and outline punishment for engaging in the behavior. While this is a necessary component of any policy, merely engaging in a military style zero tolerance policy can be ineffective and potentially even counterproductive (Shariff, 2004). Hinduja and Patchin (2007) believe it is currently unclear whether or not threats of punitive sanctions have any effect at all. However, it is clear that schools and districts must have some form of written policy in place if they intend in implementing any form of punishment for cyberbullying. Schools that have not kept their behavioral policies up to date have struggled to implement long-term behavioral consequences when cyberbullying has occurred (Boucek, 2009).

While the solution to cyberbully remains perfectly unclear, it is known that shirking responsibility on the issue is simply not an effective approach (Ford, 2009). There aren't any cyberbullying programs current in place that have been fully studied for their effectiveness, but there are numerous programs that have been created to combat traditional bullying that have been found to work (Hinduja & Patchin, 2007). And although the research on the effectiveness of these programs with relation to cyberbullying is incomplete, there is a belief that the methods used to stop traditional bullying will also be effective in combating cyberbullying (Ford, 2009).

Even though the effectiveness of cyberbully prevention programs is unknown, there are steps that administrators and teachers should take to ensure that their cyberbullying

policies address the needs of their students. Administrators need to ensure that school rules include specific language about cyberbullying and the consequences for cyberbullying, and they should work diligently with teachers, parents, and students to raise awareness of the problem (Kowalski & Limber, 2007; Brunner & Lewis, 2009). Hinduja and Patchin (2009) believe that effective school policies should specifically define all possible means of harassment, the punishments should increase dramatically, education should be provided to the aggressors, policies should include language that specifically addresses off-campus incidents, they should establish a reporting procedure, and they should outline how reports will be investigated. Campbell (2005) believes that even if districts or states adopt universal policies, schools should develop and implement one within the district's parameters that meets the individual needs of their own population. It is also imperative that these policies stress values, kindness, and restorative justice in order to prevent cyberbullying from occurring (Campbell, 2005). Since parental involvement remains such a key factor in most facets of education, it is recommended that cyberbullying be a part of each school's Acceptable Use Policy (AUP), and it is recommended that parents be required to sign the AUPs as well as the students (Brown et al., 2006).

The implementation of cyberbullying policies is not merely the responsibility of the school. Districts and policymakers are also urged to revise the language in current policies to include various forms of electronic harassment, and these revisions should, as much as possible, include language anticipating what cyberbullying may look like in the future (Brown et al., 2006). For instance, since sexting is such a new and extreme phenomenon, policymakers are urged to look at technological innovations that are in the

works and include clear definitions and consequences for how behaviors such as sexting

may look in a few years (Boucek, 2009). Policymakers also need to take into account the

fact that many parents do not possess the technical knowledge their children do. With

that in mind, policies that include parental education are highly recommended (Brown et

al., 2006). Since students, staff, parents, and the public as a whole feel the effects of

cyberbullying, the development of effective policy requires a collaborative effort by all

parties involved (Brown et al., 2006).

With the increase in general awareness related to cyberbullying, more states are

directing districts to include digital forms of harassment in their policies. As of March

2008, 17 states had either proposed or passed cyberbullying laws (Hinduja & Patchin,

2009). Whether or not mandates have come from a higher level, schools and districts are

strongly urged to create policies that specifically define cyberbullying, include off-

campus incidents, delineate punishment, and identify proactive measures to be taken to

reduce the prevalence of the behavior (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009; Campbell, 2005; Brown

et al., 2006; Kowalski & Limber, 2007; Brunner & Lewis, 2009; Ford, 2009).

Legal Issues

Since schools have a fiduciary duty to ensure the safety of their students, there is

ample justification for their involvement in cases of cyberbullying that may originate

away from the school campus (Juvonen & Gross, 2008; Ford, 2009). Since instances that

begin off campus often are brought to school the next day, schools could potentially face

consequences for not acting in an appropriate manner (Smith et al., 2008; Brown et al.,

2006). In fact, administrators who fail to act in a way to protect their students when their

school does have a written cyberbullying policy, an act that is defined as deliberate indifference if a hostile environment is created, could be found legally liable (Trager, 2009; Kosse, 2001). Unfortunately for school officials, there are also consequences for responding inappropriately and unfairly punishing cyberbullying aggressors (Brown et al., 2006).

Trager (2009) believes that the *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District* (1969) is the founding case upon which schools and districts support having jurisdiction over behaviors that occur away from campus. The *Tinker* (1969) case involved three students who wore black armbands to school in protest of the Vietnam War. The principal then enforced a rule that students who wore armbands would be suspended from school until they agreed to refrain from wearing the armbands to school. These three students continued to wear armbands to school and were subsequently issued a lengthy suspension. The incident was taken to court and the courts ultimately ruled in favor of the students. However, the impact of this case was the fact that the court determined that freedom of speech does not allow students the right to act in a manner that disrupts the school climate or violates the rights of others. As Trager stated, "The *Tinker* standard offers an appropriate tool for schools to proscribe cyberbullying" (p. 557). Although some have argued that the *Tinker* case is not applicable when considering cases of cyberbullying, it is important to note that the case was supported because of the fact that the disruption of a school is not protected by freedom of speech (Trager, 2009).

It is widely assumed that educators can and must intervene in instances where cyberbullying interferes with the educational process (Hinduna & Patchin, 2009). Most

case law supports this notion even when the disruption occurs off school grounds (Trager, 2009), but there are a handful of instances in which courts have not supported the actions of schools when dealing with harassment that occurred off-campus. For instance, in the case of *Klein v. Smith* (1986), a student was suspended for ten days for extending his middle finger at a teacher while off campus. The parents filed a lawsuit and prevailed because the courts determined that the student's behaviors did not significantly impact the school (*Klein v. Smith,* 1986). A case that is more typical of cyberbullying was *Beussink v. Woodland R-IV School District* (1998), where a student was suspended for ten days for making posts on a web site that included profanities towards the school's administration. In this case, the court ruled that the school could not impose discipline for an act that did not occur at school simply because they were unhappy with the content (*Beussink v. Woodland R-IV School District,* 1998). A final case that did not end up favorably for schools was *Emmett v. Kent School District No. 415* (2000). In this case, a student was expelled for creating a web site that included the opportunity to vote on who should die next as well as mock obituaries for certain students. Even though the intended audience was members of the school, the court ruled against the school with the assumption that the speech was outside of the school's control (*Emmett v. Kent School District No. 415*, 2000)

Fortunately for schools, court rulings similar to those of *Emmett* are rare. Since many school district personnel are reluctant to get involved in cyberbullying cases out of fear of legal repercussions, schools desperately need the support of the court system to embrace jurisdiction of cases that originate away from school (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009; Trager,

2009). Luckily, the majority of court cases in the past decade have ruled in favor of the schools.

For example, in *Doe v. Pulanski County Special School District* (2001), the court ruled in favor of the school when they considered a threatening letter that was stolen from the writer's home and brought to school an actual threat. The *Morse v. Frederick* (2007) case yielded similar results when ruling that schools do have the authority to act if free speech could lead to violence. In *J.S. v. Bethlehem Area School District* (2000), a student created a web page that included numerous hurtful and profane pieces of information about a teacher, including an inappropriate list of reasons why that teacher should be fired. The school expelled the student, and the court upheld the expulsion because the web site created a major disruption to the teacher and the entire school community (*J.S. v. Bethlehem Area School District,* 2000).

Recent trends in court rulings seem to show that courts are not only supporting schools in cases where violence could be involved, but they are also supporting schools in cases where staff members are denigrated publicly. In *Doninger v. Niehoff* (2007), a student created a blog that was used to refer to the administration as "douchebags" and to tell students to harass an administrator for a decision that had previously been made. Although no direct threat of physical harm was made, the courts ruled that the student's actions caused a considerable disruption to the school environment and thus supported the school's disciplinary actions (*Doninger v. Niehoff,* 2007). In the case of *Wisniewski v. Board of Education of the Weedsport Central School District* (2007), a student sent an electronic image of his English teacher being shot in the head to some friends. The student received a suspension, and the court supported the school because the students

should have been aware of the disruption such an image would have initiated (*Wisniewski v. Board of Education of the Weedsport Central School District,* 2007).

Not surprisingly, the surge in popularity of social networking web sites has caused some cyberbullying cases to end up in court as well. For instance, in *Requa v. Kent School District No. 415* (2007), a student was suspended for uploading video on to You Tube and MySpace taken during class that mimicked a teacher and then added comments on the page making fun of the teacher. The court ruled in favor of the school and upheld the suspension (*Requa v. Kent School District No. 415,* 2007). A final case worth noting is *Layshock v. Hermitage School District* (2006). In this case, a student made postings on MySpace that made fun of the school's principal. Although no direct threats were made, and although there were no vulgarities included on the page, the courts still ruled in favor of the school because the page caused a disruption to the school environment.

There are many other cases similar to these, but the trends in court rulings should ease the tensions of teachers and school administrators. The debate over jurisdiction and free speech may remain, but the courts are regularly supporting schools for disciplining students who are guilty of cyberbullying.

Rationale for Current Study

Because the phenomena of cyberbullying is so new, and because there is so little research on the issue, there has not been enough time to properly evaluate intervention strategies or its full causes and consequences (Beran & Li, 2007; Hinduja & Patchin, 2009). While researchers are beginning to see that the school climate and mental health of students can be seriously compromised, there is a significant need for research to

further identify strategies for schools, parents, and students to incorporate in order to prevent and respond to digital forms of harassment (Raskauskas & Stoltz, 2007; Feinberg & Robey, 2009; Beran & Li, 2005). Schools and districts are beginning to include electronic forms or harassment as a part of their policies, but merely mentioning that cyberbullying is prohibited is clearly not a proven method in dealing with the problem. Schools are in need of research-based programs that are devised to deal with cyberbullying, and it will be important to continually evaluate the effectiveness of these programs (Ybarra et al., 2007).

To date, there is a lack of empirical evidence validating the effectiveness of cyberbullying intervention programs (Mason, 2008). But since so many adolescents feel that their schools do not adequately address cyberbullying, the need for future research to identify effective school policy remains strong (Bauman, 2009; Beran & Li, 2005). Although educators are beginning to gain a better understanding surrounding the issue, there are still major gaps in the literature suggesting that much more needs to be learned in order to help students prevent experiencing the many harmful effects of cyberbullying (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2008; Brown et all, 2006).

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Explanatory Design

This study was conducted using the mixed methods explanatory design. The

explanatory design is a two-phased mixed methods design that uses qualitative data to

explain quantitative results (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). Phase one of this two-phase

design consisted of collecting quantitative data. The second phase included the collection

and analysis of qualitative data that connected to the results from the quantitative study

(Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). There are two variants of the explanatory design: the

follow-up explanations model and the participant selection model (Creswell & Clark,

2007). The follow-up explanation model is used to obtain qualitative data to expand

upon findings from a quantitative study; the participant selection model uses quantitative

data to purposefully select participants for a qualitative study (Creswell & Plano Clark,

2007). This research study used the participant selection model because one of the

primary objectives of the quantitative portion of the study was to identify school leaders

with effective cyberbullying policies that can be interviewed for phase two. Of the

participant selection model, Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) stated "Investigators need

to specify criteria for the selection of participants for the qualitative phase of the

research" (p. 75). For this study, the criterion for the selection of participants for the

qualitative phase was administrators who have been identified as implementing effective

cyberbullying policies at their respective schools.

Quantitative Methodology

The quantitative data obtained in this study came from surveys issued to educational leaders at the middle school level. A cross-sectional survey design, which is one that collects all data at a single point in time to record data about present views on an issue (Creswell, 2008), was utilized to determine current practices by the participants. Since survey data can be used to determine individual opinions about policy issues, practices, which Creswell (2008) describes as actual behaviors, will be studied.

In selecting the population for this study, Creswell (2008) describes the *population* as all individuals who possess one characteristic distinguishing them from others, while the *target population* is the group of individuals in a population that can actually be used in the study (p. 393). For the purpose of this study, the *target population* was middle school principals in the state of Nevada.

To obtain information from the participants, an electronic questionnaire consisting of both open-ended and closed-ended questions was issued. The questions sought to understand how the participants address incidents of cyberbullying at their sites and whether or not they believe their actions have been effective. Since the term *effective* is very subjective, a working definition of the term for the context of this study was provided to each participant. In order to enhance the rate of response, the target population received a letter from the researcher in advance that introduced the purpose and significance of the study.

The descriptive data received from the survey highlighted the participants who felt most strongly that their efforts in dealing with cyberbullying have been effective. Once

all of the data had been received, three principals were selected for interviews to

complete the qualitative portion of this study (Creswell & Clark, 2007).

Qualitative Methodology

The participants in phase two were selected through purposeful sampling since their

survey data indicated an existing effective policy related to cyberbullying (Creswell,

2008).   Purposeful sampling is beneficial because a researcher is able to identify

particular subjects that are best believed to be able to expand upon a particular idea or

theory (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). A phenomenological approach was employed in order

to gain a full understanding of the essence of the phenomenon by each individual

(Creswell, 1998). Bogdan and Biklen (2007) stated, "Researchers in the

phenomenological mode attempt to understand the meaning of events and interactions to

ordinary people in particular situations" (p. 25). This goal of this interview approach was

to describe and understand the events and actions that take place when dealing with

instances of cyberbullying (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Since this particular

phenomenon is so new, describing effective cyberbullying polices is very subjective since

there is little quantifiable evidence to support the claims of each participant. The

subjective nature of this section of the study is another reason to choose a

phenomenological approach since phenomenological researchers attempt to emphasize

the subjective aspects of human behavior (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

Each of the participants selected engaged in a one-on-one interview with the

researcher. The interview consisted of open-ended questions related to their approach to

cyberbullying. The interview protocol (Appendix B) was first piloted at three schools in

an attempt to determine which questions would most likely help the respondents accurately explain their policies while answering the identified research questions. Open-ended questions were used so that each participant was able to fully explain their stories without restriction (Creswell, 2008).

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to obtain evidence from school-based leaders who have effectively dealt with cyberbullying behaviors. A mixed-methods approach was employed to obtain this information. A quantitative study was first conducted in order to identify those leaders who employ effective cyberbullying policies at their respective schools. A follow-up qualitative study was then be conducted with those who had been identified in order to gain a deeper understanding of the practices that are in place and that are working. In order to do so, information was obtained from school officials who have directly dealt with the problem of cyberbullying. It was be important to determine what schools have done to address the problem; from that information, it was imperative to delineate what actions have been effective and what actions have not been effective, and why.

In the context of this study, the term "effective" is very subjective. Because of this, it is important to define this term so that it can be understood throughout the study. Since cyberbullying was looked at from the perspective of educational leaders, issues of cyberbullying being addressed effectively meant that through the actions of school leaders that are directly related to cyberbullying, there has been a decrease in the negative effects observed by victims due to cyberbullying.

Research Questions

1. What school procedures are in place to address cyberbullying?

2. Of the cyberbullying procedures that are in place, which are reported as being effective by school leaders?

3. What are schools that are effectively addressing cyberbullying doing differently than those who are not effectively addressing cyberbullying?

4. Are school cyberbullying policies being evaluated to determine their effectiveness?

Description of the Instrument

The quantitative portion of this study was conducted by administering a survey to middle school principals in the state of Nevada. Permission to conduct this survey was obtained through the IRB (Institutional Review Boards) at both the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) and through the respective school districts that were participating in the study. The survey was created electronically so that it could be disbursed quickly to a large audience. The survey began with requesting some basic personal and demographic information. The next section of the survey consisted of 20 statements on which the participants will be asked to rate the extent to which they agree or disagree with the statements on a Likert scale. Following the 20 questions, the participants are instructed to answer the next 15 "yes" or "no" questions if they do in fact have a cyberbullying policy at their schools. If they do not have a cyberbullying policy at their schools, they are instructed to skip that portion of the survey. The survey concludes with five open-ended questions asking the participants to explain how they deal with

cyberbullying incidents at their school. The last piece of the survey asks the participants

if they would be willing to participate in a one-on-one interview if they feel that their

cyberbullying policy is effective.

The survey that was created combines a modified version of the *Cyberbullying Report

Card for Schools* by Hinduja and Patchin (2009) and a modified version of the *Criteria

for District Bullying and Harassment Policies* by the Florida Department of Education

(2009). The authors of both surveys were contacted, and permission was granted to use

the surveys and alter them as needed to meet the needs of the current study.

The very last question on the survey asked participants to list their name and phone

number if they believe their school has an effective cyberbullying policy and if they are

willing to participate in a follow-up interview. Ten principals indicated their willingness

to participate in an interview, and three were chosen.   The sampling size remained small

so that the researcher could extract in-depth information about people's approach at their

respective schools (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). The descriptive data obtained from

the interviews assisted the researcher in developing insights on the steps administrators

have taken to effectively combat cyberbullying (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

A phenomenological interviewing approach was utilized in conducting the one-on-

one interviews. The reason for choosing a phenomenological approach was to allow the

subjects to provide an in-depth description of their experiences related to cyberbullying

(Marshall & Rossman, 2006). The interviews were structured into three parts as Seidman

(1998) suggests. The first part focused on the participants past experiences with

cyberbullying, the second part focused on their present approaches, and the final part

attempted to join the first two parts together to summarize their experiences in hopes of exploring future changes that may be needed (Seidman, 1998).

The interview protocol (Appendix B) was piloted at three middle schools to determine the appropriateness of the questions. Once the pilot had been completed, a final interview protocol was created and employed in each of the interviews. Descriptive data was gathered in the subjects' own words so that insights may be drawn on how they have approached cyberbullying (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). An interview guide was employed using open-ended questions, but the researcher also allowed considerable latitude to the subjects so that they were able somewhat shape the content of the interview in order to fully convey their message (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The researcher took notes on the interview protocol during the interviews, but the interviews were also be recorded and fully transcribed following each interview. Utilizing both data recording methods ensured that none of the data from the interview is lost (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007).

<center>Procedure for Collecting Data</center>

The administrators' cyberbullying survey that was created was distributed electronically via the *Zoomerang* website to middle school principals throughout the state of Nevada. After acquiring informed consent, and prior to administering the survey, an introductory e-mail was sent to the targeted group of administrators providing them with an introduction to the research study. The targeted group of administrators was middle school principals throughout the state of Nevada. Following the introductory e-mail, a second e-mail was sent to the targeted group that contained a hyperlink to the *Zoomerang*

survey along with a second letter describing the importance of the information and thanking each administrator for their participation. The initial e-mail asked administrator to complete the survey within one week. At the conclusion of that time period, a second e-mail reminder was sent out because an insufficient amount of responses had been received. Two weeks later, a third e-mail was sent out and finally a sufficient amount of responses had been received.

The goal was to receive at least 50 responses from principals, and after the three reminders had been sent out, 66 principals completed the survey. Once that number had been reached, the next step was to identify those administrators who would be participating in the qualitative portion of the study. The final question on the survey asked the administrators if they were willing to participate in a short interview. If they were, then they were asked to leave their name and phone number. The number of participants selected for this portion of the study originally depended on the number of participants who were willing to take part in an interview. The goal for this portion of the study was three principals, and that goal was met. Since the number of respondents willing to participate in an interview exceeds that number, random sampling was be used to select the individuals to participate in the interview.

A general interview protocol was be followed for the interviews, but it was not always strictly followed as the goal was to allow each participant to express their opinions as freely as possible without limiting what they may be able to say. Notes were taken during the interviews, but they were also recorded and later transcribed to ensure the accuracy of each response.

Procedures for Analyzing Data

The information obtained from the surveys was put into the *Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS)* so that the information from the Likert scale questions and the "yes" or "no" could be analyzed. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as measures of central tendency, frequencies, and counts. These types of data reporting procedures are fairly easy to understand and helpful in making a rather concise and meaningful summarization of a large amount of data so that patterns and emerging themes are relatively easy to identify (Gall, Gall, and Borg, 1999).

Aside from gaining a basic understanding of cyberbullying practices in schools, another goal of the quantitative portion of the study will be to compare responses on the surveys of those who do believe they have an effective cyberbullying policy to those who do not believe they have an effective cyberbullying policy. A series of independent sample t-tests were performed with question "If your school has a written cyberbullying policy, do you believe that policy is effective?" employed as the independent variable. The t-tests were used to help analyze questions two and three from the research questions, which ask "Of the cyberbullying procedures that are in place, which are reported as being effective by school leaders? Why do the school leaders believe these policies are effective?" and "What are schools that are effectively addressing cyberbullying doing differently than those who are not effectively addressing cyberbullying?" The independent variable will be used to compare people who believe they have effective cyberbullying policies versus those who do not. The independent variable were measured against the following seven dependent variables that were identified by similar themes and computing their mean score:

1. Knowledge and prevalence (questions 2 and 3).

2. Student education (the average of questions 7, 8, and 9).

3. Parent communication (the average of questions 11 and 18).

4. Teacher involvement (the average of questions 4 and 10).

5. Anonymous reporting systems (question 15).

6. Technology policy (the average of questions 5 and 16).

7. School climate (the average of questions 6 and 13).

A similar strategy was be employed to test research questions two and three using the 15 items on the second part of the survey, the section with "yes" and "no" answers, as the outcome variable. The independent variable was the respondents' answers to the question, "If your school has a written cyberbullying policy, do you believe that policy is effective?" Because this 15-item scale is measured using nominal data, a series of Chi-squared tests were computed to compare people who answered "yes" and "no" to the question assessing perceptions of cyberbullying policy effectiveness. A Chi-squared test was run with each of the 15 questions used as the dependent variable to determine which measures, according to the data, were significant and which were not to an effective cyberbullying policy.

Since the quantitative portion of the study was used to answer research questions two and three, the quantitative portion was primarily used to answer research questions one and four, but some of that information was also relevant to questions two and three. To analyze the qualitative portion of this study, a content analysis was conducted. Each interview was transcribed. Once transcribed, the data were read through thoroughly and the information was labeled into codes. The codes were then be analyzed to reduce

overlap and redundancy, and they were finally be collapsed into themes (Creswell, 2008). This process was repeated throughout each of the interviews. Once the themes from each interview were identified, they were again be analyzed to reduce overlap and redundancy, and six overall themes were identified from the interview data of all three participants (Creswell, 2008).

The findings of the qualitative portion of the study will be presented through a narrative discussion. A thorough and in-depth summary of each theme will be provided (Creswell, 2008). To further explore the meaning of the qualitative data, the findings will be compared to common themes found in cyberbullying literature. Of particular interest will be an analysis of how consistent the research findings are with the body of research that is currently in existence.

<center>Summary</center>

The goal of this portion of the study is to identify several consistent strategies that are being implemented. Although many schools and school districts are beginning to acknowledge the gravity of cyberbullying, many policies fail to go any further than simply stating that cyberbullying is not allowed. The result of this data will be a synthesis of information that may be useful for principals and school administrators in creating and implementing policies for maintaining a cyberbullying-free campus. Although punishment for engaging in cyberbullying is certain expected to be a component of this synthesis, it is hoped that the information obtained from this study will produce proactive strategies that focus on prevention and positive communication rather than mere punitive measures.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding about whether or not

middle schools in the state of Nevada have cyberbullying policies, if so, what those

policies entail, whether or not principals believe their policies are effective, and to

identify key aspects of cyberbullying policies which make them effective. A mixed-

methods explanatory design was utilized that used qualitative data to explain quantitative

results (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). The survey instrument used for the quantitative

portion of the study combined a modified version of the *Cyberbullying Report Card for*

Schools by Hinduja and Patchin (2009) and a modified version of the *Criteria for District*

Bullying and Harassment Policies by the Florida Department of Education (2009). The

survey (Appendix A) was comprised of some basic demographic questions, twenty

questions on a Likert Scale, fifteen "yes" or "no" questions, five open-ended questions,

and concluded with a question asking if the participants would be willing to take part in a

one-on-one interview.

The target population for this study was all of the middle school principals in the state

of Nevada. Middle school was specifically chosen because it is the age where

cyberbullying incidents are most prevalent (Seals & Young, 2003; Williams & Guera,

2007; Wolak, Mitchell, & Finkelhor, 2007, Ybarra & Mitchell, 2007, Hinduja & Patchin,

2009). IRB approval was obtained from school districts in both northern and southern

Nevada prior to the survey being launched. Once IRB approval was received, a pre-

notice of the survey (Appendix C) was e-mailed to all middle school principals in

Nevada. Five days following the initial e-mail, another e-mail was sent out with a link to

the *Zoomerang* survey. Although the e-mail was sent to 118 principals, after the first

week, only ten principals had responded. A second e-mail was sent out to all principals a

week later reminding them of the importance of cyberbullying and asking for their help in

obtaining data. The initial goal was to receive at least 50 responses, but two weeks after

having sent out the second e-mail, only 42 principals had responded. A third e-mail was

then sent out. Within a week of the third e-mail, a total of 66 principals had responded to

the survey.

　　Of the 66 respondents to the survey, ten individuals indicated that they would be

willing to participate in a one-on-one follow-up interview regarding the cyberbullying

policy they employ at their respective schools. Of those ten respondents, three

individuals were randomly chosen and participated in an interview using the quantitative

cyberbullying interview protocol (Appendix B), which had previously been piloted at

three schools.

　　The data collected from the *Zoomerang* survey were entered into the SPSS Version

18 statistical program. Some basic descriptive statistics were recorded pertaining to

demographic information. An independent sample t-test was used utilizing the question

"If your school has a written cyberbullying policy, do you believe the policy is

effective?" as the independent variable. From the twenty questions on the Likert Scale

questionnaire, seven dependent variables were identified by identifying questions with

similar themes and computing the mean scores from those questions. The following

seven themes were identified: knowledge and prevalence; student education; parent

communication; teacher involvement; anonymous reporting system; technology policy; and climate.

A series of Chi-squared tests were conducted again using the question "If your school has a written cyberbullying policy, do you believe the policy is effective?" as the independent variable with each of the fifteen questions from the "yes" or "no" questionnaire as the dependent variable. Finally, for the qualitative portion of the study, a content analysis was conducted from each of the interviews. The data were labeled into codes and then collapsed into themes.

Chapter IV presents the findings of the study in three sections. The first section simply presents the responses to the survey. The second section, which will be the data analysis section, will present the quantitative findings from the independent t-tests and the Chi-squared tests, and it will then present the findings of the qualitative interviews. The third and final section of this chapter will answer the research questions using the using the data from the data analysis section and comparing it to the current body of research.

Survey Responses

The survey was sent out to a total of 118 middle school principals in Nevada, and 66 of those principals responded to the survey. Of those who responded to the survey, 68.3% indicated that they have a cyberbullying policy. Of those 68.3%, 71.7% believe their policy is effective. When asked, on average, how many cyberbullying incidents are reported each month, the most common response was 2 – 5 (45%). The basic characteristics of each school's cyberbullying policies are contained in Table 1.

Table 1

Characteristics of School Cyberbullying Policies

Item	Number	Percent
Does your school have a written cyberbullying policy?		
Yes	41	68.3
No	20	32.7
If your school has a cyberbullying policy, is it effective?		
Yes	33	71.7
No	13	28.3
In an average month, how many cyberbullying incidents are reported to you?		
0 – 1	21	36
2 – 5	26	45
6 – 10	11	19
More than 10	0	0

With respect to the length of time each principal had worked at their individual school, the number of years had varied from .5 to 16, with an average of 4.9 years. When asked how long each individual had been an administrator, the responses varied from .5 years to 37 years, with an average of 11.4 years. The demographics of the principals surveyed are depicted in Table 2.

Table 2

Principal Experience

Question	Number of Responses	Average Number of Years
How many years have you worked at your current school?	57	4.9
How many years have you been an administrator?	57	11.4

Following the "yes" or "no" questions, each participant was asked to answer five open-ended questions. The first open-ended question asked, "What interventions do you utilize most often when cyberbullying incidents are reported to you? The responses were analyzed and the following five themes were identified: conferencing; discipline; investigate; counseling; and nothing. A total of 43 principals responded to this question, and the results of the question are listed in Table 3 by category.

Table 3

Most Utilized Interventions

Category	Number	Percent
Conference	6	13.9
Discipline	15	34.8
Investigate	8	18.6
Counseling	11	25.5
Nothing	3	6.9

N = 43

The next open-ended question asked "Of the interventions you have utilized when cyberbullying has been reported to you, in your opinion, which have been the most effective?" Again, the principal responses were analyzed and themes were identified. This time, however, only four themes were identified: parent notification; counseling; discipline; and nothing. Overwhelmingly, parental involvement (50%) was the most common response given. The results to this question are listed in Table 4 by category.

Table 4

Most Effective Interventions

Category	Number	Percent
Parent notification	21	50
Counseling	8	19
Discipline	10	23.8
Nothing	3	7.1

N = 42

The next open-ended question asked of each principal was "Of the interventions you have utilized when cyberbullying incidents have been reported to you, in your opinion, which have been the least effective?" The following six categories were identified after an analysis of the responses was conducted: discipline; counseling; warnings; peace

Table 5

Least Effective Interventions

Category	Number	Percent
Discipline	6	15.4
Counseling	4	10.3
Warnings	7	17.9
Peace contracts	2	5.1
Talking to parents	4	10.3
Unsure	16	41%

N = 39

contracts; talking to parents; and unsure. The majority of the respondents to this question were not sure of the least effective means to deal with cyberbullying incidents. The results to this question are listed in Table 5.

The next question asked "What steps have you taken at your school to make students feel comfortable about reporting cyberbullying incidents?" The responses were analyzed and divided into the following six similar themes: anonymous reporting system; through the school's web site; staff rapport with students, bullying prevention/awareness; parent communication; and none. The most common response by far was staff rapport with 37.5% of the respondents indicating that is how they have helped students feel comfortable with reporting cyberbullying. The results from this question are reported in Table 6.

Table 6

Cyberbullying Reporting Policies

Category	Number	Percent
Anonymous reporting system	6	15
Through the school's web site	7	17.5
Staff rapport with students	15	37.5
Bullying prevention/awareness	5	12.5
Parent communication	2	5
None	5	12.5

N = 40

The final open-ended question asked of the principals was "What steps, if any, have you taken to integrate cyberbullying awareness into the school's curriculum?" After the data were analyzed, the following seven common themes were identified: required by teacher; counselor presentations; in computer classes; through assemblies; in in-house suspension; after-school clubs; and none. The results from this question are listed in Table 7.

Table 7

Curricular Awareness

Category	Number	Percent
Required by teacher	12	30
Counselor presentations	7	17.5
In computer classes	5	12.5
Through assemblies	4	10
In in-house suspension	1	2.5
After school clubs	1	2.5
None	10	25

N = 40

Data Analysis Methods

To obtain the dependent variables for the independent sample t-tests, Hinduja and Patchin's (2009) *Cyberbullying Report Card for Schools* was examined and questions were grouped together according to similar themes. Among the 20 questions on this part of the survey, seven dependent variables were identified. The first dependent variable,

which was titled "knowledge and prevalence", was created by computing the mean scores to the questions "We know how many students at our school have been victims of cyberbullying" and "We know how many students at our school have cyberbullied others".

The second dependent variable, which was titled "student education", was created by computing the mean scores to the questions "Students are taught about acceptable computer and Internet use during the school year through presentations and assemblies", "Students are taught about how to recognize cyberbullying threats to their online safety", and "Students are taught how to respond to cyberbullying in an appropriate manner."

The third dependent variable, which was titled "parent communication", was created by computing the mean scores to the questions "We distribute material to students and parents to educate them about cyberbullying" and "Parents know our policy regarding technology and cyberbullying."

The fourth dependent variable, which was titled "teacher involvement", was created by computing the mean scores to the questions "Teachers regularly remind students to approach them if they are dealing with an issue related to cyberbullying or online safety" and "Teachers know how to recognize cyberbullying issues and how to intervene in an appropriate manner."

The fifth dependent variable was the only dependent variable that contained the mean to only one question. This variable, which was titled "anonymous reporting system", compares the independent variable against the question "We have an anonymous reporting system to allow students and teachers to report instances of cyberbullying without fear of retaliation."

The sixth dependent variable, which was titled "technology policy", was created by computing the mean scores to the questions "It is made clear to students that the inappropriate use of technology will not be tolerated by school administration" and "Our school has a clear policy regarding cell phones and other portable electronic devices."

The seventh and final dependent variable, which was titled "school climate", was created by computing the mean scores to the questions "We work to create a climate in which cyberbullying is not considered 'cool' among the student population" and "We take actual and suspected incidents of cyberbullying seriously."

Quantitative Results

A series of independent sample t-tests were run using the question "Is your cyberbullying policy effective?" as the independent variable. Of the respondents who answered the question "Is your cyberbullying policy effective?", 33 (71.7%) indicated that their cyberbullying policies were effective while only 13 (28.3%) indicated that their cyberbullying policies were not effective. Seven variables described above were employed as the dependent variable: knowledge and prevalence; student education; parent communication; teacher involvement; anonymous reporting system; technology policy; and school climate.

The results of the t-tests are displayed in Table 8. The first t-test, employing "knowledge and prevalence" as the dependent variable, revealed that there was not a significant difference between those who answered "yes" to indicate that their cyberbullying policy was effective($M = 2.48$, $SD = 1.00$) than people who answered "no" ($M = 2.31$, $SD = 1.16$), $t(44) = .52$, $p = .61$. When "student education" was employed as

the dependent variable, a significant difference was noted between those individuals who answered "yes" to indicate that their cyberbullying policy was effective ($M = 4.33$, $SD = .186$) than those who answered "no" ($M = 3.54$, $SD = .256$), $t(44) = 11.69$, $p < .001$. When "parent communication" was employed as the dependent variable, again a significant difference was noted between those individuals who answered "yes" to indicate that their cyberbullying policies were effective ($M = 4.09$, $SD = .605$) than those who answered "no" ($M = 3.54$, $SD = .852$), $t(44) = 2.47$, $p = .017$. When teacher involvement was employed as the dependent variable, it was revealed that there was not a significant difference between those who answered "yes" that their policy was effective ($M = 3.68$, $SD = .635$) than people who answered "no" ($M = 3.31$, $SD = 1.09$), $t(44) = 1.45$, $p = .153$. The fifth t-test, which employed "anonymous reporting system" as the dependent variable, also failed to reveal a significant difference between those who answered "yes" that their policy was effective ($M = 3.72$, $SD = 1.33$) than people who answered "no" ($M = 3.46$, $SD = 1.51$), $t(44) = .588$, $p = .559$. When "technology policy" was employed as the dependent variable, again, there was not a significant difference between those who answered "yes" that their policy was effective ($M = 4.73$, $SD = .309$) than those who answered "no" ($M = 4.50$, $SD = .577$), $t(44) = 1.62$, $p = .112$. The seventh and final t-test, which employed "school climate" as the dependent variable, did find a significant difference between those who answered "yes" that their policy was effective ($M = 4.48$, $SD = .405$) and those who answered "no" ($M = 4.12$, $SD = .506$), $t(44) = 2.60$, $p = .013$.

Table 8

Results From Independent Sample T-Test

Variable Title	Yes		No		
	M	SD	M	SD	t(df = 44)
Knowledge and prevalence	2.48	1.00	2.31	1.16	.52
Student education	4.33	.184	3.54	.256	11.69***
Parent communication	4.09	.605	3.54	.852	2.47*
Teacher involvement	3.68	.635	3.31	1.09	1.45
Anonymous reporting system	3.72	1.33	3.46	1.51	.588
Technology policy	4.73	.309	4.50	.577	1.62
School climate	4.48	.405	4.12	.506	2.60*

*Note: *** $p < .001$, **$p < .01$, * $p < .05$*

Next, a series of Chi-squared analyses were performed to determine whether differences in cyberbullying policy details are related to principals' perceived effectiveness of those policies. That is, do the policies employed by principals who answered "yes" to indicate the perceived success of their policies differ from the policies employed by principals who answered "no"? For example, I first compared these two groups (yes vs. no in terms of perceived policy effectiveness) in terms of whether or not their policy has language about off-campus behaviors being subject to discipline (see Table 9). The results reveal that principals who believe they have effective cyberbullying policies were more likely to have policies with language about off-campus behaviors being subject to discipline (75.8%) than principals without successful cyberbullying policies (7.7%), $\chi^2(1, N = 46) = 17.58$, $p < .001$.

Table 9

Chi-Squared Analysis

Policy Details – Does the Policy Contain:	Effective		Not Effective		χ² (N = 46)
	Yes	**No**	**Yes**	**No**	
Language about off-campus behaviors.	25	8	1	12	17.58***
A known continuum of disciplinary consequences.	29	4	6	7	8.92**
Formal procedures for investigating incidents.	28	5	7	6	4.93*
Consequences for wrongful accusations.	20	12	1	12	11.71**
Procedures for reporting cyberbullying.	29	4	8	5	4.11*
Procedures for anonymous reporting	24	9	6	7	2.90
Provisions for prompt investigations	31	2	12	1	.041
A procedure for notifying parents of victims	30	3	2	11	25.13***
A procedure for notifying parents of perpetrators	31	2	11	2	1.02
A procedure for providing education to students, parents, and teachers	17	16	1	12	7.52**
A procedure to refer victims to counseling.	12	21	0	13	6.34*
A procedure to refer perpetrators to counseling.	13	20	0	13	7.14*
A procedure for reporting actions taken to victims parents.	21	12	1	12	11.70**
Publicizing the policy for students, parents, faculty, and community.	25	8	6	6	3.72
Signs posted throughout the school.	16	17	1	12	6.66*

Note: ***$p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

Next, the two types of principals were compared in terms of whether or not their

policy has a known continuum of disciplinary consequences for cyberbullying incidents.

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Once again, the two groups differed slightly, with principals who believe they have successful policies more likely to have a known continuum (87.9%) than principals who do not believe they have successful policies (37.5%), χ^2 (1, N = 46) = 8.92, p <.01.

The patterns than emerge in Table 9 show that in almost all cases, principals who believe that their cyberbullying policy is effective are more likely than those that do not do have policy details such as: a) language about off campus behavior; b) a known continuum of disciplinary consequences; c) formal procedures for investigating incidents; d) procedures for reporting cyberbullying; e) consequences for false accusations; f) a procedure for notifying the parents of a victim; g) a procedure for providing education; h) a procedure for referring victims for counseling; i) a procedure for referring perpetrators for counseling; j) a procedure for reporting to a victim's parents; and k) signs posted throughout the school.

In fact, there were only four items on which there was not a significant difference: procedures for anonymous reporting; provisions for a prompt investigation; a procedure for notifying the parents of perpetrators; and publicizing the policy for students, parents, faculty, and the community. The complete results of the Chi-squared analysis are listed in Table 9.

<div align="center">Qualitative Results</div>

<div align="center">School A</div>

School A can best be described as a school in a middle to upper-middle class area. The school serves approximately 1,500 students, with 60.4% of the population as Caucasian, 18.4% Hispanic, 13.4% Black/African American, and 7% Asian/Pacific

Islander. A total of 9% of the population qualifies for special education services, and 24.4% qualify for Free or Reduced Lunch (FRL).

The principal at the school made it very clear that he thought cyberbullying was a major problem at his school. One of the main reasons he thought it might be a bigger problem at his school than others is because of the socioeconomic status (SES) of his student population. He believes that he has no way of knowing just how prevalent the problem is, but with the availability of Smart Phones to the majority of his student population, he firmly believes that they have "just touched the tip of the iceberg when it comes to cyberbullying."

With regards to discipline, he treats cyberbullying and bullying in the same manner. Students who are found guilty of these behaviors go through steps of progressive discipline that range from a Required Parent Conference (RPC) to a formal suspension and then potentially as far as expulsion from school. However, he emphatically pointed out that his school's primary focus is on prevention rather than punishment. His school has approximately 25 advisory periods per school year, and at least 10 of those advisory periods are dedicated to bullying or cyberbullying. They also have a Broadcast Journalism class and have had students put on several skits pertaining to cyberbullying, and he believes it's effectiveness lies within the increased awareness throughout his campus about how pervasive and how serious the problem is. He stated that the most powerful thing his student body has done was a re-enactment of the MTV show "If You Really Knew Me", which focused on the effects of bullying and cyberbullying.

The principal talked about barriers to having a more effective program, and the barrier he indicated the most was the lack of technology to track incidents of

cyberbullying. When cyberbullying gets reported, there are often several other exchanges between students that have occurred, and he lacks the resources to trace through them to get to the origin of the problem.

When asked what means of combating cyberbullying that have been employed which have been successful for him, he first mentioned is "Report a Bully" link on his school's web site. He has decided to give the students the option of being anonymous, but he's noticed a real spike in the amount of bystanders or witnesses to acts of bullying and cyberbullying who fill out reports on the web site. When those forms are filled out online, they are sent to a Google Docs folder that he himself accesses. He reported that he firmly believes that he, as the principal, should be the one speaking to each student who has been reported as a bully. He feels that is one very powerful way of getting through to students who are committing these acts.

The principal pointed to a lack of empirical data that really shows how effective his program is. He believes it is effective because he is not getting repeat offenders, but he continually refers to the fact that they're only touching the tip of the iceberg because they can only deal with what's reported to them. He said he's had approximately 30 cases of cyberbullying reported to him so far this school year, but since this is the first year that cyberbullying has been listed as a discipline code in the school district's computer system, he can't compare this year's numbers to those of any previous years.

The principal was finally asked how he evaluates his cyberbullying plan for effectiveness. He again pointed to the lack of empirical evidence, but he did state that once per month, during his administrative meetings, they run a report of behavioral infractions and look for students who have been repeat offenders. Once students like that

appear on their radar, the counselor gets involved and speaks with the students on regular basis to discuss their feelings, their behaviors, and proper ways to act.

<p style="text-align:center">School B</p>

School B can best be described as a school in an upper-middle class area. The principal at this school has a known reputation for being very proactive regarding cyberbullying and bullying behaviors. The school serves approximately 1,600 students, 65.5% of them are White, 14.6% are Hispanic, 12.8% are Asian/Pacific Islander and 6.4% are Black/African American. A total of 7.3% of the student population is eligible for special education services, and 12.6% qualify for Free or Reduced Lunch (FRL).

Much like the principal from School A, the principal from School B pointed to the fact that the socioeconomic status (SES) of his student population plays a large role in the prevalence of cyberbullying at his school. Again, he pointed to the availability of so many social mediums through Smart Phones that students can commit acts of cyberbullying through text messages, Facebook, and Twitter in a matter of a couple of minutes during passing period. He did state that he believes it's becoming less of a problem because of a parent e-mail list that he created years ago. The point of the e-mail list was to keep parents informed of things that were going on at school, which could include parking, report cards, or more serious topics such as cyberbullying. He stated that one time, a couple of years ago, he had an incident where students were passing around a naked picture of a female student who went to that school. Without divulging any personal information, he shared that information with the parents. Not only did he share what the consequences would be for any student caught participating in such behavior, but he also strongly encouraged parents to be involved with their students, to

look at their Facebook pages, and to look at their cell phones each night. Although the e-mail list started off slowly, he now has over 1,100 parents who subscribe. He believes this type of regular parent communication has helped reduce incidents of cyberbullying within his student population.

In order to address cyberbullying, his school was one of the first to put a "Report a Bully" link on their web page. Submissions initially were sent to just one counselor, but he has recently revamped his system so that whenever someone posts a submission, it is placed in a Google Docs folder and reported to all four of his counselors and all five of the administrators at his school. In addition to his "Report a Bully" link, he also has a "Just to Let You Know (J2LYK)" link where students can report if they have witnessed any acts of cyberbullying, bullying, drugs, alcohol, weapons, or concerns about students who may potentially be suicidal. He was nearly brought to tears when he shared one recent story where a student filled out a cyberbullying incident online to report that she had been repeatedly been harassed. Then, one minute and 37 seconds later, an anonymous student, who turned out to be the same person who reported the cyberbullying, filled out a report on the J2LYK form indicating that she was feeling suicidal due to the fact that she was unable to escape the pervasive bullying she was facing. Fortunately, the school was able to act quickly and the principal strongly feels that his reporting systems may have saved a life.

To address cyberbullying, all first period teachers were required to cover in detail the "Report a Bully" link and the "J2LKY" link to their classes. Prior to each school year, all sixth grade students are required to attend a sixth grade seminar and cyberbullying is incorporated into the curriculum of that class. Each sixth grade student is also required to

take a computers class, and cyberbullying is part of the curriculum in that class. Finally, the principal noted his Broadcast Journalism class and how students from that class regularly put on skits for the student body that focus on bullying and cyberbullying.

When asked whether his main focus was on prevention or punishment, the principal had no hesitation in not only stating prevention, but he also placed a huge emphasis on the importance of bystanders reporting things that they have seen. He stated that just focusing on reactive consequences is by far the least effective means of dealing with cyberbullying. He stated, "Just have a discipline plan and not a prevention plan just simply isn't effective." He also talked about the importance of teachers as a piece of the puzzle. One of the requirements he has of all teachers is to be in the hallways during passing periods because their mere presence can often prevent these types of behaviors from occurring.

Principal B pointed to parents who don't believe their child is capable of such acts and the lack of technology as the two primary barriers to being more effective when combating cyberbullying. Nevertheless, he stated that he has had no more than 10 instances of cyberbullying reported to him this school year. They track their data through the district's computer system as well as the number of incidents that are placed in their Google Docs file. He stated that the next change he is going to make regarding cyberbullying is that once per quarter, he's going to have all teachers do an "all-stop", where each teacher, regardless of subject area, will teach a lesson provided by him for the entire period. He believes the big emphasis is on the bystander because they get much more information from bystanders than they do from victims. He also wanted to point out the importance of helping students understand the difference between reporting and

tattling. Tattling is telling on someone in an attempt to get them in trouble, where reporting is helping to prevent trouble from happening in the first place.

Lastly, the principal was asked how evaluates his cyberbullying policy for effectiveness. He said that he really views this school year, the 2010-2011 school year as a baseline since it's the first year that cyberbullying is its own category in the districts computer system that tracks behavioral infractions. He also thinks that we are going to see a higher number of cyberbullying incidents reported this year due to the new law and the fact that raising awareness is such in emphasis. As far as truly evaluating the effectiveness of his policy, he doesn't feel that he can do that yet. At this point, he can only hope that the efforts they are putting forth on the front end will reduce the amount of work and the number of victims on the back end.

<div align="center">School C</div>

Of the three principals interviewed, the principal at School C seemed to be the least concerned about cyberbullying. School C is best described as a school in a middle to lower-middle class area that serves approximately 1,400 students. Of the student population, 33.3% is White, 29.8% is Hispanic, 21.4% is Asian/Pacific Islander, and 14.1% is Black/African American. Of the student population, 8.4% qualify for special education services and 39.7% qualify for Free or Reduced Lunch (FRL).

When asked about the prevalence of cyberbullying at School C, the principal said that he thinks it happens all the time, but there are few students and parents who are willing to report because of fear of retaliation. When asked how incidents that are reported are handled, he stated severe instances are dealt with through Required Parent Conferences (RPCs) or suspensions, and less severe instances are dealt with through peace contracts.

In discussing proactive measures taken regarding cyberbullying, it was pointed out that bullying and cyberbullying were a part of the Deans' orientation at the beginning of the school year. However, a recent increase in cyberbullying incidents has forced them to change their approach. They recently added a "Report a Bully" section to their school's web site, and the reports are sent to the counselors. The counselors then address the issue with both the victim and the perpetrator, but serious threats of violence are reported to the Dean for disciplinary action.

School C also has a Broadcast Journalism class, and the counselors and the students put together a series of 10 episodes involving a variety of bullying and cyberbullying scenarios. Once of those episodes was played on the morning announcements each day for 10 days in a row, and the principal feels that this step was crucial to raising awareness about the behavior and about reporting the behavior. He said that focusing on proactive measures has been a very positive force this school year, and part of the proactive measures taken include helping students understand what types of behaviors are considered bullying and cyberbullying. When asked what the least effective approach to cyberbullying, the principal merely stated "Letting it happen and waiting for the kid to end up in the Deans' Office."

When it comes to analyzing the prevalence and evaluating for effectiveness, the principal was not too confident in being able to answer the question accurately due to the unknown factor of how many incidents are actually reported. He stated that approximately 8 – 10 incidents of cyberbullying are reported per month, but he really hasn't taken any steps to evaluate his cyberbullying program for effectiveness.

Content Analysis

At the conclusion of each interview, the interviews were transcribed and thoroughly examined for common themes. While there were many similarities and some slight differences between the three schools, six constant themes emerged from the qualitative data.

The first theme identified by the interviews was the focus on and the importance of reporting procedures. Each of the schools interviewed had a "Report a Bully" link on their web site. Whenever a form is submitted from the web site, either a counselor or an administrator takes immediate action. The importance of reporting, however, does not solely rely on those who have been victims of cyberbullying. It appears as though a tremendous emphasis is being placed on witnesses and bystanders reporting acts of cyberbullying and bullying that they see.

Curriculum integration, primarily focusing on bullying and cyberbullying awareness, was the second theme that emerged from the data. All three schools either had lessons taught to their students by teachers, counselors, administrators, or all of the above. The next theme was an emphasis on student-centered productions through mediums such as television shows created in a Broadcast Journalism class. All three principals stated that they have placed an emphasis on students educating students on bullying and cyberbullying through the school's television system, and all three principals felt very strongly that this was a highly effective means of raising awareness. The fourth theme could be considered rather similar to the third, which is a focus on prevention. Through television broadcasts, teachers speaking with students, counselors working with students, helping students understand what bullying and cyberbullying is, and encouraging

students to report these behaviors through a variety of outputs has been a very powerful means of combating cyberbullying.

Punishment was the next theme identified. Interestingly, it was identified in two different ways. First off, each principal felt very strongly that discipline must be enforced whenever a student is found guilty of cyberbullying behaviors. They feel this way because it is very important to send a strong message to students who engage in such behaviors that it will simply not be tolerated, but it is also important to demonstrate to the victim that the school is willing to help and will take action when these incidents are reported. On the same token, principals also feel that punishment is the least effective means of dealing with cyberbullying. Although that seems to contrast the previous statement, principals believe that a cyberbullying policy that only focuses on punishment is not effective. Again, they feel that being proactive is of extreme significance, but simply not doing anything and then punishing students for their inappropriate behavior will not only fail to stop the problem, it can often make it worse due to the retaliation that victims may experience.

Finally, technology was the final theme identified in the data. First, cyberbullying is becoming more of a problem due to the constant availability of technology through the use of Smart Phones. Cyberbullying doesn't have to take place at home on a computer through Facebook or MySpace anymore, it can take place at any time using a cell phone to make inappropriate posts to Facebook, send text messages, take pictures, or record videos. The principals have also identified technology as a barrier to combating cyberbullying because of the lack of tracking systems available to help them get to the root of many of the problems that occur.

Results By Research Question

Four research questions were identified for this study. The questions will be answered by using a combination of the data obtained from the *Cyberbullying Report Card for Schools* by Hinduja and Patchin (2009), the *Criteria for District Bullying and Harassment Policies* by the Florida Department of Education (2009), and the results from the qualitative interviews.

Research Question 1: What school procedures are in place to address cyberbullying

It is important to preface the fact that the information reported in answering this research questions is a combination of the responses from all of the respondents. Some of these respondents have admitted that they do not have effective cyberbullying policies. The purpose of this question is to simply identify, at the present time, the tactics that are employed by different schools in dealing with cyberbullying. Those strategies that have been identified as effective will be reported in the next research question.

In the survey that was administered, 34.8% of the respondents indicated that discipline is the most utilized intervention and that counseling (25.5%) was the second most utilized intervention. In attempting to make students more comfortable reporting incidents of cyberbullying, having the staff develop a comfortable rapport (37.5%) was the most common response. Schools have taken different steps to integrate cyberbullying awareness into the curriculum in a variety of ways. Of the responses received, 30% of the principals require teachers to integrate cyberbullying awareness into their respective curriculum, 17.5% raise awareness through counselor presentations to classes, and 12.5% use their computer classes as a way of teaching cyberbullying awareness.

Additional steps taken by schools to address cyberbullying include regular parent communication with both victims and perpetrators, having an anonymous reporting system, having an online reporting system, increasing awareness through the use of student-centered Broadcast Journalism, developing a formal procedure for investigating reports, having a known continuum of disciplinary consequences for cyberbullying, referring victims and perpetrators for counseling, and posting signs throughout the school pertaining to cyberbullying.

Research Question 2: Of the cyberbullying procedures that are in place,

which are reported as being effective by school leaders?

From the modified version of the *Cyberbullying Report Card for Schools* by Hinduja and Patchin (2009), three out of the seven themes were reported as being effective ($p<.05$) through a series of independent t-tests. Of the three themes that were reported as being effective, the most effective was "student education" ($p < .001$). The student education theme involves teaching students acceptable computer and Internet use through presentations and assemblies, teaching students how to respond to cyberbullying in an appropriate manner, and how to recognize cyberbullying threats. The theme of student education is very strongly supported throughout the literature, and added support was provided by the qualitative portion of the study as the principals interviewed, all of whom believe their cyberbullying policies are effective, employ a variety of ways of education students regarding cyberbullying.

The next theme identified as effective was "parent communication". Although parent communication was not one of the six main themes identified through the content analysis portion from the qualitative interviews, two of the three principals interviewed

continually stressed the importance of communicating with parents in a number of ways. The survey found it to be significantly important to regularly communicate with parents about cyberbullying and to provide education. Two of the three principals interviewed concurred with this conclusion. Some strategies that have been employed to increase parent communication have included contacting the parents of the victims and the perpetrators every time an incident of cyberbullying occurred and educating parents through e-mails or newsletters about current information regarding cyberbullying

The third theme that emerged as significant from the independent t-tests was "school climate". Again, these results can be substantiated by the responses of principals who have been interviewed. When discussing school climate as it pertains to cyberbullying, the data obtained pointed to the importance of having all staff members continually engage in dialog with students so that it is know that cyberbullying is not considered "cool". In addition, administrative support to the victims is another key element related to school climate. Although the content analysis that was conducted following the qualitative portion of this study clearly identified punishment alone as the least effective means of dealing with cyberbullying, punishment is still an important part of an effective cyberbullying program. When administrators investigate, take seriously, and take disciplinary action against those students who have committed acts of cyberbullying, it creates a climate where victims are more comfortable in reporting their experiences since they know the school will take them seriously.

A series of Chi-squared analyses were performed based off of a modified version of the *Criteria for District Bullying and Harassment Policies* by the Florida Department of Education (2009). There were a total of 15 questions in the survey, and the respondents

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were simply asked to answer "yes" or "no" if their cyberbullying policies contained certain items. Of the 15 items in the survey, the Chi-squared analysis revealed a significant difference between those principals who do have an effective cyberbullying policy versus those who do not have an effective cyberbullying policy on 11 items. In order of significance, the items identified as significant are: a procedure for notifying the parents of victims; language about off-campus behavior; consequences for false accusations; a procedure for reporting to parents actions taken to protect the victim; a known continuum of disciplinary consequences; a procedure for providing education to students, parents, and teachers; a procedure for referring perpetrators for counseling; posting signs throughout the school; a procedure for referring victims for counseling; developing a formal procedure for investigating incidents; and procedures for reporting cyberbullying.

Finally, through a content analysis conducted from the interviews conducted from three principals who reported having effective cyberbullying policies, six main themes emerged from the data. The six themes identified were: the focus on and the importance of having reporting procedures in place, which includes an emphasis on both victims and bystanders; curriculum integration, primarily focusing on awareness; student-centered productions through means such as performances which are broadcast from a Broadcast Journalism class; a focus on prevention rather than punishment; although a focus on prevention rather than punishment was identified, punishment was also identified as one of the six themes which should be a component of an effective cyberbullying plan; and technology.

Research Question 3: What are schools who are effectively addressing cyberbullying

doing differently than those who are not effectively addressing cyberbullying?

While the data show that there are many things that schools with effective

cyberbullying programs are doing differently than those who do not have an effective

cyberbullying policy, merely taking a reactive approach rather than a proactive approach

to the problem is most likely the most significant difference. Schools that do not make

any efforts to raise awareness and simply rely on punitive measures when cyberbullying

is reported, according to the literature, the quantitative data, and the qualitative data, are

not effective in dealing with cyberbullying.

With regards to the details obtained in cyberbullying policies, the differences between

those schools with effective cyberbullying policies and those without effective

cyberbullying policies are providing students with education regarding cyberbullying,

including language about off-campus behaviors, having a known continuum of

disciplinary consequences, having a formal investigation procedure, identifying

consequences for false accusations, procedures for reporting cyberbullying (potentially

including the option for anonymous reporting), a procedure for notifying the parents of

victims and perpetrators, a procedure for referring victims and perpetrators for

counseling, a procedure for notifying the parents of victims of the actions taken to protect

the victim, and posting anti-cyberbullying signs throughout the school.

From the independent sample t-tests, the three main things that schools with effective

cyberbullying policies are doing that schools without effective are not doing are

providing student education with a focus on awareness, having regular parent

communication, and placing an emphasis on school climate.

The answer to this question can be referred back to Fowler's (2004) belief that, when looking at the Stage Model of the Policy Process, policies often get left in the earlier stages of the process without being seen through to implementation and evaluation. How cyberbullying policies were being evaluated for effectiveness was the last question asked in each of the interviews in the qualitative portion of this study. While it is clear that the principals interviewed have clearly followed through with the implementation of their cyberbullying policies, evaluation for effectiveness is clearly a facet of this process that is lacking.

It would be inaccurate to state that the principals interviewed failed to adequately evaluate their policies for effectiveness due to lack of effort. Instead, the principals pointed to the lack of tools available to truly evaluate their policies. Principal A stated that his administrative team looks at the data once per month to see if there are increases or decreases in cyberbullying incidents with respect to actions they've taken, but the validity of that information is limited because, as he stated, "We've only touched the tip of the iceberg." By that, he means he can only evaluate what has been reported to him. He firmly believes in the fact that, which is supported by the literature, that very few of the incidents of cyberbullying are ever brought to the attention of school staff. Principal A also stated that he has had his students take surveys regarding cyberbullying and bullying in an attempt to determine the effectiveness of their policy, but the validity of those surveys is dependent upon students taking them seriously and answering questions honestly.

Principal B believes that he will be better able to evaluate his policy for effectiveness in the future because this year is a "baseline" year. By that statement, he means that since the new state cyberbullying law was passed, and since cyberbullying was first added as a separate behavioral infraction in his school district's computer system, he will finally have some empirical data that will show him how often incidents are reported to him. He is encouraged by this fact, but he also acknowledges that his analysis is limited by the fact that he can only look at the number of incidents that are actually reported. He doesn't feel that he is capable of fully evaluating his program yet, but he stated, "I can only hope that the efforts we are putting forth on the front end will reduce the number of victims on the back end."

When asked how he evaluates his cyberbullying policy for effectiveness, Principal C was the least confident in the ability to do so. His primary reason for thinking this way was because he felt he was at the mercy of how many incidents are reported compared to how many incidents actually happen. He stated that he does a monthly count of how many incidents of cyberbullying are reported to either the Deans' Office or the Counselor's Office, but aside from that, he hasn't taken any steps to evaluate the effectiveness of his cyberbullying policy.

Summary

In this chapter, 66 middle school principals in the state of Nevada completed a survey on cyberbullying policies employed at their respective schools. A quantitative data analysis was conducted through a series of independent sample t-tests and a series of Chi-square analyses. Of the respondents who completed the survey, 10 principals who indicated that they had an effective cyberbullying policy stated that they would be willing

to participate in a one-on-one interview. Three principals were randomly selected out of those 10, and a content analysis was conducted from the qualitative data to find recurring themes related to effective cyberbullying policies.

The final chapter of this dissertation will provide a summary of the results from the study, provide a conclusion of the results, and provide recommendations for future study within the realm of cyberbullying.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The explosion of the Internet, social networking, and smart phones has affected

nearly everyone in modern society. In fact, as far back as 2004, it was estimated that

nearly 97% of youth had regular access to the Internet (Ybarra, 2004). While there are

many academic, social, and business-related benefits that have arisen from the astounding

technological advances in the past couple of decades, it has also led to the creation of a

new form of human indecency that is now referred to as cyberbullying. Through the use

of social networking sites like Facebook, MySpace, and Twitter, through text messaging,

e-mail, instant messaging, and chatrooms, individuals are now able to completely

humiliate others in a variety of fashions, with a seemingly unlimited audience, in a matter

of seconds. The problem has become so prevalent that nearly 70% of teenagers have

been a victim of cyberbullying at some point (Juvonen & Gross, 2008), and it's so severe

that as many as 93% of teenagers feel negative effects from incidents of cyberbullying

(Raskauskas & Stoltz, 2007). Such effects include emotional and psychological

disorders, low self-esteem, anxiety, feeling sad, being scared, being embarrassed,

increased truancy, decreased academic achievement, depression, increases in violent

behavior, and potentially even suicide (Willard, 2006; Beran & Li, 2005; Hinduja &

Patchin, 2007; Hinduja & Patchin, 2009).

Developing an effective cyberbullying program is a struggle for most school

administrators since many of these behaviors occur off campus and not during school

hours. An additional struggle is the lack of reporting by students who are witnesses or

victims of cyberbullying. While the numbers may vary slightly, research has shown that somewhere between 10-15% of students who are victims of cyberbullying actually report their experiences to an adult at school (Juvonen & Gross, 2008; Hinduja & Patchin, 2007; Bauman, 2009). However, many of these incidents, which occur off-campus, are resolved in some fashion at school, thus making the issue of cyberbullying extremely relevant to school districts and school leaders.

When compared to other school-related issues, cyberbullying is still extraordinarily new. However, the infancy of this phenomenon should not diminish the devastating effects it has already inflicted upon its thousands and thousands of victims. Stories about Ryan Patrick Halligan (Halligan, n.d.) and Megan Meier (ABC News, 2007) are becoming more and more common. Aside from the dozens effects of cyberbullying that range from relatively minor to rather severe, we're dealing with an issue so powerful that it has left numerous children believing that they have no other option than to hurt themselves or take their own lives. In the open-ended questions at the end of the quantitative survey, one principal anonymously responded to the issue of cyberbullying by saying "How can I justify taking time out of my day to worry about this when I have to worry about making AYP?" The cold hard facts about cyberbullying can answer that question very simply. If students are dying, if students are forced to be committed to mental institutions, if students are skipping school, coming to school on drugs, bringing weapons to school, and not paying attention in class due to utter fear of their peers, and this is all because of the cyberbullying they have experienced, then that principal might want to think about how he or she would be able to make AYP without addressing cyberbullying. Yes, it has an effect on test scores. But even more importantly, quality

educators did not get into this business simply because of test scores. A good educator should be worried about the student as a whole, and if cyberbullying is effecting young people in this dramatic of a fashion, how can one justify not taking the time to properly address it?

Discussion of the Results

A survey was taken by 66 middle school principals in the state of Nevada regarding the cyberbullying policies at their respective schools. Middle school was specifically chosen because electronic forms of bullying tend to peak in the middle school years, with the most significant increase of prevalence occurring between 6th and 7th grade (Seals & Young, 2003; Williams & Guera, 2007; Mitchell & Finkelhor, 2007; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2007; Hinduja & Patchin, 2009). Although there is little literature regarding school policy on cyberbullying, the results of this study did seem to support what research is in existence.

The first quantitative method employed was a series of independent t-tests with the question "does your school have an effective cyberbullying policy" used as the independent variable against seven different dependent variables grouped together by theme from Hinduja and Patchin's (2009) *Cyberbullying Report Card for Schools.* Of the seven themes identified, it was determined that there was a significant difference on three of the seven themes when comparing schools who have effective cyberbullying problems versus those who do not have effective cyberbullying programs. The first, and most significant, theme identified was called "student education". Student education needs to come in a variety of forms. There is a need to teach students about the effects of cyberbullying and how to respond to cyberbullying incidents. This should be done

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through presentations or assemblies, but these themes should also be embedded within the curriculum in a variety of subject areas. As students become more aware of cyberbullying, they will be more socially adjusted which leads to better decision making and coping skills and thus makes them better equipped to handle instances of cyberbullying (Feinberg & Robey, 2009).

The next significant theme identified by the independent t-tests was "parent communication". The strength of this result can certainly be supported by both an abundance of research and by the results of the qualitative portion of this study. In addition to providing ongoing communication to parents of both victims and perpetrators of cyberbullying, it is important for schools to take proactive measures when dealing with parents as well. Brunner and Lewis (2009) encourage Internet safety training for parents, to teach how bullying behaviors occur, and to help them understand why it is important to report these incidents must be reported to school officials. The notion of education for parents and caregivers is also strongly supported by Bauman (2009). The theme of "parent communication" can be also be strongly supported by the series of Chi-squared tests that were performed using the same independent variable as the independent t-tests versus fifteen questions from a modified version of the *Criteria for District Bullying and Harassment Policies* by the Florida Department of Education (2009). A significant difference was noted between school with effective cyberbullying polices versus those without effective cyberbullying policies on the following three items: having a procedure in place for notifying the parents of a victim of cyberbullying ($p <.001$); a procedure for providing education for parents ($p < .01$); and a procedure for reporting to the parents of the victim the actions taken to protect their child. That series of tests yielded another

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important result with regards to parent education. Although there was no significant difference noted, both schools with and without effective cyberbullying policies overwhelming indicated that they have a policy that includes notifying the parents of the perpetrator of cyberbullying.

The third and final significant theme from the independent t-tests was "school climate". This question asked principals if they work at creating a climate where it is clear that cyberbullying is not an acceptable form of behavior and that acts of cyberbullying are taken very seriously. Again, this theme can be strongly supported by both the literature and the results of the qualitative portion of this study. Students who experience cyberbullying quite often perceive a poorer climate at their school than those students who have not been victimized by cyberbullying (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009). Additionally, students who are confident that adults at school will take their reports seriously are much more comfortable and confident in reporting their experiences to an adult (Hinduja & Patchin). From the three principal interviews conducted in this study, it was evident that school climate was a major factor in increasing cyberbullying awareness on their campuses. Each of the principals interviewed indicated that they have a Broadcast Journalism class that they use to create student-centered productions related to both bullying and cyberbullying that highlight the significance of the issue and how seriously infractions would be taken.

Next, a series of Chi-squared analyses were conducted to determine whether differences in cyberbullying policy details are related to principals' perceived effectiveness of those policies. The tests were run to determine if a difference existed between those principals who answered "yes" to the perceived success of their policy

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versus those who said "no" to the perceived success of their policy. The question was being compared to the fifteen questions on the *Criteria for District Bullying and Harassment Policies* by the Florida Department of Education (2009). A significant difference was identified on eleven of the fifteen items on the questionnaire. The items of significant difference showed that schools with effective cyberbullying policies include the following:

1. Language about off-campus behavior ($p < .001$).

2. A known continuum of disciplinary consequences ($p < .01$).

3. A formal procedure for investigating incidents ($p < .05$).

4. Consequences for wrongful accusations ($p < .01$).

5. Procedures for reporting cyberbullying ($p < .05$).

6. A procedure for notifying the parents of victims ($p < .001$).

7. A procedure for providing education to students, parents, teachers, and community members ($p < .01$).

8. A procedure for referring victims of cyberbullying for counseling ($p < .05$).

9. A procedure for referring perpetrators of cyberbullying for counseling ($p < .01$).

10. A procedure for notifying the parents of victims of the actions taken to protect their children ($p < .01$).

11. Signs posted throughout the school regarding cyberbullying ($p < .05$).

In addition to the eleven items that found a statistically significant difference between schools with effective cyberbullying policies and those without effective cyberbullying policies, the two other items on the questionnaire are still of significance because the

majority of school with and without effective cyberbullying policies employ those strategies. The first strategy that did not show any statistically significant difference was promptly conducting an investigation once an incident of cyberbullying has been reported. Of the schools with effective policies, 93.9% indicated that this is a component of their cyberbullying policy. Of the schools that indicated that they do not have an effective policy, 92.3% indicated that this is a component of their cyberbullying policy. The second strategy that did not yield a statistically significant difference was notifying the parents of a perpetrator of cyberbullying. Of the schools with effective cyberbullying policies, again, 93.9% indicated that this is a component of their policy. Of the schools that indicated that they do not have an effective policy, 84.6% indicated that this is a component of their cyberbullying policy.

Many of the results of this questionnaire are supported by cyberbullying literature. For example, when discussing school solutions to cyberbullying, a survey given to students indicated that an anonymous reporting system, a program to teach students about the effects of cyberbullying, and the punishment of students who participate in cyberbullying behaviors were the three most popular responses (Cassidy, et al., 2009). Another key item to a successful cyberbullying program identified in the literature as well as the survey was the use of education, counseling, and pro-social outlets for victims (Hinduja & Patchin, 2007). Ford (2009) takes this notion one step further with the belief in the importance of providing intervention, counseling, and consequences for the perpetrators of cyberbullying.

There are two more components of the questionnaire that are supported by the research. First, Hinduja and Patchin (2009) believe in the importance of an anonymous

reporting system. This idea can be further supported by the qualitative portion of this

interview as each of the three principals interviewed, which all indicated that they have

an effective cyberbullying policy, have a link on their web page where students can

anonymously report instances of cyberbullying. The final component of the

questionnaire that is supported by the research is having a known continuum of

disciplinary consequences. Although using discipline as the sole means of addressing

cyberbullying is potentially one of the least effective method of addressing the issue

(Shariff, 2004), it is important to take swift action to show support to the victims and let

them know that the school is taking the problem seriously (Hinduja & Patchin).

Finally, a content analysis was conducted from the three principal interviews that

were conducted. From those interviews, six main themes were identified. The first

theme identified focused on the importance of reporting procedures. Each of the schools

had a "Report a Bully" link on their web site that encouraged students to report incidents

of both bullying and cyberbullying. The principals believed this to be an effective tool

because so many students are reluctant to come to administration to report an incident out

of fear of retaliation or fear of being labeled a "rat". The idea of having a reporting

system is supported by the Chi-squared analyses that was conducted as a statistically

significant difference was noted regarding having a reporting system when comparing

those principal who have an effective cyberbullying policy versus those who do not ($p <$

.05). The idea of having a reporting procedure, and possibly even an anonymous

reporting procedure, is also supported by the literature (Cassidy, et al., 2009; Hinduja &

Patchin, 2009).

The next theme that emerged from the content analysis was curriculum integration.

This theme, which could also be known as "education" is also supported by the quantitative portion of the study and by the literature. In the Chi-squared analyses that was conducted, providing education not only to students, but also to parents, teachers, and community members was found to be statistically significant ($p < .01$). Hinduja & Patchin (2009) believe that students should be exposed to curricular enhancements that discuss the unacceptable use of technology, and Cassidy, et al. (2009) surveyed students who believe in the importance of teaching students the effects of cyberbullying.

The third theme that emerged from the content analysis was an emphasis on student-centered productions. Each principal interviewed discussed the fact that they have a Broadcast Journalism class and that bullying and cyberbullying performances were created and put on by students. Although none of the research discusses such a method in cyberbullying prevention or awareness, each principal interviewed strongly believed that the television shows put on by the students at their school send a very powerful message. The fourth theme focused on prevention, which in a way could be connected to the third theme. Hinduja and Patchin (2009) concur with the importance of prevention, as they believe that students should be exposed to cyberbullying prevention strategies through assemblies, signs, and curriculum enhancements.

Punishment was the next theme identified. Again, it has been made clear that punishment alone is not effective, but punishment is an essential component of an effective cyberbullying program. Each principal interviewed felt very strongly in the importance of enforcing discipline when incidents of cyberbullying occur because of the message it sends out to the student body. The notion of punishment is supported by the Chi-squared analysis that was conducted as a known continuum of disciplinary

consequences for cyberbullying was found to be statistically significant for schools with effective cyberbullying policies ($p < .01$). Again, punishment is also supported in the literature as Cassidy, et al. (2009) identified this to be an important component when dealing with cyberbullying through a survey given to students, and Ford (2009) highlighted the importance of enforcing consequences for these types of behaviors.

Technology was the final theme identified by the principals. They pointed to the ease with which cyberbullying can occur due to the technological advances through smart phones, and they also pointed to technology as a barrier to effectively dealing with cyberbullying because an inability still exists to track evidence back to the origin of the problem.

<div align="center">Conclusions</div>

The conclusions of this research study include items that have been identified by multiple sources as being an effective component of a cyberbullying program. When looking at the results of the independent t-test, the results of the Chi-squared analysis, the results of the qualitative portion of this study, and the current body of research related to cyberbullying, the findings of this research study have indicated the following items as being essential components of an effective cyberbullying policy:

1. Parent Communication. When discussing parent communication related to cyberbullying, it is important to include procedures to notify the parents of the victim of cyberbullying, to notify the parents of the perpetrator of cyberbullying, and to notify the parents of the victim to inform them of the steps being taken to protect their child.

2. The climate of the school impacts the willingness of victims and bystanders to report incidents of cyberbullying. It is important for administrators, teachers, and staff members to create a climate where students are fully aware that cyberbullying is not acceptable and is not considered "cool". Steps school leaders can take to increase the climate related to cyberbullying include having assemblies and presentations discussing the effects of cyberbullying, decorating the school with anti-cyberbullying signs, and ensuring that teachers are a constant presence on campus. Finally, if administrators and school staff show victims that they take incidents of cyberbullying seriously, they are more likely to increase the percentage of students who are willing to confide with an adult about their experiences.

3. Once an incident of cyberbullying has been reported, it is imperative that a prompt investigation takes place. There should be known continuum of disciplinary consequences for these actions, there should be a formal procedure in place for investigating incidents of cyberbullying, and consequences should be strictly enforced.

4. The language in an effective cyberbullying policy must include a statement about behaviors that occur off-campus. Although many incidents of cyberbullying take place on the evening and during the weekend, the effects of the event often cause a major disruption at school the following day. It is imperative that schools let parents and students know that it is within the school's jurisdiction to enforce consequences even when these acts take place away from the school campus or outside of school hours.

5. Procedures need to be in place for making students comfortable reporting incidents of cyberbullying. Included in reporting procedures and supported by the results of this study and by the current body of research includes an anonymous reporting system. One of the reporting strategies that was consistent among all three principals interviewed in the qualitative portion of the study is the option to report an incident of bullying or cyberbullying through a link on the school's web site. Options such as this reduce students' fears of reporting problems to administrators in person.

6. A focus on prevention rather than punishment is very important. Although punishment is a key item identified, it cannot be solely relied upon to stop cyberbullying behaviors. Prevention needs to focus on providing education to students, parents, teachers, and community members about what cyberbullying is, how it occurs, and how deeply it can impact the life of a young individual. Additionally, prevention needs to focus on publicizing the school's policy, making sure that all stakeholders are aware of the importance of reporting cyberbullying, and making them aware of the avenues with which they can report their experiences.

7. A procedure for referring students for counseling. When referring students for counseling, it is important to realize that both the victims and the perpetrators of cyberbullying should be referred for counseling.

Recommendations for Further Study

1. Since this study was conducted in the state of Nevada, with respondents from large urban areas and very small rural areas, a study should be done comparing cyberbullying in rural areas versus cyberbullying in urban areas.

2. In two of the principal interviews in the qualitative portion of the study, the principals mentioned the fact that the higher socioeconomic status of their student population leads to an increase in cyberbullying behaviors due to the capabilities of smart phones. Further studies should be conducted looking at practices to combat cyberbullying in schools of low socioeconomic status, middle class schools, and schools with high socioeconomic status.

3. This study was conducted by solely by surveying and interviewing principals at the middle school level. Although cyberbullying behaviors peak in the middle school years (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009), it still occurs at the high school level. A study should be conducted identifying what strategies are employed to combat cyberbullying in high schools, of those strategies, what are reported as being effective by administrators, and the differences in effective cyberbullying policies between middle and high schools should be highlighted.

4. A cyberbullying prevention study needs to take place that utilizes student focus groups. The information from this study came from survey data and interviews conducted by principals and were triangulated by the current body of literature by educational and psychological scholars. One piece that is missing from this study is student voice. A research study should be

conducted where student focus groups are allowed to discuss their feelings towards cyberbullying, why they don't report their experiences, and steps that school officials can take to convince them to report their experiences.

5. A study needs to take place where students who have been identified as pervasive victims of cyberbullying are willing to participate in interviews. Through these interviews, information could be obtained to discover what the students truly felt needed to be done in order to support and protect them so that they could feel safe coming to school.

6. This study was conducted using the survey results of 66 middle school principals in the state of Nevada along with interview results from three principals. In order to allow for greater generalizability, a study such as this should be conducted with a much larger sample size and in different regions within the United States.

7. A study should take place that focuses on how schools can properly evaluate their cyberbullying policies for effectiveness.

Summary

Every student has the right to come to school with the confidence that they are going to a safe, secure environment. Bullying is nothing new to children going to school, but researchers now more than ever have a solid understanding on the depth and the severity of its impact. Now adding another dimension to the torture that perpetrators can inflict upon their prey is the fact that technological advances have given them boundless means with which to harass their victims. The jobs of school administrators, teachers, counselors, and support staff are often quite complex. Gone are the days where educators

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can simply present information and let the students decided whether or not they want to learn it. The concept of accountability has drastically changed the approach that all stakeholders must take in their approach to education, and this is probably for the better. But when educators get too caught up in "AYP" or test scores, they often forget the complexity of their positions. Not only are they faced with the task of providing quality instruction to students, but they also must take the element of human dynamics into consideration when deciding how to approach their positions.

For school principals, human dynamics is an imperfect science. But when forced to look at how devastating the human element can be at times to other individuals, it highlights the urgency with which they must pay attention to issues outside of test scores and AYP. It is now known that as many as 93% of cyberbullying victims have felt negative effects, some of which include multiple maladaptive, psychological outcomes like anxiety, depression, and thoughts of suicide (Hinduja & Patchin, 2006; Willard, 2006; Raskauskas & Stoltz, 2007). Less severe effects, but ones that have a greater impact on test scores and AYP status include peer aggression, increases in school violence, increases in truancy, increases of substance abuse, poor grades, and unfavorable attitudes regarding school (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004; Hinduja & Patchin, 2007; Willard, 2006). And if these facts aren't enough to convince school leaders that they must take the issue of cyberbullying seriously and proactively, Ybarra, et al. (2007) reported that students who have been targeted by electronic forms of harassment are eight times more likely to carry a weapon to school within 30 days of their experience.

If every child has the right to come to school knowing that they are entering a safe, secure environment, then every educator has the obligation to take action on current

issues that impact their student population. With the boom of social networking in the past few years, cyberbullying is now one of those issues that educators simply must acknowledge as a primary concern when evaluating threats to student safety and academic performance.

This brings us back to the conceptual framework of this study, which was Fowler's (2004) Stage Model of the Policy Process. The state legislature and the school districts have taken care of the first four steps of this process (Issue Definition, Agenda Setting, Policy Formation, Policy Adoption), but all four of these steps are generic and meaningless unless school leaders take it upon themselves to thoroughly address the last two components of the Stage Model. The first four stages have left schools knowing that cyberbullying is now considered illegal. However, that fact does little to proactively reduce the prevalence of the problem. Step five of the Stage Model is Implementation, and this is a step that is left completely up to each individual school. In order to be effective, school leaders must take a look at the facts related to cyberbullying and implement a proactive anti-cyberbullying policy that is relevant to their student population.

Finally, the last step, the most important step, and probably the most ignored step of the Stage Model, is Evaluation. Technology is changing so rapidly that it is nearly impossible to keep up with. A principal who has an outstanding cyberbullying policy in place today but fails to consistently evaluate it for effectiveness will most likely have an outdated and ineffective policy in two years. Evaluation of effective cyberbullying policies cannot be a summative action; it must be ongoing in order to remain relevant.

To take on all of these tasks certainly overloads an already full plate for principals and other school leaders. But if educators are serious about wanting to help children, if they care about the child as a whole, then cyberbullying must remain on that plate if they truly desire to make a difference in the lives of children.

ADMINISTRATOR CYBERBULLYING SURVEY

Please click on your selected response for each question (choose one).

How many years have you worked at your current school?
1-5   6-10   11-15   20-25   25+

How many years have you been an administrator?
1-5   6-10   11-15   20-25   25+

Does your school have a written cyberbullying policy?
Yes   No

If your school has a written cyberbullying policy, do you believe that the policy is effective?
Yes   No

In an average month, how many cyberbullying incidents are reported to you (please include assistant principal, principal, other deans, counselors, and/or any other school resources if you have them)?
0-1   2-5   6-10   11-15   16+

The following are statements about your school. Please indicate the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements along a scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Your answers are confidential.

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Cyberbullying is a problem at our school.					
2. We know how many students at our school have been victims of cyberbullying.					
3. We know how many students at our school have cyberbullied others.					
4. Teachers regularly remind students to approach them if they are dealing with a issue related to cyberbullying or online safety.					
5. It is made clear to students that the inappropriate use of technology will not be tolerated by school administration.					
6. We work to create a climate in which cyberbullying is not considered "cool" among the student population.					
7. Students are taught about acceptable computer and Internet use during the school year through presentations and assemblies.					
8. Students are taught about how to recognize cyberbullying threats to their online safety.					
9. Students are taught how to respond to cyberbullying in an appropriate manner.					
10. Teachers know how to recognize cyberbullying issues and how to intervene in an appropriate manner.					
11. We distribute material to students and parents to educate them about cyberbullying.					

12. We hold after school meetings and events during the school year for parents and community members about online safety among youth.					
13. We take suspected and actual incidents of cyberbullying seriously.					
14. We know when we can intervene in cyberbullying incidents that originate off campus.					
15. We have an anonymous reporting system to allow students and teachers to report instances of cyberbullying without fear of retaliation.					
16. Our school has a clear policy regarding cell phones and other portable electronic devices.					
17. Students know our policy regarding technology and cyberbullying.					
18. Parents know our policy regarding technology and cyberbullying.					
19. Students believe that reporting cyberbullying will make the problem worse.					
20. Your school is doing enough to prevent or stop cyberbullying.					

If your school does have a written cyberbullying policy, please answer the following yes/no questions:

Question	Yes	No
1. Our cyberbullying policy includes language about off-campus behaviors being subject to discipline.		
2. We have developed a known continuum of disciplinary consequences for cyberbullying incidents.		
3. We have developed a formal procedure for investigating incidents of cyberbullying.		
4. Our policy describes consequences for a student who is found to have wrongfully and intentionally accused another student of an act of cyberbullying.		
5. Our cyberbullying policy includes a procedure for reporting cyberbullying incidents.		
6. Our cyberbullying reporting policy permits students to anonymously report incidents of cyberbullying.		
7. A prompt investigation is conducted once cyberbullying has been reported.		
8. The policy includes a procedure for immediately notifying parents of a victim of cyberbullying.		
9. The policy includes a procedure for immediately notifying the parents of the perpetrator of an act of cyberbullying.		
10. The policy includes a procedure for providing education to students, parents, teachers, and community members about cyberbullying.		
11. The policy includes a procedure to refer victims of cyberbullying for counseling.		
12. The policy includes a procedure to refer perpetrators for cyberbullying for counseling.		
13. The policy includes a procedure for regularly reporting to a victim's parents the actions taken to protect the victim.		

14. The policy includes a procedure for publicizing the policy for students, parents, faculty, and community members.		
15. Signs regarding our cyberbullying policy are posted throughout the school.		

Please answer the following questions in the text box about your personal beliefs regarding your school's cyberbullying policy.

1. What interventions do you utilize most often when cyberbullying incidents are reported to you?

2. Of the interventions you have utilized when cyberbullying incidents have been reported to you, in your opinion, which have been the most effective?

3. Of the interventions you have utilized when cyberbullying incidents have been reported to you, in your opinion, which have been the least effective?

4. What steps have been taken at your school to make students feel more comfortable reporting cyberbullying incidents?

5. What steps, if any, have been taken to integrate cyberbullying awareness into the school's curriculum?

If you believe you have an effective cyberbullying policy at your school, would you be willing to participate in a follow-up interview? A follow-up interview would take no more than 30 minutes and would be conducted at the most convenient time and in the most convenient location for you.
    Yes   No

If you are willing to participate in a follow-up interview, please leave your name and a phone number where you can be reached

APPENDIX II

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. Please describe the extent to which you believe cyberbullying is a problem at your school.

2. What procedures do you have in place to address cyberbullying?

3. Do you have any proactive strategies for addressing cyberbullying?

4. Would you say that your cyberbullying policy and procedures focus more on prevention or on punishment?

5. What do you believe is the most effective way to address cyberbullying?

6. Why do you feel this is effective?

7. What do you feel is the least effective?

8. Why is it not effective?

9. Approximately how many cases of cyberbullying per month are brought to the attention of administrators or counselors?

10. Do you have any way of tracking cyberbullying discipline data?

11. What reporting procedures do you have in place?

12. What could you do to improve your cyberbullying policy?

13. How do you evaluate your cyberbullying policy for effectiveness

APPENDIX III

IRB RECRUITMENT E-MAIL

Date: January 19, 2011

To: Nevada Middle School Principals

From: Brian Wiseman

RE: Cyberbullying Research Study

Dear Middle School Principal:

My name is Brian Wiseman. I am an assistant principal in the Clark County School District, and I am also a doctoral student at UNLV. Due to the alarming increase of cyberbullying and the subsequent negative effects felt by our students because of this epidemic, I am conducting a research study for my doctoral dissertation on school policies and procedures related to cyberbullying. Since this phenomenon is still relatively new, there is little research indicating the most successful strategies schools may employ to reduce the prevalence of cyberbullying on their campuses.

The purpose of my study is to gain a better understanding of the policies and procedures that are currently in place in middle schools across the state of Nevada. I have chosen to focus on middle schools because of the overwhelming amount of research that indicates that cyberbullying is most prevalent amongst middle school students. In two weeks, I will be sending an e-mail to each middle school principal in Nevada that will contain a link to a survey about cyberbullying practices at each individual school. Participation in this survey is strictly voluntary, responses will remain anonymous, and it should take no longer than 20 minutes. The purpose of the survey is to determine the practices being employed at schools that are effective with regards to combating cyberbullying. Since the term "effective" is very subjective within the contents of this study, the definition of "effective" as it pertains to this study is "the actions you are taking at your school lead to a decrease in the amount of cyberbullying that occurs at your school." At the conclusion of the survey, participants will be asked if they would be willing to participate in a one-on-one interview about the specific strategies employed at their individual school. Anyone willing to participate in the study would then be asked to provide their name and contact information. The name and school location of all participants in the interview will remain anonymous in the findings of the research study.

I would like to assure you that participation in this study involves very minimal risk. There will be no financial cost to you for participation in this study, nor will you be financially compensated for your participation. The data obtained will be used to expand upon the current body of research in existence regarding cyberbullying practices, and you may decline to answer any question that makes you feel uncomfortable. You have the right to withdraw participation at any time.

Because a great deal of research is needed to fully understand how schools can work to reduce the many negative effects of cyberbullying victimization, your participation in this short survey would provide valuable data that could have a positive impact on a great number of students.

For questions regarding the rights of research subjects, any complaints or comments regarding the manner in which the study is being conducted may be directed to the UNLV Office of Research Integrity – Human Subjects (ORI-HS) at (702) 895-2794. If you have any comments, questions, or concerns about the survey, you may contact me directly at brwiseman@interact.ccsd.net or via cell phone at (702) 219-7373. Should you need to reach the principal investigator, please contact Dr. Pamela Salazar at (702) 895-1971 (office) or via e-mail at pam.salazar@unlv.edu.

Your participation in this survey will be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Brian Wiseman
Assistant Principal
UNLV Doctoral Student

APPENDIX IV

PERMISSION LETTER TO USE THE CYBERBULLYING REPORT CARD

Hello Brian,

Thanks for the note and kind words regarding our book. Yes, you have our permission to use our Cyberbullying Report Card. Just cite us in your work and we would love to see the results when you are done.

Best of luck with the project,

Justin Patchin

Justin W. Patchin, Ph.D.
Co-Director, Cyberbullying Research Center
Associate Professor of Criminal Justice
Department of Political Science
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire
105 Garfield Avenue
Eau Claire, WI 54702-4004
Phone: 715.836.4058
Email: patchinj@uwec.edu
www.cyberbullying.us

From: Brian R. Wiseman [mailto:brwiseman@interact.ccsd.net]
Sent: Friday, July 30, 2010 3:04 PM
To: hinduja@cyberbullying.us; patchin@cyberbullying.us
Subject: Cyberbullying Dissertation

Dr. Hinduja and Dr. Patchin,

First, let me express my sincere grattitude for the outstanding work you two have provided to the field of cyberbullying. My name is Brian Wiseman. I am an assistant principal in the Clark County School District in Las Vegas, and I am also a doctoral student in the Educational Leadership department at UNLV. I am currently working on my dissertation on cyberbullying. Your book "Bullying Beyond the Schoolyard" has been an amazing resource for me, and I was wondering if I may obtain permission to use part of the Cyberbullying Report Card (Resource H) in the book. I believe that this will be an excellent tool for me to use in creating my survey for administrators.

Obviously, should permission be granted, I would make sure I give proper credit, and I will be sure to send you the results of my study once it is completed.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

APPENDIX V

PERMISSION TO USE THE CRITERIAFOR DISTRICT BULLYING AND

HARASSMENT POLICIES

Hello Brian,

The checklist we utilize was developed within my office as a tool for certifying school district's compliance with s. 1006.147, Florida Statutes requiring each district to develop a policy preventing bullying and harassment in schools. You are welcome to make use of the checklist, as well please feel free to contact me at your convenience should you have additional questions.

Thank you,

Brooks Rumenik

Director, Office of Safe Schools
Florida Department of Education
325 W. Gaines Street, Suite 554
Tallahassee, Florida 32399
850-245-0749
brooks.rumenik@fldoe.org

From: Brian R. Wiseman [mailto:brwiseman@interact.ccsd.net]
Sent: Saturday, July 31, 2010 1:29 PM
To: James, Olivia; Rumenik, Brooks
Subject: Cyberbullying Policy

Good Morning!

My name is Brian Wiseman. I am an assistant principal in the Clark County School District in Las Vegas, and I am a doctoral student in Educational Leadership at UNLV. I'm doing my dissertation on cyberbullying policies and I came across your Criteria Checklist. I'm looking to survey school leaders on their cyberbullying policies, and I think that items from this checklist could be an extraordinary asset to my survey.

In short, I am asking to use all or part of the checklist for my survey. Do you know who created this survey? If so, is there any way you might help me get in touch with that individual?

Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Brian Wiseman

RESULTS FROM THE CYBERBULLYING REPORT CARD SURVEY

Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Cyberbullying is a problem at our school.	9%	16%	21%	48%	7%
We know how many students at our school have been victims of cyberbullying.	22%	38%	17%	17%	5%
We know how many students at our school have cyberbullied others.	24%	43%	16%	14%	3%
Teachers regularly remind students to approach them for help if they are dealing with an issue related to cyberbullying or online safety	14%	16%	14%	41%	16%
It is made clear to the students that the inappropriate use of technology will not be tolerated by school administration.	2%	2%	2%	34%	60%
We work to create a climate in which cyberbullying is not considered "cool" among the student population.	2%	7%	17%	43%	31%
Students are taught about acceptable computer and Internet use during the school year.	2%	2%	0%	40%	56%
Students are taught about how to recognize cyberbullying threats to their online safety.	5%	5%	16%	50%	24%
Students are taught how to respond to cyberbullying in an appropriate manner.	9%	2%	17%	57%	16%
Teachers know how to recognize cyberbullying issues and how to intervene in an appropriate manner.	2%	9%	23%	60%	7%
We distribute materials to students and parents to educate them about cyberbullying.	9%	16%	12%	48%	16%
We hold after school meetings and events during the school year for parents and community members about online safety among youth.	21%	22%	9%	36%	12%

We take suspected and actual incidents of cyberbullying seriously.	2%	0%	0%	28%	71%
We know when we can intervene in cyberbullying incidents that originate off campus.	3%	10%	5%	43%	38%
We have an anonymous reporting system that allows students and teachers to report instances of cyberbullying without fear of retaliation.	14%	24%	3%	21%	38%
Our school has a clear policy regarding cell phones and other portable electronic devices.	0%	2%	0%	24%	74%
Students know our policy regarding technology and cyberbullying.	2%	2%	7%	47%	43%
Parents know our policy regarding technology and cyberbullying.	2%	3%	17%	47%	31%
Students believe that reporting cyberbullying will make the problem worse.	7%	12%	34%	38%	9%
Your school is doing enough to prevent or stop cyberbullying.	12%	31%	31%	19%	7%

APPENDIX VII

RESULTS FROM THE FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION CRITERIA FOR

DISTRICT BULLYING AND HARASSMENT POLICIES

Item	Yes	No
Our cyberbullying policy includes language about off-campus behaviors being subject to discipline.	62%	38%
We have developed a known continuum of disciplinary consequences for cyberbullying incidents.	82%	18%
We have developed a formal procedure for investigating incidents of cyberbullying.	72%	28%
Our policy describes consequences for a student who is found to have wrongfully and intentionally accused another student of an act of cyberbullying.	59%	41%
Our cyberbullying policy includes a procedure for reporting cyberbullying incidents.	79%	21%
Our cyberbullying policy permits students to anonymously report incidents of cyberbullying.	71%	29%
A prompt investigation is conducted once cyberbullying has been reported.	90%	10%
The cyberbullying policy includes a procedure for immediately notifying the parents of a victim of cyberbullying.	76%	24%
The policy includes a procedure for immediately notifying the perpetrator's parents of an act of cyberbullying.	84%	16%
The policy includes a procedure for providing education to students, parents, teachers, and community members about cyberbullying.	58%	42%
The policy includes a procedure to refer victims of cyberbullying for counseling.	45%	55%
The policy includes a procedure to refer perpetrators of cyberbullying for counseling.	32%	68%
The policy includes a procedure for regularly reporting to a victim's parents the actions taken to protect the victim.	63%	37%
The policy includes a procedure for publicizing the policy for students, parents, faculty, and community members.	65%	35%
Signs regarding our policy are posted throughout the school.	34%	66%

INFORMED CONSENT FOR QUALITATIVE RESEARCH STUDY FOR MIDDLE

SCHOOL PRINCIPALS IN THE STATE OF NEVADA

Department of Educational Leadership

TITLE OF STUDY: Cyberbullying in Schools: A Research Study on School Policies

and Procedures

INVESTIGATOR(S): Dr. Pamela Salazar

CONTACT PHONE NUMBER: 702-895-2794

Purpose of the Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to interview middle school principals in the state of Nevada who, through data obtained in a survey, have identified themselves as having effective cyberbullying policies and practices in place at their schools. These principals also have indicated their willingness to participate in the interview.

Participants

You are being asked to participate in the study because you fit the following criteria: Middle school principal in the state of Nevada between the ages of 25-70 who have completed a survey and agreed to participate in follow-up interview.

Procedures

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following: participate in a one-on-one interview that will last no longer than 45 minutes. A basic interview protocol will be used to structure the interview, but participants will be allowed to also discuss any information they feel is relevant that has not been brought up for discussion through the interview protocol. Subjects who agree to participate in interviews will no longer remain anonymous, but their confidentiality will be guaranteed. Pseudonyms of their choice will be selected for both their own names and the names of their schools.

Benefits of Participation

There are no direct benefits to you as a participant in this study. However, we hope to learn what policies are in place by principals who have reported having effective

cyberbullying policies. The information obtained from these sources will be coded and analyzed for recurring themes that may be useful in all schools.

Risks of Participation
There are risks involved in all research studies. This study may include only minimal risks. It is not anticipated that the participants will be subjected to any risks, but participants may at times feel uncomfortable with the audio recording of the interview or with the content of some of the questions. The interviews will not be videotaped.

Cost /Compensation
There will not be financial cost to you to participate in this study. The study will take approximately 45 minutes of your time. You will not be compensated for your time.

Contact Information
If you have any questions or concerns about the study, you may contact Dr. Pamela Salazar at 702-895-1971. For questions regarding the rights of research subjects, any complaints or comments regarding the manner in which the study is being conducted you may contact **the UNLV Office of Research Integrity – Human Subjects at 702-895-2794 or toll free at 877-895-2794 or via email at IRB@unlv.edu.**

Voluntary Participation
Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate in this study or in any part of this study. You may withdraw at any time without prejudice to your relations with the university. You are encouraged to ask questions about this study at the beginning or any time during the research study.

Confidentiality
All information gathered in this study will be kept completely confidential. No reference will be made in written or oral materials that could link you to this study. All records will be stored in a locked facility at UNLV for 5 years after completion of the study. After the storage time, the information gathered will be shredded and destroyed.

Participant Consent:
I have read the above information and agree to participate in this study. I am at least 18 years of age. A copy of this form has been given to me.

_____   _____

Signature of Participant   Date

_____

Participant Name (Please Print)

APPENDIX IX

INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN AN AUDIO TAPED INTERVIEW

Department of Educational Leadership

**TITLE OF STUDY: Cyberbullying in Schools: A Research Study on School Policies
and Procedures**

INVESTIGATOR(S): Brian R. Wiseman

CONTACT PHONE NUMBER: 702-219-7373

Audio/Video Taping:

I agree to be audio taped for the purpose of this research study.

_____   _____

Signature of Participant   Date

_____

Participant Name (Please Print)

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VITA

Graduate College
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Brian R. Wiseman

Degrees:
    Bachelor of Arts, Special Education, 1999
    Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, IL

    Master of Science, Education Leadership, 2005
    University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Professional Experience:
    Assistant Principal, Indian Springs K – 12 Schools, 2009 – 2011
    Dean of Students, Kathleen and Tim Harney Middle School, 2007 – 2009
    Special Education Instructional Facilitator, Cheyenne High School, 2005 – 2007
    Self-Contained Special Education Teacher, Cheyenne High School, 2002 – 2005
    Self-Contained Special Education Teacher, Pacifica High School, California, 2000 – 2002
    Special Education Teacher, Buffalo Grove High School, Illinois, 1999 – 2000

Dissertation Title: Cyberbullying in Schools: A Research Study on School Policies and Procedures

Dissertation Examination Committee:
    Chairperson, Pamela Salazar, Ed.D
    Committee Member, James Crawford, Ph.D
    Committee Member, Robert McCord, Ed.D
    Graduate Faculty Representative, Porter Troutman, Ed.D