Building-Level School Administrators' Perceptions of Cyber Bullying, Among Students Under their Supervision: Implications for Prevention and Intervention

James P. Colt
St. John Fisher College

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Michael Wischnowski

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Diane Reed

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By

James P. Colt

Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Ed.D. in Executive Leadership

Supervised by:
Dr. Michael Wischnowski, Dissertation Chair
Dr. Diane Reed, Committee Member

Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. School of Education
St. John Fisher College

November 2008
Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. School of Education

St. John Fisher College

Ed.D. in Executive Leadership

We recommend that the dissertation by

James P. Colt

Entitled: Building-Level School Administrators’ Perceptions of Cyber Bullying Among Students Under their Supervision: Implications for Prevention and Intervention

Be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Education Doctorate degree.

Michael Wischnowski, Ph. D., Dissertation Chair

Diane Reed, Ed. D., Committee Member

8/19/08

Date
Dedication

The completion of my dissertation is dedicated to my wife, Stacy, whose love and support helped me to cross the finish line. Also, special THANKS to my family and friends, for helping make my life-long dream a reality.
Biographical Sketch

James P. Colt is the Coordinator of School Safety and Security for the Monroe 1 BOCES school district. Mr. Colt is the chair of the district-wide Bullying Prevention Committee at Monroe 1 BOCES, and he is an active member of both the Rochester Cyber Safety and Ethics Initiative, and the Monroe County Community Task Force on Bullying Prevention. His professional experience includes service as a police officer employed by the State University of New York, and as a Criminal Justice Instructor and School Community Safety Specialist at Monroe 1 BOCES. He holds New York State Certification as a public school teacher and a school administrator. He graduated with a Bachelor of Arts Degree from the University at Buffalo in 1992. He earned a Masters Degree in Criminal Justice from Buffalo State College in 1995 and a second Masters Degree in Educational Administration from St. John Fisher College in 2003. Mr. Colt began doctoral studies at St. John Fisher College in 2006, and received his Ed. D. Degree in 2008. He pursued his research on the topic of cyber bullying under the direction of Dr. Michael Wischnowki and Dr. Diane Reed.
Abstract

Research has indicated that both technology use and cyber bullying behavior by teenagers are increasing. Despite the importance of the role of building-level school administrators in establishing climate and addressing violence, the research on cyber bullying to date has not included the perceptions of building-level school administrators.

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of building-level school administrators about cyber bullying, the factors that influenced their response to cyber bullying, and the measures they and their schools are taking in regard to prevention and intervention of cyber bullying. This study employed a sequential explanatory mixed-methods strategy, which began with a broad survey to obtain both quantitative and qualitative data. The next phase involved conducting detailed interviews to expand upon data gathered through the surveys.

Results indicated that participants generally feel that cyber bullying is increasing among students under their supervision. Participants also reported using a variety of responses to intervene in incidents of cyber bullying, and that the response was influenced by the location where the cyber bullying occurred. The majority of participants reported that they have not received training on cyber bullying, and that school policies are often inconsistent and unclear. Therefore, recommendations for schools include incorporating cyber bullying into existing bullying prevention efforts, with an initial emphasis on awareness training and policy development.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Bullying and Cyber Bullying

The topic of bullying and cyber bullying has great professional significance and practicality across disciplines, such as education, psychology, health, and criminal justice. Simply stated, children who feel unsafe cannot learn; this notion has relevance for all those who have an interest in the health and success of our youth. Launched by the pioneering research of Daniel Olweus in the late 1970's, a body of research on how bullying constitutes a major barrier to healthy child development has been developed by researchers, clinicians, and educators. In addition, increasing academic attention has focused on bullying prevention. It has become clearer that, given the complexity of the issue, prevention efforts must be systemic and ongoing in order to achieve a level of success (Olweus, Limber, & Mihalic, 1999; Greene, 2006). However, despite the national attention paid to this “hot topic” and subsequent flurry of research, there are many school districts that have not taken measures to address the issue. There is clearly a need for informed leadership in this area that implements the latest research on what works in bullying prevention. Further, the lack of significant academic attention to the topic of cyber bullying creates a problem for the development of prevention and intervention efforts based on evidence-based practice.

Specific areas of focus of academic research on bullying have been on etiology, influences, prevalence, characteristics, and impact. However, there has been a paucity of
academic research on the use of technology to engage in bullying behavior, which is commonly referred to as cyber bullying (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006; Willard, 2006). Computers are now relatively common in households and are often used for entertainment, socializing, and academic support (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004a). According to the UCLA Internet Report: Year Three, a nationwide survey found that 97% of all 12- to 18-year-olds use the Internet with users spending 11 hours (on average) per week online (Lebo, 2003). Further, Internet use continues to increase among American youth, and they increasingly use cell phones as their primary means of communication (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004a). While online, youth can access a number of social networking sites. From there, youth can share information, participate in discussions, exchange pictures, and connect with peers (Willard, 2006). Although the technology has positively contributed to society, the ready access and means to communicate electronically has also provided a large window of opportunity to engage in online harassing behavior. Modern technology has also provided a new realm for individuals to be bullied and harassed by peers. The resulting harm is even magnified, as damaging or hurtful information can be widely disseminated over a range of mediums (Willard, 2006). Despite the dearth of academic research on cyber bullying, it is useful to examine the research on traditional bullying to gain a better understanding of the more recent phenomenon of cyber bullying.

History of Traditional Bullying Research

Norwegian scholar Daniel Olweus has been referred to as the pioneer of bullying research. In his seminal research in the early 1970’s, Olweus labeled bullying as “mobbing” and defined it as an individual or group of individuals harassing or teasing another person (Hoover & Oliver, 1996). Yet, school officials in Norway did not focus
their attention on bullying until the early 1980’s, when three young boys committed suicide after being subjected to aggravated harassment (Espelage & Swearer, 2003). These events spurred a national campaign on bullying prevention that resulted in a bullying prevention program being implemented in every primary and secondary school in Norway. Since then, numerous countries, including England, Italy, Canada, Japan, the United States, and Australia, have recognized bullying as a serious concern, and have focused efforts on researching and combating it (Espelage & Swearer, 2003).

**Definitional Issues**

A significant issue concerning bullying and harassment is the difficulty in defining the terms. For example, what is perceived as “joking and horsing around” may be viewed by another as “offensive,” and by others considered “bullying” or “harassment.” Sullivan (2000) defines bullying as willful, repeated negative acts, either physical or verbal, committed by one or more children against another. More specifically, Bullock (2002) defines bullying as harmful physical or psychological actions that are repeated and unprovoked, committed by one or more children against another. Perhaps the most commonly accepted definition of bullying is a type of aggression in which (a) the behavior is deliberate and harmful, (b) the behavior is repeated over time, and (c) there is an imbalance of power involving the more powerful attacking the less powerful (Nansel, Overpeck, Pilla, Ruan, Simons-Morton, & Scheidt, 2001). Physical bullying may include hitting, kicking, and pushing, while psychological bullying includes name-calling, teasing, taunting, threatening, and the exclusion and rejection of children from a group.
Cyber bullying is defined as willful and repeated harm inflicted through the medium of electronic text (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006). This is primarily done through computers via e-mail, Instant Message (IM), or web-posting; it is also done by sending text messages via cell phones.

*Imbalance of Power*

As previously stated, an element of bullying is the imbalance of power involving the more powerful attacking the less powerful (Nansel et al., 2001). In bullying situations, power can be defined in a number of ways, as the bully can be older, larger, stronger; have higher social status; or be more verbally adept (Coloroso, 2003). Olweus (1993) described bullying as typified by a power differential where the aggressors are more dominant than their victims. In addition, bullies have reported feeling justified for their actions due to feeling a sense of power and superiority; they also have an inflated view of their own self-worth (Olweus, 1993). Jeffrey (2004) noted that bullies exploit a power imbalance in which they thrive on controlling or dominating others. In this sense, they appear stronger, more aggressive, and more confident than other students. Having a sense of control, especially in front of peers, is important to their self-esteem. Further, research has even indicated that bullies can be the most popular students or central members of cliques (Pelligrini & Long, 2004). Pelligrini and Long (2004) viewed bullying as deliberate aggression to gain high or powerful status in the peer group. Finally, it has been shown that the peers often fail to intervene in bullying incidents that they witness. For example, Atlas and Pepler (1998) noted in a study that peers were present in 85% of bullying episodes. However, the peers attempted to stop the bullying only 10% of the time. The lack of intervention by students, combined with the lack of
intervention that often occurs by school staff, clearly shows a gap that needs to be
addressed.

*Traditional Bullying: Scope and Impact*

In order to clarify this multi-faceted topic, it is useful to examine the scope and
impact of traditional bullying. Bullying occurs in many forms, including verbal, physical,
emotional, sexual, and electronic. Research indicates that approximately 30% of students
in Grades 6 through 10 have been bullied, or bully others “sometimes or more often”
during a semester (Nansel et al., 2001). Further, bullying is harmful as victims are more
likely to be depressed and anxious, have low self-esteem, perform poorly academically,
and have suicidal thoughts (Limber, 2002). Victims are more introverted and cautious,
and often withdrawal from aggression (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004a). Those who bully, on
the other hand, are more likely to get into fights, damage and steal property, drop out of
school, and carry a weapon (Nansel et al., 2001; Olweus, 1993). Bullies have been shown
to be aggressive with their peers and with adults, and tend to have a more positive view
of violence (Olweus, 1993). Finally, youth who bully are often bigger and stronger than
their peers, are impulsive, and tend to lack empathy (Olweus, 1993). With the definition,
prevalence, and impact of bullying in mind, it is also important to consider another body
of research that includes a theoretical perspective on the causes and influences of
bullying behavior.

*Theoretical Framework: Influences*

The research on influences of bullying behavior often focuses on social learning
and contextual variables, including familial and peer influences. For example, Espelage,
Bosworth, & Simon (2000) discuss how a lack of family cohesion, family violence,
community violence, and inadequate parental supervision influence aggression and bullying. In addition, these authors note that poor modeling of problem-solving skills, delinquent peers, and bystander behaviors influence aggressive behaviors, especially during adolescence. Espelage (2004) offers a social-ecological perspective and views bullying as an activity that is influenced through time as a result of the complex relationships between child, family, peer group, school, community, and culture. Overall, it is clear that influences on bullying are complex and systemic. Therefore, for prevention, organizational, or school-wide, strategies that include ongoing and sustained efforts may have the most impact on reducing bullying in schools (Greene, 2006).

Rigby (2003) summarizes five different theoretical perspectives in understanding bullying. They include (1) developmental features, (2) individual differences, (3) a socio-cultural perspective, (4) group and peer pressure, and (5) a rationale for restorative justice. The first, the developmental perspective, explains bullying as a child development issue. For example, these developmental theories assert that bullying begins in early childhood when children begin to act at the expense of others to establish their social dominance (Rigby, 2003). The second perspective involves attributions to individual differences, such as lack of empathy (Rigby & Slee, 1993). The third perspective views bullying from a socio-cultural framework, and seeks to explain bullying as a result of the existence of specified social groups with varying levels of power (Rigby, 2003). For example, gender differences, which have a cultural and historical basis, would be seen as important, as society is considered patriarchal. Males are viewed as having more power due to a societal belief that males are the dominant sex. The fourth perspective, response to group and peer pressure, considers bullying within
the larger social context, which consists of behaviors and attitudes of members of the school community (Rigby, 2003). The final perspective, restorative justice, views bullying as a result of the type of character that the individual has developed. For example, children who bully others feel little pride in the school, and they lack a connection to the school community (Rigby, 2003). Overall, it is appropriate to look at the influences on bullying behavior, as they provide a deeper understanding of the issue and provide information that may lead to effective interventions.

**Theoretical Framework: Effectiveness of Prevention Programs**

There is general agreement that comprehensive social-ecological, or whole-school, approaches are necessary to reduce all forms of aggression in schools (Olweus et al., 1999; Greene, 2006). Specifically, this involves a coordinated effort at a number of levels, including (a) individual, (b) classroom, (c) school, and (d) community (Olweus, 1993). Further, Vreeman and Carroll (2007) conducted a systematic review of school-based interventions to prevent bullying; they found that interventions that involve multiple disciplines were more effective in reducing bullying. For example, out of 10 studies evaluating the whole-school approach, seven revealed decreased bullying (Vreeman & Carroll, 2007). The researchers also found that increased social work support, and mentoring for those “at-risk” were also effective in reducing bullying. On the other hand, Greene (2006) stated that prevention programs that focus exclusively on bullies and victims are ineffective, as they fail to take into account the role that bystanders play in the bullying dynamic. Similarly, Greene (2006) asserted that traditional bullying prevention programs are likely to be ineffective for cyber bullying, given its anonymous nature, and that it often occurs off school grounds. Although more
research is needed to verify this, it still remains important to more fully understand the role that schools have in prevention and intervention of cyber bullying. More specifically, the examination of building-level school administrator attitudes on intervention may shed light on the assertion. Building-level school administrators include principals and assistant/associate/vice principals.

**Significance of the Study**

This researcher is employed by a Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) school district, which is a cooperative extension of ten component school districts located in the same county in the Northeast. This BOCES is one of thirty-seven BOCES in New York State, which were created to provide shared educational programs and services to school districts. The district offers more than eighty programs and services that assist students of diverse backgrounds, from newborns to senior citizens, in discovering and reaching their learning potential. The role of this researcher includes providing support to programs and districts in researching and implementing safety-related changes.

In addition, the BOCES and this researcher, are part of a large-scale initiative taking place in the same county, led by researchers at a local college. The initiative involves a study of cyber safety and ethics among K-12 students. The goal of this initiative is to address the problem of Internet safety and cyber bullying; to do this, they are using data from surveys in multiple districts. The surveys are being administered to students, parents, and teachers in approximately fifteen school districts in the county. The goal of the current study was to add to the descriptive data being generated by the surveys. Specifically, additional quantitative and qualitative data obtained through
surveys and follow-up interviews with building-level school administrators can offer insight into potential policy changes and educational opportunities for the school communities.

Problem Statement

Research has indicated that nearly 35% of teenagers and 42% of middle-school students claim to have been bullied via e-mail, text messages, and in chat rooms (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006; National i-Safe Survey, 2004). Yet, cyber bullying often goes unnoticed by schools, given the nature of electronic communication. For example, Ybarra (2004) noted that traditional bullying has usually involved face-to-face interactions while at school, while traveling to or from school, or in public places. Cyber bullying, on the other hand, does not involve a face-to-face interaction, is often done anonymously, and can be done at any time (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004b). Principals in schools arguably play a key role in the prevention of traditional bullying (Harris & Hathorn, 2006). According to Harris and Petrie (2003), safe schools are invariably led by principals who foster a climate based on belonging and caring, but they must also focus on the elimination of bullying behaviors. Although it is unknown as to whether principals play the same vital role in addressing cyber bullying, it is plausible, given that cyber bullying is a variation of bullying. Nonetheless, there has been little research conducted on the perspectives of any building-level school administrators on cyber bullying.

Olweus (1993) noted from his research the importance of the attitudes and behaviors of school personnel in preventing and controlling bullying. Further, he emphasized that comprehensive intervention programs should establish acceptable behaviors for students, allow for relationship development between teachers and students,
and increase cultural sensitivity and diversity acceptance by faculty. The research suggests that in order for school personnel to be successful in combating bullying, a culture of respect must be fostered (Olweus, 1993; Harris & Petrie, 2003). Will and Neufeld (2002) discussed the importance of leadership of the school principal in supporting the reduction of bullying behavior. Further, they emphasized that principals must (a) understand the seriousness of bullying, (b) provide clear definitions and direction to faculty and staff, and (c) enforce building and district policies that outline acceptable conduct (Will & Neufeld, 2002). Yet, despite the importance of the roles of building-level school administrators in establishing climate and addressing violence, the research to date has not been focused on their perceptions. This remains true with the exploration of the more recent phenomenon of cyber bullying. Specifically, the perspectives of all building-level school administrators -- including principals and assistant and vice principals, who are often responsible for leadership and discipline -- have not been included in research efforts aimed at understanding cyber bullying among students.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of building-level school administrators about cyber bullying and their level of preparedness to intervene in cyber bullying incidents.

The primary research question was: What are building-level school administrators' perceptions of the prevalence and types of cyber bullying that occur among students in their school?
The second research question was: *How do building-level school administrators respond to incidents of cyber bullying, and what are the factors that influence their decisions regarding when and how to intervene in cyber bullying incidents?*

The final research question was: *What measures are administrators and their schools taking to prevent incidences of cyber bullying and cyber offending among students in their school, and who is responsible for leading these measures?*

**Limitations**

To answer these research questions, this researcher used a mixed-methods approach to explore the role and meaning of school building leadership in addressing cyber bullying. A sequential explanatory strategy was employed, beginning with the collection and analysis of quantitative data, and then shifting to the collection and analysis of qualitative data (Creswell, 2003). More specifically, the study began with a broad survey to obtain both quantitative and qualitative data. The next phase involved detailed interviews to collect rich data from participants. Due to the nature of the study, results will not be generalized to a greater population outside of the county where respondents are employed. The purposive sampling procedure that was employed decreases the generalizability of findings. For the survey strategy, it is difficult to determine causal relationships. Finally, the findings of the qualitative interviews may be subject to different interpretations.

**Definitions of Terms**

Blog - An interactive web journal or diary, the contents of which are posted online and viewable by some or all individuals (Patchin & Hinduja, 2005).
Buddy List - A collection of names or handles which represent friends or “buddies” within an instant messaging or chat program (Patchin & Hinduja, 2005).

Bullying - A type of aggression in which (a) the behavior is deliberate and harmful, (b) the behavior is repeated over time, and (c) there is an imbalance of power involving the more powerful attacking the less powerful (Nansel et al., 2001).

Cellular Phone (or cell phone) - A device which allows for telephone communications without being tethered to one specific place (Patchin & Hinduja, 2005).

Chat - An online conversation, typically carried out by people who use nicknames instead of their real names. You can read messages from others in the chat room and type and send in a message or reply (Patchin & Hinduja, 2005).

Computer - An electronic device that stores and processes information, and also facilitates electronic communication when connected to a network (Patchin & Hinduja, 2005).

Content Creator - A term used for an increasing number of teenagers who use the Internet as a means to share their creations such as art, music, stories, videos, or photos online (Lenhart, 2007).

Cyber bullying - Willful and repeated harm inflicted through the medium of electronic text (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006).

Cyber-space - The electronic universe created by computer networks in which individuals interact (Patchin & Hinduja, 2005).

E-mail - Electronic mail that allows Internet users to send and receive electronic text to and from other Internet users (Patchin & Hinduja, 2005).
Flaming - Sending angry, rude, or obscene messages directed at a person or persons privately or an online group (Patchin & Hinduja, 2005).

Harassment - as defined by the Penal Law of the State of New York

Harassment in the first degree (240.25) - A person is guilty of harassment in the first degree when he or she intentionally and repeatedly harasses another person by following such person in or about a public place or places or by engaging in a course of conduct or by repeatedly committing acts which places such person in reasonable fear of physical injury. Harassment in the first degree is a class B misdemeanor (New York State Penal Law, 2007).

Harassment in the second degree (240.26) - A person is guilty of harassment in the second degree when, with intent to harass, annoy, or alarm another person:

1. He or she strikes, shoves, kicks, or otherwise subjects another person to physical contact, or attempts. Threatens to do the same; or
2. He or she follows a person in or about a public place or places; or
3. He or she engages in a course of conduct or repeatedly commits acts which alarm or seriously annoy such other person and which serve no legitimate purpose. Harassment is a violation (New York State Penal Law, 2007).

Aggravated harassment in the second degree (240.30) - A person is guilty of aggravated harassment in the second degree when, with intent to harass, annoy, or alarm another person, he or she:
I. Communicates, or causes a communication to be initiated by mechanical or electronic means or otherwise, with a person, anonymously or otherwise, by telephone, or by telegraph, mail, or any other form of written communication, in a manner likely to cause annoyance or alarm. Aggravated harassment in the second degree is a class A misdemeanor (New York State Penal Law, 2007).

Instant Messaging (IM) - Private, real-time communications with anyone on a contact or buddy list (Willard, 2006).

Internet - A worldwide network of computers communicating with each other via phone lines, satellite links, wireless networks, and cable systems (Patchin & Hinduja, 2005).

Intimidation, Harassment, Menacing, or Bullying Behavior - Threatening, stalking, or seeking to coerce or compel a person to do something; intentionally placing or attempting to place another person in fear of imminent physical injury; or engaging in verbal or physical conduct that threatens another with harm, including intimidation through the use of epithets or slurs involving race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, religious practices, gender, sexual orientation, age, or disability that substantially disrupts the educational process (NY State School Violent and Disruptive Reporting System).

ISP - Internet Service Provider. The company that provides an Internet connection to individuals or companies (Patchin & Hinduja, 2005).
Monitoring - The recording and reporting of online activity. It may record a history of all Internet use, or just inappropriate use (Patchin & Hinduja, 2005).

Network - Two or more computers connected so that they can communicate with each other (Patchin & Hinduja, 2005).

Social Networking Site - Web-based services that allow individuals to construct a profile, share information with other users, and view lists of others made by other users within the system (Boyd, 2007).

Text Messaging - Messages sent via cellular phones (Willard, 2006).

Trolling - Deliberately posting false information to entice genuinely helpful people to respond and contribute to the discussion (Patchin & Hinduja, 2005).

Username - A fake name or handle that a user establishes during registration that identifies the user on that site (also known as screenname) (Willard, 2006).

Summary of Remaining Chapters

Chapter 2, Review of the Literature, describes the problem statement and research questions of the study, and includes a topic analysis supported by the literature.

Chapter 3, Research Design Methodology, describes the general perspective of the study, and includes the problem statement, research context and participants, and data analysis and collection procedures.

Chapter 4, Results, describes the research questions, and includes the presentation and summary of data analysis and findings.
Chapter 5, Discussion, describes the significance and implications of the findings, discusses limitations, and provides recommendations for future research and actions.
Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Introduction

Bullying among adolescents in schools is a significant problem, both in terms of prevalence, and impact on victims and bullies (Nansel et al., 2001). The use of technology to engage in bullying, often called cyber bullying, has exacerbated the problem. The commonly referenced definition of bullying is a type of aggression in which (a) the behavior is deliberate and harmful, (b) the behavior is repeated over time, and (c) there is an imbalance of power involving the more powerful attacking the less powerful (Nansel et al., 2001). Patchin and Hinduja (2006) define cyber bullying as “willful and repeated harm inflicted through the medium of electronic text” (p. 152). This chapter begins with the statement of the problem and research questions, followed by a review of the empirical studies that have been conducted on traditional bullying. The review provides a deeper context for understanding the more recent phenomenon of cyber bullying. Next, the empirical research to date on cyber bullying is examined. The literature indicates that there appears to be fundamental differences between traditional bullying and cyber bullying that merit further attention. The research, however, has largely ignored the perspectives of teachers and administrators, who play a fundamental role in the prevention and intervention of bullying and cyber bullying.
Problem Statement

Research has indicated that nearly 35% of teenagers and 42% of middle-school students claim to have been bullied via e-mail, text messages, and in chat rooms (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006; National i-Safe Survey, 2004). More specifically, 13% of teenagers reported feeling threatened through electronic means, and 2% reported “feeling very or extremely upset or afraid” (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006; Wolack, Mitchell, & Finkelhor, 2006). Yet, the cyber bullying often goes unnoticed by schools, given the nature of electronic communication. For example, Ybarra (2004) noted that traditional bullying has usually involved face-to-face interactions while at school, while traveling to or from school, or in public places. Cyber bullying, on the other hand, does not involve a face-to-face interaction, is often done anonymously, and can be done at any time (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004b). Another factor contributing to the problem is that parents are typically not aware of what their child is doing or saying in cyberspace (Strom & Strom, 2005). A survey by Research Topline (2007) found that a knowledge gap exists, in that parents reported that cyber bullying occurs less often that teenagers reported. This overall lack of awareness by adults in schools, as well as by parents, presents a significant roadblock to developing appropriate interventions for cyber bullying. For educators, this becomes an issue in that schools are increasingly being asked to intervene in cyber bullying. Yet, few researchers have investigated the role that can be expected of schools, nor the factors that may influence interventions by adults at school. Finally, the extent to which building administrators are aware of cyber bullying among their students, as well as whether parents are increasingly reporting to schools when they become aware of it, are unknown.
Researchers have proposed different reasons why teachers fail to intervene in traditional bullying situations. The reasons pertain to teachers' attitudes toward bullying. For example, teachers may be unaware of the nature of bullying and extent to which it occurs (Espelage & Swearer, 2003). Holt and Keyes (2004) noted that a greater proportion of studies have found that teachers tend to report a lower prevalence of bullying than do students. Further, in an observational study, Atlas and Pepler (1998) found that teachers intervened in only 18% of bullying that occurred in elementary and middle school classes. Other proposed reasons for the lack of intervention may be the teachers’ inability to accurately identify bullies (Leff, Kupersmidt, Patterson, & Power, 1999) and lack of confidence in dealing with bullying (Boulton, 1997). Overall, it appears that teachers' attitudes play a role in the lack of intervention. It is unknown whether the attitudes of teachers, and of administrators play a role in intervention for cyber bullying. However, it is expected that teacher and administrator attitudes would also have an impact on the decision to intervene for cyber bullying.

**Research Questions**

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of building-level school administrators’ about cyber bullying and their level of preparedness to intervene in cyber bullying incidents.

The primary research question was: *What are building-level school administrators' perceptions of the prevalence and types of cyber bullying that occur among students in their school?*
The second research question was: *How do building-level school administrators respond to incidents of cyber bullying, and what are the factors that influence their decisions regarding when and how to intervene in cyber bullying incidents?*

The final research question was: *What measures are administrators and their schools taking to prevent incidences of cyber bullying and cyber offending among students in their school, and who is responsible for leading these measures?*

Leff et al. (1999) noted that the extant investigations of bullying in the United States have relied heavily on student surveys or student observations. However, Holt and Keyes (2004) noted that it is critical that staff attitudes also be evaluated, given their importance to overall school climate. Despite the significant role of leadership and school principals in addressing cyber bullying, very few studies have addressed the attitudes and perceptions of building-level school administrators on cyber bullying. Therefore, little is known about the level of preparedness and factors that influence the response by administrators to effectively intervene in cyber bullying situations. Further, little is known about the level of confidence administrators have in dealing with cyber bullying situations. Information gathered from the unique perspective of building-level school administrators may be used to assist with future cyber bullying prevention and intervention efforts.

*Empirical Research: Traditional Bullying*

Bullying occurs in many forms, including verbal, physical, emotional, sexual and electronic. Research indicates that approximately 30% of students in Grades 6 through 10 have been bullied, or bully others “sometimes or more often” during a semester (Nansel et al., 2001). More specifically, 17% of students reported having been bullied
“sometimes” or more often during school, while 19% reported bullying others (Nansel et al., 2001). In a study of students in Grades 4 through 6, Melton, Limber, Flerx, Cunningham, Osgood, Chambers, Henggeler, and Nation (1998) found that 25% of students admitted to bullying another student several times or more during a school term. In addition, Hoover, Oliver, and Hazler (1992) found that 81% of male and 72% of female middle and high school students reported being bullied during their school years. The overall findings indicate that victimization by bullying is a relatively pervasive phenomenon.

**Characteristics and Impact**

Knowing that bullying is considered a widespread problem, characteristics of both bullies and victims merit further attention. Bullies have been shown to be aggressive, stronger, and larger than their peers (Olweus, 1993). Bullies have also been associated with groups who systematically victimize specific groups of peers (Olweus, 1993). In regard to school functioning, the behaviors and values of bullies have been shown to be at odds with the general school population. This contrast has resulted in negative attention by teachers (Pellegrini, Bartini, & Brooks, 1999). Further, bullies derive satisfaction from inflicting physical and mental injury, and demonstrate a lack of empathy for victims (Sullivan, 2000). Those who bully are more likely to get into fights, damage and steal property, drop out of school, and carry a weapon (Nansel et al., 2001, 2003; Olweus, 1993). Cunningham, Henggeler, Limber, Melton, and Nation (2000) noted that bullies are more likely to report owning guns that are used for intimidation. Olweus (1993) also found that boys identified as bullies are four times more likely to have a criminal conviction by age 24. Further, Olweus (1993) noted that the majority of bullying
is done by males, while the most common form of bullying for both males and females is verbal bullying. Finally, bullying tends to decrease as children get older, but is at its peak at the beginning of secondary school, when the “new” students are vulnerable (Sullivan, 2000).

Those who are victims, on the other hand, are often younger and more passive than the bully, and lack close peer relationships at school (Sullivan, 2000). Further, bullying is harmful, as victims are more likely to be depressed and anxious, have low self-esteem, perform poorly academically, and have suicidal thoughts (Limber, 2002). Children who are bullied tend to be more socially isolated than other children (Nansel et al., 2001). In addition to these consequences, children who are fearful and intimidated cannot learn because their basic needs of safety, security, and comfort are not being met. Concerning victimization and gender, males are more likely to be bullied by other males, and females are bullied by both sexes (Melton et al., 1998). Males are more likely to report being physically bullied, while females are more likely than males to be victims of rumor spreading and sexual comments (Nansel et al., 2001). Finally, Dwyer, Osher, and Warger (1998) described how characteristics of both the bully and the victim predispose children to future violent behavior. Without adult intervention, these children are more at risk for continued bullying, social rejection, and depression. Willard (2006) noted that cyber bullying victimization can result in similar negative effects, including anxiety, anger, depression, academic failure, and low self-esteem. Therefore, the significance of this study examining administrator perceptions on intervention becomes clearer. In other words, a better understanding of how and why administrators intervene in cases of cyber bullying can lead to the development of possible solutions to this problem.
Adult Responses to Bullying

Given the reluctance of many children to intervene in bullying, teachers and administrators play a critical role in prevention and intervention. However, adults often overestimate their ability to identify and intervene in bullying situations. Further, Charach, Pepler, and Ziegler (1995) found that students report that teachers rarely speak to their classes about bullying, perhaps indicating that they will not intervene unless it involves a physical assault. The findings, supported by additional observational studies, suggest that teachers may be unaware of the bullying that occurs around them (Limber, 2002). Also of note is that many children question the commitment of teachers and administrators in stopping bullying. For example, Harris, Petrie, and Willoughby (2002) studied 196 ninth-grade students and found that only 35% believed their teachers were interested in stopping bullying, as opposed to only 25% who believed administrators were interested in stopping bullying. Overall, considering the covert nature of cyber bullying, it may be suggested that the level of awareness and confidence by teachers and administrators in dealing with cyber bullying would be even lower. Beran and Li (2005) noted that few teachers and administrators are aware that students are being harassed through electronic communication. This would be due in part to the lack of research, experience, and training; it may also be because the harassment may be anonymous, and therefore difficult to identify. This study will explore this in more detail in that it will assess the perceived level of awareness of cyber bullying that administrators possess.

Teacher Attitudes Toward Bullying

Teacher and administrator attitudes about cyber bullying have rarely been academically researched. Since the research supports whole-school approaches for
bullying prevention, it is important to consider the contributions of adult school members to the school environment. Holt and Keyes (2004) conducted a study that explored how teachers’ attitudes shape school climate and can, therefore, influence bullying. The researchers surveyed 797 teachers and paraprofessionals from 18 Wisconsin elementary and secondary schools. Results indicated that 57% of respondents felt that students would not intervene if they saw another student being bullied. On the other hand, 93% reported that adults would stop verbally bullying if they witnessed it, with 65% reporting that staff has received training on how to intervene. This study seeks to assess current training being conducted for building-level school administrators on cyber bullying. This study also seeks to explore the factors that influence the decision by building-level school administrators to intervene in instances of cyber bullying.

Definitional Concerns

Although there is general consensus on the definition of bullying, the actual identification of bullying can be complicated. For example, intent to psychologically harm is difficult to determine, especially when the bullies justify their actions based on an anti-victim attitude (Greene, 2006). Further, regarding the element of repetition, there are questions as to whether an incident constitutes bullying if it occurs on only one occasion. Further, the imbalance of power element may be difficult to determine, particularly in cases of indirect bullying and cyber bullying (Greene, 2006). The definitional concerns may pose a problem from the perspectives of adult members in schools. For example, Drake, Price, Telljohann, and Funk (2003) found that teachers, along with adults in general, do not include all of the elements in their understanding of bullying. This study
explores whether key stakeholders in the school have difficulty defining cyber bullying, and whether this difficulty influences their interventions.

*Cyber Bullying*

Although there has been increasing academic research on cyber bullying, it still has not received significant scholarly attention. Although the research on traditional bullying is useful in providing insight into cyber bullying, the significant differences between the two creates difficulty in making generalizations. For example, incidents of cyber bullying may not involve the imbalance of power and repetition that are elements of the commonly referenced definition of traditional bullying. Further, cyber bullying often occurs off-school grounds and often involves incidents where the victim does not know the identity of the bully (Wolak, Mitchell, & Finkelhor, 2006). Therefore, it is necessary to review what is known about cyber bullying, and to reinforce the need to better understand the perceptions of teachers and administrators to develop effective responses. Overall, cyber bullying should not be considered a completely new phenomenon. Rather cyber bullying is a variation of traditional bullying that has evolved with the increased use of technology by youth to communicate.

*Definition of Cyber Bullying*

Cyber bullying is a recent phenomenon that has resulted from the emergence of new communication technologies. According to Belsey (2004), “cyber-bullying involves the use of information and communication technologies such as e-mail, cell phone and pager text messages, instant messaging, 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). Further, Patchin and
Hinduja (2006) define cyber bullying as “willful and repeated harm inflicted through the medium of electronic text” (p. 152). For purposes of this research, the two main electronic devices used for cyber bullying include computers and cell phones. Finally, Ybarra and Mitchell (2004a) have defined online harassment as “an overt, intentional, act of aggression towards another person online” (p. 1308).

Cyber bullying can be done in a number of ways, and it can vary in degree of seriousness. Cyber bullying can involve sending harassing e-mails and IMs, or posting harmful material or images using the Internet or cell phones. Willard (2006) differentiates between different types of cyber bullying. For example, harassment occurs when offensive or insulting messages are repeatedly sent electronically to a victim. Another type, denigration, involves sending or posting harmful or inaccurate information about a victim to others with the intent to disrupt friendships or to damage the reputation of the victim (Willard, 2006). Impersonation occurs when an individual acts as if they are the target, then sends or posts material that negatively reflects on that target. Outing is the electronic spreading of very personal information about a victim to others. Lastly, exclusion involves deliberately refusing to electronically communicate with a victim.

Although cyber bullying can be relatively minor in seriousness, such as simply being ignored or disrespected, it can also be threatening and distressing. For example, cyber threats can involve direct threats to hurt someone or to commit suicide. Cyber bullying can also be considered a criminal matter in some instances, as it can be interpreted as unlawful. For example, Section 240.30 of the New York State Penal Law (2007) is Aggravated Harassment in the Second Degree. The law states that a person is guilty of this when, with intent to harass, annoy, or alarm another person, he or she
"communicates, or causes a communication to be initiated by mechanical or electronic means or otherwise, with a person, anonymously or otherwise, by telephone, or by telegraph, mail, or any other form of written communication, in a manner likely to cause annoyance or alarm" (p. 632). Whatever form it may take, cyber bullying, like traditional bullying, involves the repeated infliction of harm to another individual. It remains unclear, however, whether teachers and administrators are aware of the different ways in which students cyber bully, and whether the different types constitute a crime. This study focused on these important questions that may influence the decisions on whether and how to intervene.

The Use of Technology

The use of technology among adolescents has been increasing. The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) has documented the expansion of the Internet into public schools (Conn, 2004). For example, according to the NCES (2002), 87% of instructional classrooms had Internet access by 2002. Data from more recent research indicates that about 93% of teens use the Internet; this totals well over 20 million when considering the total population (Lenhart, Madden, Macgill, & Smith, 2007). This equates to over 9 out of 10 teens, with about half of teenagers using the Internet on a daily basis (Lenhart, Madden, & Hitlin, 2005). In addition, 83% of teenagers stated that most people that they know use the Internet, while only 6% reported that few of the people they know use the Internet. Further, most teenagers own at least one personal media device, such as a desktop or laptop computer, cell phone or Personal Digital Assistant. However, regardless of whether teenagers own technology or not, they are still able to access the Internet. For example, the research also showed that the majority of
teens go online most frequently at home, with over one-quarter saying that they go online from a private area, such as a bedroom (Lenhart, Madden, & Hitlin, 2005). Finally, 78% of teenagers who go online stated that they had accessed the Internet from school. The number of those teenagers using the Internet increases with age and grade level, with the biggest increase happening at the beginning of the seventh grade. As of 2003, one-half of youth between 12 and 17 owned cell phones, with an estimated 74% owning cell phones as of 2006 (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006). The statistics are significant, in that increasing use and reliance upon these technologies creates more opportunities to use them in an inappropriate manner.

What types of activities are teenagers doing while they are online? Research indicates that nearly 90% have sent or received e-mail, and 84% visit websites for popular entertainment information, such as movies, television shows, music groups, or sports (Lenhart, Madden, & Hitlin, 2005). Other activities (in order of popularity) include playing online video games, getting information about current events, sending or receiving IMs, retrieving information about colleges, researching politics, buying things, researching health information, looking for employment information, and looking for religious information. The digital activities, however, are not confined to computers. For example, almost half of teens own a cell phone, and one third have used a cell phone to send text messages. Finally, teens who own cell phones are also heavy communicators online (Lenhart, Madden, & Hitlin, 2005).

The most significant activity for teens, however, involves the use of the Internet for social interaction through the use of social media. Whether the activities are through social networking sites or through blogs, more and more teens are using the Internet as a
means to connect with others and to share their creations (Lenhart, Madden, Macgill, & Smith, 2007). For example, although the numbers continue to rise at a significant pace, the latest research shows that 55% of teenagers age 12 to 17 who are online have a profile on a social networking site, with 42% of social networkers also indicating that they blog. In addition, nearly 40% of online teens, called content creators, share their own creations, such as art, music, photos, and stories online. Overall, it is becoming increasingly clear that online social networking and creativity play a significant role in the lives of teenagers today. Unfortunately, teens who are social network users and who have created content are also more likely to report being cyber bullied (Lenhart, 2007). It is concerning that social networking sites, which were very rare just a few years ago, are now a primary avenue for cyber bullying.

How Technology is Used for Cyber Bullying

In cyber space, as in the real world, victims can be harassed about their physical appearance, social status, race, age, sex, gender, religion, academic performance, or disability. Victims are often youth, but case law has shown that adults, such as teachers and school administrators, have also reported being victims of cyber bullying by youth. In reality, anyone can be bullied, threatened, or harassed online. Further, the reasons and ways in which cyber bullying is taking place are constantly evolving. The bullying can take place through sending harassing e-mails and IMs, or posting harmful material or images using the Internet or cell phones. It can also be accomplished via social networking sites, blogs, and even through online gaming. Each method that can be used merits further attention.
E-mails and IMs have been considered a primary means in which cyber bullying takes place. Cyber bullying can be done through e-mail by the direct sending of annoying, cruel, insulting, or threatening messages to another. It can range in degree of seriousness from fairly benign (somewhat annoying, cruel, or insulting) to very serious (threatening or extremely cruel). In addition, flame mail (provoking e-mails) and hate mail (hate speech directed at minorities or marginal groups) are other ways to electronically cause harm to others (Willard, 2006). Depending on the facts and circumstances, the cyber bullying may be considered a form of simple harassment, or it could even rise to the level of stalking. E-mail can also be used to transmit unflattering or embarrassing digital photos, or to spread rumors about another or others. Also, the forwarding of a private e-mail to others who were not intended to see the message is becoming much more common (Lenhart, 2007). This can cause extreme harm and discomfort, especially if the information was very personal in nature, or if it involved comments about others. E-mail has long been considered the primary means of communication via computers. However, there seems to be an emerging preference by teenagers for instant messaging. For example, teenagers have expressed that they use IM most often when communicating with friends, with some viewing e-mail as a means to converse with “old people” (Lenhart, Madden, & Hitlin, 2005).

Instant messaging involves communicating via text messages with one or more individuals in real time over a network, such as the Internet. AOL Instant Messenger, MSN, or Yahoo! Messenger are examples of instant messaging services that allow individuals, especially teenagers, to have conversations that are much more instantaneous. The more recent applications also allow the sharing of voice messages,
photos, music, video, and links to websites or articles. In a recent court case, a federal appellate court with jurisdiction over New York State dealt with an eighth-grade student who shared with his friends via IM a small drawing that suggested that one of his teachers should be shot. The picture depicted a gun pointed at a person’s head with dots of blood splatter nearby. Beneath the drawing was the teacher’s name and the word “kill,” which also showed that adults can be victims, as well.

Through instant messaging, individuals can be bullied by their friends or by peers with anonymous screen names through the direct sending of harmful information. Also, using features, such as buddy profiles, enables others to insert harmful or embarrassing information or images for others to read or see. Another example of cyber bullying involves the exclusion of others from participating in their conversations (by blocking from a buddy list) or using IMs to quickly spread malicious rumors about others.

Despite the increasing ownership and use of cell phones by teenagers, the use of text messaging is omitted from the conversation about cyber bullying. This is a concern, as text messaging via cell phone and other mobile text messengers has become another popular means to cyber bully others (Lenhart, 2007). With the increase in integrated “do-it-all” technological devices, this will likely become a more significant problem. The mobile nature of texting devices is what makes them dangerous in terms of facilitating cyber bullying. The cyber bully, armed with the phone and the phone number of their victim, can send harmful and threatening information to anyone, at anytime, to or from anywhere. Current devices also allow the transmission of various media files, such as photos, videos, or links, which can be used in a harmful manner. Overall, recent research has indicated that 13% of teenagers reported being a victim of cyber bullying by
receiving a threatening or aggressive e-mail, IM, or text message (Lenhart, 2007). But it is very clear that direct threats or cruel messages are not the only ways to cyber bully via e-mail or messaging. Other ways include forwarding private communications to others, spreading rumors, excluding others, or sending embarrassing or doctored images to others. This study examined the perceptions of building-level school administrators regarding their awareness and prevalence of each type of technology.

Websites and message boards can provide additional means to cyber bully others. For example, a website can be created for the purpose of demeaning or bullying others or another. These sites can also encourage others to join in as the word spreads. Websites that rapidly become popular are said to be “hot,” which means that they receive many hits or visits in a short amount of time. Through those websites, many forms of lists can be posted that invite others to join in on the harassing behavior. The writing of online “hit lists” also appears to be gaining in popularity in the teenage world (Goldstein, 2007). While the lists can be appropriate, such as creating a list of favorite movies, songs, or bands, others that are more disturbing include lists of students or teachers that someone loathes, hates, or wishes death upon. The online forum can facilitate the defamation of students, and court cases have shown that this can apply to teachers as well.

Weblogs, which have come to be known simply as blogs, have become very popular on the Internet. Blogs are online journals or diaries that can be instantly published to the Internet. They are often interactive in nature and allow other readers to comment on and add to the published information (Richardson, 2006). In instances of cyber bullying, harmful information can be posted on a “bashboard.” On the other hand, bullies can also visit the blog of a victim, where they can read and post damaging
information. Since blogs can be quite popular and known by adolescents in a particular community, cyber bullying that happens in blogs can be visible to many in a community, or even worldwide. The implications are quite different than those of the traditional bully who may bully in front of a few peers or spread rumors within a school. This will continue to be an issue as teenagers are increasingly entering the “blogosphere.” Similarly, chat rooms constitute another way to communicate and share information with others or groups. Technological development has enabled more file-sharing capabilities, such as the sharing of photos and the use of webcams to see who is being communicated with. Chat rooms are very common online, and the research has shown that they are commonly used in incidents of cyber bullying (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006; Berson, Berson, & Ferron, 2002; Caravan, 2006).

The online gaming world has also experienced rapid growth over the past decade. Research has shown that the majority of online teenagers play games online, with the numbers growing significantly since the year 2000 (Lenhart, Madden, & Hitlin, 2005). As the Internet connection speeds have increased, more sophisticated multiplayer online games have emerged. Unfortunately, the online gaming world is also not immune from cyber bullying, hate, and vulgarity. Gaming bullies can harass fellow players in a number of ways. For example, beginners can be subjected to online taunting as they are learning the game. Further, harassment can manifest itself in the form of obscene language and cheating, and can even involve a number of individuals forming online gangs. Gaming bullies are often less interested in the game, and more interested in created disruptions and getting attention. They may look for someone who has responded to their online misdoings, then continue to harass and annoy that target out of convenience. They can
also easily portray themselves as other people, such as through impersonation or expressing statements that are not true. Unfortunately in the gaming world, there are few mechanisms for reporting wrongdoings, such as those that are emerging in social networking sites.

Technology use, especially by teens, seems to have converged into the newest, most popular arena, social networking. The key to this medium is its inherent interactivity. Through the years, the biggest change in Internet use has been the increased ability to share, connect, create, and interact. In its infancy, the Internet was basically a means to read and view information. Today the Internet is often a means to create and share information, such as through social networking sites. Research shows that over half of all teenagers between the ages of 12 and 17 have created a profile on a social networking site (Lenhart et al., 2007). While MySpace.com and Youtube get the most attention and appear to be the most popular, there are literally hundreds of other popular social networking sites, and the numbers are increasing. Also increasing are the numbers of teenagers who are considered “content creators,” defined as “online teens that have created or worked on a blog or webpage, shared original creative content, or remixed content they found online into a new creation (Lenhart, 2007). Content creators often use social networking sites to share their work. Unfortunately, they fall under the category of intense Internet users, who have been shown to be victims of cyber bullying more often (Lenhart et al., 2007). It may be hypothesized that the use of social networking sites will continue to increase, meaning that incidents of cyber bullying will also rise.

Yet, when considering safety issues, recent research has also shown that personal information disclosure may not be as commonplace as many believe, and that most
adolescents are using MySpace in a responsible manner (Ellis, 2007). The researchers also raise questions about the claims of registered users (which for MySpace has been as high as 200 million users,) citing that about one in 20 online profiles had been deleted or were no longer active (Patchin & Hinduja, 2007). Also, a number of teen profiles were noted to not have been logged on to for a number of months or even a year. The FBI has also pointed out that the number of assaults by sexual predators using the Internet is rare. Their website, fbi.gov, an official site of the U.S. Federal Government, indicates that despite the significant media attention, criminal incidents are rare on social networking sites. Yet, the site does concede that they have opened dozens of cases regarding inappropriate activity on the sites and have received numerous complaints, as well.

In a study conducted by the Grunwald Associates for the National School Boards Association, the results further supported that there are two sides to the debate on whether social networking sites pose a great danger to our youth. For example, results in the study showed that the overwhelming majority of youth have never had an unknown adult ask them for personal information (National School Boards Association, 2007). Further, schools appear to overestimate youth risk behaviors while using social networking sites. For example, more than half of school districts in the United States said students providing personal information is a “significant problem,” while only 3% of students said they have ever given out their e-mail addresses, screen names, or other personal information to strangers. Additional results showed that one in five students reported that they had seen inappropriate pictures or inappropriate language on social networking sites in the last three months. The data did confirm the prevalence of technology and media use by youth. For example, 9- to 17-year-olds reported spending
almost as much time using social networking services as they spent watching television; this amounted to approximately 9 hours of social networking, compared with 10 hours of television viewing. Further, the National School Boards Association (2007) also found that 96% of students with online access reported that they had used social networking technology (such as chatting, text-messaging, blogging, and visiting online communities including MySpace) and sites for younger children (such as Webkins and chat sections of Nick.com).

What did the participants say about cyber bullying? Results in this study showed that only a minority of students reported having negative experiences with social networking in the last three months, and about one in 14 students (about 7%) reported experiencing cyber bullying (National School Boards Association, 2007). The results are not overly surprising, given that social networking sites are only one means to participate in cyber bullying. Yet, overall, adults, including parents and schools, must be careful not to label social networking sites as a persistently dangerous and hazardous activity. As has been indicated, there are indeed safety concerns that are related to the rising use of social networking sites, such as cyber bullying and not being truthful (i.e., age inflation,) that can influence predators. Yet, the NSBA study showed that the largest percentage of participants (59%) reported that they use social networking sites to talk about education-related topics, including college planning, learning outside of school, news, careers, politics, ideas, religion, or schoolwork. While schools and parents should remain vigilant, they must not overestimate the negative experiences that can occur. They must be reasonable and persistent in raising awareness of practicing safe habits while online, and
in getting back to teaching the fundamental issues of right and wrong, and of appropriate and respectful behavior.

*The Psychology of Cyber Bullying*

The nature of communication while online can be affected by the lack of inhibition, or disinhibition, that often occurs in cyber-space. Willard (2003) noted that disinhibition can be facilitated online as technology creates an illusion of invisibility. The feelings of anonymity can lead to a belief that identities cannot be discovered by another while online. Further, due to the lack of tangible feedback in online communications, cyber bullies may feel less empathy for the victim (Willard, 2003). Moreover, Suler (2004) also suggested that psychological factors can lead to online disinhibition. These factors include (a) anonymity and invisibility to others, (b) the time-lag with sending messages and getting feedback, (c) an exaggerated sense of self from being alone, and (d) the lack of authority figures online. Therefore, to better understand cyber bullying, it may be argued that these are additional risk factors and influences that should be considered, along with the myriad influences on traditional bullying behavior.

*Understanding Online Communication*

A significant challenge facing teachers and administrators that may hinder their preparedness in intervening in cyber bullying involves the language of online communication. Huffaker and Calvert (2005) explained that the language on the Internet used by youth has been evolving and that adolescents are actually in the middle of a “language evolution” (p. 3). The researchers referred to this language as “netspeak” (p.3) and argued that the language is creating a “generation technology gap” that prevents parents and educators from understanding the language of the Internet. Huffaker and
Calvert further argued that cyber bullying policies should be created with an understanding of youth mentality on online use and of the “new language.” This study considered the level of understanding by teachers and administrators of “netspeak,” and how this may constitute a barrier to effective intervention.

**Empirical Research: Cyber Bullying**

Early research on cyber bullying involved the administration of surveys to assess the number of children who have experienced cyber bullying. A national foundation that specializes in Internet safety, i-SAFE America (2004), conducted a nationwide survey of 1,566 fourth-to eighth-grade students. Results indicated that 57% of students said that someone had said hurtful things to them online, and 53% admitted saying mean or hurtful things to others online. Forty-two percent also reported being bullied online, with 7% stating that it happens “quite often.” Thirty-five percent of students reported being threatened online, and 20% stated that they have received mean or threatening e-mails (National i-SAFE Survey, 2004). Additional surveys by i-SAFE found that 22% of students knew someone who had been bullied online, with 19% saying that they themselves said something hurtful to others online (National i-SAFE Survey, 2004). The i-SAFE surveys also shed light on a significant issue: that a gap existed between what parents were saying about their children’s online activities and what the children were saying. Specifically, the surveys found that 93% of parents stated that they established rules for their child’s Internet activity. On the other hand, 37% of children reported being given no rules from their parents on using the Internet. Similarly, 95% of parents stated that they knew “some” or “a lot” about their children’s Internet activities, while 41% of children stated that they do not share information about online activities with their
parents. Results appear to indicate that parents are overconfident in their abilities to supervise online activities. The current study took this a step further and explored whether building-level school administrators are also confident in their abilities to supervise online activities. Further, this study examined whether a similar gap exits between what the students are saying about cyber bullying an online activities, and what building-level school administrators are saying.

Another survey administered by the Crimes Against Children Research Center in New Hampshire found that approximately 6% of youths had experienced online harassment (Wolack, Mitchell, & Finkelhor, 2006). Further, a Canadian survey conducted in 2001 found that 25% of young Internet users reported receiving messages that involved stating hateful things about others (Mnet, 2001). Li (2006) described additional surveys that showed similar results. Wolack, Mitchell, and Finkelhor (2006) also found that numerous young people are experiencing inappropriate, and even dangerous, content on the Internet. Further, in 2002, researchers from the National Children’s Home in Great Britain surveyed adolescents between the ages of 11 and 19 years (National Children’s Home, 2002). Results indicated that the most prevalent type of cyber bullying at the time was via cell phone text messaging (16% reporting being bullied this way), followed by Internet chat rooms (7%), and e-mail (4%). Further, a survey by the National Children’s Home and Tesco Mobile found that 20% of participants reported being victims of cyber bullying (Mobile Bullying Survey, 2005). With preliminary data showing that cyber bullying is in fact occurring, a review of additional academic research provides greater insight into what has been discovered. The review again demonstrates
that very little attention has been given to the perceptions of school staff on cyber bullying.

In a large-scale endeavor, Berson, Berson, and Ferron (2002) used an online survey design to obtain information on risks for adolescent girls online. Specifically, a total of 10,800 adolescent girls, aged 12 to 18 years, completed an online survey that involved a 19-item questionnaire of multiple choice and open-ended questions. Results were categorized into these three areas: (a) online habits, (b) supervision of online activities, and (c) patterns of interaction online. Regarding online habits, nearly 25% reported being online for six to nine hours, with 12% spending 10 to 12 hours online. Having their home computer as their primary access site was stated by 92%. Regarding their time online, 58% reported spending their time instant messaging or e-mailing friends, 20% surfing the web, and 16% spending time in chat rooms. Regarding supervision, 70% of participants reported that their parents had discussed online safety with them, with 35% reporting that teachers discussed cyber safety. Regarding their time online, 50% of participants reported being supervised at least occasionally by parents or teachers, with supervision defined as sitting with them or periodically checking the screen. Regarding interaction patterns, 60% of respondents reported giving out personal information while online. Also, 15% reported receiving “disturbing communication” online, with three percent stating they have initiated threatening or sexually explicit messages.

Overall, the study by Berson, Berson, and Ferron (2002) was designed to assess online risks to female adolescents that may be associated with threatening behavior. The results confirmed that a significant number of adolescent girls are engaging in risky
online activities, such as releasing personal information. The data also indicated a gap in preventative action to maintain awareness and safety for young individuals. It is significant that only 35% of respondents indicated that teachers discussed cyber-safety with them. Further, Berson, Berson, and Ferron (2002) note that as adolescent girls spend increasing amount of time online, they are more likely to participate in destructive or dangerous acts. Yet, it is important to note the limitations of this study. The results may be difficult to generalize to a larger population, given the anonymity of the respondents and the nature of an online survey instrument. For example, the possibility exists that respondents may exaggerate or misrepresent their responses. Also, the sample was a convenience sample, which raises questions on whether the data are representative. Nonetheless, the results are significant and provide a framework for better understanding activities in cyber-space, as well as the decisions that are made while online. The results also showed that communication between school officials and students regarding cyber safety was deficient.

Another study, the Youth Internet Safety Survey, by Ybarra and Mitchell (2004a) focused on Internet victimization and associated correlates of youth. The survey was a nationally representative telephone survey of regular Internet users conducted in 1999 and 2000. Ybarra and Mitchell (2004a) interviewed 1,501 regular Internet users between the ages of 10 and 17 to assess the characteristics surrounding Internet harassment. Results indicated that 19% of young Internet users were involved in online aggression. Specifically, 12% reported being aggressors while online, 4% reported being targets only, and 3% reported being both aggressors and targets. The identification of aggressor was made on the basis of the respondents' answers to these two questions: (a) making rude or
nasty comments to someone while on the Internet, and (b) using the Internet to harass or embarrass someone with whom the youth was mad. Those identified as targets were identified based on answers to (a) whether anyone had used the Internet in the previous year to threaten or embarrass them by posting or sending messages about them for other people to see and (b) whether they ever felt worried or threatened because someone was bothering or harassing him or her while online. Results from the study indicated that relatively few youth (31%) who reported being a target knew the harasser in person. Also, a similarity to traditional bullying was discovered in that Internet harassment can be repetitive. Specifically, 55% of Internet targets reported being harassed more than once by the same individual. Overall, the study was significant in that it offered an important initial examination of the characteristics associated with cyber bullying. Another important implication from the study is that youth who report aggressor or target behavior are also especially likely to reveal serious psycho-social challenges, such as depression and low commitment to school.

Using data from the Youth Internet Safety Survey, Ybarra and Mitchell (2004b) conducted another study that focused on youth engaging in aggressive behavior while online. Specifically, they examined psychosocial characteristics of online aggressors and associations with parent-child relationships, substance use, and delinquency. Results indicated that 44% of Internet harassers reported a poor caregiver-child emotional bond, while only 19% of non-harassers reported this poor bond (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004b). Regarding psychosocial challenges, 32% of Internet harassers (versus 10% of non-harassers) reported frequent substance use. Further, results indicated that victims of traditional bullying are more likely to engage in online harassment. For example, 51% of
Internet harassers (versus 30% of non-harassers) reported being a victim of traditional bullying (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004b). Finally, 20% of Internet harassers reported being a victim of Internet harassment, while four percent of non-harassers reported being victimized online. Overall, results demonstrated that Internet harassers reported associated psychosocial issues and weak emotional relationships with caregivers; these factors are important to consider in intervention efforts.

In a follow-up study, Ybarra, Mitchell, Wolak, and Finkelhor (2006) sought to identify the characteristics of youth who are targets of Internet harassment. The study involved analyzing data from the Second Youth Internet Safety Survey conducted between March and June 2005. The survey was a national telephone survey of a random sample of 1500 Internet users between the ages of 10 and 17 years. Results indicated that 9% of Internet users in the previous year were targets of online harassment. Thirty-two percent of the targets reported that the harassment was chronic, in that it occurred more than three times in the previous year. Forty-five percent reported knowing the harasser prior to the incident, again supporting the assertion that cyber bullying is often anonymous. Approximately 50% of the harassers were male, and 51% were adolescents. Further, 38% of the harassed youth reported being distressed due to the cyber bullying. Those significantly more likely to report distress included (a) those targeted by adults, (b) those asked to send a picture of themselves, (c) those who received an aggressive offline contact (e.g., receiving a call or visit), and (d) those who were preadolescents. Also, youth who visited chat rooms were less likely to report distress due to the cyber bullying. Another important finding involved the significant increase in the prevalence of cyber
bullying via the Internet from 2000 to 2005. Overall, the data indicated that cyber bullying can have serious implications for some youth.

A study conducted by Li (2005) explored the nature and scope of adolescent experiences with cyber bullying by surveying 177 seventh-grade urban students. Li (2005) found that 54% of the students reported being a victim of traditional bullying, and 24.9% reported being a victim of cyber bullying. Nearly 15% of students reported cyber bullying others, and almost 33% reported bullying others in the traditional form. Regarding gender differences, 60% of the victims of cyber bullying were females, and 52% were males. In addition, similar to traditional bullying, the majority of cyber bullying victims and bystanders failed to notify adults. A significant implication from the research was that bullies, cyber bullies, and victims appear to be closely related. For example, nearly 30% of bullies also reported that they were cyber bullies, approximately one in three bullying victims were cyber bullying victims, and one in six bullying victims reported cyber bullying others (Li, 2005).

Li (2006) further explored cyber bullying by focusing on gender differences and on whether or not cyber bullying victims and bystanders reported incidents to adults. A survey of 264 junior high school students (Grades 7 through 9) from three urban schools was conducted. Results indicated that nearly 50% of the students were victims of bullying, and 25% had been cyber bullied. In addition, over half of the students knew someone who had been cyber bullied, while one in six admitted to cyber bullying others. When considering gender, no differences were found in relation to victimization. However, males reported to be more likely to be cyber bullies than females. This was not consistent with other research, which found that females were more likely to engage in
Another significant finding was that, consistent with prior research on bullying, victims and bystanders of cyber bullying often chose not to report to adults. Further, over one-third of students in this sample did not believe that adults tried to stop cyber bullying when they were informed. This is significant for this study, which investigated why administrators may fail to intervene in cyber bullying.

Kowalski et al. (2005) focused their research on cyber bullying among middle-school students. The research questions focused on both traditional and cyber bullying incidents that occurred in the previous two months. Results indicated that 25% of girls and 11% of boys reported being electronically bullied in the previous two months. Conversely, 13% of girls and eight percent of boys reported bullying someone else electronically in the previous two months. Comparing these results to those related to traditional bullying, 12.1% of girls and 14.1% of boys reported being bullied at school at least two to three times in the previous two months. Also, approximately 5% of girls and 8% of boys admitted to traditional bullying while at school on at least 2 to 3 occasions within the previous two months. Overall, this study was unique in that it allowed for a comparison of the two types of bullying. For example, the data showed that some cyber bullies and targets of cyber bullying are not involved at all with bullying at school. In addition, role-switching can occur; some students who had bullied (but were not victimized) at school reported being targets of cyber bullying.

Patchin and Hinduja (2006) conducted a study to explore the scope and nuances of cyber bullying in order to provide a foundational backdrop for future empirical work. The study assessed perceptions of and experiences with cyber bullying by youthful Internet users. The survey methodology involved a questionnaire that was linked to the
official web site of a popular music artist. The survey was active for the month of May in 2004, and a total of 571 responded to the online survey. Results indicated that 30% of participants reported being a victim of online bullying. Online bullying was defined as being ignored, disrespected, called names, threatened, picked-on, or victimized by rumors spread by others. Specifically, 60% reported being ignored by others online, 50% were disrespected, 30% were called names, and 21.4% were threatened by others. Also, regarding negative effects, 42.5% of victims reported feeling frustrated, 40% were angry, and 27% felt sad. Also of interest is the fact that about one-third of participants reported that it affected them at school. However, the study did not describe how the students were affected at school. This is significant when considering this study that examined interventions by building-level school administrators. The lack of awareness on the part of administrators of how cyber bullying has a negative impact on students at school can hinder an effective intervention.

Patchin and Hinduja (2007) also explored the emotional and behavioral effects of cyber bullying by applying General Strain Theory. Data collected in an online survey of adolescents indicated that cyber bullying is a form of strain that may be connected to problems offline, including delinquency and school-related problems. In arguing for the application of Robert Agnew’s General Strain Theory to cyber bullying, the researchers described that cyber bullying can be a strain-inducing experience in a number of ways. For example, cyber bullying attacks involve the presentation of negatively valued stimuli that could lead to delinquency due to anger and other negative emotions. Therefore, a victim of cyber bullying may attempt to resolve the strain through revenge on the aggressor or through other delinquent behaviors. In addition, when victims of cyber
bullying experience rejection and lack of peer acceptance, strain in the form of negative emotional and psychological effects may be experienced. Finally, the researchers noted that cyber bullying victimization could lead to fear while offline and to the use of avoidance techniques while in school.

To investigate their assertions, the researchers conducted an online survey of 1,388 adolescent Internet users in 2004-2005. Data showed that over 32% of males and 36% of females reported being victims of cyber bullying, most commonly in chat rooms and via computer text messages. Further, over 30% of cyber bullying victims reported feeling angry, and 34% reported frustration. Also of note was that 35% reported that the cyber bullying experience did not bother them. Regarding the relationships between cyber bullying, strain, and offline problems, results indicated that cyber bullying victims are more likely to report engaging in offline problem behaviors, with older youth reporting more problem behaviors. Similarly, results also indicated the same relationship between strain and offline problem behaviors. Overall, the research suggested that cyber bullying victims may be at greater risk for negative consequences, such as school violence and delinquency.

Burgess-Proctor, Patchin, and Hinduja (2008) examined cyber bullying and online harassment by exploring the victimization reported by adolescent girls. The researchers were interested in the emotional and physical consequences experienced by Internet-using adolescent girls after being victimized by cyber bullying and online harassment. An online survey methodology was used to examine experiences of online harassment as reported by 3,141 respondents. The questionnaire was linked to a number of adolescent printed websites, and individuals were asked to participate in the survey while on the
website. Using a mixed-methods design, quantitative data were gathered through questions about the scope, extent, and frequency of cyber bullying victimization. Qualitative data were also gathered through open-ended survey questions about experiences with cyber bullying that were stated in narrative fashion. Results indicated that 38.3% of participants reported that they had been bullied online. More specifically, 45.8% reported being ignored while online, and 42.9% reported being disrespected while online. A smaller number, 11.2%, reported being threatened while online. The narrative data overlapped at times with the quantitative data, as name-calling and the spreading of rumors were reported to be common occurrences online. Yet, an interesting result was that the most common occurrence reported in the quantitative area, being ignored, did not emerge as a strong theme in the narrative area. Overall, these are important results that provide valuable information about prevalence and types of cyber bullying experienced by adolescent girls. However, there still remains a gap in the literature in assessing the level of awareness and preparedness by administrators in addressing cyber bullying.

A survey conducted in 2006 involved U.S. pre-teens between the ages of 6 and 11 (Caravan, 2006). Results showed that 17% reported being cyber bullied in the past year, with 4% saying that it happened more than five times. Seventy-nine percent reported that within the past year, they had never had any mean, threatening, or embarrassing things said about them through e-mail, IMs, text messages, chat rooms, or social networking sites. Of those preteens who reported being cyber-bullied (with 37% reporting this), the most common was comments being said to them related to their appearance, such as their clothes, hair, height, or weight. Of the victims, 23% stated that they were cyber bullied by
e-mail, 19% from comments on a website, 18% in a chat room, 12% from an IM, 11% from an embarrassing photo being e-mailed or posted on a website, and 7% from a text message. Also, somewhat surprisingly, 45% of the victims stated that they received the messages at school, 44% from home, and 34% while at a friend’s house. Forty-five percent reported that they did not know who sent the message, and 44% reported that they did know who sent the message. Slightly more than half of the victims reported telling their parents about the cyber bullying, 44% reported telling a friend, and 27% reported telling a teacher. Finally, 17% of the pre-teens stated they were worried that they would be bullied online or in some other way as they headed back to school later in the year.

Another survey conducted in 2006 involved U.S. teenagers between the ages of 12 and 17 (Caravan, 2006). Results showed greater frequency of cyber bullying among teenagers than among pre-teens, with 36% of teenagers reporting being cyber bullied within the past year, and 6% saying that it happened more than five times. Also, a lower number of teenagers than pre-teens reported that they had never been cyber bullied in the past year (64%). Of those cyber bullied, 59% stated that the comments made about them had to do with their dating life, or interest in a girl or boy, or someone who likes them. Thirty-eight percent reported that the cyber bullying messages had to do with their appearance, such as clothing, hair, height, or weight. Of the teenage victims, 44% stated that it happened via an IM, 34% via an e-mail, 30% via comments on a website, 19% via a text message, 14% in a chat room, and 13% from an embarrassing photo e-mailed around or posted on a website. More teenagers than pre-teens (70%) stated that they received the messages at home, 30% stated they received the messages at school, and
25% stated they received the messages while at a friend’s house. Also, more teenagers than pre-teens reported that they knew who sent the messages, with 72% reporting that they knew the attacker, and 26% reporting that they did not know. Also, a fewer number of teenagers than pre-teens reported telling their parents (35%) or a teacher (9%), while a greater number (72%) did report telling a friend. Finally, 10% reported that they had been threatened with physical harm while online, 8% reported that someone had pretended to be them online in a way that was harmful or embarrassing, and 10% reported that they had sent mean, threatening or hurtful messages to others while online.

Empirical research has also been conducted regarding cyber bullying and technological abuse among teenagers in dating relationships. TRU conducted an online survey among 615 13- to 18-year-olds, and among 414 parents with teens in that age range (Research Topline, 2007). Results of the study indicated that cyber bullying among teenagers in dating relationships is problematic, in that it is occurring. For example, 25% of teenagers reported that their boyfriend or girlfriend harassed, put-down, or called them names. In addition, 19% of teenagers reported that their partner spread rumors about them via the Internet or cell phone, and 18% reported being harassed by their partner via a networking site. In addition, 11% reported that their partner shared private or embarrassing images or videos of them with others. Also, 10% reported that they were threatened with physical harm by their partner through Internet messages. Also of note was the fact that from 70% to 82% of teenagers who were victims of cyber bullying by their partner did not report this to parents, depending on the nature of the harassment. Finally, the research indicated a knowledge gap exists in the extent to which parents reported that relational cyber bullying occurs, versus the extent to which teenagers
reported that it occurs. For every type of cyber bullying, behavior, parents reported that it occurs less often that teenagers reported. Overall, the study demonstrated that cyber bullying can be prevalent in teenage relationships, and that parents are often unaware of the extent to which it occurs among teenagers.

The Colorado Multi-site Evaluation Study was part of an ongoing bullying prevention initiative that involved over 3,000 youth in Grades 5, 8, and 11 taking surveys, and other 2,293 youth from the original sample participating in a follow-up survey (Williams & Guerra, 2007). The focus of the surveys was to contrast the prevalence of cyber bullying with physical and verbal bullying, and to explore whether specific predictors of physical and verbal bullying also predict cyber bullying. Results from the first year of the study indicated that 21% reported being cyber bullied at some point, and 18% reported having cyber bullied others. Data from a follow-up survey indicated that just over 9% of youth reported engaging in cyber bullying, with a fairly small percentage of fifth graders saying that they cyber bullied, and the highest percentage of cyber bulling was reported by the eighth graders. Also, comparing with traditional bullying, verbal bullying was reported to be the most prevalent, followed by physical bullying, and then cyber bullying. Verbal bullying peaked in eighth grade and remained high in eleventh grade. Both physical and cyber bullying also peaked in eighth grade, but both declined by eleventh grade. In terms of influences on cyber bullying, three predictors were found to affect cyber bullying, including whether one thinks cyber bullying is wrong (moral approval), school climate, and peer influences. Given the importance of school climate in influencing cyber bullying, this study explored the perceptions of building-level school administrators, who have a significant impact on school climate.
The Growing Up with Media survey was a national cross-sectional survey of over 1500 youth ages 10 to 15 years old (Ybarra, Diener-West, & Leaf, 2007). One focus of the research was to examine the possible overlap between cyber bullying and traditional school bullying, and to explore the relationship between cyber bullying and other school discipline problems. Results showed that almost 35% of youth between the ages of 10 and 15 reported being a victim of cyber bullying, with 8% reporting being targeted monthly or more often. A significant finding in this study was that 64% of those cyber bullied reported that they had not been bullied at school. However, a relationship does appear to exist between being a victim of cyber bullying and school behavior problems, such as skipping school and carrying a weapon. Further, cyber bullying victims also reported more frequent disciplinary actions at school, including detentions and suspensions.

Another study examined the relationship between traditional and cyber bullying (Raskauskas & Stolz, 2007). Eighty-four adolescents, aged 13 to 18, completed a questionnaire regarding their involvement in both types of bullying. Results indicated that 48% of participants reported being a victim of cyber bullying, and 21% reported being a perpetrator of cyber bullying. In this study, contrary to many others, the most common method of cyber bullying was via cell phone text messaging. Also contrary to other research, results showed a large percentage of overlap between traditional bullying and victimization, and cyber bullying and victimization. Specifically, the analyses showed that most cyber bullies are also traditional bullies, and most cyber bullying victims were also victims of traditional bullying. An interesting finding from this research was that cyber bullying victims were also likely to be involved as bullies in school; that included
physical bullying, teasing, rumor-spreading, and exclusion. Overall, the results imply a connection of cyber bullying to schools. It further adds to the belief that cyber bullying should not be addressed independently of traditional bullying.

Research conducted by the Pew Internet and American Life Project in 2007 explored cyber bullying and online teens by surveying 935 teenagers (Lenhart, 2007). Results showed that 32% of teens who use the Internet reported being a victim of cyber bullying. Specifically, 15% reported that someone took a private e-mail, IM, or text message that was sent to them and forwarded it to someone else, or posted it where others could see it. Thirteen percent reported that someone spread a rumor about them online, and 13% reported that someone had sent them an aggressive or threatening e-mail, IM, or text message. Six percent reported that someone had posted an embarrassing picture of them online without their permission. Of those reporting receiving threats, older teens (particularly 15-to 17-year-old girls) were the most frequent victims. Concerning gender, girls (38%) are more likely to report being a victim of cyber bullying than boys (26%). Also, teens who use social networking sites are more likely to report being cyber bullied (39% versus 22% of those who do not use social networking sites). Similarly, content creators (those who create blogs, upload photos, share information and art, etc.) were also more likely to report being cyber bullied than their peers. Finally, the majority of all teens (67%) state that bullying occurs more often offline than it does online. In other words, they believe that traditional bullying is still the most common form of bullying.

In May 2007 through January 2008, Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) completed a research study that involved over 40,000 students in Grades K-12, as well as parents and teachers (McQuade, 2008). The survey was designed to measure the nature
and extent of both online victimization and offending across grade levels. The study also
explored the perceptions of parents regarding supervision and examined the perceptions
of teachers regarding school-related cyber offending by students. Results indicated that
many children use the Internet while in Kindergarten, and as they age, continue to use
technological devices, such as laptop computers and cell phones. Regarding cyber
bullying, both cyber bullying and victimization was reported as early as the second grade,
with 9% of participants reporting having been mean to someone online, and 18%
reporting that someone was mean to them. Further, results indicated that cyber bullying
peaks in middle school, but also continues into the high school years. Also of note, 66%
of high school students reported that parents did not supervise their online activities,
while only 7% of parents reported no supervision of the Internet activities of their child.
For the current study, the issue of supervision was examined from the perspective of
building-level school administrators.

The RIT study also surveyed a total of 889 teachers and other district staff
members. Respondents in general believed that their school district was prepared to assist
with student learning through technology. Also, faculty reported varying degrees of
training and education on topics such as information security and technology. In addition,
school staff were divided on whether students are more knowledgeable about information
technologies than they are, about whether students using electronic devices in schools is
problematic, and regarding their abilities to supervise the use of technology by their
students. Finally, staff were also divided about the capabilities of their school districts to
guard against improper online activities of students. The current study explored these
issues from the perspective of building-level school administrators.
Legal Implications

A significant challenge facing educators today involves the role of the school in disciplining students for cyber bullying behavior. Parents often look to schools to assist with problems related to cyber bullying, but schools have very limited authority to discipline students for off-campus conduct. Further, schools are faced with issues related to freedom of speech, in that they have to carefully consider the relevant laws pertaining to protected speech. Within a constitutional context, the legal standard was set by the United States Supreme Court case of Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District (1969), where it was held that student speech is not protected if it “materially and substantially disrupts the educational process of the school environment.”

There have been an increasing number of Federal and State court cases pertaining to unlawful school responses to cyber bullying. For example, in Buessink v. Woodland R-IV School District (1998), a student had created a homepage while off campus that included vulgar language. The school imposed a suspension, which was later overturned by the court because of a lack of evidence of any disturbance or material disruption in the school environment.

A similar decision was made in Emmett v. Kent School District No. 425 (2000), which involved a high school senior, while at home, posting mock obituaries and a “who would die” list on a web page. The court overturned the school suspension and held that there was no evidence that the speech constituted a true threat. Finally, in Killion v. Franklin Regional School District (2001), a student was suspended for creating and posting online while outside of school a “top ten” list about a school employee that included statements about the employee’s physical appearance. The court held that the
speech was not threatening, and that there was a lack of evidence of an actual disruption at school. Therefore, the emerging legal standard involved whether the speech constituted a true threat and whether there was a substantial disruption to the educational process.

On the other hand, recent court decisions have also upheld school disciplinary action that was related to cyber bullying off school grounds. For example, in *J.S. v. Bethlehem Area School District* (2002), a student was suspended for creating a web-site that solicited donations to help pay for a hit man; it also discussed having a teacher killed. The teacher was unable to return to the school due to fear and stress. In this case, the court upheld the suspension, citing an actual and substantial disruption of the work of the school. Further, in *Layshock v. Hermitage School District* (2006), a student while at home on Myspace.com, created a parody of a high school principal in which the principal was described as an alcoholic who also used illegal drugs. In this case, the parody was accessed by so many students in the school that the district prohibited student use of the computer system for six days. Therefore, the court upheld the suspension based on the disruption at school. However, in reviewing and overturning this suspension, a federal court, citing *Tinker, Bethel, and Hazelwood*, stated that schools must have a well-founded expectation of disruption. The judge in this case defined evidence of substantial disruption as violence, widespread canceling of classes, disorder that prevents teachers from controlling their classes, or disciplinary action against many students.

In New York State, a federal appellate court took a different position. In *Wisniewski v. Board of Education of Weedsport CSD* (2007), an eighth-grade student was suspended for an entire semester after creating a drawing suggesting that a teacher be shot and killed, and sharing the drawing with 15 friends, including some classmates, via
IMs from a home computer. The police were also contacted in this case, and they concluded that the drawing posed no real threat to the teacher or school. After the parents sued the school board and superintendent in federal court, a federal district court ruled against the parents after finding that the drawing was reasonably understood as a true threat. On appeal, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, citing both *Tinker* and *Morse*, also ruled against the parents, holding that it was reasonably foreseeable that the teacher and school officials would find out about the drawing, and that it would create a substantial disruption within the school. Overall, this court had a different interpretation from the judge in *Layshock*. This decision, therefore, reinforces the difficulty in defining *substantial disruption*.

Overall, it can be inferred from the court decisions that some instances of off-campus cyber bullying, such as those that are not directly threatening, are beyond the reach of school discipline. Despite the increasing number of court cases pertaining to cyber bullying, it remains unknown whether teachers and administrators are aware of the case law, and whether this impacts on their level of confidence to intervene. This is significant in that schools are being increasingly asked by parents to intervene with cyber bullying. Lenhart, Madden, and Hitlin (2005) noted that 71% of parents believe that schools have a significant responsibility for ensuring children's safety on the Internet. The researchers also found that 42% of parents have looked to schools for advice on the topic of Internet safety. Yet, schools are faced with a legal conundrum when they intervene in cases of cyber bullying. An inadequate response by schools may lead to serious consequences related to negligence, yet a response involving the imposing of discipline can result in civil litigation brought forth by parents.
School Obligations and Cyber Bullying

According to Shariff (2005), cyber bullying presents a number of both legal and educational concerns for schools. From the legal perspective, the boundaries surrounding freedom of speech and the protection of students have not been clearly delineated. At the same time, parents are increasingly suing schools for failing to protect their children from cyber bullying (Shariff, 2005). In regard to school response, Shariff (2004) found that school responses to cyber bullying were not significantly different than responses to traditional bullying. However, parents reported that they experienced some common negative patterns of school response to their complaints about bullying. For example, some parents indicated that school administrators “assumed victims invited the abuse,” “believed parents exaggerated the problem,” and “assumed that written anti-bullying policies absolved them from doing more to protect victims” (Shariff, 2005, p.471).

Shariff (2005) contends that the negative responses by some school officials “stems from a fear of litigation, and a lack of knowledge about the complexities of bullying -- particularly cyber bullying” (p. 9). Shariff (2005) further expressed that the tendency of schools to rely on reactive zero-tolerance policies, suspension, and criminal charges rarely solves school problems. The questions of whether and when schools should intervene are significant. This study also investigated whether fear of litigation and lack of knowledge influence interventions by administrators.

Conclusion

In summary, there has been a growing body of research on cyber bullying among youth. However, there are many areas that need further study in order to more fully understand this recent phenomenon. The body of research on the correlates of traditional
bullying offers insight into cyber bullying, but gaps remain due to fundamental differences between the two forms. More research is needed to comprehend the scope, prevalence and nuances of cyber bullying, and to comprehend the factors that influence school interventions. Further, more research is clearly needed to better understand the perceptions of building-level school administrators on the topic. This is especially true, given the role of the principal in improving school culture and in decreasing bullying behaviors by students. In addition, Olweus (1993) also noted that a key in reducing bullying in schools is a clear policy on bullying that results in consistently applied consequences. Cyber bullying research is emerging, but evidence-based best practices in intervention and prevention do not exist. Therefore, it is important to assess the perceptions of school leaders to identify factors that can lead to effective solutions. Further, it is important to assess the perceptions of school leaders regarding the policies and measures being undertaken in their schools to address cyber bullying.

The research questions to assess the perceptions are:

1. What are building-level school administrators' perceptions of the prevalence and types of cyber bullying that occur among students in their school?

2. How do building-level school administrators respond to incidents of cyber bullying, and what are the factors that influence their decisions regarding when and how to intervene in cyber bullying incidents?

3. What measures are administrators and their schools taking to prevent incidences of cyber bullying and cyber offending among students in their school, and who is responsible for leading these measures?
The study employed a mixed-methods design to assist in answering the questions, including a cross-sectional survey followed up with qualitative interviews. Overall, a better understanding of the factors that influence decisions to intervene can be used to inform and support educators in their efforts to protect our children.
Chapter 3: Methodology

*Introduction: The General Perspective*

According to Cottrell and McKenzie (2005), quantitative research is used to examine relationships among variables and emphasizes measurement. The quantitative approach, also called experimental or empirical research, involves (a) stating hypotheses, (b) conducting a study and analyzing data, and (c) stating conclusions based on the results (Cottrell & McKenzie, 2005). In addition, the quantitative approach focuses primarily on postpositivist claims for developing knowledge (Creswell, 2003). The approach employs strategies of inquiry, including surveys and experiments, and uses data collection instruments that produce statistical data.

The purpose of qualitative research, on the other hand, is to describe, explain, and understand the complex nature of a phenomenon (Cottrell and McKenzie, 2005). It is designed to provide valuable information and insight into a topic. The focus of the qualitative approach is on the processes and meanings that are unable to be measured in terms of quantity or frequency (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Further, according to Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p. 3), “qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomenon in terms of the meanings people bring to them.” Creswell (2007) explains that qualitative research involves inductive data analysis that establishes patterns and themes, and notes that the definition focuses on the impact of the research and how it can transform the world. Qualitative research is an
interpretive process, which includes intensive and sustained experiences between inquirer and participants.

A mixed-methods approach involves the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data (Creswell, 2003). The approach often bases knowledge claims focused on pragmatism, meaning it is more consequence-oriented or geared toward solutions to problems. The use of a mixed-methods inquiry is based on the assumption that collecting diverse types of data can provide a deeper understanding of a research problem. For this study, a mixed-methods design was chosen to converge findings from both quantitative and qualitative data sources in order to better understand a relatively new topic. Specifically, this researcher used a mixed-methods approach to explore the role and meaning of school building leadership in addressing cyber bullying. A sequential explanatory strategy was employed, which began with the collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data, and then shifted to the collection and analysis of qualitative data (Creswell, 2003). The study began with a broad survey of building-level school administrators designed to obtain both quantitative and qualitative data. The next phase involved conducting detailed interviews to collect rich qualitative data from a small group of building-level school administrators, which expanded upon the initial survey questions. The results of the study will be used to increase awareness and to potentially implement meaningful change.

Rationale

Leff et. al. (1999) noted that the extant investigations of bullying in the United States have relied heavily on student surveys or student observations. Harris and Hathorn (2006) added that data collection regarding bullying has been gathered primarily through
student reports. However, Holt and Keyes (2004) noted that it is critical that staff attitudes also be evaluated, given their importance to overall school climate. Despite the role of teachers and administrators in addressing cyber bullying, very few studies have addressed the attitudes and perceptions of school staff members on cyber bullying (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006; Willard, 2006). In a notable exception, Harris and Hathorn (2006) conducted a survey to assess middle school principals’ perceptions of bullying on campus. For this study, a survey was used to assess the perceptions of building-level school administrators at all levels on the more recent phenomenon of cyber bullying.

Given the lack of research on administrator experiences with and attitudes toward cyber bullying, a pioneering survey will provide insight into the views of building-level school administrators, who arguably will play a key role in prevention and intervention efforts. Surveying a group of building-level school administrators will result in gaining a better understanding of the variables related to intervention to cyber bullying.

Creswell (2003) explains that, if a phenomenon or concept is poorly understood because little research has been conducted on it, then a qualitative approach is merited. Further, since qualitative research is exploratory, it is practical when (a) the important variables regarding a phenomenon are not clearly known, (b) the topic is new, and (c) the topic has not been addressed with a group of people (Creswell, 2003). This applies to the topic of cyber bullying, in that it has not received significant academic attention and is considered a relatively new phenomenon (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006; Willard, 2006). Therefore, for this study, qualitative interviews were conducted following the survey to further examine responses to cyber bullying as reported by school building administrators. Overall, using mixed methods provided an in-depth understanding of how
cyber bullying is addressed and provided a foundation for more specific empirical research in the future. Specifically, this study began by surveying school building administrators regarding their experiences in intervening with cyber bullying. In-depth interviews with the administrators were then conducted to collect more detailed data to further explore questions posed by survey results.

Problem Statement

Research has indicated that nearly 35% of teenagers and 42% of middle-school students claim to have been bullied via e-mail, text messages, and in chat rooms (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006; National i-Safe Survey, 2004). Yet, cyber bullying often goes unnoticed by schools, given the nature of electronic communication. For example, Ybarra (2004) noted that traditional bullying has usually involved face-to-face interactions while at school, while traveling to or from school, or in public places. Cyber bullying, on the other hand, does not involve a face-to-face interaction, is often done anonymously, and can be done at any time (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004). Principals in schools arguably play a key role in the prevention of traditional bullying (Harris and Hathorn, 2006). According to Harris and Petrie (2003), safe schools are invariably led by principals who foster a climate based on belonging and caring, but who also must focus on the elimination of bullying behaviors. Although it is unknown whether building-level school administrators play the same vital role in addressing cyber bullying, it is plausible, given that cyber bullying is a variation of bullying. Nonetheless, there has been little research that has been conducted on building-level school administrators’ perspectives on cyber bullying.

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of building-level school administrators of cyber bullying among students in their respective schools.
The primary research question was: *What are building-level school administrators’ perceptions of the prevalence and types of cyber bullying that occur among students in their school?*

The second research question was: *How do building-level school administrators respond to incidents of cyber bullying, and what are the factors that influence their decisions regarding when and how to intervene in cyber bullying incidents?*

The final research question was: *What measures are administrators and their schools taking to prevent incidences of cyber bullying and cyber offending among students in their school, and who is responsible for leading these measures?*

Information gathered from the unique, but vital, perspective of building-level school administrators may be used to assist with future cyber bullying prevention and intervention efforts.

*Research Context*

The study involved surveying 285 building-level school administrators from elementary, middle, and high schools in a large county located in the Northeast. This included all known principals, along with assistant and vice principals in the county. Their schools, varying in size and population, were in suburban and urban districts. The smallest of the districts has approximately 1,100 students and two school buildings. The largest district is an urban district that has an approximate student enrollment of 34,000 students. There are a total of 17 suburban school districts in the county with student enrollment estimated at 87,000. The total number of suburban schools within the districts in the county is 122. Further, there are 58 urban elementary schools and 22 secondary schools, with an estimated student enrollment of approximately 34,000. The goal of this
research was to conduct a census survey, with all public building-level school administrators in the county being surveyed. The data collection activities covered a four-month period, beginning in February 2008 and ending in June 2008. Specifically, the online surveys were completed from February through March 2008. Data analysis of the survey results followed, and then the qualitative interviews of six school principals and assistant principals were conducted.

This researcher is employed by a Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) school district, which is a cooperative extension of ten component school districts located in the same county in the Northeast. This BOCES is one of thirty-seven BOCES in New York State, which were created to provide shared educational programs and services to school districts. The district offers more than eighty programs and services that assist students of diverse backgrounds, from newborns to senior citizens, in discovering and reaching their learning potential. The role of this researcher includes providing support to local districts in researching and implementing safety-related changes within their districts.

In addition, the BOCES and this researcher are part of a large-scale initiative in the same county, lead by researchers at a local college. The initiative involves a study of cyber safety and ethics among K-12 students. The goal of the initiative is to address the problem of Internet safety and cyber bullying; to do this, they are using data from surveys in multiple districts. The surveys are being administered to students, parents, and teachers in approximately fifteen school districts in the county. The goal of the current research is to add to the descriptive data being generated by the surveys. Specifically, additional quantitative and qualitative data obtained through surveys and follow-up interviews with
building-level school administrators can offer insight into potential policy changes and educational opportunities for the school communities.

Research Participants

The research participants for the study were building-level school administrators employed in 18 school districts in the county. Specifically, the administrators represented all levels, including elementary, middle, and high schools. For the quantitative phase, a purposive sample, including all known building-level school administrators in the county, was used. More specifically, all known principals and assistant principals in public schools in the county were invited to participate in the survey. Information and e-mail addresses for building-level administrators were obtained through directories from two local BOCES and through school district websites. It is acknowledged that the lists may not have been completely accurate, given that individuals listed as building-level administrators in the directories and websites may have retired, left the position, were on a personal leave, or were inadvertently omitted. Further, additional building-level administrative positions may have been added in a school district, depending on the needs of that district. Once the administrators were identified, more detailed information was asked in the survey, including grade level of the students they supervise, age range, and number of years experience.

Instruments Used in Data Collection

The primary method of data collection was a non-experimental cross-sectional survey. According to Creswell (2003, p. 153), survey designs provide a “numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population.” The researcher may then generalize or make claims about a specific
population. The advantages of administering the instrument electronically included eliminating the costs associated with mailing paper-based surveys and increasing the response time (Cottrell and McKenzie, 2005). Further, building-level school administrators generally have access to computers and e-mail accounts, meaning that an electronic data collection method did not present issues due to lack of access to technology.

The survey instrument was an original instrument developed by this researcher and was inspired by a bullying survey of middle school principals conducted by Harris and Hathorn (2006). Special attention was paid to clearly defining the construct of cyber bullying, given the issues that have been noted regarding the difficulty in defining bullying. In other words, the intent was to clearly delineate and operationalize the construct of cyber bullying in order to improve the validity of measurement. This was significant, in that previous research on bullying has lead to great variability of responses by participants, perhaps due to the construct of bullying not being clearly defined. Therefore, this survey used an inductive approach, in that the survey development began with a clearly defined construct, which served as a guide for subsequent item development.

Overall, a four-step process was used in developing the instrument that was modeled after a summary of major steps to developing a summated rating scale (Spector, 1992). This included defining the construct, designing the scale, conducting a pilot test, and validating and norming the scale. After completing the first two steps, the survey was piloted in selected schools in adjacent counties and in a local BOCES. The purpose of piloting the survey was to validate and norm the survey, and to improve validity.
Specifically, the draft survey was completed by building-level school administrators not participating in this study. The instrument was modified, based on feedback obtained by pilot survey participants with increased confidence that the constructs measured what they were intended to measure.

This survey was cross-sectional, with the data being collected at one point in time during a specified time period. A web-based survey tool through the research company, Vovici, was used to collect the data. The tool, Websurveyor, was also used for the local research initiative previously mentioned. Specifically, a link to the electronic survey was sent via e-mail to 285 building-level school administrators employed in public schools from one county in western New York. Included in the e-mail was an explanation of the research project, as well as directions on how to log in to the survey, navigate through the survey, and submit the survey. The survey was open during a 32-day period from Thursday, February 28, 2008, to Monday, March 31, 2008. One hundred seven completed responses were received to the survey during this time. Reminders were sent via e-mail on three occasions in an attempt to improve response rates. After the first reminder, 56 building-level school administrators had completed the survey. After the second reminder, 85 building-level school administrators had completed the survey. After the third reminder, 107 building-level school administrators had completed the survey, for a final response rate of 38%. During the survey, some technological problems were experienced, in that a small number of participants responded saying that they were unable to log on to the survey. Settings were changed in the web-based survey tool to help correct those log-in problems. However, it is unknown whether those who unsuccessfully attempted to take the survey first attempted to do so again after the
problems were corrected. Therefore, it is possible that the response rate was decreased due to this issue.

The secondary method of data collection was in-depth, one-on-one interviews. According to Cottrell and McKenzie (2005), in-depth interviews are used “to uncover feelings and attitudes an individual has regarding a specific experience” (p. 229). Interview investigations can take place in a number of ways, are often formal and structured, and take place in a number of stages, beginning with thematizing and ending in reporting (Kvale, 1996). For this study, based on the survey findings, a convenience sample consisting of a small number of the principals and assistant principals was selected for interviews to gain more insight into areas that needed further exploration. The sample was also purposeful, as each of the sample participants were selected based on their known experiences in dealing with cyber bullying issues and on their willingness to further expand upon the results obtained from the surveys. Specifically, results that needed further explanation which were unexpected or surprising were explored in greater detail through personal interviews of six building-level school administrators. The administrators consisted of three school principals and three assistant principals from the varying levels of elementary, middle, and high schools.

Participants were interviewed at their schools at a mutually agreed-upon time and location. All interviews were conducted in a quiet location, usually an office behind closed doors, to minimize disruptions; this proved to be a private and comfortable environment that was conducive to open communication. After brief discussions prior to each interview, participants were asked to sign the interview consent form; they were reminded that the results were not attributable to them or their school and that they could
end the interview at any time. Each interview was digitally recorded; it began with a question regarding the meaning of the concept of cyber bullying. Each interview was later transcribed, and the audio data were transformed into text.

*Risks and Confidentiality*

The survey instrument and data analysis procedures used in this study were carefully developed to minimize risks and discomfort. However, participants in both the survey and interviews were advised through cover letters that they may be asked about sensitive information related to student cyber offending, and their use of the Internet, computers or other electronic devices (See Appendices A and C). Participants were also advised that, if at any time during this study, they became uncomfortable or preferred not to answer any further survey questions, they could choose to either exit the incomplete survey or terminate the interview. None of the information obtained in the course of this study was attributable to participants or their students. Completed survey data were retained on secure computers and were accessible only to the researcher. Completed interview data were recorded, transcribed, and secured in a locked cabinet, and were accessible only to the researcher. Overall decisions in data collection were ethically made, based on protecting and respecting the rights of participants, with special attention given to informed consent and the sensitive nature of the topic.

*Data Analysis*

The analysis of the primary quantitative and qualitative survey data were completed based on a series of steps recommended by Creswell (2003). Specifically, information was first reported about the numbers of survey responses, using figures with numbers and percentages. Next, a method to check response bias was determined.
Response bias has been defined as the effect of non-responses to the instrument on survey estimates (Fowler, 1988 as cited in Creswell, 2003). Before discussing this method, a brief discussion on response rates of web-based surveys is merited.

A main source of error in surveys is the non-response bias that can occur when all potential respondents do not complete the survey. If a large percentage of participants do not respond, then it is difficult to say that the perception of those who did respond are representative of the population. Therefore, an adequate response rate is important for the validity of the survey and for generalizing the results of the survey. However, non-response has been said to be a main challenge for web-based surveys (Crawford, Couper, & Lamias, 2001). In researching the characteristics associated with increasing response rates of web-based surveys, Archer (2007) examined 99 web-based surveys administered from 2004 to 2006 and found that the average response rate was 48.3%. Although Fowler (2002) notes that there is no accepted standard for minimum response rates, a rate below 50% is often considered on the low side.

For this study, with a response rate of 38%, response bias was checked using a procedure called a wave analysis. This procedure involved examining returns on select questions from earlier responders and assessing whether the early returns differed from later returns (Leslie, 1972; Creswell, 2003). This analysis is based on the assumption that late respondents most resemble non-respondents, meaning that if the responses remain the same, then the likelihood of response bias is reduced. In this study, the wave analysis involved randomly selecting 10 questions from the survey and assessing differences in responses across the three waves of responses that were received. Percentages of responses were calculated across the three waves for all 10 questions, and minimal
differences existed across the three waves. One question did show a small variation in responses, and this became a question to be further explored in the interview phase of the project. Although there is no absolute test for determining whether the answers of respondents differ from those of non-respondents (Leslie, 1972), the results of the wave analysis were reassuring. Similarly, Leslie (1972) found that when surveys are made up of relatively homogenous populations (as was this survey of building-level school administrators,) then significant response-rate bias is probably unlikely. This is due to the assertion that those having strong identification with a group tend to respond to matters affecting them as members of the group.

As mentioned, the first steps of survey data analysis involved reporting survey responses and checking for response bias. The next step recommended by Creswell (2003) was to discuss a plan for providing a descriptive analysis of data for all variables in the study. For the survey phase of this project, this analysis involved reporting the responses to each question in terms of numbers and percentages (quantitative), and creating tables for comments received (qualitative). The results were critically examined after being documented in both narrative and figures and tables formats. After analyzing individual responses to questions, the responses were then categorized and coded, based on how they were related to the three primary research questions of the study. The qualitative data were analyzed using steps proposed by Creswell (2003). The first step was to organize and prepare the data for analysis, which involved transcribing and organizing the interview data. The next step was to organize and read through the data to obtain a sense of the overall meaning and to begin identifying categories of responses. The next step involved organizing and coding the data into meaningful groups, and
generating themes and more fully developed categories (Creswell, 2003). This was accomplished by clustering together the themes of each individual participant in relation to answering the three primary research questions of the study. This step involved meaning condensation where the meaning units were interrogated, based on the purpose of the study (Kvale, 1996). The final step involved an interpretation of the data, based on lessons learned and individual understanding of the findings.

Summary of the Methodology

This chapter has explained the methods that were used in a mixed-methods study that explored the role and meaning of school building leadership in addressing cyber bullying. More specifically, the methods were chosen to investigate the experiences of school building administrators who have intervened in incidents of cyber bullying. The objective of the study was to obtain descriptive data regarding a topic that had not yet been researched from the perspective of a population that consisted of building-level school administrators. For this study, the data provide a detailed contextual description of how administrators make decisions in responding to cyber bullying, and explanation of why particular decisions were made. This, in turn, can offer insight into leadership, policy, and curricular implications for school districts to consider in their efforts at the prevention and intervention for cyber bullying. Overall, the sequential study was organized based on quantitative data collection and analyses, followed by qualitative data collection and analyses. The qualitative analyses clarify and extend upon the quantitative results.
Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of building-level school administrators about cyber bullying among students under their supervision and their level of preparedness to intervene in cyber bullying incidents. This chapter is organized based on the three primary research questions posed in Chapter I; it first presents the results from the survey and then the results from the interviews. Beginning with the survey, the chapter reports building-level school administrators' perceptions of the prevalence and types of cyber bullying that occur among students in their school. Next, the responses to cyber bullying are detailed, along with the factors that influence the decisions by administrators regarding when and how to intervene in cyber bullying incidents. Finally, the measures which administrators and their schools are taking to prevent incidences of cyber bullying and cyber offending among students in their school are discussed, along with the question of who has the responsibility for leading these measures. The results of the interviews are then reported and organized based on the research questions.

Online Survey Results

Demographics. The link to the original cross-sectional survey was sent via e-mail to all known public building-level school administrators in a county in western New York. A total of 107 completed surveys were submitted, for an overall response rate of
38%. Before examining the findings related to the first research question, the demographic characteristics of the research participants for the survey are presented. Of the 107 respondents, the demographics were broken down, based on job title, level of supervision (elementary, middle, high, other/multiple grades), age range, and years of experience. The slight majority of respondents to the survey were assistant principals (n=66) over principals (n=41). Table 4.1 provides a summary of the demographic characteristics pertaining to grade level of supervision.

Table 4.1

Grade Level of Supervision of Respondents (n=107)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Characteristics</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Elementary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade Level of Supervision</td>
<td>27 (25%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most prevalent age range for participants in this study was between 46 and 50 years. Table 4.2 provides a summary of age-ranges of participants.
Table 4.2

Age Range of Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>46 to 50 years</td>
<td>22 (21%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-40 years</td>
<td>21 (20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51 to 55 years</td>
<td>18 (17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 to 35 years</td>
<td>16 (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 55 years</td>
<td>13 (12%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 to 45 years</td>
<td>12 (11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 to 30 years</td>
<td>5 (5%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of participants (69%) had less then ten years experience as an administrator, while less than one-quarter of participants (24%) reported having 10 to 20 years experience as an administrator. A relatively small number of participants reported having over 20 years experience. The mean number of years of experience was 7.87 years.

Survey Results: Research Question One

Prevalence. The first research question was: What are building-level school administrators’ perceptions of the prevalence and types of cyber bullying that occurs among students in their school? In order to assist with answering this question, a group of general questions was asked to get a sense of perceptions by the participants of prevalence of cyber bullying among students under the supervision. Specifically, questions were asked regarding whether cyber bullying among students and of
faculty/staff by students is increasing in their building. Table 4.3 provides a summary of the results.

Table 4.3

*School Administrators' Perceptions of Cyber Bullying By Students (n=107)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceptions</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cyber Bullying Among Students Increasing in Building</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyber Bullying of Faculty/Staff by Students Increasing in Building</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty/Staff Have Been Victims of Cyber Bullying at Least Once</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results indicate that the majority of participants believe that cyber bullying among students is increasing in their school building. Also, only a small number of participants believe that the cyber bullying of faculty/staff is increasing in their building. However, a much larger percentage reported that faculty/staff have been victims of cyber bullying. Therefore, although it appears as though participants do not believe that faculty/staff are increasingly being victimized by cyber bullying, there are still some that report that victimization of faculty/staff has occurred. Interestingly, the fact that a number of participants indicated that they were not sure raises additional questions as to whether a reliable mechanism for reporting cyber bullying is present in many districts.

*Reporting of cyber bullying.* Participants were also asked about the reporting of cyber bullying by victims, bystanders, and parents. Table 4.4 provides a summary of the results.
Table 4.4

School Administrators' Perceptions of Reporting of Cyber Bullying (n=107)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceptions</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reporting by Student Victims</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reporting by Bystanders</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reporting by Parents</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in Table 4.4, the results indicate that the majority of respondents believe that the reporting of cyber bullying by victims is increasing, while the majority of respondents believe that the reporting of cyber bullying by student bystanders is not increasing. However, approximately one-quarter of respondents indicated that they were not sure if the reporting by student respondents is increasing. Finally, a slight majority of respondents believed that the reporting by parents is not increasing, although the number reporting “not sure” may again indicate that many may just not be aware of this and speaks again to the possibility of a lack of a reliable reporting process.

Prevalence and types of cyber bullying. To assist with answering the first research question, a group of specific questions was asked to get a sense of perceptions of the types of cyber bullying among students under the supervision of the administrators. Participants were also asked how often they have observed or were notified of specific types of cyber bullying among students that occurred in their school building. Results showed that administrators observed or were notified of all questioned types of cyber bullying on a weekly, monthly, and annual basis. These included the sending of annoying
or cruel e-mail, instant messages, or text message to another; sending of threatening e-
mail, instant messages, or text message to another; spreading of rumors about another;
someone taking a private email or instant message that was sent to them and forwarding
it to someone else or posting it where others could see; someone posting an embarrassing
or "altered" picture of another online without permission; and someone using a social
networking site (i.e. MySpace, Facebook) to cyber bully another (See Table 4.5).
Table 4.5

*Observed or Notified of Specific Types of Cyber Bullying Among Students That Occurred in School Building*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Cyber Bullying Via Computer or Cell-Phone</th>
<th>Frequency in Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sending of annoying or cruel e-mail, instant messages, or text message to another</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sending of threatening e-mail, instant messages, or text message to another</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spreading of rumors about another</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Someone taking a private email, or instant message that was sent to them and forwarding it to someone else or posting it where others could see</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Someone posting an embarrassing or “altered” picture of another online without permission</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Someone using a social networking site (i.e. MySpace, Facebook) to bully another</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As can be seen in Table 4.5, all types of cyber bullying were said to be observed by or reported to some respondents on at least a weekly and monthly basis. Also, all types of cyber bullying were also reported to have been observed by or reported to respondents one or two times per year. Overall perceptions were that very few of each type occur on a daily or weekly basis. The most common type observed by or reported to respondents on a weekly and monthly basis was the spreading of rumors about another by using a computer or cell phone. The least common type was someone posting an embarrassing or “altered” picture of another online without permission.

Overall, considering prevalence in regard to type of cyber bullying at school, the results indicated that someone spreading of rumors about another by using a computer or cell phone was the most commonly reported type in that it happens on a weekly, monthly, and sometimes daily basis. Regarding cyber bullying that was reported to have been observed by or reported to respondents one or two times per year, the most common type was the sending of annoying or cruel e-mail, instant messages, or text message to another using a computer or cell phone. Finally, the type of cyber bullying that was most frequently reported to have never occurred was someone posting an embarrassing or “altered” picture of another online without permission (65%).

Participants were also asked how often they were notified of specific types of cyber bullying among students that occurred away from their school building. Results showed that all respondents stated that they were notified of the same questioned types of cyber bullying on a daily, weekly, monthly, and annual basis (See Table 4.6).
Table 4.6

Notified of Specific Types of Cyber Bullying Among Students That Occurred Away From School Building

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Cyber Bullying Via Computer or Cell-Phone</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>1 or 2X/ Year</th>
<th>1 or 2X/ Month</th>
<th>Weekly</th>
<th>Daily</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sending of annoying or cruel e-mail, instant messages, or text message to another</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sending of threatening e-mail, instant messages, or text message to another</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spreading of rumors about another</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Someone taking a private email, or instant message that was sent to them and forwarding it to someone else or posting it where others could see</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Someone posting an embarrassing or &quot;altered&quot; picture of another online without permission</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Someone using a social networking site (i.e. MySpace, Facebook) to bully another</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be seen in Table 4.6, all respondents indicated that they had been notified of all types of cyber bullying that occurred away from school on a daily, weekly and
monthly basis, and annual basis. As with cyber bullying at school, overall perceptions were that very few were notified of any type of cyber bullying on a daily or weekly basis. The most common type reported to respondents on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis was the spreading of rumors about another using a computer or cell phone.

Overall, the most common type of off-campus cyber bullying reported to respondents on a daily basis was the spreading of rumors about another, with 6% saying that this was reported to them on a daily basis. In addition, all types of cyber bullying were also said to have been reported to most respondents one or two times per year, with the most common type being the sending of threatening e-mail, instant messages, or text message to another using a computer or cell phone. Finally, the type of cyber bullying that was most frequently reported to have never been reported was someone posting an embarrassing or "altered" picture of another online without permission; 52% stated this was never reported to them. When comparing the cyber bullying that happened either at school or away from school, it is interesting to note that the most common type for both was the spreading of rumors about another by using a computer or cell phone.

Survey Results: Research Question Two

Response to cyber bullying. The next research question was: *How do building-level school administrators respond to incidents of cyber bullying, and what are the factors that influence their decisions regarding when and how to intervene in cyber bullying incidents?* Participants were asked whether they had responded by taking a range of actions, ranging from taking no action to making a referral to the police. Figure 4.1 provides a summary of the responses.
The most commonly used response to a student found guilty of cyber bullying on school property was the discussion of the incident with both the student and the parent. The next most commonly used response was discussing the situation or providing informal counseling with just the student. Conflict resolution was surprisingly reported to be the next most commonly used response, despite research indicating that it may not be effective. Other commonly used responses included some form of disciplinary measure, such as another disciplinary action, suspension in- or out-of-school, or referral to police. Referral to formal therapeutic treatment was used less frequently. Interestingly, 6% reported that no action was taken in response to a student found guilty of cyber bullying on school property.
Participants were also asked about the response to a student found guilty of cyber bullying off school property (see Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2

Percentages Reporting Using Responses to a Student Found Guilty of Cyber Bullying while Away From School

The most commonly used response to a student found guilty of cyber bullying off school property, as it was with on school property, was the discussion of the incident with both the student and the parent. The next most commonly used responses off school property, as it was with on school property, was discussing the situation or providing informal counseling with just the student, followed by using conflict resolution.

However, the responses for off-campus cyber bullying differed from on-campus cyber bullying regarding discipline, as the numbers using other disciplinary action, or in- or out-of-school suspension were much lower. Referral to police was used just about as
often for off-campus cyber bullying as it was for on-campus, and referral to formal treatment was used more often for off-campus cyber bullying. Finally, 14% reported that no action was taken in response to a student found guilty of cyber bullying off school property; less than 6% reported that no action was taken in response to a to a student found guilty of cyber bullying on school property.

Factors influencing intervention: Technology use. The second research question also examined the factors that influence the decisions of building-level school administrators regarding when and how to intervene in cyber bullying incidents. The survey item addressing this involved asking what types of technology the administrators use on a regular basis while at or away from work (see Table 4.7)

Table 4.7

Technology Reported to be Used on a Regular Basis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technology</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Receive and/or Send Email</td>
<td>89.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Browse the Internet</td>
<td>81.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receive and/or send Text Messages</td>
<td>37.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicate Using Instant Messaging</td>
<td>17.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use Social Networking Sites</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contribute to Blogs</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most common form of technology reported to be used on a regular basis is sending and receiving e-mail, and browsing the Internet. Less commonly used were instant messaging, using social networking sites, and contributing to blogs. This should
be noted given the research showing the popularity of using these forms of communicative technology by today’s youth. Specifically, data appear to indicate that participants regularly use different types of technology than do youth.

Factors influencing intervention: Confidence. Another group of questions began with personal confidence levels in terms of possessing the skills and knowledge to intervene in cases of cyber bullying. Other questions focused on levels of confidence by respondents in their school’s ability to supervise the use of technology by students (as seen in Table 4.8).

Table 4.8

Confidence in Personal Ability to Intervene in Cyber Bullying Cases, and in Ability of Schools to Supervise Use of Technology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceptions</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Confident They Possess Required Skills and Knowledge to Intervene</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confident in their School’s Ability to Supervise Use of Computers by Students at School</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confident in their School’s Ability to Supervise Use of Any Technology by Students at School</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Results indicated that less than one-half of respondents agreed that they were confident that they had the necessary skills to intervene. Also, the fact that 28% were not sure they had the necessary skills would appear to indicate that they do not have the confidence in their skills to intervene. Also of note, just over one-half of the participants agreed that they had confidence in their school’s ability to supervise computer use at school. Further, nearly a third of participants disagreed that they were confident in their school’s ability to use any technology by students at school. This suggests that participants are finding it even more difficult to supervise the use of technology, such as cell-phones and PDA's while at school, than it is to supervise computer use.

Some participants also made specific comments regarding their levels of confidence in their school’s ability to supervise the use of computers and use of any technology by students while at school. These comments support the notion that it can be difficult to supervise technology use by students at school. Some comments supported the lack of confidence in supervision of computers given the high technological skill levels of many students. For example, one participant commented that “although we work diligently to block sites, new ways of attaining access become available on a daily basis.” Similarly, another participant stated that “my District is not prepared nor ready to handle this. They place filtering systems that are easily bypassed with proxy servers and the filtering system that doesn't recognize foreign languages which is how students get through them.”

Further, the comments also showed some lack of confidence in their school to supervise any other technology. For example, comments to support this include “there is no way to supervise all the time” and “students always find ways around it.” Finally, as
indicated by this final comment, most responses indicated that schools are diligently trying to supervise technology, but often find it difficult to do so effectively: “We do as good of job as can be expected for a school. However, I don't believe it possible to police all tech use to avoid cyber bullying. I see more issues arise out of misuse of cell phones than I do the misuse of computers.”

Factors influencing intervention: Training. Respondents were asked whether they had received training on the topic of cyber bullying. The results (n=105) indicated that 40% had received training on cyber bullying, while 60% had received no training. For those who indicated that they had received training, Figure 4.3 summarizes what the training entailed.

Figure 4.3

Training on Cyber Bullying Received by Building-Level School Administrators
Results indicated that of the just 40% who indicated that they had received training on cyber bullying, the training most often involved an overview of cyber bullying. The next most common type of training included Internet safety, followed next by traditional bullying training that included information on cyber bullying. Of note was the fact that just over 10% of participants indicated that they had received training regarding the legal and policy issues associated with cyber bullying.

Factors influencing intervention: Fears of litigation. Finally, to help answer the second research question, participants were also asked whether they had fears of potential litigation or lawsuits, due to disciplining for off-campus cyber bullying. Results indicated that 4% “Strongly Agreed” that they have fears of potential litigation, 19% “Agreed,” 25% were “Not Sure,” 44% “Disagreed,” and 9% “Strongly Disagreed.” Four participants also commented on this question. One participant stated: “Depends on the evidence. No assumptions.” The remaining comments also focused on the impact of the off-campus cyber bullying on the school environment. For example, one participant remarked that, “if it occurs off campus and then impacts the learning process at school, I am confident in taking disciplinary action.” Another participant stated: “Actions that occur off school grounds which impede normal operations, or the rights of others during the day are heavily considered.” The final participant stated that, “discipline is enacted as we address the behaviors that carry over into the school as a result of the off-campus cyber bullying.”

Survey Results: Research Question Three

Ranking of preventative measures. The final research question was: What measures are administrators and their schools taking to prevent incidences of cyber
bullying and cyber offending among students in their school, and who is responsible for leading these measures? Prior to asking about the measures, respondents were first asked to rank a group of preventative measures to address cyber bullying from the most important to the least important.

Table 4.9

*Ranking of Preventative Measures in Order of Importance*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preventative Measure</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Training and Education for Faculty and Staff</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training and Education for Students</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training and Education for Parents</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training and Education for Administrators</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased Communication Between Schools and Parents</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Updated Policies Regarding Cyber Bullying</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using Latest Research Results on Cyber Bullying</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interestingly, training was ranked as the top four preventative measures. Also, participants felt that training and education for faculty/staff, students, and parents was more important than their own training.

*Preventative measures: Perceptions of current and needed Training.* The next group of questions focused on whether training on cyber bullying was being conducted, or should be conducted in their schools for various stakeholders, including administrators, faculty and staff, parents, students, and school board members.
Table 4.10

*School Administrators' Perceptions of Training for Stakeholders on Cyber Bullying*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training for Stakeholders</th>
<th>Percent in Agreement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Training is Needed</td>
<td>Conducted in School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training for Administrators</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training for Faculty/Staff</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training for Parents</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training for Students</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training for School Board Members</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results indicated that low percentages of participants indicated that training was being conducted for stakeholders on cyber bullying, as compared to high percentages indicated the need for training for stakeholders. Of note was the fact that participants indicated that training was being conducted for the stakeholders in the same order that they ranked the most important preventative measures to address cyber bullying.

Specifically, respondents indicated that training was most commonly conducted for faculty and staff, followed by students, then parents, and then administrators. The ranking of preventative measures to address cyber bullying in order of importance was the same. Also of interest was the fact that 15% of participants were not sure if training was being
conducted for parents, and 67% were not sure if training was being conducted for school board members.

Preventative measures: Policies. The next series of questions that followed focused on school policies related to bullying and cyber bullying. Specifically, respondents were asked whether their schools had board policies on bullying and cyber bullying, whether related policies have been updated, and whether these policies need to be updated. Table 4.11 provides a summary of the responses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceptions</th>
<th>Yes (%)</th>
<th>No (%)</th>
<th>Not Sure (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Board Policy on Bullying Exists in my School</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Board Policy on Bullying includes Information on Cyber Bullying</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policies such as Code of Conduct and Acceptable Use Have Been Updated to Include Cyber Bullying</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a Need to Update Code of Conduct and Acceptable Use Policies to Include Cyber Bullying</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results indicated that over three-quarters of participants reported that their school has a board policy on bullying, while just over one-third of participants stated that this policy included information on cyber bullying. However, nearly one-half stated that other polices, such as Code of Conduct and Acceptable Use, have been updated to include
cyber bullying. Of note was the fact that nearly half of participants were unsure if their board policy on bullying was updated to include cyber bullying.

Preventative measures: Responsibility for addressing cyber bullying. The final group of questions focused on who is responsible for addressing cyber bullying, both in school and away from school. Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with questions pertaining to the responsibility for addressing cyber bullying and whether cyber bullying should be included in existing bullying prevention efforts. The final item asked about whether cyber safety education should be included in the curriculum at their school. Table 4.12 provides a summary of the responses.
Table 4.12

*Viewpoints on Responsibility for Addressing Cyber Bullying*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceptions</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary Responsibility for School to Address Cyber Bullying Occurring at School</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Responsibility for Parents to Address Cyber Bullying that Occurs Away From School</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Community Approach is Necessary for Addressing Cyber Bullying</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addressing Cyber Bullying Should be Included in Existing Bullying Prevention Efforts</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyber Safety Education Should be Included in Curriculum at my School</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results indicated that participants strongly believed that it is primarily the school's responsibility to address cyber bullying that occurs at school, and it is primarily the parents' responsibility to address cyber bullying that occurs away from school. Participants also strongly agreed that a community approach is necessary for addressing cyber bullying and agreed with the assertion that cyber safety education should be incorporated into the school curriculum. All participants were in agreement that cyber bullying should be included in school's existing bullying prevention efforts. This is interesting in light of the fact that there is some disagreement in the literature over whether traditional bullying prevention programs are also effective for cyber bullying.
Preventative measures: Leadership. One question specifically focused on leadership; it asked participants whether school principals should be the leaders of cyber bullying prevention efforts. Twenty-three percent of respondents indicated that they strongly agreed that school principals should be the leaders of cyber bullying prevention efforts. Thirty-eight percent agreed with the statement, 24% stated that they were not sure, 13% disagreed, and 3% strongly disagreed. In addition, 11 participants also offered additional comments to this question. Taken as a whole, nearly all of the comments indicated that the leadership on cyber bullying should be a collaborative and shared effort. For example, one participant stated that, “it is a collective effort that includes the principal; I think it should be a function of the school’s School-based Planning Team, which is a collective body of administrators, parents, students, teachers, and parents.” Similarly, another participant commented that “principals cannot be the sole leaders. Several constituent groups need to be involved in leadership” and, “they (principals) should provide leadership to those most knowledgeable on the topic and who are skilled at disseminating that knowledge.” One participant noted, “certainly participants, but how many different social problems can we LEAD the fight against and still be educational leaders?!!!” In an exception to the collaborative effort theme, one principal stated, “Superintendent should be the leader, and then it trickles down. Leadership is top down, not bottom up.” This comment suggests a more one-way transactional approach, rather than a two-way transformational approach.

Overall comments and concerns. The final question asked participants about other comments and concerns that they have about cyber bullying among students. Forty-five participants offered additional comments, from which some common themes and ideas
emerged. One common theme from the comments was the perception that cyber bullying is prevalent and increasing. For example, participants stated that “it has reached a high level and must be addressed” and “it is on the rise. More and more students are creating MySpace accounts and using them unsupervised.” Similarly, another participant stated that “this is only going to become a bigger problem as students are able to access technology more easily.”

In addition to the theme that cyber bullying is increasing, cell-phones were often named specifically as a concern. For example, one participant stated:

While in this position for 5 years, I have seen an increase in cyber bullying incidents mainly over the past two years. Currently, I am less concerned with the use of school computers to commit cyber bullying incidents as I am with the use of cell phones. The issues I’ve dealt with mainly have dealt with students using cell phones.

Finally, one participant expressed that intervening can be increasingly time-consuming and that “school leaders need to be cautious that they do not become overwhelmed dealing with the vast number of cyber-bullying issues that arise.”

A second theme that emerged from the comments could be conceptualized as a generational digital divergence that exists between adults and youth. This divergence exists on two levels and includes (a) the difference of perceptions that exists between adults and youth regarding cyber bullying, and (b) the discrepancy that exists between adults and youth regarding technology use and proficiency. The theme of generational digital divergence was apparent in comments such as:
It is an impossible field to monitor without assistance from parents and students. We can spot and intervene when a student physically harasses another in a hallway or cafeteria. The ‘being present’ and visible ‘strategies’ go a long way.

How do caring adults best be present and visible in closed communication forums?

Similarly, other comments included, “victims often don’t tell,” and “there is often a lack of parent involvement and ability to monitor their own child.” In addition, another participant commented that, “educating all involved is crucial. We live in a technological society! Our students know more about the computer that we do at times!” Finally, the concept of generational digital divergence could be seen in additional comments including, “it is also very difficult to address, since students are often more adept at using the technology than adults are” and “I am sure there is a lot more going on than we are made aware of.”

A final theme that emerged from the comments was that cyber bullying should be viewed more as a community concern and a shared responsibility, with more education needed for all stakeholders including parents, students, and schools. One participant summarized this concept by stating that “we need an awareness of its frequency. We can monitor in school as much as possible, but parents play a vital role and without that partnership with parents and the community we cannot effectively address this issue.” Similarly, additional participants stressed the importance of partnering with parents, as indicated by the comment:

Raising parents level of awareness and concern so that they are more attentive at home and stop problems before they begin. Parents who are concerned have a
tendency to block their children from using the computers, rather than teaching them how to do so correctly and then supervising more consistently. They expect that to happen in school alone.

Finally, numerous participants indicated that there is a need for additional training for parents, students, and school staff, and also stressed the importance of developing and implementing policies aimed at cyber bullying prevention and intervention.

Interview Results

Definitional issues. As previously stated, phase two of the current study involved interviewing six building-level school administrators to respond and expand upon the results of the survey and further answer the research questions. Before exploring the research questions, a discussion on definitional issues is merited. Upon analyzing the interview data, some common themes were found to exist pertaining to the definition of cyber bullying. For one, there were some variations regarding the definition of cyber bullying. As stated previously, a commonly accepted definition of bullying is a type of aggression in which (a) the behavior is deliberate and harmful, (b) the behavior is repeated over time, and (c) there is an imbalance of power involving the more powerful attacking the less powerful (Nansel et al., 2001). Cyber bullying has been defined as willful and repeated harm inflicted through the medium of electronic text (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006). All participants described cyber bullying as using technology to bully others, but there were differences in the interpretation of what constituted bullying. For example, the most common words used by participants to define bullying were “intimidation,” “harassment,” and “threats” against others. Other words used to define bullying included “picking on,” “making fun of,” and “abusing others,” “teasing,” and
“making someone afraid.” None of the participants specifically stated that the definition of bullying was deliberate and harmful, while one participant stated that bullying involved those of “higher status poking fun at those with less power.” Also, in their definitions, participants described the technology as “computers, cell phones, phones, and answering machines.” Two participants specifically mentioned “the Internet”, one participant mentioned “text-messaging” and one participant mentioned “instant messaging.”

All participants were asked whether they believed that incidents need to be committed more than once to constitute cyber bullying. Participants were evenly split in answering the question and included two answering in the affirmative, two in the negative, and two who were undecided. For example, for those answering in the affirmative, one stated “I think bullying is a term that can be overused in general, bullying or cyber bullying. Sometimes kids are just mean, and do things once. I think to be considered bullying it would mean to be persistent and consistent.” Similarly, another participant stated, “typically, in my experience, its been some type of behavior, pattern of behavior that’s been repeated over and over again or at least for a day or two at times or different events.”

On the other hand, two participants noted that they do not believe that incidents have to be repeated in order to constitute cyber bullying. For example, one participant commented:

I think even though bullying suggests a repetitive action, just the first incident, if its serious enough, could be considered a form of bullying. So it depends on the
type of bullying and what is said and the way it’s said, the intent that it’s conveyed through the message could determine whether or not it is bullying.

Also, another participant stated, “I don’t think it has to be repeated. I have had students that have come to me very traumatized, and it has only happened once, and I take it very seriously, and certainly they do.”

Finally, two participants were undecided about whether incidents needed to be repeated in order to constitute cyber bullying. For example, one participant initially stated, “if it’s bullying, yes, bullying is something that’s repeated.” However, upon further thought, the participant then remarked:

That’s interesting because I’ve had situations where it wasn’t repeated but I still thought it was cyber bullying, so I don’t know, it might be a little bit different from bullying because there are instances where it just happened once, but maybe because the use of technology makes it so permanent that it doesn’t need to be repeated because it doesn’t go away, its still, there’s still evidence of it, so it never went away. So maybe no.

Along the same lines, another participant commented:

I think there probably is an element of over time-ness, but I’m not sure if that’s because it has to happen over time in order for it to come to my attention. You know if it only happens only one time I’m less likely to know about it. I know about the situations that persist. So it’s kind of a chicken and an egg sort of thing, but we try to take to task that bullying or bullying behaviors are kind of in the mind of the beholder. So if this is the person who you’re interacting with in a way that I perceive to be bullying or intimidating, then that qualifies whether you
intend it to be or not. So for some people that doesn’t have to happen, for some kids that doesn’t have to happen more than once for them to be intimidated by it. So I don’t know that I would consciously think about it being repeated over time.

*Interview Results: Themes Related to Research Question One*

*Cyber bullying is increasing, but it depends.* Again, the primary research question for the current study was: *What are building-level school administrators’ perceptions of the prevalence and types of cyber bullying that occurs among students in their school?* Regarding prevalence, participants in general believed that cyber bullying is an increasing problem, although grade level must be taken into account. For example, when asked whether cyber bullying among students is increasing, one high-school level participant commented:

The level of dependence that these students have on these devices is increased dramatically and with that, and with of course the wide proliferation of students who have cell phones and have access to this technology, I can only assume that it has increased. I wouldn’t be able to quantify how much we catch, but at the same point, again depending on the strict definition of what cyber bullying is some kids may harass each other, and if it’s taken the wrong way the next thing you know it could be considered cyber bullying. So it’s a very gray definition as you well know, it’s a very gray area when it comes to interpreting which is bullying and cyber bullying and which is not, but to actually quantify whether its increasing I can only assume that it is because of the result of the widespread use of the technology.
While the participant believes that cyber bullying is increasing, it was difficult to pinpoint why the belief was formed, other than the increased use of technology.

Further, a middle-school level participant remarked:

I think that cyber bullying and bullying really typically comes at this age level. I think seventh grade I don’t see much besides a little bit here and there, but it’s more bickering back and forth. Eighth grade I would say is where I would see it the most.

At the elementary/middle-level, one participant stated:

We’ve had I want to say maybe three or four instances that have been actually reported, but I’m sure it happens more, but yes its been an issue that’s increasing and I have to say is mostly among older students, not K through 3, but the older students who have access to cell phones and cameras on their cell phones.

Overall, participants were in agreement that cyber bullying is more prevalent in middle and high school, although all participants reported having addressed cyber bullying in their school.

Finally, the belief by participants that cyber bullying is increasing has to be considered in the context of the concept of generational digital divergence. For example, nearly all participants commented that they became aware of the cyber bullying by either the victim or more commonly by the parents of the victim reporting this to them. Interestingly, none of the participants stated that it was reported by a teacher. Overall, the results reinforce the point that participants only become aware of cyber bullying when it is brought to their attention. None of the participants reported actually “catching someone in the act.” This is noteworthy in light of the research indicating that victims of cyber
bullying often do not tell adults, including parents and school officials. Therefore, it can
be surmised that the participants are only aware of cyber bullying among students in their
school, based on reports from a small percentage of overall victims and parents of
victims. Thus, the concept of generational digital divergence may influence the
perceptions that cyber bullying is increasing.

*Cell phones at school, social networks at home.* Regarding the technology and
types of cyber bullying, a common theme that emerged was that text-messaging via cell-
phone was consistently cited by participants as the most prevalent type. All six
participants specifically described text-messaging as the most common problem with
cyber bullying, and often stated that this is the most significant problem within the
school. For example, participants at all levels described cyber bullying problems
associated with text-messaging, such as this specific comment:

I think if you talk about what's going to be happening in schools, I think text
messaging right now is the one way that kids could really be sneaky and sly and
kids could text message in their pockets without anyone knowing, they can go in
the bathroom and take out their phone and text message. So I think for a school
purpose, inside a school text messaging seems to be the way to go about it.

Also, the majority of participants also specifically mentioned “MySpace”, and
indicated that social networking sites are more often used while away from school. For
example, according to one participant:

With text messages many times that's a more of an immediate, or it may happen
at school or outside of school. If it happens at school we're in a prime location to
have a conversation with the kid versus many times and for example, my school
Facebook and Myspace are blocked on the computer so students don’t have access to them so therefore they don’t have the opportunity to read those or see those things at school, so many times its at home.

In addition, another participant remarked, “they’re not allowed to access things like their Facebooks at school and they know that if they’re caught they can lose their computer privileges. So much of the bullying that has come to me has been outside of school.”

Overall, participants felt that cell-phones and text-messaging were more problematic in schools, while social networking sites were more problematic away from school.

*Interview Results: Themes Related to Research Question Two*

**Situation and location.** The next research question was: *How do building-level school administrators respond to incidents of cyber bullying, and what are the factors that influence their decisions regarding when and how to intervene in cyber bullying incidents?* Results showed that the actual response by participants to cyber bullying depended on a number of factors. A common theme emerging from the comments of the participants involved both the situation and location of a cyber bullying incident.

Regarding situation, each participant described that the response often depends on the particular facts of a cyber bullying incident. For example, one participant commented, “we look at it on a case-by-case basis, that we listen to all sides and we air on the side of caution as to making sure that we are looking out for the best interests of all students involved.” As one participant stated:

Either it was just kids goofing around on line at home and there weren’t any other problems associated with it as far as school was concerned I probably would get necessarily involved … but when it comes to my attention its usually part of a
constellation of a bigger problem. So we always try to tease out all of the pieces that are involved and deal with it as part of that learning experience for kids.

Although never specifically mentioned by participants, a threat assessment was implied to have occurred by all interviewees in response to the incidents. For example, all participants stated that they completed some form of investigation when responding to reports of cyber bullying in which they gathered facts in an attempt to determine threat levels and appropriate response. Upon assessing the situation, the response usually included communication with victims and parents. If the situation were more threatening in nature, some form of discipline was imposed, or cases were referred to police.

When considering the situation, a key factor in influencing the response was the location where the incident occurred. The theme of the significance of location was evident through comments made by all participants. However, the views on the extent to which they can get involved in off-campus cyber bullying showed some differences. For example, some expressed the belief that off-campus cyber bullying is often beyond the reach of the schools. As one participant remarked, “if it happens out of school and carries its way into this building then I’m going to take a part in it,” but also said, “but if it happened outside of school, unless it enters into the building, I can’t be involved.”

Similarly, another participant stated, “if anything occurs off campus technically we can’t act.” However, the participant followed up with, “something might have happened on Internet and you know one of the kids might come into school and try to address the issue in school and then it becomes our problem.” Similarly, according to another participant, “I don’t punish kids for, 200 e-mails back and forth at night … I can’t do that.”

However, the participant added:
I don't have a whole lot of control over whether kids use their computers at home, so all I can do is make the parents aware of it and let them know that that's part of the problem that's contributing to it, the tensions that are going on between the kids in school.

Therefore, each of these participants felt that the incident needed to be connected to the school for them to respond.

On the other hand, some participants were more inclined to believe that they had an obligation to respond to cyber bullying in some manner regardless of a connection to school. For example, according to one participant:

I used to think if it happened outside of school we don't have to deal with it, but now just because, it is just because of technology I have to, I feel like I have to deal with it. I don't have a choice.

Similarly, another participant commented, “but if it happens at home I don't ignore it because it has a potential of impacting the school” and added, “usually if it's outside of school I do want the child to feel supported if the child was being bullied.” Finally, another participant stated:

We certainly have probably over-extended at times our reach when it comes to cyber bullying that's taken place outside of school with giving school consequences inside. And again, my personal belief is I'd rather over extend to protect a student's feelings or their best interests and get my wrists slapped for that than to under extend and have some much more drastic take place and have a student get hurt or hurt themselves as a result of cyber bullying.
Overall, location, whether at school or away from school was a prime factor that influenced the response of all participants, although there were some differences over where the line is drawn.

*Uncertainty.* In regard to confidence in abilities to effectively respond to cyber bullying, a common theme that emerged from the results was a sense of uncertainty by all participants. This sense of uncertainty was based on these four main factors: (a) uncertainty due to the changing technological times, (b) uncertainty due to generational digital divergence, (c) uncertainty due to lack of policies, and (d) uncertainty due to lack of awareness of legal issues. All participants expressed some degree of confidence in their skills and abilities to deal with cyber bullying. For example, comments included, “if it’s a clear cut case I’m pretty confident,” and “I am fairly confident.” However, the theme of uncertainty emerged around the issue of rapidly changing technological times.

For example, one participant noted, “technology is going to change and tomorrow it’s going to be something else. You know with instant messaging, Myspace, now you got text messaging coming on, there’s going to be something bigger and better coming around the corner.” Other participants echoed this sentiment.

Further, the feelings of uncertainty were also inferred from comments pertaining to generational digital divergence. For example, comments from participants included, “I don’t feel confident that I certainly know or am aware of everything that takes place” and:

It’s harder for a third person to be aware of the bullying unless the person that’s been bullied or the person who is bullying decide to share that information with
somebody else. While bullying that occurs face-to-face a lot of times somebody might have heard and can be the reporter or try to intervene.

Similarly, when specifically asked about confidence levels in intervening, a participant replied, “no, no not at all, not at all. There’s so much, you know, with the Myspace and getting around that … the students are so computer savvy and it’s for many of them beyond the adults.” Finally, one participant commented, “I feel like no, because there isn’t anything written. There’s no written policy for me to refer to.” The examples show feelings of uncertainty due to the lack of awareness of instances of cyber bullying, the lack of direction through policy, and the perceptions that the students are often more technologically proficient than adults.

Finally, a lack of confidence in abilities to respond was also inferred from responses regarding case law that has addressed cyber bullying in schools. None of the participants expressed confidence in awareness about case law that has evolved around the issue of cyber bullying in schools. Participants also indicated that they have not received updates from school attorneys or central office about case law in this area. However, despite the overt lack of awareness of case law, in their responses, all participants expressed knowledge of the general concepts stemming from court decisions. For example, each participant discussed cyber bullying having an impact on the school environment, which has been an important component of the decisions related to cyber bullying.

Interview Results: Themes Related to Research Question Three

Inconsistency. The final research question examined was: What measures are administrators and their schools taking to prevent incidences of cyber bullying and cyber
offending among students in their school, and who is responsible for leading these measures? In regard to measures being taken, a primary theme that emerged from responses of participants was inconsistency. All school districts appeared to be taken very different approaches in addressing cyber bullying. For example, nearly all participants mentioned that their schools had implemented various programs aimed at character education, promoting respect, or bullying prevention. However, none of the programs were specifically aimed at cyber bullying prevention, and none of the schools had a committee aimed at bullying prevention. Similarly, training on the topic of cyber bullying was noted to be inconsistent, with participants stating that although it is needed, it is not happening on consistent basis for members of the school community.

Inconsistent and unclear policies. In regard to policies, some participants were unsure if their schools had board policies on bullying, and responses varied as to whether policies, such as the Code of Conduct, had been updated to include cyber bullying. For example, four participants stated that their codes of conduct policies have not been updated to include cyber bullying, although all mention bullying. Two other participants stated that their codes allude to cyber bullying, such as sending harassing text messages, but do not specifically mention cyber bullying.

In regard to policies regarding technology use, such as cell phones and Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs,) the policies were inconsistent across districts. For example, one participant described a “building rule” where cell phones were not allowed to be used between the hours of 7:30 A.M. and 2:30 P.M. Three participants also stated that they can possess the technology, but that it should not be used or seen during the school day. Further one participant reported that cell phone policies are up to the discretion of each
school building administrator, although in their school there are no cell phones or electronics allowed. Finally, one participant described, “students are allowed to use cell phones before school and after school, and we have what we call a cell zone here where students are allowed to use cell phones during the day in the cafeterias.” Overall, in addition to the inconsistent policies, participants also expressed the difficulties in enforcing the policies. According to one participant, “it’s a constant battle because I could walk out in the hall right now, walk with you around the corridors and I’m sure I’d find at least one student somewhere using a cell phone when they shouldn’t be doing it.” Another participant also remarked that, “in terms of the cell phones, it’s hard to ban it outright when you can’t monitor what a kid has. We can’t search a kid unless we have a reasonable cause to.”

*Shared leadership.* In response to whether school building administrators should be the leaders of bullying and cyber bullying prevention efforts, a theme that emerged was that they often have a role in it, but that it is a shared responsibility. However, there were some differences of opinions regarding who should primarily lead the efforts. Some participants felt more strongly about their role as shown with the comments:

In the sense of I’m the leader for everything that happens in my building, it really all flows from me, and it doesn’t mean that it has to sound egotistical, but if its not on my radar its probably not going to be on anybody else’s radar, but I also don’t feel like I need to be the expert about it. I feel like this is an area where I need to be able to tap into somebody else’s expertise, but again I have to be the person who’s going to say this is important, we need to pay attention to it and
here's the person who's going to help us develop our skills in that area, whether they're internal or external or whatever they might be.

Others felt that the school should lead the efforts, but that it involves a partnership with parents:

I think parents can relieve the cyber bullying efforts through appropriate instruction of their kids, appropriate monitoring of their computer usage, of their cell phone usage ... but I also believe there's a partnership between parents and school officials. I think boards of education need to develop policies on cyber bullying as well.

Others felt that school boards have the role of leadership in this area: "I think for us to really have meaningful enforcement of anything, it should be coming through the board policy because then we have, we can say look with this board policy, and we are following board policy." Finally, one participant stressed the need for leadership coming from the home:

I'm ultimately responsible for anything that happens in the school building so I personally am a principal that takes that personal on the ownership because I know by law I'm responsible. But also just morally, I should be because these are the children that I'm responsible for. I really also think that the students who do it ... it just really has to be that home involvement, we really need the parental support.

Summary of Results

This Chapter presented the results of a sequential explanatory mixed-methods study involving a survey and interviews. Data were presented and organized, based on
the three primary research questions of the study. Survey results indicated that building-level school administrators generally feel that cyber bullying is increasing among students under their supervision. In regard to reporting, the majority of respondents believe that the reporting of cyber bullying by victims is increasing, while the majority of respondents believe that the reporting of cyber bullying by student bystanders is not increasing. Building-level school administrators also reported that the spreading of rumors about another by using a computer or cell phone was the most common type of cyber bullying among students, both at school and away from school.

Results also indicated that a variety of responses have been used by building-level school administrators in response to students found guilty of cyber bullying. The most commonly used response to a student found guilty of cyber bullying both on and off school property was the discussion of the incident with both the student and the parent. Also, concerning factors that influenced their response, less than one-half of respondents agreed that they were confident that they had the necessary skills to intervene, and the majority reported receiving no training on the topic of cyber bullying. Participants indicated that felt that training and education for faculty/staff, students, and parents were more important than their own training.

Further, a low number of participants indicated that training was being conducted for stakeholders on cyber bullying, as compared to high numbers that indicated the need for training for stakeholders. In addition, three-quarters of participants reported that their school has a board policy on cyber bullying, while just over one-third of participants stated that this policy included information on cyber bullying. Participants also strongly agreed that a community approach is necessary for addressing cyber
bullying, and all participants felt that cyber bullying should be included in existing bullying prevention efforts. In addition, based on open-ended opportunities to comment, some themes emerged including a (a) noted perception of increase in prevalence of cyber bullying, (b) generational digital divergence that exists between youths and adults, and (c) belief that the issue is community concern and a shared responsibility.

Finally, based on interviews, themes that emerged included (a) cyber bullying is increasing but it depends, (b) cell-phones at school, social networks at home, (c) situation and location, (d) uncertainty, (e) inconsistency, (f) inconsistent and unclear policies, and (g) shared leadership. Overall, this Chapter presented results from a survey, and then results from the interviews. Chapter 5 will discuss the implications of the findings in terms of the literature and professional practice, and will offer recommendations for future research and actions.
Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

There has been an increasing academic interest in the topic of cyber bullying, which has resulted in the administration of increasing descriptive studies. The research has mostly focused on cyber bullying offending and victimization, with data collected from surveys administered to adolescents and children. There have been no studies to date that have focused on the perceptions of cyber bullying by building-level school administrators, who play an important role in bullying prevention. Therefore, the current study focused on the perceptions of building-level school administrators to obtain their observations and insights into this complex social problem. This chapter will explore the implications of the findings of the current research project in order to give meaning to the data, and to better understand the significance of the findings. Recommendations for future research and action based on the findings will be offered. Further, limitations to the study involving sampling procedures and response rate will be discussed. The chapter will conclude with a concise summary of the study based on the data analysis and results.

The research questions for this study were:

What are building-level school administrators’ perceptions of the prevalence and types of cyber bullying that occur among students in their school?
How do building-level school administrators respond to incidents of cyber bullying, and what are the factors that influence their decisions regarding when and how to intervene in cyber bullying incidents?

What measures are administrators and their schools taking to prevent incidences of cyber bullying and cyber offending among students in their school, and who is responsible for leading these measures?

Implications and Recommendations for Future Research

Prevalence. Based on the results related to research question one, the majority of building-level school administrators believe that cyber bullying among students is increasing in their school building. This is consistent with other research that has shown that cyber bullying among youth is increasing (Ybarra, Mitchell, Wolak, & Finkelhor, 2006). However, a number of participants also indicated that they were “not sure,” which creates additional questions as to whether they are unaware if it is increasing. Although “not sure” is not a clearly stated position, it is possible that this number is indicative of an issue that has been documented in the body of research: that adults are often unaware of whether it is occurring or not (Strom & Strom, 2005; Research Topline, 2007). It is important to remember that the participants most likely based their response on incidents of cyber bullying that were brought to their attention.

Further, nearly one-third of participants also reported that faculty/staff have been victims of cyber bullying, which means, contrary to a popular view, that cyber bullying is not a phenomenon that is limited to youth. While the research has focused on cyber bullying by and among youth, case law has shown that adults such as faculty and staff can be victims of cyber bullying by youth, and by other faculty and staff. Future research
should also explore the nature and extent of cyber bullying victimization of faculty and staff by students. Similarly, workplace cyber bullying of faculty and staff by other faculty and staff could be explored.

The majority of respondents also indicated that the reporting of cyber bullying by victims is increasing, while the majority of respondents believe that the reporting of cyber bullying by student bystanders is not increasing. This is interesting in light of research that has shown that both victims and bystanders often choose not to report to adults and teachers (Caravan, 2006; Li, 2006). Further, Beran and Li (2005) noted that few teachers and administrators are aware that students are being harassed through electronic communication. This would be due in part because cyber bullying is often anonymous and under-reported, and therefore difficult to identify. Still, it is unknown as to whether participants indicated that the reporting by victims is increasing due to the belief that cyber bullying is increasing in general. Nonetheless, research has shown that youth are more likely to be engaged in cyber bullying if they believe adults and bystanders will not intervene (Williams & Guerra, 2007).

Further, a slight majority a respondents believed that the reporting by parents is not increasing, although the number reporting “not sure” may again reflect a lack of awareness, or reflect the lack of a reliable reporting mechanism in some districts. Prior research is not clear on whether the reporting of cyber bullying by parents to schools is increasing. However, research has shown that 71% of parents believe that schools have a significant responsibility for ensuring children’s safety on the Internet, and 42% of parents have looked to schools for advice on the topic of Internet safety (Lenhart, Madden, & Hitlin, 2005). What is clear is that building-level school administrators
should foster a school climate that encourages the reporting of cyber bullying by victims, bystanders, and parents. Future research could focus on whether parents are increasingly reporting incidents of cyber bullying to schools.

Types. Regarding types of cyber bullying, participants felt that the most common types of cyber bullying both at and away from school was spreading of rumors about another by using a computer or cell phone, while the least common was someone posting an embarrassing or “altered” picture of another online without permission. Prior research has been inconsistent regarding the most common types of cyber bullying. However, recent research has shown that students reported that the most common method was taking a private e-mail, IM, or text message that was sent to them and forwarding it to someone else, or posting it where others could see it (Lenhart, 2007). Next most common was someone spreading a rumor about them online and someone sending them an aggressive or threatening e-mail, IM, or text message.

Overall, the results for this study were similar, and indicate that the most common types of cyber bullying are not threatening, but rather are more indirect such as through the spreading of rumors. However, even indirect forms of cyber bullying, such as rumor spreading, can result in significant emotional harm to victims. Therefore, it is important to consider all forms of cyber bullying as serious issues that need to be addressed. Future research could focus on specific types of cyber bullying and the harm caused, such as through indirect forms of cyber bullying such as rumor spreading. Further, future research should continue to explore the harmful effects of types of cyber bullying and impact at school, such as absenteeism, decreased academic performance, and damaged relationships.
Response. The most commonly used response to a student found guilty of cyber bullying both off and on school property was the discussion of the incident with both the student and the parent. The next most commonly used response both off and on school property was discussing the situation or providing informal counseling with just the student. Next, an unanticipated result was that conflict resolution was reported to be the next most commonly used response, despite research indicating that conflict resolution programs such as peer mediation may not be effective in addressing bullying (Nansel et al., 2001). Also, a relatively small number, 6%, reported that no action was taken in response to a student found guilty of cyber bullying on school property. Therefore, the results appear to indicate that participants do respond to incidents of cyber bullying when they become aware of it. This is contrary to research that has shown that students often feel that adults do not try to stop cyber bullying when informed, or question the commitment by administrators in stopping bullying (Li, 2006; Harris, Petrie, and Willoughby, 2002). This is also incongruent with research indicating that adults are least likely to intervene in cases of cyber bullying via the Internet (Williams & Guerra, 2007). This appears to be another example of generational digital divergence, where school officials report that they are responding and taking action, while students report that adults do not try to stop cyber bullying.

Also, the most common response to reported cyber bullying was discussing the incident with both student and parent. This appears contrary to some research showing that school responses have been negative. For example, Shariff (2004) found that school responses to cyber bullying were not significantly different than responses to traditional bullying. However, parents reported that they experienced some common negative
patterns of school response to their complaints about bullying. For example, some parents indicated that school administrators: “assumed victims invited the abuse,” “believed parents exaggerated the problem,” and “assumed that written anti-bullying policies absolved them from doing more to protect victims” (Shariff, 2005, p.471).

However, results from both the surveys and interviews seemed to indicate that building-level school administrators do respond to cyber bullying in an attempt to solve the problem. Relatively few participants reported taking no action, although when the cyber bullying took place away from school, the numbers that reported taking no action increased. Future research could explore reasons why some building-level administrators do not take any action when informed about allegations of cyber bullying.

There are implications that stem from the reported belief by participants that the location of the cyber bullying offense influenced their response. For example, it is clear that cyber bullying that was found to have occurred on school property needs to be addressed by the school. However, when cyber bullying occurs off-school property, questions arise as to the legal limits of the authority of the school to respond and impose discipline. Schools generally have very limited authority to discipline for off-campus misconduct. Therefore, cases of cyber bullying of students off-campus that have become known at school by administrators raise questions about what the response should be. Some legal experts have argued that schools should have no authority to discipline for off-campus misconduct by students, and certainly some parents would agree with this. On the other hand, parents are contacting schools demanding that something be done by the school because their child has been cyber bullied by classmates outside of school.
Therefore, for schools, there is an unclear legal boundary between what may be considered negligence (failing to respond) and violating the rights of students by overextending their authority.

Also, the fact that a number of participants reported using suspensions for off-campus cyber bullying poses the possibility that they may not be acting in accordance with emerging case law. Interview participants indicated that they were not knowledgeable about the current case law regarding school response to off-campus cyber bullying. Participants did express an understanding that in order to impose discipline, cyber bullying must have an impact on the school environment. However, questions remain as to whether they understood the factors that influenced court decisions such as whether the speech constituted a true threat, and whether there was a substantial disruption to the educational process. Since so few participants reported receiving training on legal and policy issues associated with cyber bullying, it appears as though they have received little guidance in regard to legal rules regarding disciplining for off-campus conduct. Therefore, the potential for lawsuits exists if decisions are made that are not in accordance with the law.

Shariff (2005) also asserted that the negative responses by some school officials “stems from a fear of litigation, and a lack of knowledge about the complexities of bullying—particularly cyber bullying” (p. 9). Shariff (2005) further expressed that the tendency of schools to rely on reactive zero-tolerance policies, suspension, and criminal charges rarely solves school problems. The current study found that although some participants did have fears of potential litigation, more than three-quarters did not. Results from interviews also found that participants did not have fears of litigation as a
result of their response to cyber bullying. Also, although participants did report using in
school suspension (36% reporting) and out of school suspension (23% reporting) for off-
campus cyber bullying, the numbers do not indicate that these responses are overly relied
upon. Interview results further substantiated that participants preferred discussing the
situation with students and parents, and generally only disciplined for off-campus cyber
bullying if it substantially impacted on the school environment. Similarly, nearly half of
respondents indicated that they had referred cases to police. However, interview results
seemed to indicate that this was only done when situations were serious and threatening
enough to warrant police involvement. Overall, most participants attempted to respond to
the cyber bullying in some manner. However, they were not always confident in their
abilities to effectively respond, and in their school policies to guide appropriate decision-
making.

Finally, other commonly used responses by participants to cyber bullying was
discussing the situation or providing informal counseling with just the student, or using
conflict resolution. However, the study did not explore whether school counselors were
involved in the responses. Future research could focus on the role of school counselors in
addressing cyber bullying. Research questions could focus on the perceptions of school
counselors regarding cyber bullying, and on their interventions.

Confidence and supervision. Less than one-half of respondents agreed that they
were confident that they had the necessary skills to intervene, although nearly 10%
strongly agreed with this. While a relatively lower number (13%) either disagreed or
strongly disagreed that they were confident in their skills, 28% indicated that they were
not sure. When discussing confidence levels, a “not sure” response seems to indicate that
they are not confident in their skills to intervene. Also, results from the interviews suggested mixed confidence levels in skills to intervene, as indicated by a sense of uncertainty given that cyber bullying is a fairly recent topic, and given the rapidly changing technologies and use of technologies. When considering the level of responsibility of building-level school administrators have in providing for a safe school environment, the fact that over 40% of participants were not confident in their skills to intervene suggests that this is an issue that needs to be addressed. Future research could explore the relationship between variables such as age and number of years experience of school administrators, and their confidence levels to intervene. It may be hypothesized that younger school administrators may be more confident in addressing cyber bullying. This could be due to younger school administrators being less influenced by the concept of generational digital divergence.

Further, only slightly more than one-half of the participants agreed that they had confidence in their schools ability to supervise computer use at school, and even less agreed that they had confidence in their school’s ability to supervise use of any technology such as cell-phones. As indicated from interview results, all participants specifically described cell-phone text-messaging as the most common problem of cyber bullying at school. This is problematic in that cyber bullying via cell-phone text messaging is happening at school, and there are issues with supervision of cell-phones at school. This has created a gap that needs to be addressed. Further, the trends in technological development are indicating that cell-phones are increasingly able to access the web using wireless technology. Since school web-filters only regulate school computers, this can become an even greater issue as there will be increasing opportunities
to access the web to engage in misconduct such as cyber bullying, or to access inappropriate web sites.

Overall, the lack of confidence shown by participants in both their and their school’s ability to supervise technology is consistent with other research. For example, research conducted by the Rochester Institute of Technology indicated that school staff was divided in their abilities to supervise the use of technology by their students (McQuade, 2008). Results from the study also showed that staff were also divided about the capabilities of their school districts to guard against improper online activities of students.

Training. The lack of confidence and uncertainty regarding cyber bullying intervention is most likely related to the fact that 60% of participants in the current study indicated that they had received no training on cyber bullying. Of the remaining participants who had received training, the training most often involved an overview of cyber bullying. The next most common type of training included Internet safety, followed next by traditional bullying training that included information on cyber bullying. In addition, only a small number of participants (10%) indicated that they had received training regarding the legal and policy issues associated with cyber bullying. Similarly, only 20% of participants reported that awareness training was conducted for administrators. Without training, it is not surprising that participants expressed doubts in their ability to respond in an effective manner. It is encouraging that more than three-quarters of participants recognized that there is a need for awareness training for administrators. Also recognized was the need for additional training and education for all stakeholders including parents, students, faculty/staff, and board members. Future
research should include the evaluation of professional development efforts on the topic of cyber bullying. Training programs should be evaluated in terms of effectiveness in reducing cyber bullying behaviors, and in terms of effectiveness in improving abilities of those who become aware of cyber bullying to effectively respond.

*Policies.* In the survey, three-quarters of participants reported that their school has a board policy on bullying, but only one third of participants stated that this policy includes information on cyber bullying. Therefore, from a policy perspective, schools in this county for the most part have not developed and implemented policy specifically addressing cyber bullying. Another unanticipated result from the study was that nearly half of participants were unsure if their board policy on bullying was updated to include cyber bullying. This raises some serious questions regarding whether the policies may exist, but have not been effectively communicated throughout the district. Specifically, if building-level school administrators are not aware of the policies, then faculty, staff, and students are likely unaware as well. Nearly one-half of participants did state that other polices such as Code of Conduct and Acceptable Use have been updated to include cyber bullying. Interview results also showed some confusion by participants over whether the Code of Conduct is a board policy, since it is reviewed by the board. In any case, it is encouraging that some important guides such as Codes of Conduct appear to be specifically mentioning cyber bullying. At the very least, the topic may then be brought to the attention of faculty, staff, and students, when the Code of Conduct is reviewed at the beginning of the school year. Future research could explore the impact of cyber bullying policy on the behaviors of school staff members, and on the behaviors of students.
Another implication is related to the difficulties that can stem from policies aimed at regulating the use of technology such as cell-phones. Schools have been debating whether cell-phones should be banned, or whether they can be possessed but not used, or whether they can be used during specified time periods. This has resulted in policies that were inconsistent across and even within districts. While parents often cite safety concerns for allowing their child to possess cell-phones, the irony is that their child may be more susceptible to cyber bullying victimization because they possess the cell phone. Again, all six interview participants specifically described cell-phone text-messaging as the most common problem with cyber bullying, and often stated that this is the most significant problem within the school. However, even with policies in place, participants expressed the difficulties in enforcing the policies given the prevalence of youth who possess the technology. Finally, schools will also have to consider the increasing capabilities of cell-phones to access the Internet. Therefore, schools will have to decide whether policy should be updated or modified to address growing concerns of potential misuse by students as school.

Leadership. The majority of participants in the survey believed that school principals should be the leaders of cyber bullying prevention efforts in schools. However, nearly all participants believed that is primarily the parent’s responsibility to address cyber bullying that occurs away from school. Further, interview results showed that participants were divided on whether school principals should be the leaders of cyber bullying prevention efforts; some felt that leadership should come from school board’s or parents. Overall results showed support for the notion that leadership in this area should be a shared responsibility between schools, parents, and community. Survey results
showed that nearly all participants believed that a community approach in necessary for addressing cyber bullying. This suggests the need for a collaborative effort between various stakeholders to develop partnerships aimed at developing shared goals focused on cyber bullying prevention and intervention.

Interestingly, despite the belief in the role of the building-level school administrator in leading prevention efforts, the data on training and policies indicate that relatively little has been done about it. The lack of training and confidence in their abilities to respond are possibly related to the overall lack of action being taken in schools. This incongruence appears to indicate a gap that exists between what building-level school administrators believe they should be doing, and what they are actually doing. In short, they recognize the need for action, but are unclear on how to go about it. Therefore, overall, some significant questions arise as to who should be leading the efforts. For example, if the building-level school administrator is not leading the efforts at school, then who is? How does the topic of cyber bullying become a compelling interest that induces schools to take action? The building-level school administrator is the leader of the school, and in this role, is positioned to exercise leadership in this area. Overall, without the leadership component, efforts at cyber bullying prevention will not be as comprehensive and strategic as they need to be.

Other recommendations for future research. The topic of cyber bullying is a multi-disciplinary topic that can be approached from different perspectives depending on the discipline. Future studies could focus on a related survey of building-level school administrators using random sampling procedures in order to be able to generalize the findings to a greater population. The definitional concerns regarding the elements of
cyber bullying also merit further academic attention, as indicated by the results of this study and the disagreement over the element of having to occur more than once. Further, schools may not always have a clear understanding of the elements of cyber bullying or bullying based on State Education guidelines. For example, in the New York State Violent and Disruptive Incident Guidelines, bullying is defined as verbal or physical conduct that threatens another with harm, including intimidation through the use of epithets or slurs. Therefore, it appears as though “less serious” forms of behavior such as name-calling and rumor-spreading are not included as reportable bullying. Cyber bullying is also not specifically stated in these guidelines. Overall, it is important to have a clear definition of the elements of cyber bullying in order to more fully understand that nature and scope of the issue.

Further, the lack of information about best practices for schools indicates that action research projects could be useful in planning for and implementing prevention efforts regarding cyber bullying. According to Glanz (2003), action research can be a useful tool that assists educational leaders in reflecting on their practices, programs, and procedures. Action research is conducted by practitioners to assist with solving issues and improving professional practice. Therefore, a school district could collect and analyze data and include questions about specific cyber offending behaviors, how and where it happens, and whether adults were told or otherwise aware of the problem. The district could then implement an action plan based on the results. Future research should also include the evaluation of any professional development programs and initiatives aimed at the prevention and intervention of cyber bullying.
Implications and Recommendations for Professional Practice

As has been previously indicated, this researcher serves on the advisory board of a large-scale cyber safety and ethics initiative in a county in western New York, led by researchers at a local college. As part of the initiative, a study of cyber safety and ethics was conducted among over 40,000 K-12 students, as well as among a smaller sample of parents and teachers. A goal of the initiative is to use the data from surveys in multiple districts to address the problem of Internet safety and cyber bullying to advance cyber safety and ethics awareness and education in schools and in the community. The current research project was aimed at a sample of building-level school administrators, who were not included in the initiative study.

The implications for the current study for professional practice are related to the efforts of the initiative, as efforts are currently underway to address cyber safety and offending issues in general. From the current study, data obtained from building-level school administrators has implications for potential policy changes and educational opportunities for the school communities. The role of building-level school administrators in preventing violence and shaping school climate places them in a position of leadership that can facilitate positive change. Therefore, the results of the current study will be shared with all local school districts with the hope that they will be used to assist with their efforts aimed at cyber bullying prevention and intervention. Specifically, after notification by the local Cyber Safety Initiative, an executive report detailing the results and recommendations of the study will be sent to the Superintendents of all public school districts located in the county of the study.
While this study has focused attention on intervention and prevention of cyber bullying by building-level school administrators and their schools, it is important to consider that schools are only one piece of a complex societal problem. As previously stated, cyber bullying is also a parental issue and community issue. Therefore, it is important for communication to take place among the key community stakeholders to create a better understanding of their individual and collective roles and responsibilities pertaining to prevention and intervention.

Further, on a larger scale, implications of potential legislation, or the absence of legislation should be considered. For example, will new laws regarding cyber bullying prevention efforts be mandated, and will they be implemented in schools and make a difference? In the absence of legislation, will schools take action? Further, what role does law enforcement play in this, and do current state laws adequately address the issue of cyber bullying? Also, what role do Internet Service Providers, search engines, and websites have in addressing the issue, and what do the laws say about policing the Internet? Overall, the issue has far-reaching implications across disciplines, which must be continuously researched and discussed in order to create effective strategies for prevention and intervention.

Recommendations for action. The current study pointed out some areas of concern regarding the factors that influence the responses by building-level school administrators to cyber bullying. The lack of confidence reported in their skills and abilities to intervene indicates the need for further education and awareness training for administrators, as well as for faculty/staff, students, and parents. The training should not only be an overview of the topic of cyber bullying, but also should focus on strategies for different groups. For
example, training for building-level school administrators should include the legal issues associated with cyber bullying, while training for students should include encouraging students and bystanders to report incidents of cyber bullying. Further, training for all staff should include information on the evolving types and methods of cyber bullying, in order to improve awareness and recognition. In addition, all staff should receive training on how to consistently intervene when they observe or become aware of cyber bullying. Finally, training for parents should focus on issues of changing technology, supervision of technology, and communication with their children about online activities.

In regard to policy, the sense of uncertainty shown by building-level school administrators regarding non-existent, inconsistent or unclear policies on cyber bullying indicates a need for school districts to focus on developing, revising, or better communicating their policies to the school community. However, one third of participants did state that their bullying policy included information on cyber bullying. Therefore, schools in the county could reach out to other districts to share information on policy. Further, the New York State School Boards Association provides guidelines for developing a policy framework, and provides a sample policy on harassment and bullying that includes a reference to electronic communication. The policy should clearly state how students are expected to behave with regard to cyber bullying, and could include a statement that students have the right to report all types of bullying without fear of reprisal. Perhaps the local Cyber Safety Initiative could facilitate increased communication among school districts regarding policy development, or suggest a model policy that can be shared with Superintendents and School Boards.
Again, the results from the current study indicated that building-level school administrators recognize the need to address the problem of cyber bullying, but showed differences as to who should lead the prevention efforts and how this should be done. For the current study, all participants felt that cyber bullying should be included in existing bullying prevention efforts. However, despite legislation in New York State regarding violence prevention enacted in 2001, many schools have been inconsistent with bullying prevention efforts in general. Therefore, absent any further legislation mandating efforts be undertaken by schools to specifically address the issue of cyber bullying, many school districts may continue to wait. This could be problematic considering the research showing that the problem of cyber bullying is increasing. Further, the majority of participants for the current study agreed or strongly agreed that cyber safety education should be incorporated into the curriculum. Yet, interview results indicated that this is often not happening in schools; there is little guidance in regard to what to include in the curriculum.

However, leadership does not mean that the administrator has to be the expert in cyber bullying prevention and intervention. Therefore leadership can involve recognizing that the topic represents a compelling interest, and then using internal and external resources to assist in developing a strategic, comprehensive plan. Although there are emerging best practices regarding bullying prevention, there are no current research-based best practices for addressing cyber bullying. Thus, a transformational leader must be able to deal with complexity, uncertainty, and ambiguity, which were themes that emerged around cyber bullying for the current study. In considering the themes, a leadership strategy would be to continue to learn about and reframe the issue of cyber
bullying, and then to inspire a shared vision for addressing the problem while enabling others to act (Kouzes & Posner, 2005). Overall, in schools, a champion must step forward to lead the efforts.

Although there is no blueprint for an effective model of cyber bullying prevention, a visual model for schools to consider in addressing cyber bullying is presented in Appendix E. The model is based on a logic model discussed by McCawley (1997), and is organized based on inputs (what we invest), outputs (what we do and whom we reach), and outcomes (what the short and long term results are, and what the ultimate impacts are). The model incorporates knowledge obtained from the literature, and from this study. Further, the model is based on research showing that when youth are more connected to their schools because they view school climate as being positive (i.e. trusting, fair, pleasant, etc.), then they are less likely to engage in cyber bullying, as well as verbal and physical bullying. In other words, the model may serve as a planning guide for a comprehensive school-wide effort aimed at improving school climate, which has shown to be an important factor in decreasing cyber bullying. The model could also apply to bullying prevention in general, with one focus being on cyber bullying.

An important aspect of any comprehensive effort aimed at cyber bullying prevention and intervention is addressing the concept of generational digital divergence. As indicated in both the literature and in this study, there are differences of perceptions that exist between adults and youth regarding cyber bullying. There is also a discrepancy that exists between adults and youth regarding technology use and proficiency. This researcher has described the differences as generational digital divergence (See Appendix
Central to the model is the increasing gap that exists between adults and youth in regard to communication, trust, and supervision issues surrounding the use of technology. Therefore, prevention and intervention efforts should focus on establishing a model of generational digital convergence. More specifically, this would entail efforts at decreasing the gap that exists, primarily through improved communication between adults and youth. Improved communication can result in both youth and adults developing a better understanding and appreciation of their differences of perspectives. In order to achieve convergence, however, a key challenge is overcoming the issues of trust. In addition to open communication, perhaps one way to improve trust is for both adults and youth to teach and learn from each other. Adults should strive to be effective role models and should teach children how to behave ethically and respectfully. Adults should also be open to learning more about changing technology, and be willing to learn from their children about their online activities. Similarly, youth need to learn about safe and ethical communications while online, while at the same time teach adults about the online world and language. In short, both youth and adults play a shared role in the prevention and intervention of cyber bullying.

Limitations

To answer the research questions, the current study involved using a mixed-methods approach to explore the role and meaning of school building leadership in addressing cyber bullying. A sequential explanatory strategy was employed that began with a broad survey to obtain both quantitative and qualitative data. Qualitative interviews were then conducted to further expand on the survey results and to generate additional meaning and themes. Due to the nature of the study, results cannot be
generalized to a greater population outside of the county where respondents are employed. Specifically, the purposive sampling procedure that was employed decreases the generalizability of findings as participants were not randomly selected. Rather, the survey involved inviting a homogenous sample of all known public building-level school administrators in a county to participate. The participants selected for the interviews were comprised of a convenience sample of building-level school administrators who had experience dealing with the topic of cyber bullying.

Other limitations involved issues of self-reporting accuracy and response rate. Regarding the former, the study was limited by the accuracy of self-reporting by participants. Therefore, any inaccuracies in self-reported responses can impact study results. In addition, the response rate of participants, (38%), is considered on the low end of acceptable standards. However, as stated in Chapter 3, a wave analysis was conducted to check for response bias. Also, research has shown that significant response-rate bias is probably unlikely when surveys are made up of relatively homogenous populations (as was this survey of building-level school administrators). Finally, the findings of the qualitative interviews may be subject to different interpretations, and are also unable to be generalized to a greater population. However, through the design of the sequential explanatory strategy, the interviews for this study were used to further validate and explain the survey, and to assist in substantiating the new knowledge regarding the phenomenon of cyber bullying.

Conclusion

Research has shown that both technology use and cyber bullying behavior by teenagers are increasing. Yet, the academic research on the use of technology by students
to engage in bullying behavior is in its infancy. The emerging body of knowledge and literature, which has mainly consisted of surveys of youth, began in the late 1990's and showed that cyber bullying was in fact occurring, and also began shedding some light as to how. Other research on cyber bullying has focused on, but was not limited to, prevalence, harm, types, gender issues, age, supervision, and the overlap between cyber bullying and traditional bullying. However, despite the emerging academic attention, the research on cyber bullying to date has not included the perceptions of building-level school administrators. In consideration of the importance of the role of building-level school administrators in establishing school climate and addressing violence, the current research attempted to fill this void.

The purpose of the current study was to examine the perceptions of building-level school administrators about cyber bullying, factors that influenced their response to cyber bullying, and the measures they and their schools have taken in regard to the prevention and intervention of cyber bullying. A sequential explanatory-methods strategy was employed which began with administration of an original web-based survey to collect both quantitative data and qualitative data. To administer the non-experimental cross-sectional survey, a link to the electronic survey was sent via e-mail to 285 building-level school administrators employed in public schools from one county in western New York. A total of 107 completed responses were received to the survey during the 32 days it was open, which was a 38% response rate. The next phase of the study involved conducting detailed interviews to expand upon data gathered through the surveys. For the interviews, a convenience sample was used which involved the selection and interviews of 6 principals and assistant principals to gain more insight into areas that needed further
exploration. Further, interview participants were selected based on their known experiences in dealing with cyber bullying issues, and on their willingness to further expand upon the results obtained from the surveys.

Results were presented and organized based on the three primary research questions of the study. Survey results indicated that building-level school administrators generally felt that cyber bullying is increasing among students under their supervision. In regard to reporting, the majority of respondents believed that the reporting of cyber bullying by victims is increasing, while the majority of respondents believed that the reporting of cyber bullying by student bystanders is not increasing. Also, the spreading of rumors about another by using a computer or cell phone was reported by respondents to be the most common type of cyber bullying among students both at school and away from school.

Results also indicated that a number of responses have been used by building-level school administrators in response to students found guilty of cyber bullying. The most commonly used response to a student found guilty of cyber bullying both on and off school property was the discussion of the incident with both the student and the parent. Also, less than one-half of respondents agreed that they were confident that they had the necessary skills to intervene in cyber bullying incidents, and the majority reported receiving no training on the topic of cyber bullying. Participants also ranked training and education for faculty/staff as the most important preventative measure, followed by training and education for students, for parents, and then for administrators.

In addition, a low number of participants indicated that training was being conducted for stakeholders on cyber bullying, as compared to high numbers that
indicated the need for training for stakeholders. Further, three-quarters of participants reported that their school has a board policy on cyber bullying, while just over one-third of participants stated that this policy included information on cyber bullying. Participants also strongly agreed that a community approach is necessary for addressing cyber bullying, and all participants felt that cyber bullying should be included in existing bullying prevention efforts. Further based on open ended opportunities to comment, some themes emerged including (a) a noted perception of increase in prevalence of cyber bullying, (b) a generational digital divergence that exists between youths and adults, and (c) a belief that the issue is community concern and a shared responsibility.

Finally, based on interviews, a theme that emerged included the notion that cyber bullying is increasing, but it depends. In other words, participants felt that cyber bullying among students is increasing in general but depends on age and grade-level. Another theme was that cell-phones and text messaging are more of an issue at school, while social networking is more of an issue at home. Another theme involved situation and location, meaning that the response by participants is often situational, and depends on where the incident of cyber bullying occurred. Another theme was a sense of uncertainty felt by participants, which was influenced by changing technological times, generational digital divergence, and by lack of awareness of legal issues associated with cyber bullying. Some final themes that emerged centered on inconsistent and unclear policies across and within schools regarding cyber bullying, and also the need for cyber bullying to be addressed through shared leadership.

Finally, there were several implications of the findings of the current study in relation to the literature. For example, the majority of participants believed that cyber
bullying among students is increasing in their school building, which is consistent with other research that has shown that cyber bullying is increasing. The majority of respondents also indicated that the reporting of cyber bullying by victims is increasing, while the majority of respondents believe that the reporting of cyber bullying by student bystanders is not increasing. This is interesting in light of research that has shown that both victims and bystanders often choose not to report to adults and teachers. The results suggest that participants do respond to incidents of cyber bullying when they become aware of it, which is contrary to research that has shown that students often feel that adults do not try to stop cyber bullying when informed. This appears to be another example of generational digital divergence, where school officials report that they are responding and taking action, while students report that adults do not try to stop cyber bullying. Finally, in regard to response, cases of cyber bullying that occur off-campus that have become known at school by administrators raise questions about the limits of the legal authority to respond.

Some participants also reported lacking confidence in their skills to intervene, which suggests that this is an issue that needs to be addressed. The lack of confidence and uncertainty regarding cyber bullying intervention is likely related to the fact that 60% of participants in the current study indicated that they had received no training on cyber bullying. From a policy perspective, the majority of schools in this county have not developed and implemented policy specifically addressing cyber bullying. The lack of policy can add to the feelings of uncertainty regarding how to prevent and respond to cyber bullying. Finally, there was some disagreement over who should be responsible for
leading cyber bullying prevention efforts, which raises questions of whether schools will take action absent any specific legislative mandate to address cyber bullying.

Overall, considering the increasing recognition that cyber bullying is a growing problem that needs to be addressed, schools should be considering what actions to take to begin addressing the problem. This is especially true in light of the generational digital divergence that has been shown to exist between youth and adults, and due to the ever-changing means of using the Internet and cell-phones to communicate. While schools are only part of the solution, two areas of focus for school action should be in the areas of training and policy development. Regarding the former, specialized training should be offered to all stakeholders including faculty and staff, students, and parents. Policies should also be developed and effectively communicated to all staff and students. For this to happen, shared leadership can drive efforts to identify cyber bullying prevention as a priority issue. This may facilitate the systemic and sustained effort to reduce cyber bullying that incorporates best practices as they continue to emerge.
References


List of Court Cases:


Killion v. Franklin Regional School District (2001)


Appendix A
Survey Consent Information

BUILDING-LEVEL SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS’ CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Survey of cyber bullying among students under your supervision

You are being asked to participate in a research study being conducted by James Colt, doctoral candidate at the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. School of Education at St. John Fisher College. You were selected because you are a building-level school administrator in the Greater Rochester, New York Region. Your participation in this research study is completely voluntary.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY
The purpose of the current study is to examine the perceptions of building-level school administrators about cyber bullying and their level of preparedness to intervene in cyber bullying incidents. The information gathered in this study may assist in future prevention and intervention efforts.

PROCEDURES

The Survey was developed by James Colt, doctoral candidate at St. John Fisher College. The survey will take about 15 minutes to complete.

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked questions of a demographic nature such as your gender, title, and number of years experience as a school administrator. You will also be asked questions about your awareness of the prevalence and types of cyber bullying that occurs among students under your supervision, factors that influenced your response to cyber bullying, and measures you and your school are taking to prevent it.

COSTS AND BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION:

There is no cost for participating in this study, nor will you be compensated in any way for participating. Benefits of participating include contributing to knowledge and understanding about the perceptions of building-leadership in addressing cyber bullying among students. Research to date has not yet included information from building-level administrators, who play an essential role in providing for a safe environment for students.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS:

The survey instrument and data analysis procedures being used in this study have been carefully developed to minimize risks and discomfort. However, participants in this survey may be asked about sensitive information related to student cyber offending, and their use of the Internet, computers or other
electronic devices. If at any time during this study you begin to become uncomfortable, or desire not to answer any further survey questions, you may choose to either exit the incomplete survey by closing your browser window, or repeatedly click “next page” without answering any questions until you have submitted the survey.

CONFIDENTIALITY OF RECORDS AND DATA:

None of the information obtained in the course of this study will be attributable to you, your students or anyone in your family. Completed survey data will be retained on secure computers and accessible only to approved members of the research team.

PARTICIPATION, WITHDRAWAL AND RIGHTS
You can choose whether or not to participate in this study, and you may withdraw your consent at any time without consequences of any kind. You are not waiving any legal rights because of your participation in this research study.

IDENTIFICATION OF RESEARCH INVESTIGATORS
If you have any questions or concerns about the research please feel free to contact:
James Colt
Coordinator, School Safety and Security
Monroe #1 BOCES
Ed.D. Candidate, St. John Fisher College
Phone (585) 737-7915
Appendix B

Word Document Version of Survey

Cyber Bullying Survey for School Principals

Title of study: “Building-level school administrators’ perceptions of cyber bullying among students under their supervision: Implications for prevention and intervention.”

Purpose of study:
The purpose of the current study is to examine the perceptions of building-level school administrators about cyber bullying and their level of preparedness to intervene in cyber bullying incidents. The information gathered in this study may assist in future prevention and intervention efforts.

Definition of cyber bullying:
According to Belsey (2004), “cyber bullying involves the use of information and communication technologies such as e-mail, cell-phone and pager text messages, instant messaging, 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). Further, Patchin and Hinduja (2006) define it as “willful and repeated harm inflicted through the medium of electronic text” (p. 152). Ybarra and Mitchell (2004) define online harassment as “an overt, intentional, act of aggression towards another person online” (p. 1308).

Please answer the following questions:

1) What is the grade level of the building you supervise?
   a) Elementary   b) Middle   c) High School

2) What is your current title?
   _____Principal    _____Assistant or Vice Principal    _____Other

3) Number of Years Experience as Building Administrator? ______

4) What is your Gender?    a) Male    b) Female

5) What is your age range?
   (a) 25-30 yrs.    (b) 30-35 yrs.    (c) 35-40 yrs.    (d) 40-45 yrs.    (e) 45-50 yrs.
   (f) 50-55 yrs    (g) over 55 yrs.

6) Number of students in your current school? ______

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7) Cyber bullying among your students:
   a) occurs more while at school, and is an issue in our school
   b) occurs more while at school, but is not an issue in our school
   c) occurs more often outside of school, but is still an issue in our school
   d) occurs more often outside of school, and is not an issue in our school

8) Cyber bullying among students is increasing in my building:
   ___Yes  ___No  ___Not Sure

9) The reporting of cyber bullying by student victims is increasing in my building:
   ___Yes  ___No  ___Not Sure

10) The reporting of cyber bullying by student bystanders is increasing in my building:
    ___Yes  ___No  ___Not Sure

11) The reporting of cyber bullying by parents of my students is increasing in my building:
    ___Yes  ___No  ___Not Sure

12) Faculty and staff members in my school have been victims of cyber bullying by students:
    ___Yes  ___No  ___Not Sure

13) Cyber bullying of faculty and staff members by students in my school is increasing:
    ___Yes  ___No  ___Not Sure

14) In the last five years, in your role as school administrator, how often have you observed or were you notified of these types of cyber bullying among students that occurred in your school building?
Please use the following scale to evaluate the questions.

1 = Never \hspace{1cm} 2 = One or two times per year \hspace{1cm} 3 = One or two times per month
\hspace{1cm} 4 = Weekly \hspace{1cm} 5 = Daily

**Note that cyber bullying can occur both inside and outside of school.**

a) Sending of annoying or cruel e-mail, instant messages, or text message to another using a computer or cell phone:
\hspace{1cm} \hspace{1cm} \hspace{1cm} \hspace{1cm} \hspace{1cm}

b) Sending of threatening e-mail, instant messages, or text message to another using a computer or cell phone:
\hspace{1cm} \hspace{1cm} \hspace{1cm} \hspace{1cm} \hspace{1cm}

c) Spreading of rumors about another by using a computer or cell phone:
\hspace{1cm} \hspace{1cm} \hspace{1cm} \hspace{1cm} \hspace{1cm}

d) Someone taking a private e-mail, or instant message that was sent to them and forwarding it to someone else or posting it where others could see:
\hspace{1cm} \hspace{1cm} \hspace{1cm} \hspace{1cm} \hspace{1cm}

e) Someone posting an embarrassing or "altered" picture of another online without permission:
\hspace{1cm} \hspace{1cm} \hspace{1cm} \hspace{1cm} \hspace{1cm}

f) Someone using a social networking site (i.e. MySpace, Facebook) to cyber bully another:
\hspace{1cm} \hspace{1cm} \hspace{1cm} \hspace{1cm} \hspace{1cm}

15) As school principal, how often have you been notified of these types of cyber bullying among students that occurred away from my school building?
Please use the following scale to evaluate the questions.

1= Never  2= One or two times per year  3= One or two times per month
4= Weekly  5= Daily

a) Sending of annoying or cruel e-mail, IM, or text message to another using a computer or cell phone:
   ____1  ____2  ____3  ____4  ____5

b) Sending of threatening e-mail, IM, or text message to another using a computer or cell phone:
   ____1  ____2  ____3  ____4  ____5

c) Spreading of rumors about another by using a computer or cell phone:
   ____1  ____2  ____3  ____4  ____5

d) Someone taking a private e-mail, or IM that was sent to them and forwarding it to someone else or posting it where others could see:
   ____1  ____2  ____3  ____4  ____5

e) Someone posting an embarrassing or “altered” picture of another online without permission:
   ____1  ____2  ____3  ____4  ____5

f) Someone using a social networking site (i.e. MySpace, Facebook) to cyber bully another:
   ____1  ____2  ____3  ____4  ____5

16) As a response to a student found guilty of cyber bullying on school property, I have used the following:
a) Out of school suspension  ____Yes  ____No
b) In school suspension  ____Yes  ____No
c) Other disciplinary action  ____Yes  ____No
d) Discussion with student/informal counseling  ____Yes  ____No
e) Discussion with student and parent  ____Yes  ____No
f) Referral to formal therapeutic treatment  ____Yes  ____No
g) Referral to law enforcement police  ____Yes  ____No
h) Conflict resolution  ____Yes  ____No
i) No action taken  ____Yes  ____No

Others not listed?

17) As a response to a student found guilty of cyber bullying that occurred off school property, I have used the following:
   a) Out of school suspension  ____Yes  ____No
   b) In school suspension  ____Yes  ____No
c) Other disciplinary action  ____Yes  ____No
d) Discussion with student/informal counseling  ____Yes  ____No
e) Discussion with student and parent  ____Yes  ____No
f) Referral to formal therapeutic treatment  ____Yes  ____No
g) Referral to law enforcement police  ____Yes  ____No
h) Conflict resolution  ____Yes  ____No
i) No action taken  ____Yes  ____No

Others not listed?

Please use the following scale to evaluate the questions:
18) I am confident that I have the required skills and knowledge to intervene in cases of cyber bullying:


19) I am confident in my school’s ability to supervise use of computers by students while on school grounds to avoid cyber bullying:


20) I am confident in my school’s ability to supervise use of any technology by students (e.g. cell phones, PDA’s, I phones etc.) while on school grounds to avoid cyber bullying:


21) Rank the following preventative measures to address cyber bullying from the most important to the least important (1st being most important): Please use only one ranking per item (no ties).

   a) Training and education for administrators

   b) Training and education for school faculty and staff

   c) Training and education for parents

   d) Training and education for students

   e) Increased communication between schools and parents

   f) Using latest research results on cyber bullying

   g) Updated policies regarding cyber bullying

22) Have you received training on the topic of cyber bullying?
If yes, what did the training entail? Check all that pertain:

- Overview of Cyberbullying
- Procedures for Recognizing and Responding to Cyberbullying
- Research on Cyberbullying
- Internet Safety
- Legal and Policy issues Associated with Cyberbullying
- Traditional Bullying Training with Review of Cyberbullying
- Other

23). In my school, is awareness training on cyberbullying conducted for administrators?

- Yes  - No  - Not Sure

24). In my school, is there a need for awareness training on cyberbullying conducted for administrators?

- Yes  - No  - Not Sure

25). In my school, is awareness training on cyberbullying conducted for faculty and staff?

- Yes  - No  - Not Sure

26). In my school, is there a need for awareness training on cyberbullying conducted for faculty and staff?

- Yes  - No  - Not Sure

27). In my school, is awareness training on cyberbullying conducted for parents?

- Yes  - No  - Not Sure
28). In my school, is there a need for awareness training on cyber bullying conducted for parents?

__Yes   ___No   ___Not Sure

29). In my school, is awareness training on cyber bullying conducted for students?

__Yes   ___No   ___Not Sure

30). In my school, is there a need for awareness training on cyber bullying conducted for students?

__Yes   ___No   ___Not Sure

31) In my school, have policies (i.e. code of conduct, Internet acceptable use) been updated to include cyber bullying?

__Yes   ___No   ___Not Sure

32) In my school, is there a need for policies (i.e. code of conduct, Internet acceptable use) to be updated to include cyber bullying?

__Yes   ___No   ___Not Sure

Please use the following scale to evaluate the questions:

1=Strongly Agree   2=Agree   3=Not Sure   4=Disagree   5=Strongly Disagree

33) It is the primary responsibility of the school to address cyber bullying when it occurs inside of school:

___1   ___2   ___3   ___4   ___5

Comments ________________________________________________________

34) It is the primary responsibility of parents to address cyber bullying when it occurs outside of school:
35) A community approach that involves schools, parents, police, and community is necessary for addressing cyber bullying:

Comments

36) Addressing cyber bullying should be included in schools existing bullying prevention efforts:

Comments

37) School Principals should be the leaders of cyber bullying prevention efforts:

Comments

38) In my school, cyber safety education should be included in classroom curriculum:

Comments

39) In my school, cyber bullies should be dealt with the same as those who bully face to face:
40) From your perspective as a building-level school administrator, what are other comments and concerns that you have about cyber bullying among students, and your level of confidence to recognize cyber bullying and intervene?

Comments

__________________________________________________________________________________
Appendix C

Interview Consent Information

BUILDING-LEVEL SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS’ CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Interviews on cyber bullying among students under your supervision

You are being asked to participate in a research study being conducted by James Colt, doctoral candidate at the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. School of Education at St. John Fisher College. You were selected because you are a building-level school administrator in the Greater Rochester, New York Region who participated in the first phase survey section of the study. Your continued participation in this research study is completely voluntary.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY
The purpose of the current study is to examine the perceptions of building-level school administrators’ about cyber bullying and their level of preparedness to intervene in cyber bullying incidents. The interviews are a follow up to the first phase survey, which you previously submitted. The interviews are being conducted to expand upon and clarify data received from the survey. The information gathered in this study may assist in future prevention and intervention efforts.

PROCEDURES
The interview questions were developed by James Colt, a doctoral candidate at St. John Fisher College. The interview will take about one hour to complete.

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked questions about your awareness of the prevalence and types of cyber bullying that occurs among students under your supervision, factors that influenced your response to cyber bullying, and measures you and your school are taking to prevent it.

COSTS AND BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION:
There is no cost for participating in this study, nor will you be compensated in any way for participating. Benefits of participating include contributing to knowledge and understanding about the perceptions of building-leadership in addressing cyber bullying among students. Research to date has not yet included information from building-level administrators, who play an essential role in providing for a safe environment for students.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS:
The interview protocol and data analysis procedures being used in this study have been carefully developed to minimize risks and discomfort. However, participants may be asked about sensitive information related to student cyber
offending, and their use of the Internet, computers or other electronic devices. If at any time during this study you begin to become uncomfortable, or desire not to answer any further questions, you may choose to end the interview. If this occurs, the interview data will not be used in the study.

CONFIDENTIALITY OF RECORDS AND DATA:

None of the information obtained in the course of this study will be attributable to you, your students or anyone in your family. Interview data will be recorded, transcribed, and secured in a locked area. The data will be accessible only to approved members of the research team.

PARTICIPATION, WITHDRAWAL AND RIGHTS

You can choose whether or not to participate in this study, and you may withdraw your consent at any time without consequences of any kind. You are not waiving any legal rights because of your participation in this research study.

IDENTIFICATION OF RESEARCH INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about the research please feel free to contact:

James Colt
Coordinator, School Safety and Security
Monroe #1 BOCES
Ed.D. Candidate, St. John Fisher College
Phone (585) 737-7915

I hereby consent to be interviewed for this research project.
Appendix D

Standardized Field Interview Questions

1. What is your definition of cyber bullying? What are the key elements?

2. Have you been made aware of cyber bullying that has occurred among students under your supervision? If yes, please describe:
   a. Background circumstances
   b. Who was involved, or who reported or observed it?
   c. How person interviewed became and remain involved
   d. Whether the cyber bullying occur at school, or away from school
   e. Was it reported by parents?

3. How was technology involved?
   a. Types of devices (e.g., computers, cell phone, PDAs, etc.)
   b. The Internet (e.g., Websites, chat rooms, blogs, etc.)
   c. Voice messages vs. text messages vs. online postings

4. What were the impacts of the cyber bullying on people involved (e.g., what were the effects on their personal relationships, school work, employment, finances, etc.)?
   a. Of primary victim(s) (e.g.,) did they seek assistance?
   b. Their parents, teachers and others
   c. Witnesses
   d. Offenders

5. How did you respond to the cyber bullying?
   a. Was your response influenced by whether the cyber bullying occurred away from school or at school?
   b. What other factors influenced your response?
   c. Are you aware of how court cases have decided cases of off-campus cyber bullying?
   d. Do you have fears of potential litigation for disciplining for off-campus CB?

6. Do you feel that cyber bullying among students is increasing among students in your building? While away from school? Does grade level make a difference?

7. For survey, 3 out of 4 administrators reported that cyber bullying occurs more often outside of school, but is still an issue in our school. What does this mean? Why is it still an issue for school when it takes place most often at home?
8. Are you confident that you have the required skills and knowledge to intervene in cases of cyber bullying?

9. What measures are you and your school taking to prevent incidences of cyber bullying among students in your school?
   a. In my school, have policies (i.e. code of conduct, Internet acceptable use) been updated to include cyber bullying?
   b. Is there a board policy on bullying in your school?
   c. Does your school have a policy banning or restricting technology such as cell-phones/PDA’s? Do you feel there should be?
   d. What other measures should your school be taking to address cyber bullying among students in your school?

10. Should school principals be the leaders of cyber bullying prevention efforts?

Why or why not?

11. Please comment on anything else about cyber bullying that you would like to add that I have not asked you about.
## Logic Model for Addressing Cyber Bullying

### A Guide for Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inputs</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Short Term</th>
<th>Medium Term</th>
<th>Long Term</th>
<th>Outcome Measures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What we invest</td>
<td>What we do</td>
<td>Whom we reach</td>
<td>What the short term results are</td>
<td>What the long term results are</td>
<td>What the ultimate impact(s) are</td>
<td>External Influences: Legislation, Community Initiatives, Court Decisions, Police, Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Resources:</td>
<td>Train staff, parents, and students in strategies for cyber bullying prevention and intervention</td>
<td>The school community including all staff and students, and parents</td>
<td>Increased awareness, knowledge, skills for staff and students.</td>
<td>Implementation of strategies district-wide</td>
<td>Improved communication and learning between adults, students, and parents; Increased supervision of technology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiscal Resources</td>
<td>Develop, update and communicate policy on cyber bullying including code of conduct and wellness policy; establish compelling interest</td>
<td>School Leadership and Bullying Prevention Committee</td>
<td>Increased confidence in intervention.</td>
<td>Improved communication and learning between adults, students, and parents; Increased supervision of technology</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge Base for Program</td>
<td>Develop research agenda; research the topic of cyber bullying and effectiveness of interventions</td>
<td>School Leadership and Bullying Prevention Committee</td>
<td>Clear message that bullying not tolerated</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Involvement of collaborators</td>
<td>Provide goals, timelines, and strategies school buildings to initiate efforts to change behavior of bullies, and to support victims</td>
<td>Community stakeholders</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**INPUTS**
- **Human Resources:** Committee comprised of administrators, faculty, staff, students, and community experts.
- **Fiscal Resources:** Funds budgeted for survey development and analysis and for potential program implementation.
- **Knowledge Base for Program:** Analysis of survey results, awareness training for staff and students, code of conduct, implementation of intervention procedures, social skills standards.
- **Involvement of collaborators:** Community advisory committees, school parent organizations, law enforcement.

**OUTCOMES**
- **Short Term:** Meeting of timelines, goals, and strategies described in action plan.
- **Medium Term:** Clear cyber bullying policy aligned with bullying prevention efforts, Decrease in self-reported cyber bullying by students.
Appendix F
A Model of Generational Digital Divergence

A Model of Generational Digital Divergence

Youth Views and Technology

- Technology is Social Lifeline
- Distrust of Adults
- Feel Adults Unwilling to Help if Bullied
- No Supervision by Adults
- Fear of Technology Removal
- Privacy Proficiency

External Influences
- Rapidly Changing Technology
- Increased Use of Technology
- Lack of Proven Internet Safety Training
- Unclear Laws and Regulations
- Unclear/Inconsistent School Policies

Adult Views and Technology

- Technology is Tool
- Unaware of Youth Online Activities
- Lack of Supervision Despite Belief They Are
- Less Confident
- Uncertain