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Cyberbullying: School Administrators' Perceptions of Law and Prevalence, and Their Roles in Prevention, Intervention and Discipline

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CYBERBULLYING: SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS' PERCEPTIONS OF

LAW AND PREVALENCE, AND ROLES IN PREVENTION,

INTERVENTION, AND DISCIPLINE

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by

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Abstract

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        This study was aimed at investigating secondary school administrators' experiences with and their perceptions of cyberbullying, as well as their intervention and prevention procedures. As technology has become ubiquitous in our society, students' use has increased and impacted the school environment. Given the potential for cyberbullying and the negative effects of such, schools harbor the responsibility to prevent and intervene in such

occurrences. This can be a tricky process.

This study included 12 administrators of secondary schools across eight school divisions in Virginia.   Through an interview process, administrators spoke of their experiences with technology and cyberbullying incidents, and how they intervened and prevented such incidents.

In general, the administrators reported following the Student Code of Conduct as a district policy and guideline for managing cyberbullying and technology disruptions in their schools. The talked about the difficulty of determining when an incident that took place off campus was within their "jurisdiction" to handle, and when they need to involve law enforcement. They also spoke of the variability in the cyberbullying definition and how this variability created confusion and lack of consistency.

Chapter 1

Introduction

At one time bullying was viewed as kids being kids. It was seen as an initiation process or "rite of passage" (McCarthy, 2008). Over the past couple of decades, studies have shown this not to be the case. Bullying has been a problem in schools for years and the act does not appear to be going away. In fact, as the use of technology has become a greater part of the lives of children, bullying has expanded to include cyberbullying. Bullies who once needed a concrete place to attack their victims are now able to do so from anywhere and at any time, via cyberspace (Mason, 2008). Victims who once were able to avoid such attacks by steering free of the schoolyard are now being attacked in the privacy of their own homes (Mason, 2008; McClung, 2006).

Bullying is an epidemic; a rapidly growing phenomenon. The media is flooded with violent school shootings and bullying-related suicides. In a study of 37 school shooting incidents, nearly 60 percent of the attackers were reported to be victims of bullying prior to their attacks (Dake, Price & Telljohann, 2003). In addition, a study of close to 2000 middle school students revealed those who were victims of cyberbullying were twice as likely to attempt suicide (Bauman, Toomey & Walker, 2013).

In the past several years, many tragedies related to bullying have taken the spotlight. Ryan Halligan, a 13-year-old from Vermont committed suicide in 2003 after being continuously bullied for years. He was targeted because his learning disability, as well as his passion for music and drama, set him apart from his peers. After getting in a

fight with a particular bully who had victimized him for years, they actually became

friends, frequently communicating online. After Ryan confided in this friend about an

embarrassing medical examination he had endured, he discovered that the peer used his

secrets to spread rumors that he was gay. It is not clear whether the peer used trickery

to befriend Ryan. Regardless, distraught over rumors that he was gay, Ryan hung

himself while his father was away on business (Halligan & Halligan, 2010).

Megan Meier, a 13-year-old from Missouri committed suicide in 2006 as a

result of being cyberbullied on MySpace. A mother of one of Megan's peers helped her

daughter set up a fake MySpace account solely for the purpose of bullying Megan.

Through this account they pretended to be a boy named "Josh" who was homeschooled

and had recently moved to town. Megan developed an online relationship with "Josh"

that turned sour when he said he no longer wanted to be her friend. "Josh" stated that

he had heard she was not kind to her friends. Soon afterwards, bulletins and surveys

calling Megan "fat" and a "slut" circulated on MySpace. Megan hung herself in her

closet three weeks before her fourteenth birthday (Strenhauer, 2008).

Phoebe Prince, a 15-year-old girl from Massachusetts committed suicide after

being targeted by continuous bullying, both traditionally and by way of cyberspace.

She had moved to the U.S. from Ireland, and in her first weeks as a freshman, she

briefly dated a senior football player. Because of this she was called an "Irish slut" and

"whore." Threatening text messages were sent to her cell phone. Her face was

scribbled out of pictures in the halls. On the day of her suicide, she was bullied and

tormented at school in the library and halls. As she walked home, one of the

perpetrators threw a can of Red Bull at her as she drove by. Phoebe walked into her house and hung herself in a stairwell (Miller, 2010).

Amanda Todd, a 15-year-old girl from Canada, committed suicide in 2012. When she was twelve, a man she met in an internet chat room convinced her to flash her breasts. He later posted a picture of her flashing her breasts on Facebook. This led Amanda's peers to tease and harass her. Because of the anxiety this created in Amanda, she developed depression as well as a panic disorder. Her family moved and she changed schools. About a year later, the same individual created a Facebook page using her topless photo as the profile picture. He targeted her friends, again causing anxiety for Amanda. Amanda changed schools once more. However, bullying incidents and teasing continued. Amanda hung herself less than a month prior to her 16th birthday after creating a YouTube video about the bullying incidents (Denar, 2017).

Cases like these happen too frequently. Parents, teachers and school officials must be aware of the dangers involved and how to prevent them.

Need for Study

The current generation of children (millennials) have never known a world without computers. Most of the public schools in America had computers and internet access by the year 2000 (Conn, 2010). By the nursery school years, 67 percent of all children are using computers. By kindergarten 80 percent of all students are able to access the internet (Conn, 2010). We live in a society where 93 percent of children ages 8-18 have computers in their homes, many in their own bedrooms. Most preteens have some form of a cell phone. By 2010 more than half (66%) of all teens owned cell

phones with the ability to access pictures, music, and internet. Seventy-six percent owned another media devices, such as an iPod that would allow them the same access to technology (Holladay, 2010).

As much as school personnel struggle to control the use of cell phones on campus, text messaging is unbounded and often occurs during classroom instruction. Adolescents use technology to socialize with others (Ybarra, Alexander & Mitchell, 2003) more than any other form of communication. Though many of these communications are innocent, and educators want to support the use of technology, the truth is there is a major negative to having technology constantly available to youth (Holladay, 2010). As the frequency of use grows, the opportunities for misuse only continues to rise (Ybarra et al., 2003).

School officials and district leaders do not yet have a strong handle on how to prevent or to successfully manage bullying or cyberbullying when it occurs (Beran & Li, 2007; Belsey, 2006; Ybarra, Diener-West, & Leaf, 2007). The laws on cyberbullying are particularly confusing (Marczak & Coyne, 2010). Many school leaders and personnel may not be clear on their roles, and may be reluctant to intervene in occurrences that take place off school grounds. Though an increase in the awareness of cyberbullying is apparent, research providing school personnel necessary knowledge for proactively dealing with and preventing it is deficient (Ybarra et al., 2003).

Schools have a responsibility to respond to cyberbullying. School leaders are charged with providing a safe educational environment in which all students can learn and grow (Scheider, O'Donnell, Stueve & Coulter, 2012). Though there is a great deal

of research pertaining to the widespread presence of bullying, in general, there is far less that examines the circumstances of cyberbullying (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004). There are a few research studies that investigate students' perceptions of cyberbullying (Twyman, Saylor & Taylor, 2010). Research that investigates administrators' perceptions of cyberbullying, and the comparison of that with students' perceptions, is virtually nonexistent. There is no literature to speak of that addresses what administrators believe to be the prevalence of cyberbullying, how they define it, or how they intervene. Studies that investigate administrators' perceptions of their roles in addressing cyberbullying incidents that typically occur off of school grounds are also absent.

Significance of Study

The phenomenon is growing. Bullying, in general, may be as old as time itself (Craig & Pepler, 1997; Roland & Isdoe, 2001). However, cyberbullying is still a rather unfamiliar area to researchers and educators (Beran & Li, 2005; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004). Though cyberbullying awareness has increased, research studies and intervention strategies related to cyberbullying are limited (Beran & Li, 2007). The growth in social networking, the internet, and more advanced electronic devices, along with the rise in prevalence and negative impacts, has brought it onto the frontline of school and community matters (Hinduja & Patchin, 2007). Unfortunately, the dramatic increase in awareness has yet to assist school officials, policy makers, and researchers in establishing a solution (Belsey, 2006).

There are new cases of cyberbullying in the news every day, as well as new

victims who have taken their lives because of it (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010). Cyberbullying must be addressed and barred from disrupting our schools and destroying the lives of so many youth. Unfortunately, many administrators and school personnel are still wrestling with how to properly intervene in incidents of cyberbullying. Much of this conflict stems from a lack of knowledge of how to handle incidents that take place off school grounds, and a resistance to intervene in such situations, due to uncertainty and fear (Feinberg & Robey, 2009; Ybarra et al, 2007). There appears to be some evidence that school districts are developing policies to include cyberbullying, but the extent to which these are carried out is unclear. The confusion will only continue if cyberbullying sections are simply added to the code of conduct without training administrators on how to recognize cyberbullying incidents, as well as identify those within their jurisdiction and address them appropriately.

If there continues to be a discrepancy between what students and school personnel perceive cyberbullying to be, how can it be prevented? There is a need for research which examines how school administrators perceive cyberbullying. We need to know specifically what administrators think about cyberbullying, how they understand the laws and policies, what they feel their roles are, and what they are doing about it. Only then will we be able to develop effective programs and policies.

This study is significant because it strives to investigate administrators' perceptions of cyberbullying, their knowledge of laws and policies, how they view their roles, what they do to prevent it, and how they are intervene in incidents that take place on and off campus. It intends to provide school officials and policy makers with useful

information for designing cyberbullying prevention policies, intervention strategies, and training opportunities. There is an obvious gap between the abilities of students today and those in previous years, as technology is related (Juvonen & Gross, 2008; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004). Knowing this would lead one to believe that there is also a gap in those abilities as compared to the abilities of many school personnel and policy makers. Further, there is a major gap in the research pertaining to effective cyberbullying prevention and intervention strategies. These gaps need to be filled. In addition to negatively impacting students' emotional and physical health, it can also compromise school climates. Hence, additional research is necessary to establish effective cyberbullying prevention and intervention strategies (Feinberg & Robey, 2009; Ruskauskas & Stoltz, 2007)

Review of Literature

Origins

Olweus (2005) defines bullying as "when one is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other students." According to Patchin and Hinduja (2008) cyberbullying is a kind of behavior in the virtual environment which contains deliberate and repetitive violence and insult. Li (2007) says cyberbullying is "repetitive and destructive sense or attitude of damaging others through the use of cell phones, internet, email, etc." Willard (2004) defines cyberbullying as "sending or posting harmful, cruel text or images using the internet or other digital communication devices." Further, she divides cyberbullying into eight categories: flaming, harassment, denigration, impersonation, outing, trickery, exclusion,

cyberstalking (Williard, 2004).

Prevalence

An internet site called isafe which promotes safe internet use, conducted a study of 1500 students in grades four through eight. They discovered that cyberbullying affected over half of the students surveyed (isafe, 2010). In comparison, Hinduja and Patchin (2008) found over one-third of adolescents reported being victims of cyberbullying, while 16 percent admitted to acting as cyberbullies. While these numbers are varied from one study to the next, all of them point to the fact that cyberbullying is an issue. It is prevalent, and continuing to grow in our society.

Impact

The fact that violence in schools is often related to bullying was previously mentioned. School shootings and suicides are tragedies that must be prevented. Though it cannot be said concretely that suicides are caused by bullying, research has shown that there is a strong correlation between the two (Hinduja & Patchin, 2007). Furthermore, research has also shown that low self-esteem, high rates of depression, anxiety, and loneliness (Chappell et al, 2006; Patchin & Hinduja, 2010) to be related to cyberbullying.

In addition to tragic incidents like school violence and suicide, cyberbullying serves to intensify psychological issues (Sahin, 2012). *Maslow's Heirarchy of Needs*, indicates that children will have difficulty learning and growing if they feel unsafe (Huitt, 2007). Cyber victims have been shown to have decreases in school performance and increased levels of absenteeism (Beran & Li, 2005), just as victims of traditional

bullying (Olweus, 1993). The social, emotional, and psychological issues of cyberbullying interfere with their ability to feel safe; hence, leading to the difficulty of learning, and ultimately the school environment as a whole.

Prevention, Intervention, and Law

Administrators are faced with a difficult task of providing a learning environment that is safe for all students and staff. Teachers and school administrators must be knowledgeable of the surging progression of cyberbullying as incidents online are brought into the school. They should be able to address cyberbullying no tolerance policies (Markzak & Coyne, 2010). Unfortunately, this is not an easy task, especially when there is such a fine line regarding freedom of speech.

Perceptions

The research addressing administrators' perceptions of cyberbullying is limited. One study compared students' and administrators' perceptions, and found there to be a discrepancy in the number of students who reported being victims of cyberbullying, and the number of cases administrators were aware of in their schools (Cassidy, Brown & Jackson, 2011). Li (2007) also noted that school professionals had a lack of awareness of cyberbullying and researchers have yet to examine the nature of it thoroughly. Unfortunately, this lack of research provides school officials and policymakers with no way of knowing how best to tackle the problem (Belsey, 2006; Beran & Li, 2007; Ybarra et al, 2007). This coupled with the fact that administrators find the laws confusing (Markzac & Coyne, 2010), only makes the need for additional research more apparent.

Statement of Method

A qualitative approach was used for this study. Data was collected via interviews. Secondary school administrators were recruited to participate. The interview questions were related to their perceptions of cyberbullying; what administrators have experienced, how they have dealt with such incidents, and when they feel they should intervene. Inquiries regarding specific school and district policies, intervention and prevention strategies were included, as well as administrators' thoughts on their knowledge involving laws surrounding cyber bullying.

Research Questions

The following research questions are aimed at identifying administrators' perceptions of cyberbullying, their legal knowledge of cyberbullying, and how they feel their knowledge or the lack thereof impacts their decisions regarding prevention, intervention, and discipline.

> Q1: What are administrators' experiences with and perceptions of
>
> cyberbullying?
>
> Q2: What do administrators do to prevent and respond to cyberbullying?
>
> Q3: What level of legal knowledge of cyberbullying do administrators
>
> possess and how does it impact their actions?

Definitions

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

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

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

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

Cyberbullying. Willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009).

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

Cyberstalking. Repeated, intense harassment and denigration that includes threats or creates significant fear (Williard, 2004).

Denigration. "Dissing" someone online. Sending or posting gossip or rumors about a person to damage his or her reputation or friendships (Williard, 2004).

Direct Bullying. Involves either verbal or physical attacks on a victim (Atals & Pepler, 1998).

Exclusion. Intentionally and cruelly excluding someone from an online group (Williard, 2004).

Flaming. Online fights using electronic messages with angry and vulgar language (Williard, 2004).

Harassment. Repeatedly sending nasty, mean, and insulting messages (Williard, 2004).

Impersonation. Pretending to be someone else and sending or posting material to get that person in trouble or danger or to damage that person's reputation or friendships (Williard, 2004).

Indirect Bullying. Involves more subtle forms of harassment, such as social isolation or excluding others (Atlas & Pepler, 1998).

Outing. Sharing someone's secrets or embarrassing information or images online (Williard, 2004).

Threat. A communicated intent to inflict harm or less on another or on another's property; especially one that might diminish a person's freedom to act voluntarily or with lawful consent (Garner, 2004).

Trickery. Talking someone into revealing secrets or embarrassing information, then sharing it online (Williard, 2004).

Victim. A person who is exposed to negative actions of a bully or a cyberbully.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Methodology of the Literature Review

An investigation of the research for this literature review began at the Virginia Commonwealth University library online database. The library database allows one to use all search engines simultaneously in an effort to save both time and effort. For the purpose of this review, the search began by entering the keyword *cyberbullying*. Since cyberbullying is a relatively new phenomenon, it was not necessary to restrict publication dates. This search resulted in 705 items, 74 coming from books and media, 651 articles that had online full text access, 424 of which were peer-reviewed articles.

To narrow the search to articles more closely related to the topic, the term *cyberbullying* was combined with other words such as: *school discipline, social aspects, law, legislation, psychology, pathology, suicide, social networks, administration,* and *harmful effects* to create two-descriptor combinations. *School discipline + cyberbullying* yielded 26 peer-reviewed articles. To refine the search even more, I used c*yberbullying + speech in schools +law + administration,* 38 articles were produced. However, only two were appropriate for this study.

Of all the databases, ERIC, Science Direct, Informa – Taylor & Francis, Sage Publications, Directory of Open Access Journals, PsycArticles, and Literature Resource Center yielded the most articles. In addition, the most frequently used journals were

The Journal of Adolescent Health, Computers in Human Behavior, European Journal of Developmental Psychology, and *Education Digest*. During each search, the articles were perused for relevancy. I read the abstracts, skimmed through the text and analyzed the content (i.e. methodology, research design). Articles that appeared credible and appropriate to meet the purpose of this research were saved to a computer hard drive. Further investigation was conducted by examining the recommendations that popped up on the library online database connected to articles. Those that were the most relevant were also saved to the computer.

After gathering a large number of articles that seemed suitable, I read and sorted them more closely. Articles were chosen that had different points of view, were from different countries and states, and targeted different populations. I thought this would be the best manner in which to obtain a comprehensive view of the topic and gather different perspectives. At times, specific articles were eliminated completely due to the research design or methodology used, and sometimes simply the voice in which they were written. At least once, an interesting article was found that completely rebuffed one that was previously read, even going as far as to call it out by name. During the reading, additional authors were noted, as well as studies and reports cited in the readings that were of consequence. I noted additional articles from the reference lists of interesting articles. With the notes on these articles, as well as those collected from reading, I retrieved additional articles from the database. Examining the references of well-written, thorough articles has proven to be a worthwhile way to expand upon literature of a particular subject.

When the articles began citing one another, I determined that the search was complete. I then examined the data base of my computer for additional articles of interest. Research on this topic had been complied for several years. Therefore, many articles were already saved to the hard drive. In fact, after examination, several duplicates were identified.

Once all the articles were collected and read, they were divided into five areas that seemed most appropriate for this literature review. The number of articles was overwhelming, and attempting to organize the findings was quite daunting. So, they were vetted once more. All the empirical studies were pulled out and those that were not empirical were set aside. The research standards of the American Educational Research Association (AERA) was used to further vet these studies. Those deemed appropriate were used to write this literature review.

The literature review consists of five sections: (1) Origins, (2) Prevalence, (3) Impact, (4) Prevention, Intervention, and Law, and (5) Perceptions. Origins describes the background and history of cyberbullying. It introduces theories and discusses the discrepancies between researchers' beliefs and the difficulties of defining. Prevalence shows how incidents of cyberbullying have increased over the past couple of decades. It discusses the differences in findings, and possible factors that have effect on these differences. Impact discusses the negative impacts of cyberbullying, physiological and psychological effects, as well as the negative impact of schools. This section also addresses suicide. Prevention, Intervention, and Law identifies prevention strategies that have been effective for traditional bullying. It explains how intervention methods

for cyberbullying must be different than those traditionally used. This section also discusses law and policy. It covers the difficulties administrators run into when determining their roles in cyberbullying, and how knowledge of laws, and the lack there of, complicate decisions administrators have to make. The last section, Perceptions looks at students', teachers', and administrators' perceptions of cyberbullying. It notes that there are differences in their perceptions, according to the limited research that is in existence. It also identifies a gap in the literature pertaining to the perceptions of administrators. This section further notes that administrators' perceptions are a key piece in effective prevention and intervention of cyberbullying.

The Origin of Cyberbullying

Bullying has a deep-rooted existence in society. It has been around since the beginning of time and stems from the instinctual need for survival. However, though it was once thought to be simply a part of life and normal to growing up, that is no longer the belief. Bullying has become a growing problem for youth and has been shown by research to have many negative impacts, some which are fatal.

Defining Bullying

The word "bullying" began in the 1530s, at which time it meant "sweetheart." However, over time the word change meaning and throughout the 17th century it morphed into something that signified a "harasser of the weak (Wikipedia)." The definition itself is still somewhat of a difficulty in the topic of bullying and lacks consensus across researchers.

Dan Olweus, a professor of psychology at the University of Bergen in Norway

was the first to create a definition for bullying (Donegan, 2012). He conducted the first "systematic intervention study" pertaining to bullying in the 1980s after three students from Norway committed suicide because of repeated bullying. His work began long before that in the 1970s, with a project that is now thought to be the first significant bullying research in the world. For over 40 years his research has focused on the topic of bullying. His prevention programs are used in schools all around the world (Olweus, 2010).

Olweus' definition has three components: (1) aggressive behavior or the intent to do harm, (2) an act that is carried out repeatedly or over time, (3) an interpersonal relationship characterized by power (Olweus, 1999). Some researchers regard this definition as the only definition for bullying. However, there are others who have attempted to expand his definition or change it. For example, several researchers have approved of Olweus' definition with two additions: (1) the victim does not provoke the bully with verbal or physical aggression, (2) the bullying occurs in a familiar social group (Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2009). Still others have created their own definitions. Overall, the lack of consensus is an issue and becomes an even larger problem when attempting to define the concept of cyberbullying.

Some researchers, like Li (2006), have attempted to create a definition that states cyberbullying is "bullying via electronic communication tools." Others have tried to apply Olweus' definition to cyberbullying. Still others feel as though his definition does not translate to cyberbullying (Yabarra, Boyd, Korchmaros & Oppenheim, 2012).

Interpretations make defining bullying a difficult task. First, taking the "intent

to cause harm" into consideration, Vandebosch and Van Cleeput (2009), say that it is difficult just because of the nature of written material. Due to the fact that tone, facial expressions, and eye contact are non-existent in messages such as, emails, texts, and chats, they can be easily misunderstood. Therefore, it is not easy to say that they are intentional in character. Second, power imbalance usually refers to physical strength, and an individual of larger size and strength bullying one of lesser strength. In the cyberspace, someone who has superior technological knowledge, could be considered as more powerful than another (Gladden, Vivola-Kantor, Hamburger & Lumpkin, 2014; Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2009). Some researchers believe this; others do not. Third, the repetitive piece is a difficult one. Olweus states that it must be repetitive or continue over time. When something is put on cyberspace it can be shared over and over again. In addition, the victim can go back and visit it time and time again. There has been question as to whether this constitutes as repetitive nature, if the repetition is not conducted by the original perpetrator (Slonje, Smith, & Frisen, 2012). Some researchers feel that it is appropriate, while others do not. Hence, the inconsistency continues. To create the appropriate prevention and intervention techniques, first one must define the phenomenon. Furthermore, to create an adequate definition both empirical results and theoretical foundations are necessary (Pieschl, Porsch, Kahl, & Klochenbusch, 2013).

Theoretical Framework

Over the last decade or more the awareness of cyberbullying has grown. Research has rapidly followed, but it is still an uncharted territory for the most part.

Along with the discrepancies in definition, an overall theoretical approach is also hugely lacking. This is not simply the case for cyberbullying; it is true for bullying in general (Monks, Smith, Naylor, Barter, Ireland & Coyne, 2009). There are a couple theories that seem to fit well with cyberbullying: (1) General Strain Theory, and (2) Moral Disengagement.

General Strain Theory (GST). General Strain Theory also known as Criminology Theory was originally devised by Durkheim and Merton, but was later revisited and modified by Robert Agnew (Agnew, 1992). It suggests that strain causes delinquency and criminal-like or aggressive behaviors. There are three types of strain: (1) the failure to achieve goals that are positive and valued, (2) the loss of a positive valued stimuli, and (3) the presence of negative stimuli. It further explains that an individual who is affected by a strain, experiences negative emotions, which can be externalized and expressed as delinquent and aggressive behaviors (Agnew, 1992). Though cyberbullying is an international issue that creates psychological as well as physical strains, there is limited empirical research using the General Strain Theory. Jang, Song, and Kim (2014) conducted a study that showed victims of traditional bullying have tendency to become cyberbullies by externalized strain.

Moral Disengagement. This theory was developed by Bandura (2002). This theory states that all individuals have morals and values. At times they do things that go against their morals and values. As a way to rationalize behaviors or cope with them, they basically detach themselves or disengage from them. It allows for "cognitive moralization" of the actions.

It would make sense that with Moral Disengagement Theory, bullies would not feel remorse. This leads to another issue with prevention of cyberbullying. Many programs that are developed including Olweus', uses empathy as a foundation. The development of empathy assists plays and important role in reducing bullying incidents. With Moral disengagement, empathy is nonexistent. This is more the reason to broaden empirical research to use theoretical frameworks such as these.

Prevalence

Cyberbullying is a relatively new phenomenon only coming into the forefront of research over the past decade. Because it is such a new phenomenon, there is a great deal of controversy over the prevalence of cyberbullying incidents. Dan Olweus, a Norwegian psychologist who is well known for his research on bullying in Norway and the United States as well as his bullying prevention program, claims that the media has blown cyberbullying out of proportion. He states that cyberbullying "has not increased over time and has not created new victims and bullies" (Olweus, 2012). Furthermore, he suggests that when research is conducted in an appropriate manner, it shows that cyberbullying is a "low-prevalence phenomenon" (Olweus, 2012). Olweus is alleging that research studies that were conducted over the past decade were not done in an appropriate manner.

For the purpose of this literature review, 22 empirical studies have been compiled from the years 2005-2014 to look at the prevalence of cyberbullying. In an attempt to show the progression, these studies will be analyzed in chronological order. With the exception of one study, all were quantitative in design and utilized surveys and

various questionnaires. The sample sizes ranged from 104 to 10,700, and the demographics were varied due to nationality and region. However, most studies involved middle and high school students. Six of the studies were conducted in the United States, five in Canada, two in Turkey, two in Sweden, one in Ireland, one in Czechoslovakia, one in Finland, one in New Zealand, one in Taiwan, one in both China and Canada, and one in both the U.S. and Singapore.

Li (2007b) conducted a study in Canada that included 177 (80 male, 97 female) students from two middle schools. She went in with the assumption that students from lower SES would be more involved in cyberbulling. She found that 60% of the students who reported being involved in cyberbullying were from middle class areas. Therefore, she determined that SES was not a factor. In addition, half of the respondents reported knowing someone who had been bullied, roughly a quarter reported being cyberbullied themselves, and one out of six reported bullying others.

In a similar study in 2006, Li recruited 264 junior high school students. Again, approximately half of the individuals reported being aware of cyberbullying (55.6 males, 54.5 females), and roughly a quarter reported being victims (25.0 males, 25.6 females). In contrast to the previous study, there was a gender difference when reporting cyberbullying others (22.3 males, 11.6 females). In a third study conducted by Li (2007a) that incorporated students from both Canada (N = 264) and China (N = 197), the prevalence of male cybervictims increased to 31.2%, but the female cybervictims remained steady at 26.3%. The percentage of cyberbullies also remained similar to the previous study (21.9 males, 13.4 females), as did the percentage of those

who reported being aware of incidents (53.6 males, 52.2 females). To take it a step further, Li (2007a) looked at the frequency of incidents. She found that 30% reported being bullied 4 or less times, 43% reported being bullied between 4 and 10 times, and 20% reported being bullied 10 times or more. In addition, in all of these studies over half of the individuals who were victimized chose to remain quiet as opposed to telling adults (Li, 2006; Li, 2007a; Li, 2007b).

Three more studies were conducted in 2007, which took place in Sweden, Canada, and the U.S. Beran and Li (2007) looked at the relationship between traditional bullying and cyberbullying. Slonje and Smith (2007) studied eight mixed-gender schools in Sweden, with students ages 12-20. Kowalski and Limber (2007) examined a selection of students from the northwestern and southeastern parts of the United States. The findings of these studies were quite varied. Beran and Li (2007), found 58% of respondents to be victims of cyberbullying, 26% to have cyberbullied others, and 37% to have used both cyberbullying and traditional bullying techniques. Considering that over one-third of the respondents reported cyberbullying, as well as traditional bullying, they hypothesized that students who were cyberbullied may also be victims of traditional bullying, and in turn cyberbully others. In contrast, Slonje and Smith (2007) found that only 10% of respondents reported having been victims of cyberbullying. Along these same lines, Kawolski and Limber (2007) found 11% of respondents to have cyberbullied in the past month, and 7% to have been cybervictims. They felt that the actual frequency of cyberbullying occurrences was under-represented, and went on to say that perhaps the victims had either not been bullied in the past

couple months, or they did not recognize the incidents as bullying (Kawolski & Limber, 2007). The differences in the findings of these studies may actually be due to the measures used. Both Kawolski and Limber (2007) and Slonje and Smith (2007) looked at bullying in the past month or two; whereas, Beran and Li (2007) looked at the past year. It is possible that the frequency of cyberbullying incidents in these two studies would have been greater had they looked at a longer period of time. Furthermore, of these three studies, only Slonje and Smith (2007) reported on gender, in which they stated the differences were not significant.

In 2008, two studies were conducted; one in the U.S. and the other in Turkey. In a study conducted by Feinburg and Robey (2008), 45% of preteens and 30% of teens reported having been cyberbullied while at school. Similar to the Slonje and Smith (2007) study, they determined that cyberbullies and cybervictims were just as likely to be male as female. In addition, they reported that they were more likely to be anonymous. Topcu, Erdur-Baker, and Capa-Aydin (2008) compared private school students and public school students in Turkey. They stated that students in private schools are of higher SES and have a higher frequency of technology usage than the students in public schools. Furthermore, they noted that frequency of technology usage is related to cyberbullying and cyber victimization. In fact, they noted that frequency of technology usage is a better predictor of being a cyberbully or cyber victim than gender in public school students. Oddly, this was not the case for the private school students. Though private school students reported more frequent usage, public school students reported more cyberbullying incidents. The researchers find this surprising considering

the fact that frequency of usage increases the probability of cyberbullying incidents. Opposed to Li's (2007b) findings, this study might lead one to believe that SES does play a factor, somewhat.

Five studies from five different countries, were conducted in 2010. The New Zealand sample which consisted of 1169, 15-year-olds, found that 47% of the sample had been bullied via technology; 45% of the girls and 50% of the boys. In addition, 37% of the respondents reported bullying others. This study pointedly looked at text bullying, finding that though text bullying was less frequent than traditional bullying, it was a rather frequent mode of bullying. Specifically, 6.9% of boys and 7.0% of girls used texts to bully others, while 7.9% of boys and 13.8% of girls reported being bullied via this modality (Marsh, McGee, Nadalaya & Williams, 2010). These findings are comparable to those Erdur-Baker and Tanrikulu (2010) found when studying 165, 10-14 year old Turkish students. Though they did not find age or gender to be significant for cybervictims, they did find that 14-year-old girls had the highest scores for being cyberbullies. In contrast to the New Zealand study, where traditional bullying was found to be of greater frequency, a Taiwanese study conducted by Chung, Lee, Hsi, Huang, and Pan (2010) found cyberbullying to be twice as high as traditional bullying (victims 8.2%, bully-victims 5.1%). Their sample consisted of 2292 high school students, where 18.4% were reported cyber victims, and 11.2% were cyberbully victims. In Taiwan, they noted that cyberbullying has become a more frequent mode of bullying (Chung et al, 2010). At a lesser degree, out of 2438 Finnish youth between the ages of 13 and 16, five percent were reported to be victims only, while seven percent

were cyberbullies, and five percent were both. As mentioned previously, the difference in findings of these studies could have something to do with the timeframe chosen for measurement.

At the same time, in the southeastern United States a matched pairs study was conducted to compare children and adolescents engaged in cyberbullying. Twyman, Saylor, Taylor and Comeaux (2010), recruited 52 students out 300 who had been identified as cyberbullies. Their entire sample consisted of 104 youth between the ages of 11-17. They found that there was some overlap between traditional bullying and cyberbullying. However, they were unable to determine whether the bullying began at school and carried over to cyberspace, or vice versa. Furthermore, they noted that some of the bullies only participated online and were not engaged in traditional bullying. This would lead one to believe that if the bullying stemmed from traditional bully carry over, it must be in the form of retaliation. Further, it goes against Olweus' (2012) belief that technology does not create new bullies. If these individuals only bully via technology, it would make sense that without technology they would not be bullies.

More recently, researchers have begun to look at more than just the prevalence of cyberbullying. Wade and Beran (2011), examined various types of cyberbullying. Whereas, Czechoslovakian researchers, Kopecky and Szotkowski (2012), compared specific modes. Beran and Wade (2011), found that 21.9% of middle school and high school students in a mid-western Canadian city had been victim of at least one bullying incident in the past 3 months, and 29.7% had been perpetrators. Of all incidents, they found name-calling to be of greatest frequency (30.3%). This was followed by

spreading rumors (22.8%), imposters (16.1%), being threatened (13.0%), and receiving

unwanted sexual content (11.5%). Gender differences were not found to be significant.

Kopecky and Szotkowski (2012), found the most frequent mode of cyber bullying to be

via social networks (40.45%). Furthermore, approximately one quarter of

cyberbullying occurred through text messages (27.68%), chat (22.73%), and skype or

instant messaging (24.35%). In addition, approximately one quarter (25.02%) reported

logging into another person's account without permission for the purpose of bullying.

The intention for about ten percent (10.19%) of these incidents was to get the other

person in trouble.   In 2017, The *National Center for Education Statistics* reported that

approximately 20 percent of students between the ages of 12 and 18 admitted to being

bullied during school. Of these students, 13 percent reported "being subject of rumors,"

13 percent reported "being made fun of, called name, or insulted."   Furthermore, 4

percent reported being threatened with physical harm.

 A sample of 2186 middle and high school students was randomly selected from

northeast, northwest, southeast, and southwest portions of the U.S. The researchers

found the students to be highly involved in cyberbullying, with over 50% reporting

incidents. Thirty percent reported being either a victim or a bully, and 25% admitted to

being both (Mishna & Kohlory-Kassabri, 2012). They also found that females were

more frequently victims of bullying. In comparison, one-fifth of Holfeld and Grabe's

(2012) sample reported being victims of cyberbullying, with 55% of incidents occurring

within the past 30 days. They also found that girls were more involved in all aspects of

cyberbullying, being bullies, victims, and witnesses. Furthermore, Beckman, Hagquist

and Hellstrom (2013) looked closely at gender differences of Swedish youth involved in bullying. They determined that, although boys and girls had the same likelihood of being cyberbullies when compared to traditional bullying, girls were more involved in cyberbullying, as both bullies and victims. In addition, girls had a higher frequency of being cyber victims than boys in general.

Finklehor (2013) examined four U.S. national data sets and discovered that traditional face to face bullying in schools has significantly declined from 1990 to the present. On the other hand, internet bullying has climbed from 6% in 2000 to 11% in 2010, and 83% over the decade. This would made sense considering the mobile phone revolution in the 2000s and the onset of social media. Pettalia, Levine and Dickinson (2013) conducted the only qualitative study that could be found. Out of a sample of 260 students in Canada, 67% reported being involved in cyberbullying, 50% admitted to initiating it, and 90% stated that they were also victims. These numbers are quite troublesome considering the impact of cyberbullying. Oneill and Dinh (2013) examined that impact. They found that half of the Irish students involved in their study were "seriously upset" by cyber-victimization. Fifty-two percent reported being "very upset," and 44% stated that it had a "lasting effect." Though 71% admitted to talking to someone about it, only 6% spoke to a teacher, and 29% reported that their parents were unaware. Interestingly, Oneill and Dinh (2013) also noted that Irish students were seven times more likely than their European peers to be effected by cyberbullying. However, it is not clear how they made this determination.

In the last study, conducted by Ang, Haun and Florell (2014), proactive and

reactive aggression was investigated with a sample of 425 U.S. and 332 Singapore

youth. They found that the youth were involved in cyberbullying at approximately the

same rate (U.S 17.9%, Singapore 16.4%), and had about the same levels of infrequent

(U.S. 16.8%, Singapore 15.1%) and frequent occurrences (U.S. 1.1%, Singapore 1.3%).

In addition, they found that proactive aggression was significantly associated with

cyberbullying; however, reactive aggression was not. In other words, the researchers

determined that the cyberbullies initiated the incidents in a calculated manner, with a

purpose in mind, and the intent to harm another person. They did not do so

impulsively, as a reaction to an incident or emotion they had experienced, or in

retaliation. Furthermore, the researchers noted that nationality was not a moderator.

This shows that across cultures cyberbullying motives are similar.

Though these 22 studies are different in their measures and varying in their

findings, it seems safe to say that over time we can see a progression in the prevalence

rates of cyberbullying. As technology has become more available to youth, cell phones

have become more advanced, and social media has become more popular,

cyberbullying has increased. Some of the prevalence rates in certain studies are higher

than those in others. However, it makes sense that underestimation can be explained by

the period of time chosen to measure occurrences and the limitations of the self-

reporting methods of the studies. As the studies become more recent, the researchers

have begun to look past prevalence alone and have begun to examine some of the

modes and types of cyberbullying, it is apparent that cyberbullying is not simply a

"low-prevalence phenomenon" as Olweus (2012) claims. It has increased over time and

it appears that there are bullies who only use cyberspace as their tool for victimization. Hence, pointing to a creation of new bullies and a need for attention.

Impact

As the previous section has shown, with the advancement of technology we have seen advancement in cyberbullying as well. No longer is bullying restricted to the confines of the school grounds. Not only can cyberbullies act from the privacy of their own homes, often in an anonymous manner, perpetrators and victims do not even have to be in the same school. This was the case in the study conducted by Fenaughty and Harre (2013) in which they found over half the perpetrators in their study attended different schools than their victims. Regardless, the impact has shown to be quite distressing (Oneill & Dinh, 2013). Often times, cyberbullying has an even greater negative impact than other forms of bullying because of its potential to reach such a wider audience in as little as a matter of seconds (Feinberg & Robey, 2008). In a study conducted by Hinduja and Patchin (2015), 28% of children between the ages of 10 and 18 reported being victims of cyberbullying in their lifetime. Sadly, the effects are often far reaching and at times even irreversible (Horner, Asher & Fireman, 2015, Nickerson, 2019).

Privacy Issues

Children need to understand the consequences of putting information out there for public access. They often think that they can be anonymous. They feel that what they do online is only temporary. Everything that is done online can be traced. Children have no idea how easy it is to pull phone and email records. In fact, the library of

Congress has been archiving all Twitter messages since 2006 (Kite, Gable & Fillippeli, 2010). We can only assume that more of these types of archives will be created as technology expands and grows. Gone are the days of a closed juvenile file. No longer will the horrors they commit as a youth, be washed away as an adult.

School Effects

Some children have trouble managing the content of their social media pages and electronic devices in a responsible manner (Li, 2007a). As it happens, some of the dialogues that children are having in these arenas are quite injurious, and greatly impact the learning environment at school (Feinberg & Robey, 2009; Horner et al, 2015; Mason, 2008; Ruskauskus & Stoltz, 2007). Beran and Li (2007) stated that it matters not whether individuals are bullied at school or away from school, learning is still impacted. Victims of bullying are shown to have lower grades, poor concentration, and absenteeism. According to *Statistics on Bullying* by the Anti-Defamation League (2016), victims are more likely to skip class, skip school, avoid school activities and engage in physical fights (Zhang et l, 2016). Feinberg and Robey (2008) found that victims were not the only ones at risk. Cyberbullies and victims alike have higher rates of school failure and school avoidance. Accordingly, Sourander et al. (2010) noted that both victims and bullies have issues with feeling safe at school. This may help explain the source of school avoidance, especially since 15% of truancy is found to be bullying related (Hinduja and Patchin, 2012).

Health Factors

We already know that there are tremendous psychological damages of bullying.

It takes on many forms, including instant messaging, emails, blogs, Facebook, twitter, and texts (Williard, 2004). According to the Center for Disease Control (2012), students involved in cyberbullying, bullies and victims alike, are at risk for many health issues and school concerns. Cyber victims are twice more likely to have negative health effects than those not involved, experiencing depression, anxiety, and sleep difficulties. Perpetrators are at risk for substance abuse and academic problems, and in later adolescence and adulthood are at a greater risk of violence. Those individuals who are involved both as a victim and a bully are at higher risk for mental and behavior problems. Additional researchers have conducted studies in various countries across the globe, which resulted in similar outcomes.

Beran and Li (2007) investigated the relationship between traditional bullying and cyber bullying in Canada. They discovered that students who were bullied only by cyber methods, as well as those who were victim of both cyberbullying and traditional methods, were all impacted negatively. Feinberg and Robey (2008), found that cyberbullies were just as likely as victims to be impacted. Both are shown to have significant emotional issues, depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, physiological complaints. In a study of 1,963 middle school students in the United States, Patchin and Hinduja (2010) note that there is a "moderate and statistically significant" relationship between self-esteem and cyberbullying. Both students who were exposed to cyberbullying as a victim, as well as perpetrators had significantly lower self-esteem than those who were not involved (Reisen, Viona, dos Santos-Neto, 2019). Chang et al. (2010) also found self-esteem to be an issue in their study of Taiwanese students. Their

study showed that cyber victims, as well as those victims of traditional bullying, had the lowest levels of self-esteem and the highest levels of depression. In addition, though bullies had higher levels of self-esteem than victims, they also were lower than those who were not involved in bullying at all. Erdur-Baker and Tanrikulu (2010) also found that cyberbullying was significantly correlated to depression.

Sourander et al. (2010) found a cross-sectional association between cyberbullying and psychiatric and psychosomatic problems in Finnish students. They found that cyber victims had difficulty with emotions and peers, stomach problems, and sleeping issues; while cyberbullies were hyperactive, had conduct issues and low prosocial behavior, and they tended to smoke and drink. Both groups had issues with headaches. Kowalski and Limber (2013) compared the effects of males and females. They discovered that males had more psychological, physical, and academic effects. Girls, on the other hand, had higher levels of anxiety and depression.

Gamez-Gaudix et al. (2013) did a longitudinal study that addressed the relationship between cyberbullying and depression in Spain. They found there to be a reciprocal effect between cyberbullying and depression. They noted that cyberbullying in bullies and victims alike leads to increased depressive symptoms, which in turn increases the likelihood for cyberbullying. Furthermore, students who are depressed may have fewer social skills as well as a tendency to be isolated or withdrawn. This often makes them less attractive; therefore, increasing the likelihood for them to be victims of cyberbullying.

Suicidal Ideation

There has been much in the media regarding individuals who have committed

suicide because of cyberbullying. Though we cannot say definitively that cyberbullying

causes youth to commit suicide, research has shown there to be a strong connection

between the two (Bullying Statistics, 2010). There is also evidence showing that

cyberbullying is one factor that is correlated to suicidal ideation (Hinduja & Patchin,

2010) and the correlation between bullying and suicide has grown by 50% over the past

30 years (Bullying Statistics, 2010). This is consistent with the growth of technology.

Furthermore, Hinduja and Patchin (2010) found that 20% of youth involved in

cyberbullying, in one manner or another, seriously think about suicide, and 19% attempt

it. Similarly, in a study of 130,908 youth in Minnesota, Borowsky, Taliaferron and

McMorris (2013) found that 22% of the perpetrators, 29% of the victims, and 38% of

the bully-victims in their study admitted to suicidal thinking and/or attempts. When

presented with a study of this magnitude (N = 130,908), where over half (56.7%; 74,224

students) the students are involved in cyberbullying, these numbers are quite eye-

opening.

To take it a step further, Bauman, Toomey, and Walker (2013) investigated the

association between bullying, cyberbullying and suicide in high school students in

Arizona. Their study consisted of 1469 students, of which 49 % were female and 51%

were male. They determined that "depression mediated the relationship between

cyberbullying and suicide" for both males and females. Furthermore, experience with

bullying – both as a victim and as a perpetrator – was associated with suicidal thinking,

planning, and attempts. However, the role of participation varied for males and

females. Therefore, the root of these thought processes and acts did as well. For males specifically, being a cyberbully was a "direct predictor" of suicide attempts. Whereas for females, suicidal attempts were heavily associated with depression. In fact, the largest proportion of variance in suicidal attempts can be explained by depression of female cyberbullies. As victims, the depression females experience due victimization was shown to lead to suicide attempts. This is consistent with the idea that girls tend to internalize more, while boys tend to externalize. It is also consistent with Hinduja and Patchin's (2010) findings that all forms of cyberbullying – for both bullies and victims – were significantly associated with suicidal ideation. Additionally, those involved in cyberbullying were found to be twice as likely to have attempted suicide as those not involved, at all Hinduja & Patchin, 2010).

Karch, Logan, McDaniel, Floyd, and Vagi (2013) conducted a study of data from the *National Violent Death Reporting System* of youth who had committed suicide and obtained some interesting findings. The study incorporated youth from 10-17 years old, in 16 U.S. states. Of 1046 individuals, 75.2% were male, 69.3% non-Hispanic white, 58.1% were 16-17 years old, 51% had non-intimate partner problems (e.g. friends, parents), 42.4% had a crisis within 2 weeks prior, 12.4% were bully related, and 18.3% had a history of previous suicide attempts.

Those at Greater Risk

Age. It is difficult to determine who is at greater risk because some of the research has conflicting findings. Both Bauman et al. (2013) and Borowsky, Taliaferron and McMorris (2013) found 9th grade to be a significant period. Bauman et

al. (2010) stated that of all high school students, 9th graders had the highest likelihood of attempting suicide. Whereas, Borowsky et al. (2013) found 9th grade to be a time when suicidal thinking peaked. In addition, *Bullying Statistics 2010* stated that suicide is the leading cause of death for youth under 14, which could be thought to go hand-in-hand with the 9th grade year of school (Bullying Statistics, 2010), although they do not specifically list the percentages or age breakdowns. Therefore, it is impossible to make this determination with any level of certainty. Contrary to the previous studies, Karch et al. (2013), noted that 58.1% of youth who committed suicide in their study of 16 U.S. states were between the ages of 16 and 17. This is a little older than those youth we would traditionally find in the 9th grade. However, Borowsky et al. (2013) were looking at the period of time when suicidal ideations peaked, and Bauman et al. (2013) were examining the likelihood of attempting suicide. Karch et al. (2013), on the other hand, were reviewing cases of individuals who had committed suicide already. They also noted that 18.3% of the victims of suicide had a history of suicide attempts. Thinking about this, along with the findings Bauman et al. (2013) and Borowsky et al. (2013) presented, it seems safe to say that though suicidal ideations and attempts peak in 9th grade, successful suicides could happen at a later age. Many individuals have unsuccessful suicide attempts. In addition, it should be noted that Bauman et al. (2013) only included high school students in their study. Therefore, they would have difficulty making assumptions regarding students prior to ninth grade. Whereas, Borowsky et al. (2013) examined 6th, 9th, and 12th grade students in their study, and Karch et al. (2013) reviewed students between the ages of 10 and 17 years old. Their choice of subjects

and demographics provides them with a little broader comparison. It should also be noted that the report, which states suicide is the leading cause of death for youth under the age of 14, should not be misconstrued to mean that suicide rates for 14-year-olds and younger are the highest. It means that for this age group suicide is the highest cause of death. Since this statistic was found on the *Bullying Statistics 2010* report, it is understood that there is a relationship to bullying, however.

 Gender. There is also some discrepancy between the rates of males and females regarding suicide ideation and attempts. Though, Borowsky et al. (2013) noted that girls were most likely to report suicidal thinking, Hinduja and Patchin (2014), found boys (20.9%) and girls (19.7%) to be similar in their suicidal ideations. Conversely, Karch et al. (2013), reported that more boys (75.2%) had committed suicide in their study.

 There could be a couple reasons for this discrepancy. First, Borowsky et al. (2013) stated that girls were more likely to report suicidal ideation. Though, Hinduja and Patchin (2014) said boys and girls were similar in their ideations, they did not state whether or not the youth had reported these thoughts, other than within the confines of the study. Therefore, had Hinduja and Patchin not asked about suicidal ideations, they may not have had this finding. In other words, outside of the parameters of the study, girls may or may have reported suicidal ideation to a greater degree than boys. Secondly, Karch et al. (2013) looked at cases post-suicide. Just because there were more boys who had committed suicide does not mean they reported their suicidal thoughts prior to acting on them. Because 18.3% of these victims had previous suicide

attempts, at least to a point, one would think some ideations were reported. However, it is still not clear the extent to which reporting occurred.   Therefore, this study also does not completely contradict the findings that girls report suicidal ideation more than boys. It simply goes a step further by noting that boys commit suicide at a greater degree.

   Race. Karch et al. (2013) found 69.3% of the individuals who committed suicide were non-Hispanic white.   Contrarily, Hinduja and Patchin (2014) found race to be significantly correlated to suicidal ideation and they found that suicides in whites were notably lower. However, they went on to state that this was inconsistent with most findings in the literature and reports in the news (Hinduja & Patchin, 2014). This was consistent with the study of Borowsky et al. (2013) in which they found a higher risk in non-white youth.

   Other Factors. Borowsky et al. (2013) reported that those who did not live with both biological parents and/or received free and reduced lunch were also in the category of students who were at the highest risk for suicidal ideations. In addition, as reported previously, Karch et al. (2013) found that youth with non-intimate partner problems (e.g. parents and friends) were at a higher risk for suicide. In a manner of speaking, this correlates with the previous study. Often times, students who do not live with both parents have difficulties with their parental relationships.

School Shootings

   According to *Bullying Statistics 2010* report, revenge for bullying is one of the strongest motivations for school shootings (Bullying Statistics, 2010). In addition, Hong, Cho, Allen-Meares & Espelage (2011) found that according to the journals of

students who had committed crimes like school shootings, they were often victims of bullying as well. Further, sixty-one percent of those questioned believe that students shoot others due to being victims of bullying, and 1 in 20 students have reported seeing a gun at school (Bullying Statistics, 2010).

The truth is, it matters not who is at the greatest risk. The fact that too many are, is what matters most. This previous section has shown that there are tremendous psychological, physical, and school-related risks associated with cyberbullying; some of which have results that cannot be reversed. As researchers and educators, prevention and intervention are of utmost importance.

Prevention, Intervention, and Law

The key is to stop cyberbullying. However, as we know bullying in its traditional form has been around since the beginning of time. Cyberbullying, as has been shown is simply another form of bullying that occurs in such a manner that one does not have to be at school to give or receive. It can happen at any time and any place. Frequently, the victims do not even know who the perpetrators are due the anonymity it provides. Therefore, this form of bullying is more difficult to avoid and even more difficult to prevent.

Prevention

Research in the area of cyberbullying has been happening since the early 2000s. Justin Patchin and Sameer Hinduja have been conducting research regarding middle and high school students at the Cyberbullying Research Center since 2002.   In addition, "state and local lawmakers have [also] taken action to prevent bullying and protect

children," (stopbullying.gov, 2017).   A letter dated December 16, 2010 and signed by the U.S. Secretary of Education, stated:

> Recent incidents of bullying have demonstrated its potentially devastating effects on students, schools, and communities and have spurred a sense of urgency among State and local educators and policymakers to take action to combat bullying. The U.S. Department of Education (Department) shares this sense of urgency and is taking steps to help school officials effectively reduce bullying in our Nation's schools. Bullying can be extremely damaging to students, can disrupt an environment conducive to learning, and should not be tolerated in our schools.

Also, in 2010, The Anti-Defamation League spearheaded some of the education and legislation advocacy pertaining to bullying and cyberbullying. At that time some states adopted policies based on the ADL's model. These were thought to be a start. However, there was so much more work that needed to be done. At the same time, The US Department of Education, created a collection of overlapping elements from the state policies, procedures, and laws. Even with state policies, bullying is not slowing. Since 2010, The US Department of Education has made efforts to battle bullying and cyberbullying. Some of the actions of the department follow:

- Issuing four Dear Colleague Letters on harassment and bullying, gay-straight alliances, and bullying of students with disabilities
- Adding a requirement to the Civil Rights Data Collection that public elementary and secondary schools report incidents of harassment based on religion and sexual orientation, in addition to harassment based on sex, race, color, national origin, and disability

- Working collaboratively with the Federal Partners in Bullying Prevention, an interagency working group charged with coordinating federal efforts on bullying prevention
- Helping to develop a uniform definition of bullying
- Hosting four bullying prevention summits
- Creating training modules on bullying for school bus drivers and classroom teachers
- Producing the "Indicators of School Crime and Safety," which includes an indicator on bullying and cyberbullying in schools
- Supporting the work of the Stopbullying.gov website, which is managed by HHS
- Hosting webinars on cyberbullying, sexting, sextortion, and more
- Spearheading the Asian American Pacific Islanders Bullying Prevention Taskforce to explore the unique circumstances faced by AAPI students, including linguistic, cultural and religious issues. (US Department of Education, 2015)

Prevention requires so much more. One of the first steps is for everyone to get on the same page. Campbell (2005) suggests that prevention of cyberbullying may be similar to traditional bullying. With almost 30 years of research in bullying, there are 4 areas that have proven to reduce incidents: (1) awareness, (2) whole school policies, (3) supervision, and (4) programs.

Awareness. In any prevention program, one of the first steps is to ensure that people are aware. A difficulty in preventing bullying has often been, and still is, that schools often deny that bullying occurs (Tangen & Campbell, 2010). Perhaps, many are not aware of the extent to which it exists. Conducting a needs assessment would help to obtain this knowledge (Feinberg & Robey, 2009). Also, there are beliefs and perceptions that need to be changed; for example, some people see bullying as a rite of passage, or simply kids being kids (McCarthy, 2008). This is often not the case. All stakeholders need to be made aware of cyberbullying (Morales, 2014). Teachers and

staff must be provided professional development that specifically defines cyberbullying and explains the true consequences and dangers that are related. The training needs to be continuous and ongoing. Schools also need to make sure that parents are aware of the dangers and consequences, as well as how youth go about sending nasty texts and hurtful emails from under the covers at night or behind their closed bedroom doors (Tangen & Campbell, 2010). There are many resources and websites available for schools, teachers, and parents. Stopbullying.gov <http://stopbullying.gov>, contains tips and suggestions on how to protect youth from perpetrators. CyberSmart! Curriculum <http://cybersmartcurriculum> provides teachers with lessons that will assist them with starting a discussion about cyberbullying. "Lisa's No Pizza" <http://stopbullying.org> promotes an engaging, interactive game that could be included in the classroom curriculum.

Whole School Policies. Research has shown whole school policies to be one of the most effective practices a school can take against bullying, in general. It would make sense that it would also be a good practice to put in place for cyberbullying. However, it must be noted that policies must be streamlined to meet a specific school's needs. One cannot be taken in whole from another school and expected to work (Tangen & Campbell, 2010).

Supervision. Research has shown that supervision reduces the rate of traditional bullying in a school. The same holds true for cyberbullying. Teachers need to be aware of the negative ways in which students can use technology and take the same steps to intervene in any suspected incidents. More importantly, parents need to

be aware. There often exists a gap between parent and child knowledge of technology and the manner in which they each use it. Schools should insist on, and assist with educating and encouraging parents to talk with their children about technology, supervise their use of it, and encourage their children to talk, as well (Tangen & Campbell, 2010).

Programs. In traditional bullying, there are two types of programs that have been shown to be effective in reducing bullying – social programs and curriculum programs. Social programs stem from the belief that bystanders play a huge part in maintaining the bullying cycle. The purpose is to instill empathy. Empathy encourages bystanders act out against bullying, and not to stand by silently and allow it to continue. Research has shown that a good percentage of cyberbullying participants have been witness to bullying (Li, 2007a), or bystanders to use another term. Therefore, it would make sense that this program would work in the cyberbullying realm, as well. The second program, curriculum programs, incorporates the direct teaching of values, and empathy, embedded in a curriculum (Tangen & Campbell, 2010). There are many such programs available.

Intervention

Though prevention strategies may be similar to traditional bullying, intervention strategies may need to be quite different, as noted by Tangen & Campbell (2010). She states that the first reaction of most people is to punish cyberbullies. However, research has shown that punitive consequences are not effective. Even if they were, it would be difficult to put punitive consequences into action. First of all, many victims do not

report incidents to adults (O'Neill & Dinh, 2013), over half, according to Li (2007a).

Some think adults will not believe them (Feinburg & Robey, 2008). Others are afraid

that the adults might make the situation worse (McCarthy, 2008). While, some may be

afraid that they will lose their privileges to use technology (O'Donovan, 2010).

Secondly, there is the question of whether schools have the right to censure technology

if the incidents happen outside of school or if the student does not attend their school

(Feinberg & Robey, 2009). Further, can they prevent students from using technology at

school, or confiscate their personal devices if they are thought to be a safety issue?

Thirdly, is the issue of anonymity that technology provides. Often, perpetrators are

unknown and therefore, consequences cannot be assigned anyway (Tangen &

Campbell, 2010).

Legal Aspects and Roadblocks

As more and more incidents take place off of school grounds, school officials

struggle with the appropriate way to intervene. Educators often do not recognize

bullying that occurs of school grounds to be their responsibility (Vandebosch, Poels &

Deboutte, 2014). Efforts can be tricky as administrators attempt to balance school

safety and the protection of students' rights (Feinberg & Robey, 2009). Cell phones

with access to social media are omnipresent on school campuses. Dialogues that begin

outside of school can continue at school and again after school. It is difficult for

administrators to determine what falls within their scope of responsibility. They must

balance conflicting mandates, such as school safety and freedom of speech and

expression (O'Donovan, 2010).

In one school district in Pennsylvania just before the winter break of 2011, the assistant superintendent was faced with such a situation. He was notified that an "online poll ranking the hottest" girls in the district's high school and middle school had been created. The site quickly took on a damaging and tormenting quality as individuals posted comments regarding "students' appearance, gender, and sexual orientation." The assistant superintendent notified the director of technology and the superintendent, who wanted something done, immediately. Together with the director of technology, the assistant superintendent discovered that many posts were made from school campuses, in addition to those made off grounds. He contacted the principals of the students involved, who then contacted the parents of both the students who made the posts, as well as those who were targeted by the posts. The principals asked the parents for their assistance in the matter. The students were immediately directed to stop posting, they were given school consequences, and the site was taken down (Davis, 2011).

Fortunately, this situation did not result in a tragedy as others have. However, not all situations are handled in this manner. In fact, according to Davis (2010), many school administrators are not sure what they should do or what they can do in cyberbullying situations. Frequently, they have few examples or legal guidance to help them in their decisions. In addition, the court rules make it all the more confusing. The United States Department of Education (2010) urges schools and administrators to be conscious of *Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title IX of the Education Amendments*, and *Title VI of Civil*

Rights act of 1964, when acting against bullying. Case law pertaining to student speech

is antiquated, particularly speech that takes place off school grounds (Markzak &

Coyne, 2010). Most recent rulings pertain to students' persecution of administrators

rather than cyberbullying among students. Additionally, the recent cyberbullying cases

have had conflicting rulings that only add to the lack of clarity and in turn make school

officials all the leerier about getting involved or acting (Davis, 2011).

    In 2010, two cyberbullying decisions were released on the same day. Both were

from the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 3rd Circuit, *J.S.* v. *Blue Mountain School*

District and *Layshock ex. rel. Layshock* v. *Hermitage School District*. However, the

decisions reached by two separate three-judge panels had opposite outcomes. Both

cases involved students creating "a fake profile of a school principal" from a computer

that was not on school grounds. There was a reaction on both campuses and both

principals were incensed. The students involved in each situation were suspended by

their principal. However, only in one of the cases did the court feel the disciplinary

action was appropriate. In *Layshock ex. rel. Layshock* v. *Hermitage School District*, the

court determined that the school did not establish that the student's speech had created a

significant disruption to the learning environment of the school (Davis, 2011).

    With the Phoebe Prince case, Massachusetts developed law that allowed for

administrators to more easily attend to reports of bullying that took place off school

grounds. Before this legislation, administrators had very little authority to interfere with

situations that occurred off campus. By 2011, forty states had bullying legislation;

thirty-two of the forty states had legislation that specifically pertained to cyberbullying

(Bostic & Brunt, 2011). Since 2006, 49 states "enacted legislation aimed at preventing bullying and protecting students," (Hindija & Patchin, 2018). By November 2018, 48 state laws included cyberbullying or electronic harassment, 44 states had criminal penalties for cyberbullying and electronic harassment, 45 had school punishments for cyberbullying, 49 states developed school policies, and 17 states included penalties for off campus occurrences (Hinduja & Patchin, 2018).

Even with these policies, teachers and administrators still have great confusion when it comes to the First Amendment and how it impacts school situations. With the knowledge of cases like those in the 3rd Circuit Court of Appeals previously mentioned, administrators may fear that they are overstepping their boundaries by controlling a student's speech.

Historically, there are three laws from which students' speech is protected. The first, *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District (1969)* says schools can restrict the speech of students if it "materially and substantially disrupts learning" of others. The second, *Bethel School District No. 403 et al v. Fraser, a minor et al., (1986)* states that schools may prohibit speech that "undermines the schools' basic educational mission." The final case, *Hazelwood School District v. Kuhlmeier, (1988)* does not bind schools by the First Amendment and insist they accept or tolerate speech that "goes against values held by the school system". These laws allow school administrators the ability to oust cyberbullying legally. However, even knowing these laws does not lessen the burden of school officials when making decisions regarding cyberbullying incidents involving their students. Laws can be interpreted in various

manners, and administrators have to be extremely careful that they are not jeopardizing the civil rights of anyone.

Perceptions

A 2006 study investigating traditional bullying found that principals' and students' perceptions and awareness of bullying was somewhat different (Harris & Hathorn, 2006). As mentioned previously, everyone needs to be on the same page in order for prevention and intervention to be effective in reducing cyberbullying.

Students. Pettelia, Levine and Dickinson (2013) investigated students' perceptions of cyberbullying. They found that males and females did not significantly differ in their perceptions. Ninety-four percent perceived cyberbullying to be harmful. Although, 75% of students "somewhat" believed that cyberbullies received consequences for their harmful behaviors, they believed that it elicited harms greater than the consequences received by the perpetrators. (Pettelia et al., 2013). In a study done by France, Danesh, and Jirard (2013) perpetrators of brief and extended cyberbullying incidents were compared. Out of 20 beliefs and emotions, only one major difference was shown. Those individuals who were perpetrators of extended cyber-incidents, had been most likely hurt by something that previously occurred in cyberspace. In other words, their bullying was reciprocal in fashion. In addition, perpetrators of brief incidents stated that they would not have done bullied if it were against the law or a violation of a rule (France et al., 2013).

Agaston, Kowalski and Limber (2007) found that girls, specifically, viewed cyberbullying as a problem. Generally speaking, they found that students perceived

school personnel not to be helpful in cyberbullying situations. Further, students stated

that most incidents occurred outside of the school day, and that they were more likely to

report such incidents to their parents than adults at school. In comparison, Holfeld and

Grabe (2012), found that girls were overrepresented in all aspects of cyberbullying.

However, in contrast to the Agaston et al. (2007) study, students reported that teachers

were helpful when they were aware. Unfortunately, they were not made aware often

showing that only 8% of students reported incidents to teachers. However, they did

report the cyberbullying incidents to others; 64% told peers, 50% told parents, 20% told

siblings, 5% told cousins, and 1% told grandparents. Likewise, according to Luxenberg

et al (2015), 23% of students who are cyberbullied notified an adult after an online

incident. They say, "not telling anyone is a trend that becomes more pronounced as

students get older (21.5% in grades 3–5, 31.5% in middle school and 36% in high

school)," Luxenberg et al, (2015). This is why it makes sense to educate all

stakeholders. If parents and other relatives are aware of cyberbullying, they can make it

known to the schools, and gain support in an effort to put a halt to it.

The age of technology use is getting "younger and younger" (Mishna, Saini and

Solomon, 2009). By 2007, the majority of students had internet at home and cell

phones with access to the internet day and night. A Time Magazine article from April

2015 stated that one-third of children under the age of one have used smart phones and

tablets. The article goes one to state that "survey results show 97% of the families'

homes had TVs, 83% had tablets, 77% had smartphones and 59% had Internet access.

According to the parents' responses, 52% of kids under the age of 1 year had watched

TV, 36% had touched or scrolled a screen, 24% had called someone, 15% used apps and 12% played video games. The amount of time the children spent using devices rose as they got older, with 26% of 2-year-olds and 38% of 4-year-olds using devices for at least an hour (Sifferlin, 2015). In a 2007 study, students indicated that they had used phones in school, against school policies. In fact, they even described ways of circumventing school internet filters. Though this was more frequent at the high school level, middle school students were also aware of how to accomplish this (Agastan et al. 2007). Six years later, American Community Survey Reports conducted by The US Census Bureau shows that 79% of Americans have some form of computer and internet capability in their homes. This was a "tenfold" increase since 1984 when they started collecting data on personal computer usage (US Census Bureau, 2017). By 2016, The US Census Bureau saw another 10% increase, bringing the household computer usage to 89%. This 89% was collected by grouping all forms of computers in the same category. smartphones and tablets separately. They found that 75% of all households contained phones, 58% contained tablets, and 77% had either a desktop or laptop computer (US Census Bureau, 2018). The American Community Survey also notes that people are using computers for a greater variety of functions than previously (US Census Bureau, 2018).

Mishna et al, (2009) conducted a qualitative study consisting of fifth through eighth grade students. The majority reported a minimum of three hours on the internet daily. They noted that cyberbullies were not just "big bullies", but also those too timid to bully in "real life." They went on to report that cyberbullies say hurtful things that

can make you "really sad" and that it can happen at any time, all day long; "nonstop bullying." Over all, the students perceived it to be a "serious problem" that is quite damaging, worse than verbal bullying because "you cannot tell anyone about it and no one knows it is going on." Although one individual stated that he never thought of it as a problem, he decided that it must be an issue since the researchers were having a focus group about it.

Students went on to say that the perpetrator does not "feel guilty" because he does not have to face his victims. Furthermore, they felt that cyberbullying was easier to hide than traditional bullying. They noted that due to the ability to be anonymous, it could be anyone, "even someone next door". The general consensus was that cyberbullying allows perpetrators to victimize others without the fear of consequences. It even gives them the ability to assume a new identity online.

Lenhart et al (2015) confirm that 92% of teens are online daily, 56% are online several times per day, 71% utilize more than one social media platform, 90 % of teens with phones use them to communicate via text and the "typical teen receives 30 text messages per day." In addition, 57% of teens report meeting a new friend online. Lenhart et al (2105).

Administrators. Though there is a great deal of research pertaining to the perceptions of students, there is very little having to do with administrators' perceptions. One study was conducted by Cassidy, Brown and Jackson (2012) that compared educators' and students' perceptions of cyberbullying in schools. They found that 59% of educators were either "concerned" or "extremely concerned" about

cyberbullying. Interestingly, though 36% of students admitted to participating in cyberbullying, and 32% reported being victims, four of the educators were unable to describe even one incident of cyberbullying that had occurred. Furthermore, thirteen of the educators pointed to the same incident. The researchers also noted that the educators concern seemed superficial.

Despite the school divisions push to integrate technology into the classrooms, only two of the educators were relatively familiar with chats and blogs. Overall, they were moderately familiar with Facebook and YouTube, and fairly familiar with cell phones and email. The findings clearly point to a generation gap between the educators and the students. The school districts push to integrate technology did not carry over into educating teachers on the use and misuse of technology. Sadly, there was a complete lack of interest in even learning the results of the study. Even though the researchers made every effort to work with the school district to schedule meeting times that would suit, they were never able to come up with an opportune time (Cassidy, Brown and Jackson, 2012).

Another study conducted from spring 2013 to spring 2014 used a semi-structured interview process to investigate the perceptions of 21 middle school administrators and 15 district administrators. The findings of the study identified three main themes. First, they identified cyberbullying to be a major challenge. Second, they saw technology and parents to be "facilitators of cyberbullying," as well as "barriers to prevention." Third, school response is impacted by "unclear jurisdiction," "primary versus secondary prevention efforts," and technology (Young et al, 2017).

In summary, the section has shown that cyberbullying has increased. It has the potential to have a greater impact on schools and health factors of students, due its ability to reach larger audiences. The studies have shown great numbers of students impacted negatively by cyberbullying. However, the research pertaining to administrators is quite lacking. One of the key components to any prevention program is increasing awareness. Without research, we do not even know if administrators are aware.

Gap in the Research

The previous study was the only one that could be found that addressed educators' perceptions of cyberbullying. No studies could be located to address administrators' perceptions of cyberbullying. The limited research that does exist has shown us that there are varying perceptions when comparing students and educators (Cassidy et al. 2012; Harris & Hathorn, 2006). In addition, we have learned that the first step of effective prevention and intervention is getting everyone on the same page (McCarthy, 2008). If administrators do not have the same perceptions of cyberbullying as the students in their schools, or if they do not perceive it to be as frequently occurring, they will be unable to put a stop to it. Furthermore, if they do not understand the seriousness of it, how to go about preventing it, or even what role they have in the process, the outlook will be bleak. As this literature review has pointed out, the administrator's role is a very challenging one. The administrator is charged with protecting her students and maintaining a safe school environment that is conducive to learning, while at the same time protecting student freedoms of speech and expression.

Keeping a balance between the different mandates can be a very challenging one, specifically if administrators find the court rulings only add to the confusion. Therefore, administrators may be leery of overstepping their bounds or afraid of getting in trouble for jeopardizing a student's rights. This gap is a very important one that needs to be filled. This study will seek to start the process of doing just that – filling the gap. It will examine administrators' perceptions of cyberbullying, how they perceive their role in the process, and how laws impact their prevention and intervention decisions.

Chapter 3

Methodology

To this point, little empirical research has been published to address school administrators' perceptions of cyberbullying. When I started searching for articles for this study, I began with the keyword *cyberbullying.* It was not necessary to restrict the publication dates because cyberbullying remains a fairly new phenomenon. This original search yielded 705 items none of which related to administrators' perceptions. The researcher then narrowed the search using the term *cyberbullying* combined with other terms such as: *school discipline, social aspects, law, legislation, psychology, pathology, suicide, social networks, administration,* and *harmful effects* to create two-descriptor combinations. *School discipline + cyberbullying* yielded 26 peer-reviewed articles. To refine the search even more, the researcher used c*yberbullying + speech in schools +law + administration,* 38 articles were produced. Unfortunately, none addressed the perceptions of administrators.

After gathering a large number of articles that seemed suitable for the study, I read the articles more closely. I also pulled articles from the reference lists of articles that were relevant. Through this entire process, there were no articles specifically pertaining administrators' perceptions of cyberbullying.

It is specifically due to this lack of research in the area of administrators' perceptions that I propose a study to examine secondary school administrators' perceptions of cyberbullying, the laws pertaining to it, and how their knowledge impacts prevention, and intervention in schools. This study will be conducted in

secondary schools in the state of Virginia. The results of this study are intended to provide information about administrators' perceptions of cyberbullying that will enable school divisions to better attend to the phenomenon and increase knowledge and awareness of those who follow this issue. The research design of this study intends to concentrate on the following questions:

Q1: What are administrators' experiences with and perceptions of cyberbullying?

Q2: What do administrators do to prevent and respond to cyberbullying?

Q3: What level of legal knowledge of cyberbullying do administrators possess and how does it impact their actions?

Philosophical Foundations

Research is a systematic process; a precise method by which data are attained, evaluated, and interpreted in order to lessen complications and better results (Cohen et al, 2000). Researchers vary in their understandings and beliefs about the existence of phenomenon and how to go about collecting and interpreting the data to study and prove their assumptions. However, even though these varied beliefs and processes, researchers remain systematic and methodical in their processes (Cohen et, al, 2000; MacKenzie & Knipe, 2006). Researchers typically grasp a set of ideas, or a philosophical foundation, that supports the means in which they identify a phenomenon, study and interpret their results. It is through this understanding or thought process and precision that paradigms were born and the research methodologies that encompass them (MacKenzie & Knipe). Paradigms are beliefs that impact what we study, how we study it, and how we interpret the results. Specifically, a paradigm determines the

philosophical perspective a researcher maintains regarding a phenomenon, what can be known, and how knowledge can be attained (Assahali, 2015); it is a guideline for identifying a matter, deciding what to learn, and how to go about learning it. Mackenzie and Knipe (2006) establish three factors of a paradigm: a belief about the phenomenon (ontology), a process (epistemology), and effectiveness (methodology). Assalahi (2015) explains the significance of each part of a paradigm depends on the theoretical foundation. He identifies three theories; the positivist, interpretive, and critical. Paul (2005) identifies nine theories, which does not include the positivist view, but rather amends it with the postpositivist perspective. Whereas, Mittwede (2012) includes both positivistic and postpositivistic views identifying them as "quantitative (objectivist) approaches". McMillian (2000) also identifies Positivism/Postpositivism as quantitative in nature, and Interpretive/Constructivist as qualitative in nature.

Though both positivists and postpositivist can utilize a quantitative approach, there are some who believe that though positivist approaches are definitely quantitative, post positivists can use more qualitative approach. Polit and Beck (2008) refer to positivists as empiricists, and go on to state that naturalists are also known as postpositivists, interpretivists or constructivists. In addition, there are some pretty significant differences in their views. Positivists believe that everything can be explained through logic and reason. They feel that the number one approach is an experiment, and that statistics is the second best. They also feel that the way to the truth is through manipulation or direct regulation of the study. In social sciences this is a difficult task. Postpositivists also follow specific methods to make sure that their

observations are true. However, postpositivists realize that all observations are imperfect and can contain errors.   Though both views can be quantitative in their approaches, the postpositivists recognize that there is more to reality than strictly what can be gained from data and logic.   They believe that there is more to a phenomenon than what we can obtain through a study. All observations can be biased by beliefs, experiences, and personal views.   In other words, "knowledge is relative rather than absolute" (Merriam, 2009, p. 8.)

This study is being conducted because the researcher feels a phenomenon exists; an issue.   According to Creswell (2013), we conduct qualitative research when we feel there is an issue that needs exploring (p. 44). A phenomenon of this nature cannot be adequately explored through the use of numerical data. A survey type study will not get to the depth of the phenomenon. It might tell you what people think. Unfortunately, it will not tell you why or how.   McMillian (2000) tells us in order to "understand how people think about their world…you must get close to them" (p. 35). In this case, what we really want to understand is the why and the how. To promote understanding we must be able to describe personal experiences and create meaning (Burns & Grove, 2006, p. 35). Qualitative research is "interpretive, humanistic, and naturalistic" (Creswell, 2007). Therefore, it allows the researcher to dig deeper than an objective approach could. Hence, a qualitative method with postpositivist theoretical underpinnings is most appropriate for this study. As previously mentioned, both positivists and postpositivists views are systematic and rigorous (Paul, 2005, p. 46; Burns & Grove, 2006, p.35). However, where positivists seek to find the truth,

postpositivists realize that they will never be able to achieve the goal of finding one truth, due to the fact that there can be many. In other words, cultural differences, various views, and other natural biases come into play. For this very reason, the researcher in this study will be taking a postpositivist approach. The researcher knows that one truth is not possible. She also recognizes how various views and experiences impact science. This knowledge identifies postpositivism as the most appropriate approach to this study.

Ontology

Ontology is known as the study of "being" or "nature of reality" (Crotty, 1998; Cohen et al, 2000). It allows us to understand whether things exist or not and helps to identify the relationships between them. It is through ontology that researchers decide what to study. It begins with a personal interest. However, it is through an extensive review of the literature that one determines if what she determines to be an issue in reality exists as an issue.

The current research available indicates the existence of cyberbullying is real. The research shows that students perceive it as a huge concern. However, the lack of research in the area of school administrators leads this researcher to be concerned about the future of this phenomenon and how to deal with the issue at hand. Therefore, the need for research in this area is paramount. Without research we have no way of knowing administrators' perceptions. We have no way of establishing whether administrators' perceptions differ from those of students, which means we have no idea

of where to begin in the process of fixing the issue. Ontologically speaking, we must first determine the existence of the phenomenon. I feel that the literature review has established a need. The positivist view indicates a need for objectivity and realism to verify existence (Cohen et al, 2000). Postpositivists would realize that cultural differences and various experiences impact how individuals view cyberbullying, or even if they feel it is an issue. The research has shown that students see it as a problem. Unfortunately, the research pertaining to the views of administrators is quite lacking. Therefore, I believe that there is a need to investigate the views of administrators in order to begin to put a stop to cyberbullying as whole. I believe that the administrators' voice is lacking. Therefore, that is where we should begin. Furthermore, as Speziale and Carpentar (2003) point out, phenomena do not contain one reality but rather many. Since individuals experience reality from different points of view, they will perceive those experiences pertaining to the phenomena differently, and also interpret them differently. This further emphasizes the need for a subjective approach.

Epistemology

Where ontology is the study of being, epistemology is the study of knowing. It is about obtaining knowledge, and is more concerned with the origin, span, and restrictions of knowledge than simply existence (Assalahi, 2015). Epistemology is the inquisition of what sets belief apart from opinion. Epistemologically speaking, positivists argue that realism must dwell in objective truth and be independent of the human mind (Crotty, 1998); removed from human involvement. Therefore, in a positivist view it is important for researchers to detach themselves from those whom

they are studying in order to prevent or minimize researcher bias. Additionally, the process of inquiry is foremost. Positivists review literature, formulate theories and develop hypotheses. Then, they seek to either prove or disprove these hypotheses (Assahali, 2015). Postpositivists have similar processes and outcomes, though they believe that knowledge "cannot be absolute" (Paul,2005).   Positivists/postpositivists conceive survey designs allow researchers to prove theoretical assumptions by studying a circumstance thoroughly and discreetly (Assahali, 2015). However, as previously mentioned a survey type study will not get to the depth necessary to address the current research questions. Knowledge obtained through subjective techniques that provide rich description and deep understanding is more appropriate (Spziale & Carpentar, 2003).

For this specific cyberbullying study, I plan to gather information through individual interviews. I feel that this method will give a clearer picture of administrators' perceptions. Hence, it will provide greater or more thorough knowledge. I realize that experiences and beliefs may play a big part. I hope that this process will identify overlapping beliefs and perceptions. Though I have my own opinions, I feel it necessary to conduct my research in such a way that allows for depth, clarification and understanding (Mitchell and Jolly, 2010, p. 268). I will remain aware of how my opinions can taint the findings, and will conduct my study in such a way as to limit contamination.

Methodology

Positivism and postpositivism both maintain that knowledge is "observable and therefore measurable." Quantitative research methods are appropriate for data collection and investigation in this sense. However, qualitative research is also systematic and rigorous (Paul, 2005), allowing for measurable data. The current study seeks to identify administrators' perceptions of cyberbullying, whether they feel it is an issue in need of concern, how they address it, their knowledge of the laws surrounding cyberbullying, and how this knowledge impacts their actions. Mitchell and Jolly (2010, p. 254) state if you want to know what people are "thinking, feeling, or doing' you should use a survey instrument. However, Bogdan and Bilken (2007) say that you have to get close to someone in order to understand how they think (p. 35). In order to get close to participants, qualitative approaches are needed.

Type of Study

This study was aimed at identifying the knowledge of its participants and how that knowledge impacts the decisions they make in their schools. A non-experimental qualitative method was used. I collected data through face-to-face interviews with school administrators. The interview questions were designed to target the study's research questions. An interview process was chosen for this study due to its ability to gather personal, in depth information regarding the participants thoughts, feelings and actions. Creswell (2007) believes that qualitative research allows for "individualized interpretations of the phenomena being studied." Without attempts to control interactions, researchers are able to obtain greater insights into the realities the

participants hold (Polit & Beck, 2008).

Research Setting and Population

School administrators, which will include principals and assistant principals, from 12 secondary schools in central Virginia school divisions will be recruited to participate in the study. Since this study is not being conducted in one isolated school division it is not necessary to conduct this research in conjunction with the districts' research and planning departments. Because research has shown that cyber bullying is more prevalent in secondary schools, this study will only target secondary school administrators. In addition, in order to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon, I will attempt to include participants from large school divisions as well as smaller school divisions.

First, using the internet, I made a list of various secondary schools in surrounding districts and gathered contact information for the principals of these schools. To gain interest in the study, I will email an information sheet outlining the ramifications of the study to the principals. I will ask the principals to contact me if they are interested in participating or to give me the contact information of their assistant or associate principals if they would rather defer to one of them. I arranged each face to face interview at a location and time that is convenient for each participant as I secure participation. I resent emails or made follow up phone calls to potential participants as follow up, until I had obtained the number of participants necessary for my study. A copy of this information sheet is included in the Appendix.

Instrumentation

The interview questions were developed from the findings in the literature. However, they were carefully constructed to address the issues of secondary schools.

Data Collection

The overall purpose of this study was to determine school administrators' level of knowledge when faced with cyberbullying in their schools. The participants were administrators in secondary schools in school districts across Virginia. I conducted a qualitative methods approach in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the administrators' beliefs and issues. To obtain the data needed, Creswell (2013) states that participants should be given the opportunity to "tell stories unencumbered by what we expect to find and what we have read in literature" (p.44). I conducted individual interviews that allowed the participants to answer open-ended questions and tell their stories. I anticipated the interviews to take 30 to 45 minutes. They were conducted at a location and time that is agreeable and convenient for each participant. I recorded the interviews electronically as well as taking written notes. A copy of the Interview questions is included in the Appendix.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Qualitative data needs to be organized, classified into "codes and themes," identified and explained (Creswell, 2009). Data analysis and data interpretation are separate entities. Data analysis is about examining and grouping the transcripts, notes and other materials in such a way to allow the researcher to discover patterns. Data

interpretation is when the researcher develops ideas about the patterns he finds, relates them to the literature, theory and other concerns and explains them in a way that others can understand (Bogdan & Bilken, 2007).

I analyzed and interpreted the data in the above mentioned ways, during this study. I analyzed the data by looking for similarities and themes between administrators' perceptions of cyberbullying and their manner of addressing instances that occurred. I categorized and coded the data as themes, identifying themes and making sense out of them. Then, I interpreted the data, by describing and explaining it in detail.

Validity

The interview questions were carefully designed to address the questions that I, as the researcher wanted to answer. I used an electronic recording device to record the interviews. This allowed me to capture exactly what is said, and prevented me from missing important information in my notetaking. I asked follow up questions to ensure that I understood what the participants were saying and how they were thinking. This was to prevent me from tainting the study with my own interpretations or perceptions. After the interviews were complete, I uploaded the recordings into an online transcription program, called TEMI. Then, with the transcripts in front of me I listened to the interviews and manually corrected the transcripts where errors in wording occur.

Delimitations

Though I hoped that this research would identify important information regarding administrators' perceptions and the way to address cyberbullying, it is

important to note that the study was conducted in 12 secondary schools, in 8 different school divisions in the state of Virginia. Therefore, the data is only representative of these schools and districts. I decided to look at various schools in different districts in hopes that it would provide a broader wealth of knowledge. However, even looking at various schools from different districts provides an isolated group of schools and the findings of this study cannot be considered representative of all districts, even in the same region. It cannot even be considered representative of the districts from which the schools were selected.

Researcher Position

Having been a public school teacher and administrator for a number of years, I have seen bullying grow and transform. With more and more incidents occurring in the news; suicides and school shootings becoming more frequent, and technology becoming more available, I have to wonder how we can stop it.

I have been involved in conversations over the years regarding incidents that have occurred outside of the school, yet have impacted the school environment. I have been told that nothing can be done if it is not on school grounds or school devices. I disagree.

I feel that many administrators do not have enough training or knowledge to deal with cyberbullying in their schools. Often, they do not know how to recognize bullying or cyberbullying, and frequently they do not feel it is something that they have a right to address. On top of that, many districts are pushing to lower suspension rates; which

adds another level to the problem.

In addition, the state has started tracking bullying incidents. This means when administrators code an infraction as bullying they must indicate both the perpetrator and the victim, as well as identify the bullying type (i.e. racial, sexual, religious, etc.). Not only is it more work for an administrator to code an infraction as bullying, as opposed to using some other code. There is also a chance that the school could be labelled high risk school if the frequency is great.

If administrators do know how to identify bullying and cyberbullying, and they feel it is within their rights to discipline for such occurrences, they still may not do so based on what they are being told by their district office. So, the phenomenon continues. Personally, I find it angering and frustrating. I am concerned about the lack of consistency that I see in the schools today. I am disheartened by the fact that some administrators simply do not have enough knowledge, and others feel their hands are tied by the higher-ups. I wish to add to the research that exists on this issue. As someone who has struggled with these very issues, I want to see change.

I know that this study cannot be that change, but I feel that it is a start. I have my ideas about what is happening, but I have formulated those ideas from small, personal situations in which I have been involved. I have no research to base it on. My hope is that this study will provide an idea of where to go from here.

Summary

To validate my theory about administrators' perceptions of cyberbullying and

their actions, a qualitative based research study was conducted. The study aimed to identify administrators' perceptions about cyberbullying, their knowledge of the laws that surround cyberbullying, their actions based on their knowledge. Through this study, I collected data from interviews, which I will present in a descriptive format later in this document. I hoped to gain knowledge of administrators' perceptions of cyberbullying and their intervention and prevention practices, and investigate any connections between beliefs and actions as well as knowledge and actions.

Chapter 4

Findings

This phenomenological research study purposed to investigate administrators'
perceptions of cyberbullying in their schools. Based on the research reviewed in
preparing for this study, I discovered there was limited research available pertaining to
administrators' perceptions. There was a moderate amount of research pertaining to
students' perceptions, and a smaller amount pertaining to teachers' perceptions, and
those of other educators. However, it was noted when comparing the perceptions of
students and teachers, those perceptions varied in prevalence. According to the
research, students perceive cyberbullying to be more prevalent than teachers and other
educators. Further, with the area of administrators' perceptions lacking it is impossible
to know if there is a discrepancy in perceptions and prevalence. The research has
shown that there is a need for intervention and prevention due the effects cyberbullying
has had on students' social, emotional and academic growth (Beran & Lee, 2007;
Feinberg & Robey, 2009; Mason, 2008; Ruskauskus & Stoltz, 2007). Since we know
awareness is a key to prevention (Tangen & Campbell, 2010), my personal belief is that
this gap in research, hence gap in knowledge, could negatively impact intervention and
prevention when it comes to cyberbullying.

This study was conducted through face-to-face interviews with 12
administrators of secondary schools across eight Virginia school divisions. The
following research questions served as a guide for the investigation:

Q1: What are administrators' experiences with and perceptions of

cyberbullying?

Q2: What do administrators do to prevent and respond to cyberbullying?

Q3: What level of legal knowledge of cyberbullying do administrators possess and how does it impact their actions?

The findings of the document review and the 12 interviews are presented in narrative form in this chapter. For informational purposes, I have included some school and participant demographics as well as a brief description of the data analysis.   The findings from the interviews are presented in two forms, modelled after Moore's dissertation (Moore, 2018). In this chapter, the findings are explained as answers to the research questions that guided this investigation. In addition, I have included the finding presented by interview participant in *Appendix C* at the end of this document. The purpose of this inclusion is to allow the reader a reference for more detailed information regarding the individual interviews.

School and Participant Demographics

The 12 administrators interviewed consisted of 9 principals and three assistant principals. Seven were from high schools and five were from middle schools. Nine of the participants were male, the other three were female. The schools were from districts in the Central Virginia, Northern Neck, and the Valley Regions that ranged in number from a total of 806 students to 58,000 students. The individual schools ranged in size from 166 students to 1781 students. The schools were urban, suburban and rural. In addition, one of the schools was a regional school and one was a separate public school.

The first step in creating a participate pool involved identifying administrators in

secondary schools in divisions surrounding my residence. I utilized the internet to

search school division websites to identify their secondary schools and the principals of

those schools. I created a spreadsheet to organize the information by school district,

schools, and principals' names and contact information. After obtaining approval from

the Internal Review Board, I emailed the preapproved email and information regarding

my study (Appendix B) to principals in secondary schools in the Central Virginia,

Tidewater, Northern Neck, Northern Virginia, Valley, and Southside Virginia regions,

requesting their participation in my study. The email explains the study and ask for

their participation. It also states that if they would like to designate another individual

(i.e. assistant principal, associate principal) they need only let me know. Two principals

responded back to me within two days. For those who did not respond, I sent follow up

emails, and in some cases I made phone calls in an effort to obtain adequate

participation. In three cases, I was referred to an assistant principal. At which time, I

sent another email to those individuals asking for their participation. Fortunately, in

these cases the assistant principals were anticipating my contact. Al three were quick to

agree to participate, though one was not comfortable being recorded. As administrators

agreed to participate, I communicated with each individually, and we determined a

location, date and time, which was convenient and comfortable for each. In several

situations, it took several calls and emails before we were able to meet. I was able to

obtain approximately half of my participants rather quickly. However, it took more

time, emails and calls to obtain the rest. Many administrators did not respond to any

calls or emails. In fact, in the majority of the emails I sent, I never received a response.

It was months after I conducted 10 of my interviews that I was able to obtain the last two. Then, it took even a greater amount of time to schedule those. I thought the summer would be a good time, since schools are not in session. However, that was not the case. The very last interview took four months to schedule and then it was rescheduled 4 more times before we finally agreed to conduct it over the phone.

Data Analysis

Most principals preferred to meet in their offices. However, I met one at the local Panera, while two other interviews were conducted over the phone, because the schools were quite a distance away and it was difficult to find an appropriate time for the principals of these schools. In addition, one administrator agreed to participate if she were not recorded. After discussing this request with my dissertation chair, I sent the participant a copy of the questions, on which she typed up her answers and returned to me. For the two interviews conducted over the phone, I also sent the questions ahead in order to make the interview process easier for the respondents.

After building a positive rapport with the participants an interview protocol (Appendix A) was used for each interview. The interview protocol provided consistency and structure for the 12 interviews.

All of the interviews were digitally recorded. I utilized an online program called Temi to transcribe the interviews. Once each transcript was complete, I listened to the recording with each transcript on the computer screen and corrected any errors in the translation. I printed out hard copies of each transcript and read through them again looking for themes, using colored pens and highlighters to code similarities between

interviews. Then, I created a spreadsheet using the answers to each question as well as similarities I discovered. I used the spreadsheet to further investigate the similarities, again using highlighters and colored pens in order to code relationships between responses. Through this discovery analysis themes and subthemes emerged. Later, I combed through the spreadsheet and the transcripts again. I wrote significant quotations from the interviews on the notecards and labelled each with the themes and subthemes I discovered, as well as each participant pseudonym. The following chapter seeks to summarize the findings from the interviews and how those findings pertain to the research questions. As modelled after the dissertation by Moore (2017), this section is "organized by respondent and then by research question."

Results

Analysis of Results

This research study sought to examine the phenomenon of cyberbullying in twelve secondary schools across eight Virginia school divisions. During this investigation I attempted to answer the following research questions.

1.   What are administrators' experiences with and perceptions of cyberbullying?

2. What do administrators do to prevent and respond to cyber bullying?

3. What level of legal knowledge do administrators possess and how does

The analysis of the data uncovered multiple codes that I categorized into three major themes: (1) Incidents and Impact, (2) Programs and Procedures, and (3) Responsibility. In addition to these themes, several subthemes developed.

The themes and subthemes can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Themes and Subthemes

Research Question	Theme	Subtheme
1: What are administrators' experiences with and perceptions of cyberbullying?	Incidents & Impact	Types of bullying Platforms Episodes Definition
2: What do administrators do to prevent and respond to cyberbullying?	Procedures & Programs	District Policy Education & School-Wide Programs Monitoring and Notification
3: What level of legal knowledge of cyberbullying do administrators possess and how does it impact their actions?	Responsibility	Jurisdiction Consulting Law Enforcement Parents

Table 2 further provides representation of the themes and subthemes identified

from the data analysis, with examples of participant quotations.

Table 2. Cyberbullying Themes and Participant Quotations.

Theme	Quotations
Theme 1: Incidents & Impact	
1A: Administrators report seeing various types of bullying across programs.	"It's not as much cyberbullying as I have seen in my former schools." (B) "We commonly see [students] saying ugly things about people, you're fat, you're ugly, you look like…a dog." (C) "Instances that we do deal with, with bullying are more cyber in nature." (D) "Comments regarding appearance, clothing, brands or labels of clothing, hairstyle, etc." (E) "Working in urban schools…it's a lot of dealing related to race and class." (L) "They had different names like prep kids, Goth kids, athletes…so they would break down into social group as opposed to bullying in urban schools." (L)
1B: Students use different technological platforms for communicating and bullying.	"It's more Snapchat and Instagram. Rarely is it Facebook anymore." (A) "It's so easy now for bullying to take form in the phones and texting." (C) "Social media platforms are norms for our students now, to the end that they are far more comfortable being tigers online." (D) "Instagram has been a hot one this year." (F) "I gotta be honest…I'm having a hard time keeping up with the different platforms." (H) "The incident I'm dealing with actually somewhat currently is…with Facebook." (I)
1C: Administrators describe incidents of cyberbullying they have experienced in their schools.	"In the last two years, I have dealt with one bullying via social media case. There's a lot of harassment…not bullying by definition." (D) "Someone posted a picture of her…from a routine they were doing at halftime and circled her picture when she was in the air doing her stunt and put WTF and some emojis." (E) When [a] student was denied the possibility of being dated…bullying started…both face to face and through social media." (G) "Truly, it's not a huge, huge issue." (H) "They took a video of all these guns and these kids threatening her and sent it out on the internet." (K)

Table 2. Cyberbullying Themes and Participant Quotations.

Theme	Quotations
1D: Administrators find defining bullying to be troublesome.	"I think bullying depends on how you define bullying." (3) "[The] emphasis was trying to better define for the public what bullying actually is." (4) "Code of conduct provides a clear definition of cyberbullying…all of the reads easily and is easily understood, while applying it strictly by the book is more difficult." (6) "One of the problems we are finding is that bullying has become such a buzz word…they don't understand the true definition of bullying." (8) "The more technology evolves, I think it's harder to…define what's defamatory and what is okay." (11)
Theme 2: Programs and Procedures	
2A: District policies are limited or unknown by administrators.	"Let me see, so there's a definition." (1) "Um, no, not really." (2) "We just follow the student code of conduct." (3) "It's in the code of conduct…I believe it's a category 4." (5) "I think it's in the code of conduct." (8) "The policy is that we don't tolerate it." (9) "I think school divisions within the last 10-15 years, have really kept pace with the seriousness…especially cyberbullying, so it's…no longer considered a minor offense." (12)
2B: Education and school wide prevention programs.	"I think where we fall short is…when we give kids phones, we're not teaching them how to access information and use the phone appropriately." (3) "Right now, we are doing No Place for Hate…it's all centered around kindness and Digital Citizenship." (5) "Mainly at this age, we just try to educate them, regardless of what the law is." (5) "I think the real angle we should take is to try to teach them how to use it responsibly and appropriately." (9) "I try to use it as a learning experience, so kids can see it's not right to do it in the first place." (11)
2C: Schools have ways of monitoring students' technology usage and providing means for notification related to cyberbullying.	"We have a bullying form that kids or parents can fill out…then, it comes straight to us." (2) "We just…initiated a program that is a Stop Bullying Button on our web page." (3) "Gaggle will…comb through students' documents and look for certain words or phraseology…screening… for something we should look into." (4) "We have Silence Hurts where they can just send an email…and it will go to the administrators." (5)

		"We have a program we use to monitor students being on inappropriate websites." (10)
3A:	Administrators expressed concern in determining jurisdiction.	"It all depends on when the cyberbullying takes place." (1) "The tricky part…you know, how do you handle these incidents…what quantifies and qualifies as a school issue?" (9) "I shared with her that it was out of my jurisdiction. I couldn't do anything about it, because it did not happen in school." (10)
3B:	Administrators discussed when it is appropriate to consult with law enforcement officials.	"Sometimes we would work with the SROs, bring them into the conversation." (2) "Statements are taken from all involved and some level of consult occurs with our SROs." (6) "We've asked law enforcement to step in and investigate in situations where we weren't receiving cooperation from the parent or student." (7) "If it's out of our jurisdiction we turn it over to the SRO or…police department." (10)

Research Question 1: What are administrators' experiences with and perceptions of cyberbullying?

Research Question 1 dealt with specific incidents of technology use and cyberbullying experienced by building administrators and sought to gain an understanding of how such incidents impacted the environment through the administrators' eyes. The subthemes for this question were (a) types of bullying, (b) platforms, (c) episodes, and (e) definition.

Incidents and Impact

Types of Bullying

When asked to talk about the different types of bullying seen in their schools, administrators' answers varied. Administrator A spoke of bullying based on "sexual orientation or being a loner," while Administrator F talked about "hairstyles and clothing labels." Administrator C explained that it is all a matter of how bullying is

defined. She said, "I think that a lot of things that we see is more teasing than bullying. Um, so we have to make sure that we, our students understand the difference between teasing and bullying." Administrator C feels she commonly sees "more teasing…saying ugly things about people, and making mean comments like, you're ugly, or your fat, or you're a dog," while another administrator agreed that kids are "just trying to put others down." A middle school administrator explained, "They generally have low self-esteem issues or are trying to gain attention from others in a negative way." Administrator K spoke of students posting inappropriate pictures of previous girlfriends and boyfriends online after breakups.

Most of the administrators reported that girls were more involved in cyberbullying than boys, while boys were more involved in physical incidents. Administrator C stated there is "more drama" between girls. She started to call it "verbal teasing," but then corrected herself by saying, "I shouldn't call it teasing, because teasing is different than bullying." Administrator K reported that the "normal old-fashioned bullying" still occurs in her school, "pushing and shoving others [and] taking something that belongs to them, [like]earphones." Then, threatening harm if the victim reports it. Administrator L, having been an administrator in multiple urban and suburban school districts, told me there are "major differences" when you look at bullying from an urban versus suburban school perspective. He stated in a "suburban school bullying would be the kids who are different, ostracized and marginalized." Kids were mean to those who were in a different socioeconomic class. In suburbia, he explained, "they had different names like, prep kids, goth kids, and athletes." He stated

that the students were picked on for which group they were in. In other words, the bullying of students in suburban schools "would break down into social groups as opposed to bullying in urban schools," said Administrator L. He went on to say, "In [the] urban school division it takes on a different texture. He says, like the suburban schools "it also deals with socioeconomic status, but really it is related to neighborhoods having issues with other neighborhoods because of the demographics of how the neighborhoods shaped up." Furthermore, the "actions that the students take would be more sinister" in the urban schools. Usually, there would be "more serious violence or threats of violent fights or group fights." Administrator L found that the Latino students in his school were bullied by the African American students, and the Latino students in turn bullied other Latino students based on their countries of origin.

Most administrators indicated that they felt cyberbullying occurred more often than traditional bullying. One administrator stated that she felt there was a "high uptick in this type of bullying via social media." Another said, "social media access and cell phone access increases, or lends itself to increase cyberbullying, in my opinion." Administrator B told me, "It's not as much cyberbullying as I have seen in my former schools." Then he said, "Well, I would say no, I take that back. I would say it is more of people saying things on different social media sites or text messages." He also identified cell phones as impacting the increase of cyberbullying. Most of the cyberbullying cases "take place at home and…once they're off campus," administrators said. Further, it typically consists of the students going "back and forth" with each other.

At least from this data, there was not a difference between the prevalence of bullying incidents in high school and middle school students. It is important to note that there were only three middle schools in this study. In addition, though it was mentioned that girls tend to cyberbully more than males, this could not be confirmed by the findings. Of the incidents shared by administrators, only one of the perpetrators was female. Furthermore, there was no apparent difference between the four female and eight male administrators in there reporting of cyberbullying incidents. There did seem to be a greater degree of violence or threats thereof, in the urban schools as opposed to the other schools, as was mentioned by Administrator L. However, it must be noted that there were only two urban schools in this study. In addition, the incidents reported were chosen by the administrators of those schools. The administrators may have chosen these specific incidents due to the level of violence or threats involved. Therefore, I cannot state that urban schools have a greater level of violence in cyberbullying acts based solely on these examples.

Platforms

The majority of administrators have had to handle incidents involving Facebook or other social media programs. Administrator D reported that "social media platforms are norms for our students now, to the end that they are far more comfortable being tigers online." According to the findings from this study, the more popular platforms are "Snapchat and Instagram. Rarely is it Facebook anymore." One principal confirmed, "Instagram has been a hot one this year." Administrator H said, "I gotta be honest…I'm having a hard time keeping up with the different platforms." He said,

"kids keep changing what they are using." He further stated, "lately, there is a lot going on with the one that disappears within 24 hours, but kids are getting smart and taking screenshots." He was referring to Snapchat. Three other participants also mentioned the fact that posts disappear from Snapchat within 24 hours and the difficulties it causes them. They actually tell their students to take screenshots for proof. Another administrator stated that he feels students are not very smart, due to the fact that they post threats on social media for everyone to see and do not delete them. He reported that victims are getting more savvy in taking screenshots, so in the case that perpetrators go back and delete the comments, they will have evidence. Obviously, the skills of both the victims and bullies varies. It seems from this investigation that high school students have greater abilities than middle school students, but not in all cases. In addition, it appears that the skills and knowledge possessed by the administrators also vary widely. This is illuminated by one of the administrators in the following quote:

> These kids are so beyond us in technology and understanding, and the apps they use. I mean, they'll show me things that I don't even have a clue. I'm like, wow, I didn't know that it would do that. You know, it's very scary. (Administrator C)

As mentioned above Facebook seems to not be one of the greater used platforms. Three administrators told me verbatim "Facebook is for old people." However, it was noted by several administrators that general threats to the school or to a group of people has occurred on Facebook. Two other administrators reported incidents that took place via Facebook. While a third said, "the incident I am dealing with

actually somewhat currently is…with Facebook." He went on to describe situation

where a student wanted to date another student. He stated that a "young gentleman is

making defamatory and degrading comments about women in general." However, he

directed his comments toward one specific female. Administrator I explained that this

young man "had feelings that were not readily returned." As a result, he used Facebook

as platform in which to deal with his feelings of rejection. Though this is not an

example of cyberbullying, it is not an appropriate use of social media and certainly ends

up being a disruption to the school environment. Additionally, there were other

incidents that occurred on Facebook. This shows that though Facebook is a lesser used

platform for most students, some are still utilizing to some degree.

Texting was also noted to impact the school environment. One administrator

said, "it is absolutely an issue." Another confirmed, "texting is extremely disruptive

throughout the day." A third principal said, "It is so easy for bullying to take form in

phones and texting." Another talked about the savviness of her students. She said,

"they are increasing their manipulation of others' images" and they are taking "a lot of

screenshots from texting conversations that are then shared to embarrass the student or

manipulated to feed certain narratives."

Three administrators reported altercations occurring due to texting during the

day. One administrator stated that the fights were due to "texting banter," while the

other two stated that the students actually text each other to meet to fight. Other

administrators reported group texting to be a disruption. Administrator H stated that the

"kids can't seem to put [cellphones] down." He said, "it's a big problem." They find

girlfriends and boyfriends texting each other to coordinate passes to the bathroom and such. Another administrator explained that they have had to deal with "a lot of sexting." While another administrator noted students and staff have even been "videotaped without their knowledge."

In addition to texting, three administrators noted group chats through Google documents. One administrator said, "when I was young we used to pass notes back and forth. Nowadays students have Google docs that they name things like, my crew, where they chat with students in other classes and even other schools." She went on to explain that "most of it is innocent; most of it is just a lot of talking about nonsense." However, it becomes "bullying when a student in the group doesn't agree with what is being said about someone else." She explained, "the bullying part comes in when someone has a group document, and then they include people who may not be in agreement with what they are saying about someone." She further explains:

> You have a group of people on a document. Whoever is reading it or whoever the victim is, fees everyone on that document feels the same way. That's not necessarily true. So, it's up to the students who have been included by someone else to either stand up and say, 'Hey, that's not nice. You shouldn't do that' or 'I don't feel that way.' Or get themselves out as soon as it becomes mean or aggressive. (Administrator E)

Episodes

I asked the participants specifically to give me an example of a cyberbullying incident they had experienced. Four of the participants were unable to give me an

example of a specific incident, but rather spoke generally about how they would handle such a situation if it occurred. In addition, one administrator gave me an example of a girl who discussed self-harm on a technological platform and her friend reported it to the school, while another administrator told me of threats to the school that were made via Facebook.

The remaining fifty percent of the participants were able to speak of specific cyberbullying incidents they had dealt with. A middle school administrator spoke of an incident that occurred during a football game. Her experience is as follows:

Recently, I dealt with one of our cheerleaders during halftime. Someone posted a picture of her and commented from a routine they were doing at halftime. [She] circled her picture when she was doing her stunt and put WTF and some emojis and some things like that. It got back to the student. So…I guess I could categorize that as cyberbullying, because she had posted it on Instagram towards students and anyone else to comment on. So, I handled it as cyberbullying. Actually, her parent took her phone and I had it for a while until they picked it up. I explained…What do you do in your free time? What extracurricular activities do you do? She said, nothing. I said, so how can you put someone down for just representing your school? Although it may not be perfect, think of this particular young lady. Have you heard her talk much? So, don't you think it would take a lot for someone who seems to be shy to even get out there and try out for the cheerleading team? Now she is performing and you're making fun of

her? I was very upset. She apologized. (Administrator E)

A high school principal reported that he had only "one documented bullying via social media case." in two years. He went on to say, "there is a lot of harassment…not bullying by definition." His description of the one documented incident is below:

Generally speaking, there's a victim who did not do anything to bring conflict onto themselves or attention.   There is, um, a bully, that we determined to be a bully, so a perpetrator who targeted this individual, and would make threatening comments intended to make the victim uncomfortable at school. Um, to the point of coercive behaviors, trying to get the victim to do things for them or give them things under the threat of consequence otherwise. (Administrator D)

Other administrators spoke of similar incidents. For example, "Four students threatening one student." Similarly, a different administrator reported an incident that included multiple students that he described as, "almost a ring of bullying," directed at a female who had denied a male student's request for a date. Further, a high school principal reported a student bringing a gun to school as a result of being threatened on social media. Another administrator spoke of the difficulties when couples break up and how that impacts the school. The had a situation like this where there was a great deal of "harassment" going on behind the scenes and the school environment was impacted tremendously. The female student had been suspended for a number of days due to her behaviors in school resulting from the break up. The administrator describes the situation and how she planned to address it:

We had a couple here and they broke up. She sent lots of threatening messages to him. I didn't know. One day she was coming in with her mother and we thought we could have some resolution, so we were going to get them together to talk. But he said, "I can't talk to her. I don't want to talk to her." He showed me his cell phone and all the threatening messages. She called him 91 times in one night. I found that out from her mother, because her mother monitors her phone. When we brought our concerns to her mother's attention, she went in and looked. Her mother said, "Oh my God, you called him 91 times in one night? How could you do that? You know that you're stalking him? You're harassing him." I printed out some of the emails and the mother was flabbergasted. (Administrator K)

Administrator L described the cyberbullying incident that resulted in a student bringing a gun to school. His account follows:

The child was being bullied in his neighborhood by a group of kids. He felt that the group of kids were threatening to jump him and initiate a group assault on him at school. They said this was going to happen whenever they see him. So as a result, the child brought a weapon to school. We got word that there was a weapon at school. So of course, we went into the whole process of locking thigs down and involving the police. We were able to secure the weapon. When we started to investigate, it was an issue of him feeling scared and threatened, because of the threats he was

receiving via social media. We had to identify many of those folks that were involved in it and it was always a few folks that were directly involved in the cyberbullying piece. But there was a larger group of kids that were marginally involved in the background. So, when that child began to identify folks based on that information and corroborating statements from folks that were involved, what would happen once you started getting these folks together, the kids would start telling on each other. Who did what. Who was going to do this. Who else was involved. Essentially, many of those kids who were directly involved received five to ten days suspensions. Some of them went to the office of student conduct, because of the severity of the accusation and what we uncovered in the investigation. (Administrator L)

Definition

Though most administrators felt cyberbullying occurred more than traditional bullying, only half of them were able to give me an example of an incident they had dealt with. In addition to the administrator quoted above who only had "one documented cyberbullying incident in two years," two other administrators stated that it was either "not an issue" or "not a huge, huge issue." Another principal stated he had experienced "a couple incidents of students posting negative comments about another student." A fifth administrator said, "so, just to draw a delineation between the two, we deal with much more unsettled conflict on social media than I would ever call bullying." Further, a sixth administrator said they had "a lot of harassment, but not

bullying by definition."

Other administrators talked about incidents that occurred that "were not bullying by definition." In fact, there was a great deal of talk about definition. Administrators spoke of how you look at what is occurring. "Is it teasing or is it bullying?" one administrator asked. Another administrator said, "We need to make sure we and our students know the difference." A third administrator said, "I think that bullying depends on how you define bullying. I think a lot of things that we see are more teasing than bullying." A fourth administrator stated, "the more technology evolves, I think it's hard to define what is defamatory and what is okay." Another administrator explained, "bullying has become such a buzzword, the minute a kid does something or says something, the parent is like, my child is being bullied. They don't understand the true definition." Accordingly, another administrator said, "[you] don't want to utilize a term if it's not the right time to utilize the term." Administrator D explained that his school district's creation of the "Promote Respect Committee" a few years prior, was in part to address definition and the lack of continuity. Administrator D was chosen to serve on the committee. He explains:

> One of the big points of emphasis was trying to better define for the public
> what bullying actually is. Because the thought was that it was an overused
> term in situations that were not technically, by definition, bullying. So,
> there was an effort to better educate our public and our administrators. So,
> to that end we've seen a decrease in documented cases of bullying over
> the last…five to seven years versus what would predate that work. I would

say, however, that the [bullying] instances we do deal with are more cyber

in nature. (Administrator D)

It is clear that definition remains a concern in relation to cyberbullying. It is

also clear that administrators are aware of the discrepancy in understanding the true

definition, as well as the problems this lack of understanding creates. Nickerson (2017),

reports "definitional issues" to be major problems when looking at intervention and

prevention strategies for bullying. Several administrators in this study talked about the

need to educate students, teachers and parents on the true definition of cyberbullying.

However, if there is such a discrepancy in the definition it seems a difficult task.

Question 2: What do administrators do to prevent and respond to cyberbullying?

Question 2 examined the programs and procedures in place when administrators

respond to cyberbullying. When the participants were asked questions pertaining to real

cyberbullying incidents and scenarios, the following subthemes developed: (a) district

policy, (b) school-wide programs, (c) monitoring and notification, and (d) education.

Programs and Procedures

District Policy

All the administrators, except one, said they have a district policy. When asked,

the one administrator responded with, "Do we?" Then, he shuffled through some papers

on his desk and picked up what looked like a district copy of the Code of Conduct. He

flipped through the pages, and said, "Let me see, so there's a definition." He proceeded

to read the definition from the document:

Abusive behavior including, but not limited to taunting, threatening,

stalking, intimidating, and/or coercing by one or more individuals against other students or staff, perpetrated using information and communication technologies, such as cell phone text messages, pictures, Internet email, social networking sites, defamatory personal websites, and defamatory online personal polling websites to support deliberate, hostile behavior intended to harm others. (Administrator A)

Administrator A went on to explain that "this is the code." The infraction falls under bullying as a "BU2, category 4 or 5A, electronic bullying and/or cyberbullying" and includes such things as, "obscene, pornographic, threatening email, instant message [and] web messages." When asked how the policy impacts the school, he told me "it sets a standard." He went on to explain that "it's something new…cyberbullying…wouldn't have been here five years ago."

Additionally, ten of the other administrators referred to the Code of Conduct as their policy. One administrator simply said, "we follow the code of conduct." Two others said, "it's in the code of conduct." One stated, "there is a clear definition in the code of conduct." While another stated, "Code of Conduct provides a clear definition of cyberbullying as well as recommended guidelines for consequences and discipline." She explained that it "reads easily and is easily understood, while applying it strictly by the book is more difficult. The nuances of social media make it murky." Several administrators went on to tell me that it was a "BU code found under Bullying and Harassment." A few even explained the categories for discipline. One administrator said, "the policy is we don't tolerate it." However, he also referred to the Code of

Conduct.

The administrator who previously spoke of the district committee he served on, talked about the policy a bit more in detail. He explained that the policy requires the principal to send a letter to the family of the victim telling them there will be an investigation. In addition, a letter goes home to the family of the alleged bully to let them know an investigation has been opened. After the investigation is concluded, a second letter goes out to announce the findings, for better or for worse. Then, appropriate discipline follows.

Interestingly, no other administrators spoke in such detail about the process. They talked about meeting with both parties and with their families. They talked about conducting investigations. Several of the administrators spoke of alerting the counseling department. Many of the administrators explained how they would go about identifying individuals who used aliases online. Some stated that students are often identifiable by pictures and what they post. Other administrators reported that "there is usually a songbird," so if you put enough pressure on students, often they will report the others involved. The majority administrators spoke of mediation or restorative circles. Some spoke of consulting with SROs or referring to SROs and police if they felt it necessary. No other administrators spoke of sending letters home. Of course, this does not necessarily mean it is not occurring.

The majority of the administrators interviewed referred the student code of conduct as their policy. Remarkably, of the eight districts where these administrators work, one district included a definition for cyberbullying and another included a

definition for electronic bullying. One of the districts included cyberbullying in the bullying definition, and four districts did not include cyberbullying in their definition at all. Interestingly, the district that included cyberbullying in the bullying definition was the same district in which the administrator spoke in such detail about the district's promote respect initiative. Administrator L exclaimed, "years ago, isolation bullying used to be a slap on the wrist or a conference with parents, but not these days. He went on to say, "we have children who are being traumatized by bullying." Administrator L believes over the past 10 to 15 years, school divisions have recognized the seriousness of bullying across the board. It is no longer a minor offense. Administrator L also confirmed the Code of Conduct is the district policy and bullying and cyberbullying are no considered major offences under bullying and harassment.

Education and School-Wide Programs

One of the administrators quoted above stated that he prefers to be "less punitive and put more emphasis on learning." He said that "the first point of contact for the student is his counselor, not administration." Especially, if it is not a threat of harm, but rather simply negative comments.

Other administrators also spoke of teaching the students proper use. A principal in a large district stated that every school in their district has been charged with creating their own program. She explained that her school does not have a bully prevention program, but rather a "*Character Ed program.*" Administrator C identified their three goals as, safety, responsibility and respect. She explained that their Character Ed program is tied to these three goals. She further explained that "the teachers have a

teacher advisory lesson every Monday that is tied into Character Ed and PBIS." They

reward the students for good behavior. The students receive "bucks that they can use to

purchase certain privileges such as, "wearing a hat" or getting a "homework pass."

There is an assembly every month to recognize the high flyers. Another principal, of a

much smaller district explained that the school counselor teaches two-week sessions

through the gym classes in their school. The classes include lessons on social media

and cyber-safety. As Young, Tully and Ramirez (2017) found in their research, many

of the administrators in this study are also "comfortable with using education as primary

prevention." They feel that educating students about bullying is a more proactive

approach to decreasing its occurrences.

A principal from another large district told me that he was fortunate to have"

served on the district's *Promote Respect Committee*." He explained that the emphasis

of the committee was to "better define bullying for the public, because the term was

overused in situations that were not technically bullying." He went on to tell me that

the "expectation is for every school to have a *Promote Respect Campaign*" in order to

educate students, teachers and parents. He stated that their plan includes PBIS and it is

part of their school improvement plan. He went on to say that their "plan includes

definitions of bullying and flipping it to promote respect." On Fridays, they have

lessons in their homerooms "to educate the students on climate expectations and culture

expectations." They also have professional development trainings for their teachers, as

well as "*Coffee Chats* and awareness events for parents."

Several administrators stated that they did not have specific school-wide

prevention or education programs. However, most have something that indirectly addresses bullying. One administrator talked about a tiered program based on PBIS that "focuses on *respect*, *responsibility* and *relationships*." Another stated that they do different things that touch on it. She said, "right now we are doing *No Place for Hate*," which is "centered around kindness and digital citizenship." It is taught during their study block. Only three administrators admitted to not having anything to address bullying. The first simply stated that they did not have a program. The second, said they did not have an "official one," but they had multiple ways that they touched on it. The third, explained that they have a "bigger problem with depression and anxiety." He went on to describe their "student assistance program called *SOS*, or *Signs of Suicide*." They do not have a bully prevention program, because they have not seen a need, he explained.

Though half of the administrators mentioned having a school-wide program that was based on PBIS beliefs, character education or something similar, only three (25%) of them had a cyberbullying or social media component. Of that twenty-five percent, only one program (8%) had a significant educational basis directed at the students, parents and staff.

Most administrators found students having cell phones and technology readily available to be an issue. However, one administrator said that he did not see it as an issue. He said, "the reality is they're here to stay." He went on to say:

 Districts that have a real hardcore cell phone policy, I think, personally,

 they are kind of missing the boat, because once they get out of school

they're going to be exposed to it constantly. So, I think the real angle we should take is to try to teach them how to use it responsibly and appropriately. [Rather] than to try to deny them, because kids are kids and I can tell you…they're going to get around our efforts to keep them from having cell phone there. They're going to have…two or three cell phones. [When] you catch them, they'll give you the dead one…and keep the live ones. So, no, I don't have issues with students having cell phones and technology readily available, because [use] in a proper way can be a tremendous asset to the classroom. (Administrator I)

Additionally, two other administrators mentioned students not having effective training or monitoring. Administrator C stated that this is where she feels that we fall short as adults. Her explanation follows:

As adults, parents…when they give kids phones they are not teaching them at a young age how to access information and how to use the phone appropriately. I have different opinions about cell phones. You know, I feel like sometimes if you gave it to them…in fourth grade and you taught them how to use the phone. Then, when they get to middle school they're not going to use them. Maybe, its less likely that they'll use them in an inappropriate manner, because they know the rules, they know what is expected. But if we are waiting until middle school to do that. Then, I feel that you've kind of lost them, because they know more than you do. Because, they're teenagers, you know, they're not gonna listen to you.

They're gonna listen to everyone else. (Administrator C)

Administrator C explained that the teenagers of today communicate differently than generations past. Technology and cell phones are "their way or communicating," she says. They use platforms like Snapchat and Instagram. She explains that, "Snapchat is what middle schoolers are into." They create group chats and solicit others to join their groups. Sometimes, they talk "ugly about one another." She explained that these incidents may be happening outside of school, but once it is brought into school, they as a school, have to manage it. She expresses a need for teaching students appropriate use early on, to eliminate the entire responsibility from falling on the schools. Specifically, preventing them from having to deal with incidents in a reactive manner versus a proactive manner.

Likewise, Administrator E said she is a "firm believer in thinking that parents…should definitely have their child's cell phone at a certain of night…according to their bedtime." She went on to explain that most of the online occurrences they see impact their school happen in the evening, and she feels if students were not allowed to have their phones at that time it would cut down on the incidents. She stated by high school it is up to them to know how to use their phones appropriately. She did not mention educating them on the proper use. However, she did say, "mainly at this age, we just try to educate them, regardless of what the law is."

Administrator A also feels that the parents need to do more. He says that the thing that makes cyberbullying so hard is that parents give their children "this outlet to be cyberbullied." He explains:

So, if you give your child…who is 18 or younger a funnel and you allow

them to have social media…you're opening up the opportunity for this to

happen. So, this kid keeps hitting me. Well, get rid of your Facebook

page so they can't hit you up on Facebook, right? We as a school, we

can't control what your child gets on social media. And if they're texting

you, well, how do they have the number? (Administrator A)

Ultimately, we can control what our children are doing online. However, we

need to educate our parents as well as our students. Administrator C sated that she

gives parents resources and tells them about programs they can access through their

own cell phone providers. Other administrators spoke of resources that are outlined on

their websites for parents. Administrator K said, "Two things are ever changing. The

more technology evolves…it's harder to define what is defamatory and what is okay."

Because her school is "not big on consequences…in the traditional form,"

Administrator K said she just tries "to use it as a learning experience, so kids can see

it's not the right thing to do in the first place."

Though bullying has been a concern forever, cyberbullying is still a relatively

new phenomenon. Therefore, effective cyberbullying prevention programs are just in

the beginning stages of development and evaluation (Espelgage & Hong, 2016).

Previous research stated that school-wide approaches to identifying and managing

cyberbullying can greatly increase incidents (Redmond, Lock & Smart, 2018).

However, as mentioned previously, identification is an issue if definition is not clear. In

addition, according to Nickerson (2017), "many predicters of bullying are

indistinguishable from other forms of aggression and effective prevention and intervention approaches often target related behaviors and skills other than bullying (e.g. SEL, PBIS)." It must be noted that many of the administrators in this research study admitted to using programs and methods that included PBIS strategies.

Monitoring and Notification

One of the difficulties with addressing cyberbullying seems to be the lack of knowledge of occurrences. Several administrators said that parents often report incidents to them. In addition, some of the schools have anonymous reporting systems or "a bullying form that kids and parents can fill out" and "ping to the administrators" or the counselling department. Administrator C reported that just a week and a half prior to our interview, her district had instituted a "Stop Bullying" button on their webpages. It is an anonymous reporting system. She explained that when someone uses the system to report an incident, a message will be sent to the administrator's and the counselor's cell phones. They will receive the message and manage it accordingly. She identified an incident that involved a girl who was threatening self-harm. Her friend used the anonymous reporting system to alert the administration of this threat. Administrator C described the incident:

> We had an incident one day where a kid, um, let us know that they received a message that a student was threatening to harm herself. That was scary. They were chatting about it in their chat room. So, they brought it to our attention. We addressed the student, and sure enough, the student had a plan. We contacted the mother. The mother came and

got the student and took the student to the hospital. So, you know, it's not

always a negative situation…It can be very helpful tool.

 (Administrator C)

In this situation, a student used the "Stop Bullying" button to report an incident

that was not bullying. However, because of this anonymous reporting system's

availability the school was able to contact the girl's parents and get her assistance

before it was too late. The administrator admitted that this was a "scary" situation and

she is glad it was reported.

In addition, another administrator stated that their district has a district-wide

program called *Silence Hurts* in all middle and high schools in the division. It allows

individuals to make a report regarding something they feel should be shred and it

simply sends an email containing the report to the designated administrator.

Administrator E told me that she had received an email two days prior at 8 o'clock in

the evening. A student had made a report that one of her friends was upset, because

some of her peers had been calling her fat, lately. The girl reported that her friend was

thinking about taking some vitamin D pills. Administrator E called the girl's parent

right away. She told the parent she did not know how credible it was, but she felt it was

important enough that the parent should be made aware.

Though anonymous reporting systems were not a specific question on the

interview protocol, most administrators spoke of this monitoring process. I specifically

asked other administrators who did not speak about anonymous reporting systems to see

if they had them or if they simply did not mention it. There were a handful of schools

who did not have such a system.

In addition to the anonymous reporting systems, one administrator told me of a program they use called *Gaggle,* which "will…comb through students' documents and look for certain words or phraseology…screening…for something [they] should look into." The program picks up on certain language that may indicate bullying or threats of self-harm, and alerts administration. This administrator stated that Gaggle will search students digital journal, messaging, and assignments that are created on Google under their school accounts. Another administrator told me of a program called Crosstek that they use to monitor students' online access. He explained that through this program they can "monitor students being on inappropriate websites." It allows them to remotely talk with students, as well as shut the systems and programs down if the students are doing something they should not be doing.

Administrator C admitted that she gives parents the information from the cell phone companies regarding apps they can use to track their children's online usage and text messaging. She stated that there are apps that "send you a text message for every one your child sends out."

Through investigation of websites during this study, I discovered that many districts have additional resources and links to sites such as, www.stopbullying.org. In addition, several districts have anonymous reporting links on their websites. During the interview process several administrators informed me of these reporting options. Though the administrators did not speak of cyberbullying incidents that had been reported in that manner, they did speak of other situations that were brought to their

attention in that way. During a document of district websites in this research study, anonymous reporting links were located on four of the eight districts these participants are from. Two additional administrators spoke of anonymous reporting links, though they were not noted in the website review. Furthermore, one of the administrators stated his district did not have such a reporting option. He went on to tell me that they direct their students to see him or someone else with whom they are comfortable. Interestingly, this administrator's district has an anonymous reporting link on its website.

In addition to the reporting links, seven of these eight districts had at least one other resource regarding cyberbullying. They included resources such as, an internet safety curriculum, information on digital citizenship, bully prevention plan, bully prevention/information links, instructional technology, school safety taskforce information and Olweus' curriculum. This information alone shows that school districts are making efforts to address cyberbullying, at least by provide stakeholders with resources.

In the process of discussing procedures and programs, if was noted that no matter what an administrator's number one priority is to ensure safety and security for all students. Administrator B explained:

> One of the things that myself and my school counselor keep reiterating throughout our students is we want everyone to be able to feel comfortable when they walk in the building. And bullying is not something that makes anyone happy. It prevents them from being

successful academically, and socially and emotionally. And we don't want that to happen. (Administrator B)

The findings of this study show that administrators are concerned about the safety and security of their students. They address cyberbullying incidents as they would address anything occurring in their programs. They conduct thorough investigations with fidelity, and they do all that they can in their power to prevent further incidents from occurring. Sadly, they are not aware of all incidents and cannot prevent everything. No matter any of this, an administrator's number one responsibility it to provide safety and security. Administrator A stated that he cannot do anything about an incident of which he is unaware. He also stated "very rarely have I experienced where it's just one…just digging in on these people and there's no responsibility on the other side." He says, "there is always two sides." He often feels the said victim does something to add to the incident. In any case, he pointed out that he always makes every effort to ensure the safety of all involved. He professed:

This is interesting. When I find out about kids who've killed themselves and all that stuff, and they say nobody did anything. [I] wonder, okay, really? Did they or did they not? We don't know. How it is at the school level is, somebody could just say they didn't do anything when we know we did. And you know as a school you can't put out there what you've done. You just have to, when you hear those things…say, I'm not just going to believe it. A parent, whoever says my child went to the school and the school didn't do anything. I'm always like, I hope the school

did…if the school didn't do anything that's terrible…because there are things you can do. I would hate to think that they just didn't do anything. Maybe there are some schools out there that don't…that's crazy. (Administrator A)

The results of this study seem to be inline with that of the research, showing that cyberbullying incidents are either not as prevalent as we previously believed or else students are not reporting them to the degree that they occur. There could be several reasons for this. One reason is that students are in fear of retaliation. Administrator D states:

It's always been my belief that fear of retaliation comes from a core belief, maybe through adverse experiences along the way, that the administration or the adults that need to intervene are not gonna do it with complete fidelity and diligence. Um, and while I trust the protocols and procedures, and even personally my own way of navigating situations like this, you can never behave for another individual. I think if you onboard the right folks to include law enforcement as necessary, and counseling resources. Maybe, enact other protocols that have proven to be, through research and practice, very beneficial, such as, restorative conferences and restorative conversations. Hopefully, we have mitigated the potential for retaliation. So, really just knowing what your resources are and pulling every arrow from your quiver, so to speak, necessary to take care of that. Also, putting actionable steps in place that [the student] could rely upon if a form of

retaliation bubbles up, so that she knows exactly what to do in that situation. (Administrator D)

The point here is that just as important as ensuring safety, is ensuring that students 'feel that they are safe.' Students have to trust that those in charge will manage the situation in such a way that the situation is not worsen. It is thought that students may not report incidents if they feel those in charge will not handle the situation in an appropriate manner, or even do anything at all.

Administrator L agrees that the most important things after a traumatic incident is to restore the child's sense of safety. He admitted that there were times when they had to have a student transferred out of the school, because the parent insisted the child would not be safe. The child's biggest fear in situations like this is repercussions. Sometimes a child never feels safe after they go through something like this, no matter how quickly the administrators take action. Administrator L told me one of the things he really prides himself on as a principal is being "big on school safety and support to students." Many administrators are of the same mind. The key is to ensure the students share this belief.

Question 3: What level of legal knowledge of cyberbullying do administrator possess and how does it impact their actions?

Research question 3 focused on responsibility. When I asked the participants about their understanding of the laws surrounding cyberbullying and if it impacted the decisions they made in their schools, the participants talked a lot about when and where incidents took place. Three subthemes developed from this question: (a) jurisdiction,

(b) consulting with law enforcement, and (c) parents.

Responsibility

Two administrators expressed that they did not have a strong understanding of the laws surrounding cyberbullying. Another stated that he did not feel there was "Virginia code that teased out the fine lines between bullying and the first amendment." There was some discussion about the definition of bullying and whether or not it is the principal's jurisdiction if it happens at home. However, they all still spoke of dealing with it if it was brought into the school. They all seemed to understand that what impacted the school environment was still their responsibility.

None of the administrators were concerned about getting in trouble for over-stepping a student's rights. Administrator L declared, "if…free speech is a disruption to the learning environment or it is threatening or causing an issue with safety, then we are well within our rights to take swift action to keep another child safe." It was also stated that "school board policy to a degree supersedes a lot of notions related to free speech." Therefore, if administrators feel a situation is a disruption they can act and "not worry about whether or not [they're] violating civil liberties."

None of the 12 participants had ever had a student or parent argue freedom of speech in regard to their disciplinary actions. However, several noted being questioned about something that was not done during school or on school grounds. One administrator explained that the "policy and response protocols protects the administrators" and "if you are following policy you won't really be challenged." He went on to say that you may have to explain or "educate and rationalize to the parent,

but they deserve that."

Several administrators stated that the parents aren't typically aware that the incidents are occurring and are generally cooperative. A principal from a school in a small town stated that the "parents get it." He explained, "they are worried about reputation. They do not want it going to church or the local grocery store." Another administrator, from a large district said, "they parents are not aware and they are upset when they find out, but not at the school." Conversely, a third principal stated, "everybody's opposed to bullying, but nobody thinks their kid's a bully." He went on to say, "the parent's first reaction is almost immediately, we should have seen what the other person did." The principal from the rural district stated that parents "of course, will say they've been hacked or whatever," in response to being told what their child has done online. Administrator K said most parents are not cooperative, even when you have the messages in front of you. Another principal explained that parents are "either totally immersed or totally unaware" of what their children are doing online.

Jurisdiction

Three administrators talked about the difficulty of incidents that occurred at home. They explained how such incidents had to be handled differently. Specifically, that "it all depends on when the cyberbullying takes place." One administrator stated that even when it was not his "jurisdiction," he still made parents aware. Multiple administrators talked about mediation and restorative circles.

Specifically, one administrator said, the "tricky part…you know, how do you handle these incidents…what quantifies and qualifies as a school issue? He stated that

they have no school issued laptops. Therefore, the students are using their own property. He went on to explain that he could not use the "angle of inappropriate use of technology." Another principal talked about a situation where a child was being bullied on a social media platform. Administrator J provided the following account:

> We had some middle school students who were on social media, I think it was Instagram, and they were threatening. It was four students threatening one student. It happened outside of school, so it was out of our jurisdiction. The parents of the victim brought it to my attention. First of all, she called me. Then, I met with her here at school, in my office and she…let me see the video. I shared with her that it was out of my jurisdiction. I couldn't do anything about it, because it did not happen at school. After I finished observing the video, I called the parents of the students…in our building who was doing the threats…and made them aware. I shared…how threatening over social media could be a felony and if the police were involved, [the] student could be in some serious trouble. I also made my school resource officer aware, because that's all in his jurisdiction. He was able to contact the victim's parent and get more information. I'm not sure what he did about the aggressors, because at that time it was out of my hands. (Administrator J)

Even after telling the mother this incident was not in his jurisdiction and he could do nothing about it, he still called the alleged bully's parents and informed them of the threats that were made. He went on to explain to the family that "threats over

social media could be a felony and if the police were involved this could be very serious." Then, he got the SRO involved, because it was not his "jurisdiction." Another administrator said, "I think the fine line gets to if this is something that happened at home versus sent from school. That's where you've gotta be careful." Another administrator said, "In most cases…the actual messaging is happening outside of school hours, which doesn't mean we just leave it alone, but it does mean we can't follow up on it in the same way."

Consulting Law Enforcement

Several other administrators talked about referring to the SROs or getting them involved with conversations. Two spoke of involving the police department. One administrator explained that he had referred to the police department when he was unsure where his "jurisdiction" fell. Another administrator, stated that he has had to "get law enforcement involved when not getting cooperation from parents and students."

Administrators seem comfortable reaching out to law enforcement officers when they are unsure in which direction to go or when they feel they do not thoroughly know the law. Administrators said, "sometimes we work with the SROs, bring them into the conversation." They explained that in investigating reports, "statements are taken from all involved and some level of consult occurs with our SROs." Furthermore, even the principals who stated they did not know the laws well, handled the situations as those who did. They clearly described their intervention with the victims, bullies, and parents. One administrator stated, "if it's out of our jurisdiction we turn it over to the

SRO or…the police department." Another administrator explained, "we've asked law enforcement to step in and investigate in situations where we weren't receiving cooperation from the parent or the student." A third administrator admitted, "the laws do not impact my decisions, because I don't know the difference." He stated that it did not matter, he still handled the situations as he felt they needed to be handled. His description of his actions was no different than the administrators who were more confident.

Parents

As previously mentioned, there seems to be variability when it comes to parental involvement and accountability with children's online behaviors. Most administrators reported at least some resistance in working with parents in these situations. As administrator L reported, "some parents are totally immersed" while others are "totally unaware." This is in line with the findings from the Young, Tully and Ramirez (2017) study, where the "administrators perceived parents as unaware of students' online habits." Some students according to Administrator L carry a "sort of alter ego…on social media." When he pulls information to share with the parents, they "are astonished," because they had no idea what their children were doing online. Another administrator told me that "most of the time parents get really angry." Moreover, parents do not want to accept that their child did something inappropriate and "they try to defend their child even though you have it right there." It was reported by one administrator that parents were so involved with an online issue with their daughters that they actually became involved in a physical alteration with the girls either on the

bus or at the bus stop. These parents were actually fighting students. Another

administrator stated that she will ask the parent to keep the phone at home. However,

she reports rarely getting cooperation. Another administrator reported that parents do

not want to take their child's phone, because they may get mad at them or the child will

not be able to call the parent if needed. Administrator H stated that parents will bring

something in to report, "this is what…this person has been saying to my child, of course

they always leave out their kid's responses." Another administrator reported that

parents "first reaction is almost immediately [you] should see what the other person

did." He admits, there's probably some merit to that, because a lot of times it's hard to

trace it down to incident zero; the first volley or exchange." However, previous

research states that parents are "reluctant to doubt their own children's interpretations of

events," (Young et al, 2017), which correlates with his statements. Another

administrator admits that he always attempts to involve parents and he explains to them

that they are ultimately responsible. Whether they are "totally immersed" or not,

parents still will typically have access to their student's devices and social media

accounts. Administrator D explains that educating parents is key, "so they onboard

parents to help them get to the bottom of things."

It appears that parent education is lacking. In reviewing the district documents

in phase I of this research project I found it difficult to navigate many of the websites.

In some cases, I spent an inordinate amount of time simply searching for the student

code of conduct. It would be a struggle for any parent, I would imagine. Consequently,

I also discovered that many of the websites contained links to other resources like,

www.stopbullynow.org, www.onguardonline.com, and www.safekids.com, as well as resources such as PBIS approaches, character education programs and factsheets about social media, bullying and the like. Some parents may go searching for these resources. However, if they had as much difficulty as I did in their attempt to find what they were searching for, I cannot imagine how successful they would be. In addition, if is not enough to post the resources and links, if you are not making them know to the parents. Only one administrator spoke of having coffee chats and trainings for parents. However, more than half talked about the lack of cooperation and understanding they were experiencing with parents. This is an important point, I think.

Conclusion

An administrator said, "cyberbullying is on the forefront and it distracts students from their daily schedule." I believe this is true to a point. Actually, it appears from the data collected in this research study that technology distracts students, in general. Half of the administrators were able to give me an example of cyberbullying. Of those administrators, one stated he had "only had one documented incident" in the past two years. Whereas, at least two other administrators struggled to come up with an example. This leads me to believe that either cyberbullying is not happening as much as we think or possibly it is not being reported.

It is clear from the interview phase of this study that all administrators are aware of incidents that have occurred in their schools via technology. However, their knowledge of the incidents appears to be limited, and those incidents do not always fit the definition of cyberbullying. In addition, as with what has been noted in the

literature, there still seems to be confusion surrounding the definition, as well as a lack of clarity regarding when and how to deal with cyberbullying that occurs off grounds and not on school devices. However, it must be noted that even administrators who claim not to know much about the laws surrounding cyberbullying, as well as those who feel it is not within their jurisdiction to manage, still handle situations in the same manner as others. Furthermore, phase one of the study shows that most districts (66%) at least acknowledge cyberbullying in their Codes of Conduct, as well as in other locations on their websites. In fact, several districts who did not acknowledge cyberbullying in their Codes of Conduct, still had a link for information or some sort of program that was utilized. Therefore, it is fair to say that the majority of districts in Virginia have recognized the issue with cyberbullying in their schools.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Knowledge gained from this research study was reviewed to develop an understanding of administrators' perceptions of cyberbullying, their knowledge of the laws surrounding cyberbullying and how this knowledge impacts their intervention and prevention in such incidents. To put this discussion in proper context, I will first address the limitations of the study.

Limitations

This phenomenological study has limited application to other contexts due to a number of factors. I have identified 4 limitations: (1) sample, (2) measure, (3) design and (4) analysis.

Sample

First, the sample size is a limitation. Twelve participants is a small sample and cannot be representative of the larger population. The findings can only be reflective of these 12 individuals. They cannot represent the district in which they are employed, nor can they represent the larger population. This study was not conducted within one school district, but rather eight different districts. When I began this study, I thought investigating several different districts would provide me a more in depth understanding of administrators' perceptions, knowledge and actions.   I felt in a single district I may run into all administrators being trained in the same fashion and acting in the same manner. Whereas, if I chose participates from various districts, they would have different training, and be following different policies and procedures.   As I began the interviews, I realized that one or two participants from a particular district would not

necessarily reflect the entire district's actions. In fact, I found that even administrators from the same county varied in their knowledge and behaviors.

Second, I did not build in demographic questions. I do not have information to tell me how long each participant has been an administrator, or even if he or she worked for other districts in the past unless they mentioned it during the interview. Therefore, I do not know what experiences have led to the knowledge they possess or the actions they take, or the lack there of.

Thirdly, conducting the sampling and selecting the participates was not as random as one would like. When I started this process, I searched the internet to locate secondary schools in school divisions surrounding my own locality. I identified districts, schools and the administrators of those schools. I send out emails to ask for participation. The way the study was set up, the participates were those who responded and agreed to be part of the study. I felt lucky to have participants from 8 different divisions. However, if was difficult to compare the findings between various divisions or even urban, suburban, and rural due to the low sample numbers.

Measure

The study was designed to investigate administrators' perceptions of cyberbullying in their schools. However, I did not include a definition of cyberbullying during my interviews. In researching for this study, I identified the definition of cyberbullying to be a concern. However, I did not think to provide one for my participants. I found definition to come up quite a bit in my interviews. I also felt that in talking with the participants and asking them for

examples of incidents of cyberbullying they had experienced, frequently what they provided were not cyberbullying by definition. Therefore, I feel that providing a definition of cyberbullying may have allowed for greater validity and reliability.

Design

I designed this study to investigate administrators' perceptions of cyberbullying due to the gap in research. In conducting my literature review I noticed that there was a great deal of research pertaining to students' perceptions, but limited research pertaining to administrators' perceptions. Therefore, this research study was design to look specifically at administrators' perceptions. However, the findings of this study can only tell me of the specific experiences of the administrators who participated in my study. Without any information regarding what the students in these particular schools are experiencing, we have no way of knowing if the administrators' perceptions are in line with those of the students.

Analysis

I am not sure if this is a limitation. However, I have to note that I conducted all of the analyses for this study by hand. If I were going to do this study again, I would utilize Nvivo or a program similar. I feel that using such a program would assist with identifying the themes, hence impact reliability.

Administrators' Experiences and Perceptions of Cyberbullying

As I mentioned previously, when asked the administrators to identify incidents of cyberbullying, half the were able to give me examples of their experiences with

cyberbullying. However, many of the incidents they described were not cyberbullying by definition. Several of the incidents described, simply took place online. Many of the administrators noted this as they described the incidents. In addition, most of the administrators stated that cyberbullying was an issue that negatively impacted the school and educational environment. However, they were unable to identify more than one occurrence. In many cases, administrators were unable to identify any. Therefore, this data leads me to draw the conclusion that administrators have limited experiences with cyberbullying. Further, though the administrators in this study believe that cyberbullying has increased over time and "cell phones and social media...lends itself to increase cyberbullying," administrators are aware of very few cyberbullying incidents impacting their schools. This is also in line with the previous research stating that administrators' perceptions of cyberbullying are lower than those of students (Cassidy et al, 2011; Cassidy et al, 2012; Harris & Hathorn, 2006).

Preventing and Responding to Cyberbullying

Most administrators spoke of the district having a policy for cyberbullying. The majority of them identified the Code of Conduct as such policy. One administrator went into great detail about the district policy and procedures of his division. In addition, some administrators talked about school-wide programs. Not all of these programs were directly addressing cyberbullying. However, they were all based on *respect*, *kindness*, *character education*, or something similar. Many of these programs also had a PBIS component. They also talked about anonymous reporting systems. Though only one cyberbullying incident was identified as being reported in this manner.

It was apparent when reviewing the districts' websites, the majority of the districts have multiple systems in place. They have links to resources for parents and students, anonymous reporting systems, trainings, school-wide programs involving PBIS approaches, and the like. In fact, it seemed that there were more resources available online than I would have anticipated in talking with the administrators that I interviewed.

When given a scenario, all of the administrators described meeting with all parties, investigating and gathering information, reaching out to families, and assigning disciplinary actions, as required. Several of the administrators talked about mediation or Restorative Circles, if "all parties were in agreement". Some administrators talked about consulting with school resource officers, or at least making them part of the conversation.

None of the administrators were concerned with infringing on the students' first amendment rights. Even those who felt incidents were not within their "jurisdiction," still described their process of conducting investigations in the same way as those who were more adept.

In conclusion, it appears that school districts and administrators are attempting to prevent and respond to cyberbullying incidents in effective ways. All districts have policies, if nothing more than a Code of Conduct, and many schools have programs to educate their students and help prevent such acts, even though most of these programs do not specifically have cyberbullying components.

Administrators' Knowledge of Laws and its Impact on Their Behaviors

Two administrators stated that they felt their knowledge of the laws was lacking. Though others did not report it, some of them also appeared to have difficulty in teasing out the nuances of jurisdiction as they discussed the difficulty of dealing with situations that took place off campus and on personal devices. It was obvious that administrators were aware of the harm cyberbullying caused and the need for prevention. However, as mentioned in the research, they were unclear how to address it, especially when the occurrences took place off campus (Desmet et al, 2015; Young, Tully & Ramirez, 2017).

In addition, there was a great deal of discussion surrounding definition and the discrepancy pertaining to it. Several administrators noted the definition contained in the Code of Conduct. However, there still seemed to be an issue with the definition as the administrators discussed various incidents they had experienced. Many of the Codes of Conduct referred to repeated incidents and an imbalance of power, which only tended to add to the lack of clarity. As mentioned in the literature, someone who is computer savvy may have more power than someone with a larger stature, when speaking of cyberbullying (Vandebosch & Van Cleemet, 2009). Further, incidents posted online can be repeated, if commented on by multiple individuals (Slonje, Smith & Frisen, 2012; Pieschl et al, 2013). In addition, some definitions do not include repetition or balance imbalance when speaking of cyberbullying, "sending or posting harmful, cruel text or images using the internet or other digital communication devices," is considered cyberbullying by some (Williard, 2004).

Researcher Thoughts

    The literature identifies a discrepancy between students' perceptions of cyberbullying and those of teachers and administrators (Cassidy et al, 2011; Cassidy et al, 2012; Harris & Hathorn, 2006). Since the literature pertaining to teachers' and administrators' perceptions is limited, it is difficult to determine whether this is an accurate determination. It was because of this gap in the literature that I decided to investigate this phenomenon. However, I cannot say that this study has closed the gap at all. In fact, it opens up more questions, for me at least. I can say that my findings are in line with the research pertaining to discrepancy in definition (Ybarra et al, 2012), as well as administrators' limited experiences with cyberbullying in their schools (Cassidy et al, 2011, Cassidy et al, 2012, Harris & Hathorn, 2006). However, I cannot say whether there is a discrepancy in the perceptions of the administrators in my study and the students in theirs schools, since I did not include student perceptions in my study.

  When I interviewed my participants, there were very few identifiable cyberbullying occurrences. Some of the administrators discussed incidents, specifically stating that they were not cyberbullying. Others discussed incidents that were not cyberbullying by definition, though they did not clarify. It is quite possible that the administrators are unaware of all of the cyberbullying that occur in their schools, even with the electronic reporting systems that they have in place. It is also quite possible that the schools in which I conducted my interviews did not have high numbers of

cyberbullying.

The participants in my study identified procedures and policies that were put in place to help prevent and respond to cyberbullying. All of the participants were able to talk about prevention in one manner or another. This leads me to believe that districts are putting interventions in place. However, definition and understanding the laws still seems to be an area of concern.

Furthermore, since there was so much talk about definition and the lack of understanding, I have to wonder if the students identified incidents in previous literature were cyberbullying by definition. Two questions immediately come to mind:

(a) *Could there be a discrepancy between student's perceptions and teacher's/administrators' perceptions, because of students' lack of understanding of the definition?*

(b) *Could there be a discrepancy between student's perceptions and teachers'/administrators' perceptions, because of students' lack of reporting?*

I have to say, these were not the results I expected to get. Prior to this study I felt I would find cyberbullying happening a whole lot more than the findings of this study shows. As I mentioned, it is difficult to determine whether the results are representative to what is really happening in the schools without data from students to use as a comparison. However, let us just say for a minute that the administrators in this study are accurately reporting incidents of which they have knowledge. A couple things could be going on. First, students may not be reporting all their incidents of cyberbullying. If the incidents are not being reported the administrators would not have

knowledge of them. Second, the students may be reporting the incidents. However, that information may not have gotten to the administrators that I interviewed. Therefore, they were unaware. Third, students may be reporting the incidents, but they may not be viewed as cyberbullying by the administrators. There could be many other factors at play. We could probably go on for pages. Instead I would like to talk a little bit about definition.

When I first started researching for this study, I noticed the issues with definition early on. There was a great deal of talk about definition at the beginning of this document, so I will not bore you with reiterating all of that again. However, I do have to point out that defining cyberbullying has been an ongoing struggle, which continues. I believe every conversation that I had included definition to some degree. It appeared that even those administrators who spoke of definition and incidents that were cyberbullying by definition or not, still had some difficulty determining what that meant.

As an administrator, I have personally dealt with situations like this. With the push to stop bullying, reporting of such incidents has become even more difficult. The state of Virginia requires that you code bullying infractions to identify them for data collection purposes. As we have determined, many administrators are unsure of the definition and therefore, would find it difficult to code incidents, appropriately. As we have also determined, many districts do not provide such a definition to assist their administrators. Therefore, this would lead one to believe that there could be many discrepancies from school to school and district to district. Furthermore, if the data

collected from reporting such infractions is used to determine which schools have higher rates of bullying, this knowledge most likely would lead to additional stress as the administrators are attempting to code for such infractions. They certainly would not want to have high rates of bullying reported, incorrectly. One would imagine that in this case most would err on the side of caution.

The point I am attempting to make her is that definition is key. Without a consistent definition across the board, there cannot be consistency. We cannot compare one school to another, one district to another or one region to another, without a common definition. There is a great deal of research out there discussing all the negative factors related to bullying, as well as intervention and prevention strategies. However, none of it does any good if there is not a common understanding of what cyberbullying looks like. We have to be able to identify it before we can even begin to stop it.

Originally, this study contained two phases. After much deliberation, my dissertation committee and I determined that it served little purpose and it was eliminated. Still, I feel the need to add this one small point. During the first phase I conducted a document review of every school division website in the state of Virginia. There are 132 school divisions in the state of Virginia. I was able to review the bullying definition on 126 of their websites. Forty-four percent of the divisions included cyberbullying in their definitions by stating something like, "includes cyberbullying." Another 25% of the districts added a completely different explanation of, or definition for cyberbullying. In total, 69% of the school divisions in the state of Virginia included

cyberbullying in their bullying definitions to some degree. This means that 31% (one third) made no mention at all. In addition of the 69% who did include cyberbullying, there was a huge range of variability to the degree in which it was included as well as the definition provided. Personally, this only validates my belief that definition is an issue that needs addressing. How can we as a state expect to report and track bullying incidents, when we as a state do not even have a consistent definition from one school division to the next?

Recommendations for Practice, Policy, and Research

According to research, awareness is a major key to cyberbullying prevention and intervention (Tangen & Campbell, 2010). Awareness needs to be across the board and including all stakeholders (Morales, 2014). With this is mind, my first recommendation is that all districts provide a definition or description of cyberbullying in their Codes of Conduct. It needs to be clear and easy to understand. In conducting the interview phase of my study, some administrators appeared to understand the definition of cyberbullying, while many did not. This lack of consistency between administrators interviewed, as well as a need to report and track incidents of cyberbullying across the state and at the national level, leads me to this recommendation. School districts should include a clear definition of cyberbullying in their Codes of Conduct. In addition, I recommend that all districts teach the definition or description to all the stakeholders. Everyone needs to know exactly what cyberbullying looks like. Clarity is important. As noted in the interview portion of my study, some incidents "are not cyberbullying by definition." Students and parents are calling incidents bullying, perhaps partly because

it is such a "buzzword," right now. However, it could also be due to a lack of clarity in the definition.

This leads me to my second recommendation. I feel it is important for schools to get their parents involved in learning all they can about cyberbullying. Some districts are providing links on their websites, but I have to wonder if the parents know these are available if they do not go looking for them. I recommend that districts consider increasing their efforts to educate their parents on internet safety, cyber risks, and cyberbullying. As a parent, I believe it is important to have knowledge and resources prior to incidents arising. I was unaware of the interventions put in place by the district in which I reside, I imagine I am not in the minority when it comes to this knowledge.

Another key to prevention and intervention, according to Tangen and Campbell (2010), is programs. Some districts are putting forth great efforts in this area. However, others are lacking. The third recommendation is that all districts be required to employ some bullying prevention program based on Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS), which reinforces the behaviors they wish to see students exhibiting both during and outside of school. During the interview process several administrators discussed such programs. In addition, similar programs and references to PBIS were noted in the document review. However, it is not happening across the board. In addition, even the schools that employ such programs, still are often unaware of incidents until after they occur. Therefore, there is still a more reactive approach versus a proactive one. Research shows that these programs are effective in prevention, hence these are the programs we need to institute in our schools.

Thirdly, it was extremely difficult to locate many of the Codes of Conduct on district pages. I recommend that all districts have a Code of Conduct link on their homepages, and that the Code of Conduct is up to date.

Lastly, I recommend further research in the area of cyberbullying. We need to know administrators' perceptions and if there is still a discrepancy between their perceptions and those of students. We need to know if the clarity in definition is helpful, how to get parents involved and what intervention and prevention practices are effective. We cannot stop cyberbullying without more research about what is working and what is not.

We know that cyberbullying is a disruption to the learning environment as well as the social and emotional welfare of our children. Therefore, we need get a handle on it in order to allow our students to progress academically and our schools to evolve into the next level of greatness.

Conclusion

Cyberbullying incidents, no matter the manner in which they occur, are a disruption for everyone involved. Cyberbullying is harmful to the safe environment that schools work to provide for students. Research has shown that students cannot grow academically, socially or emotionally when their environments are impacted by cyberbullying.

Although administrators and school districts are taking action to address cyberbullying in their schools, they are frequently unaware of incidents prior to disrupting the school. In addition, administrators often struggle with lack of clarity

definition, and case rulings, that only tend to further muddy understanding of handling situations that occur outside of school and on personal devices.

Through the face to face interviews this research study showed that cyberbullying and technology use, in general, is a disruption to the school environment. Forty-four percent of the code of conducts reviewed included cyberbullying under their definition of bullying, 25% included an additional explanation or separate definition of cyberbullying. This is in line with the confusion and discrepancy mentioned by administration regarding the definition.

This research study sought to broadened the understanding of cyberbullying at the school level through the voices of administrators. In addition, it provided recommendations for the schools and districts to improve the manner in which they address cyberbullying, provide information to parents, school staff and students. As technology usage increases, we can only expect cyberbullying to increase as well. Therefore, we can only expect the disruptions to become greater. Schools need prevention and intervention strategies that will address cyberbullying, and in turn assist their students to grow, socially, emotionally and academically.

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APPENDIX A

Interview Questions

1. Can you tell me about your experiences with bullying in your school? (Q1)
    a. Are there differences in the types of bullying you see?

2. The purpose of my interview is to focus on Cyberbullying. Can you tell me about your experiences with cyberbullying? (Q1)
    a. Do you see an issue with students having cell phones and technology readily available?
    b. Have you had specific incidents related to Facebook or other social media programs?
    c. How has text messaging impacted your school?

3. Can you describe cyberbullying incidents you have dealt with? (Q1/Q2)
    a. How did you handle these incidents?
    b. How do you deal with the victims?
    c. How do you deal with the perpetrators?
    d. What experiences do you have with parents?

4. What is your understanding of the laws surrounding cyberbullying?
    a. Has your understanding of the laws in any way impacted your actions when handling cyberbullying? (Q3)
    b. Have you ever had a parent or a student question your actions as it pertains to laws like *free speech*?
    c. If so, how did you handle the question?

5. Is there a district policy pertaining to cyberbullying? (Q2)
    a. Can you tell me about that policy and how you understand it?
    b. How does the policy impact your school?

6. Do you have a school-wide bullying prevention/intervention program? (Q2)
    a. Can you tell me about that program?
    b. Is there a cyberbullying component?
    c. How do you talk to teachers about cyberbullying?
    d. How are parents involved in the program?

7. Sarah is a 9th grade female who has been receiving negative messages via text messages and facebook . Many of the students are using aliases, but some of the facebook students are identifiable by pictures. The students are calling her names like slut, and whore and telling her she is ugly and fat. Sarah is upset by these continual messages. However, she did not bring it to your attention because she was afraid of retaliation, or that you wouldn't do anything, anyway. You found out through another source who happens to be a friend of her sibling. How do you handle this situation? (Q2)

EXEMPT STUDY INFORMATION SHEET

STUDY TITLE: *CYBERBULLYING: SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS' PERCEPTIONS OF LAW AND PREVALENCE, AND THEIR ROLES IN PREVENTION, INTERVENTION, AND DISCIPLINE*

VCU INVESTIGATOR: Suzan G. Denby, M.Ed., Doctoral Candidate, denbysg@vcu.edu, (804)521-5569

Thank you for participating in my research study about cyberbullying. The purpose of this study is to increase the understanding of cyberbullying from the school administrator's perspective. Specifically, how cyberbullying affects student learning in your building and its impact on your role as an instructional leader.

In this study you will be asked to participate in interview. The interview questions will give context to your perceptions on cyberbullying's impact on the learning environment, how you approach and process these incidents, its impact on your time in completing your core work, and any strategies that have been employed to reduce these incidents.

If you have any questions, concerns, or complaints about this study now or in the future, please contact Dr. Whitney Newcomb at wsnewcomb@vcu.edu

Thank you again for your willingness to participate in my study.
Sincerely,

Suzan G. Denby, M.Ed., Doctoral Candidate
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Data by Respondent

Administrator A. Administrator A is employed in a large central Virginia

school division that serves over 50,000 students. He is a principal of a high school with

a population of approximately 500 students. He has been in this current position for 7

years. The students he serves come from all over the district due to the alternative and

vocational focus his school provides. On the day that I interviewed him, he seemed

very busy. I arrived early, but I had to wait a while to see him, because he was meeting

with a parent when I arrived. While I was interviewing him the phone rang, and he

received a radio call that took him away for almost twenty minutes.

Experiences and perceptions of cyberbullying. When Administrator A was

asked if he saw different types of bullying in school, he confirmed that he had seen

various types. He stated that students often bully others for being different than

themselves. He explained that he had seen students being bullied because of their

sexual orientation or even for "being kind of a loner." He said, "That's not prevalent,

you know, but I've seen it." He went on to say, "I guess this isn't about us. We are

doing a good job of stopping it, you know." This comment gave me the impression that

he felt he was being judged for having incidents of bullying in his school.

Administrator A agreed that having cellphones or technology readily available is

an issue in school. He stated that he has experienced incidents related to social media

though, he was not able to give me a specific example. he did say, "Facebook is not as

prevalent anymore. It's more Snapchat and Instagram." He also confirmed that his

school has been impacted by texting. However, in most cases the "actual messaging takes place outside of school hours."

Prevention and response to cyberbullying. As mentioned above, Administrator A stated that his response to cyberbullying "depends on when the cyberbullying takes place" and where. He went on to explain if he knew someone was texting someone else at school, he would "handle it differently than if it happened on the weekend or after school." He stated that they "still take it seriously, just as if he heard it being said in person." If he has "proof of it," they "use that to deal with the situation." He went on to explain that they deal with the victims by trying to get as much information as they can. He explained that they always let the parents know what is going on, and "sometimes the parents are the ones who give [them] the information." They handle cyberbullying incidents like any other incidents. They conduct interviews, get statements, and attempt to obtain as much information as they can about what was sent. If the student will allow the administrator to see the phone, they obtain images of the messages to use as evidence. When given the hypothetical scenario, Administrator 1 responded as follows:

> Um, so [I] definitely would talk to the parents about it. So, I want to involve the parents [to] see what they know. Then, I would talk to Sarah, and get her info. You know, find out what's going on. Then, I would find out does she have evidence? Like…can she give us documents that show what these things are, um, and find out why it's happening. Then, we would…call in the students that's doing it, and their parents, and get

statements. Then, we would probably do a restorative circle. That's the

one thing that we do have is restorative practices. And we have a lot of

people trained now in restorative practices. So, we utilize that when it

comes to bullying. So, if you want to say…we do have that as a way of

attacking, I guess the word is, um, bullying (Administrator A).

Administrator A says that he frequently uses restorative practices in his school. He uses

them between two or more students, staff and students, and two or more staff. In a

situation like the scenario above, he stated that he would attempt to get the parents

involved. He explained that he wants the parents to be aware of what their children are

saying and how it impacts others. He also stated that the parents have to be involved in

order to put a stop to it. He further explained that if only one student's parents can be

involved, he then only involves the students, because it would be "kind of lopsided."

Administrator A explained that he likes to use restorative practices "to help talk about

it." He said, "usually…there's two sides, right? And there could be something the

victim is doing that could potentially perpetuate some of it." He went on to say, "very

rarely have I experienced where it's just the one…just digging in on these people and

there's no responsibility on the other side." Administrator A did say that he felt that if it

were one-sided, and the individual (victim) was simply being picked on for no reason, a

restorative circle would still be helpful.

Administrator A became very passionate and began speaking more rapidly at

this moment. He said:

This is interesting. When I find out about kids who've killed themselves

and all that stuff, and they say nobody did anything. [I] wonder, okay,

really? Did they or did they not? We don't know. How it is at the school

level is, somebody could just say they didn't do anything when we know

we did. And you know as a school you can't put out there what you've

done. You just have to, when you hear those things…say, I'm not just

going to believe it. A parent, whoever says my child went to the school

and the school didn't do anything. I'm always like, I hope the school

did…if the school didn't do anything that's terrible…because there are

things you can do. I would hate to think that they just didn't do anything.

Maybe there are some schools out there that don't…that's crazy.

(Administrator A)

Administrator A spoke about instances where parents claim their child is being picked

on or such and blames the school for not stepping in. He explained that his response to

parents is, "well, you never told us. How was I supposed to do anything when you never

said anything?" He says that the parents expect the schools to notice that the student

"was sad all the time, or she was this or she was that." He feels that is a "really hard

thing to figure out," and that it is unrealistic for parents to put that on the schools. He

also feels that parents and students can "say and spin whatever story they want."

However, the schools cannot say anything. Administrator A feels that the parents need

to do more. He says that the thing that makes cyberbullying so hard is that parents give

their children "this outlet to be cyberbullied." He explains:

So, if you give your child…who is 18 or younger a funnel and you allow

them to have social media…you're opening up the opportunity for this to

happen. So, this kid keeps hitting me. Well, get rid of your Facebook

page so they can't hit you up on Facebook, right? We as a school, we

can't control what your child gets on social media. And if they're texting

you, well, how do they have the number? (Administrator A)

Legal knowledge and its impact on decision making. Administrator A was

asked about his understanding of the laws surrounding cyberbullying and if that

understanding impacts his actions in anyway. He replied:

I, honestly…don't think I'm well versed in what the laws are. Um, I know

I don't really know what the laws are to be honest with you. I mean, I

kind of look at it as bullying…that's how we've handled it. It also depends

on what is said. Like if it is a serious threat to bodily harm or death, or a

threat of use of guns or something, then it rises to a different level where

we start to involve a threat assessment. (Administrator A)

Further, Administrator A stated that he has not had a parent or student "use free speech

as a defense for making the threats or doing the bullying." However, he has had

students say that it didn't happen at school or "it took place at a different time." When

asked if there was a district policy, Administrator A looked around his desk and picked

up what looked like a district copy of the Student Code of Conduct. He said, "Let me

see, so there's a definition," as he flipped through the pages. Then, he began reading

the definition from the document:

Abusive behavior including, but not limited to taunting, threatening, stalking, intimidating, and/or coercing by one or more individuals against other students or staff, perpetrated using information and communication technologies, such as cell phone text messages, pictures, Internet email, social networking sites, defamatory personal websites, and defamatory online personal polling websites to support deliberate, hostile behavior intended to harm others. (Administrator A)

Administrator A went on to explain that "this is the code." The infraction falls under bullying as a "BU2, category 4 or 5A, electronic bullying and/or cyberbullying" and includes such things as, "obscene, pornographic, threatening email, instant message [and] web messages." When asked how the policy impacts the school, he states that "it sets a standard." He goes on to explain that "it's something new…cyberbullying…wouldn't have been here five years ago." He also stated that they do not have an official school-wide program, nor do they "officially talk to" teachers about cyberbullying. Though, they do have "multiple ways for students to express how they are dealing with stuff."

Administrator B. Administrator B is a principal of a middle school in a small school district in the Northern Neck region of Virginia. The district serves just over 800 students. It has one high school, one middle school and one elementary school. The middle school has a population of approximately 160 students. At the time of our interview, Administrator B was serving his third year as the principal. Due to the distance and difficulty scheduling a face to face interview, we decided to conduct the

interview over the phone. I sent the questions to Administrator B prior to the interview to allow him to follow along.

Experiences and perceptions of cyberbullying. When I asked Administrator B to speak of the different types of bullying he sees, first, he stated there "was not as much cyberbullying" as he had seen in his previous schools. Then, he said, "Well, I would say no, I take that back. I would say it is more of people saying things on different social media sites or on text messages." Administrator B said most of the experiences he has had with cyberbullying "take place at home and…once they're off campus." It typically consists of the students going "back and forth" with each other. He confirmed that the use of cell phones has impacted the increase in cyberbullying. Administrator B says that group texts are something they deal with, though it is a minor issue. He explains that it happens periodically, but "not a lot." He feels that platforms like Snapchat are the most troublesome. He explains:

> Different social media sites like Snapchat go off after 24 hours. Currently,
> I work with middle school kids, so they're not savvy enough or they are
> afraid to screenshot the message before it disappears. So, that's the issue
> I deal with or we deal with…it's not a major issue, but you know, it comes
> in bounds and in spurts. So, yeah, I do believe with technology, well, with
> cell phones and technology it has increased over time. (Administrator B)

Prevention and response to cyberbullying. Administrator B feels that it is easier to handle incidents in his current school, than he has experienced in prior settings. He attributes this to the small town environment. He said, "Our parents

appreciate…making them aware of it" and situations "are nipped in the bud quicker than I have ever seen in my life." He further explains, "First and foremost, because we are working in a small town, they don't want to be part of any conversation as it goes to church or to the local grocery store." He explains his procedure for responding to cyberbullying incidents below:

> Working with kids that have been victims, I usually bring them in. [I] have a conversation with them and get them to write up a statement. If there's any documentation, like they might have a screenshot or if there's a text message. I try to get a screenshot of that. Then, I bring in the one who is doing the bullying. Bring them in and have a conversation with them as well, and try to tie it all together. And just…explain to them the consequences of this. One of the things that myself and my school counselor keep reiterating throughout our students is we want everyone to be able to feel comfortable when they walk in the building. And bullying is not something that makes anyone happy. It prevents them from being successful academically, and socially and emotionally. And we don't want that to happen. I've also brought kids in and conducted mediations. Like a restorative type circle with them, to eliminate any further bullying. Then, I will phone both sets of parents and notify them of what has taken place and what's going on…make them aware. (Administrator B)

In addition, Administrator B's school has an anonymous reporting system. It is an online bullying form that can be completed by students or parents. He explained that

anyone can anonymously report an incident that has occurred, and it goes straight to the administration and counseling department in the school. However, Administrator B reports, more often than not, the parents simply give them a call when there is something to be concerned about, rather than completing the form.

When given a scenario of a cyberbullying incident, Administrator B stated that he would start the investigation as soon as the incident was brought to his attention. He explained that he would bring in the individual who reported the incident, first. He would attempt to gain as much information as possible, including screen shots. He would then bring in the victim and let them know that he is aware. He would include the parents, make them aware.   He would conference with the perpetrator and follow the code of conduct for disciplinary actions. Administrator B stated that he would also alert student services. If necessary, he would call in the school resource officers.

Legal knowledge and its impact on decision making.

Administrator B explained that he had never had anyone "bring free speech into it." He stated that in a previous setting, he had to get the resource officer involved more than once. He said, there have been times when the incidents "get deep" and the officers have to explain the severity of the students' actions and how they can actually have charges pressed against them for such acts. At his current school, Administrator B says, "no one has ever challenged freedom of speech, because, you know, the parents get it." He reiterated the fact that working in a smaller school district is different.   The parents "don't want their…child to obtain a reputation." Therefore, they are more supportive.

Administrator B explained that there is not a policy in his district. However, they do have a program they utilize in their school that includes teaching lessons to the students. This program is managed by the school counselor. They teach students about bullying, including the definition. It also includes a cyberbullying and a component on social media. They specifically included Snapchat, since that is a popular platform at this time. This year, Administrator B included a program for the teachers. He explained that some people see bullying differently and he wants to make sure everyone has the same definition. He went on say, "some of us have favorite students and they may have students that might not be as aggressive as the other students and we might feel like someone is bullying and they're not." He explained that we do not want to utilize the term when it is not the right time to do so. Therefore, he ensures that his teachers and staff have the training to recognize what is bullying and what is simply kids being kids. Administrator B does not have a specific program or ongoing system in place to include the parents in cyberbullying education. However, they do touch on it when they have parent meetings, back to school night and orientation. In addition, as mentioned above, Administrator B stated that he follows the code of conduct for disciplinary infractions.

Administrator C. Administrator C is a middle school principal in a district in Central Virginia that serves over 18,000 students. Administrator C has been in this school for 17 years, 15 years of which she has served as the principal. Prior to her principalship, she was the assistant principal in this same school. Her

middle school is one of 4 in the district and has a population of around 900 students.

Experiences and perceptions of cyberbullying. We started our interview talking about bullying in general. When I asked about bullying, Administrator C explained that it is all in the matter of how bullying is defined. She said, "I think that a lot of things that we see is more teasing than bullying. Um, so we have to make sure that we, our students understand the difference between teasing and bullying." Administrator C feels she commonly sees "more teasing…saying ugly things about people, and making mean comments." She finds that there is "more drama" between girls. She started to call it "verbal teasing," but corrected herself by saying, "I shouldn't call it teasing because teasing is different than bullying." Administrator C went on to explain that they find more physical bullying with boys, though that is minimal. She feels the majority of the bullying they experience is "verbal or cyber…through messaging." She goes on to say, "it's so easy now for bullying to take place in the phones and texting." One problem they have run into is "sexting." She said they have talked to their students about making sure they're not "taking pictures of kids in their underclothes." She said they have "not had a big problem" with it. However, a couple years back they had several kids who were involved in sexting and they had the Commonwealth Attorney come in and talk to the students about the ramifications.

When I asked if she felt there was an issue with having cell phones and technology readily available, she explained that she feels this is where we fall short as adults. Her explanation follows:

As adults, parents…when they give kids phones they are not teaching them at a young age how to access information and how to use the phone appropriately. I have different opinions about cell phones. You know, I feel like sometimes if you gave it to them…in fourth grade and you taught them how to use the phone. Then, when they get to middle school they're not going to use them. Maybe, its less likely that they'll use them in an inappropriate manner, because they know the rules, they know what is expected. But if we are waiting until middle school to do that. Then, I feel that you've kind of lost them, because they know more than you do. Because, they're teenagers, you know, they're not gonna listen to you. They're gonna listen to everyone else. (Administrator C)

Administrator C explained that the teenagers of today communicate differently than generations past. Technology and cell phones are "their way or communicating," she says. They use platforms like Snapchat and Instagram. She explains that, "Snapchat is what middle schoolers are into." They create group chats and solicit others to join their groups. Sometimes, they talk "ugly about one another." She explained that these incidents may be happening outside of school, but once it is brought into school, they as a school, have to manage it.

Administrator C stated that the school allows students to carry their cell phones on their person. She feels that the drama has reduced since they have allowed their students this privilege. She explained that they are not allowed to walk around the school talking or texting, but they are allowed to carry them. She feels that allowing the

freedom to use it in the appropriate manner has cut down on a great deal of inappropriate use. She explained that they are "not being sneaky or having to hide it anymore." Administrator C said, "they bring it with them to lunch and they sit it on the table." They are allowed to "read on it." However, they are not allowed to play games or such. Administrator C stated that they are still going to go in the bathroom and text. However, she explains, now that they have the ability to use it appropriately, "it's not causing a scene."

When I asked Administrator C about specific cyberbullying incidents she has dealt with, she told me most often the parents will call to tell them about something that happened over the weekend. She explained, if it is a situation that occurred at home in which the students are now talking about at school, they have to address it. She did not give me a specific incident that occurred, but rather spoke of minor incidents in general. She explained that they had some incidents and went on to explain how they dealt with them, without specifically describing any. When asked how text messaging has impacted her school, Administrator C described the following incident:

> We had an incident one day where a kid, um, let us know that they received a message that a student was threatening to harm herself. That was scary. They were chatting about it in their chat room. So, they brought it to our attention. We addressed the student, and sure enough, the student had a plan. We contacted the mother. The mother came and got the student and took the student to the hospital. So, you know, it's not always a negative situation…It can be very helpful tool. (Administrator

C)

Prevention and response to cyberbullying. Administrator C states that she

always begins her investigation with any incident by bringing the individuals in and

having a conversation with them. She clarified that she does not bring them in together,

but rather individually. She will ask students to see their phones, if there are text

messages or such involved. She includes resource officers in the conversation and

explain that charges can be pressed. During her tenure, they have never had charges

filed against a child. However, she feels the need to make students aware of the

seriousness of their actions. She also involves the parents in the conversations. She

feels it is not enough to make the parents aware of what the students are doing,

Administrator C wants to make sure the parents really understand. In her opinion many

of the parents do not understand what their kids are doing or even what they are able to

do. Administrators C explains:

> These kids are so beyond us in technology and understanding, and the apps
>
> they use. I mean, they'll show me things that I don't even have a clue.
>
> I'm like, wow, I didn't know that it would do that. You know, it's very
>
> scary. (Administrator C)

Administrator C states that she has also used mediation with students involved

in cyberbullying incidents. She feels that it is helpful to sit down with all the students

involved and explain how hurtful their behaviors are. She will tell them that their words

are embarrassing and humiliating. She feels that sitting down together, talking it out

and working through it is beneficial. Of course, she will only do so if both students are

willing. She would never attempt such an intervention, especially in a bullying

situation if they were not in agreement. Administrator C admits that there have been

times when students were not agreeable to mediation. However, she explains, "more

often than not they want to resolve it." In situations where students are adamant that

they do not want to mediate, she will speak to each of them and their parents, and

handle the situation appropriately on the disciplinary level, as needed. She stated that it

is difficult to isolate students from one another in a school. However, if a student is

truly afraid of another student, they will do things such as, changing the route a student

takes between classes or having one student refrain from transitioning until the halls

clear. She explained that there are things they can do, but sometimes these types of

changes do not make the situation better. In fact, they may intensify the situation.

When given a scenario where a student reported another student being bullied,

Administrator C stated that she had experienced a similar situation in the past. She

explained that she would bring in the individual who reported the incident to gather

information.   Next, she would call in the victim, and ask to see any messages she has.

Administrator C would take screen shots if possible. Then, she would bring in the

perpetrator. She would ask, "Is there anything you'd like to share with me?" She stated

that if the student denied knowing what she was talking about, she would say, "Is there

anything you did this weekend on social media that I need to be aware of?" She says

typically she would tell them, "I just want you to know that I am already aware, so you

might as well just be upfront with me." She explained, sometimes they are honest,

sometimes they are not. She will go as far as showing the screen shots she has and

saying, "Let me share this with you…it was brought to my attention." She will explain that she is aware that the incident happened outside of school, but because it has impacted the school it is now her issue.   She will deal with it as outlined by the district guidelines.

Legal knowledge and its impact on decision making. Administrator C confirmed that there is a district policy for bullying. She stated that the policy includes electronic communication, and supports "deliberate, hostile, hurtful messages intended to harm others and which substantially disrupts or interferes with the safety and welfare of the school and its students." She explained that they use the Code of Conduct for disciplinary actions.   Administrator C went on to say, there is a fine line between something that happens at home and something that happens at school, and you have to be careful. However, once it impacts the school it is the school's responsibility to address it.

Administrator C told me that a week and a half prior to our interview, her district had instituted a "Stop Bullying" button on their webpages. It is an anonymous reporting system. She explained that when someone uses the system to report an incident, a message will be sent to the administrator's and the counselor's cell phones. They will receive the message and manage it accordingly.

In addition to the district policy and district anonymous reporting system, each school in this district was charged with creating their own bully prevention program. Administrator C describes theirs as a character ed program. However, she explained that as a character ed program, they still talk about all types of bullying. All of the

teachers trained. They have a teacher advisory lesson every Monday. Those lessons are tied to the character ed program, as well as Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS). She explained that the school-wide positive behavior program rewards students for good behaviors. The students receive Knight Bucks that they are able to cash in for different privileges and opportunities (i.e. wearing a hat, homework pass, using earbuds at lunch, etc.).

Administrator C identified their three goals as safety, responsibility and respect. She explained that the character ed program is tied into these goals as well as everything else they do as a school. Each month they have an award ceremony. The teachers keep track of the bucks that are given out to each student, and during the award ceremony top students are recognized in the areas of safety, responsibility and respect. Administrator C says that the sixth graders love it. However, the eighth graders are not as excited about it. They enjoy being able to buy the privilege to wear earbuds, but are not crazy about being recognized in front of their peers.

Administrator D. At the time of our interview, Administrator D was in his third year as principal in a high school with a population of close to 1800 students. His Central Virginia school district serves over 58,000 students and his school was one of eleven high schools in the district. Prior to his principalship, he served as an assistant principal and later a principal in a middle school in the same school district. In fact, many of the students attending his current high school, were students in his previous school middle school.

Experiences and perceptions of cyberbullying. As with the other interviews, I

started by asking Administrator D to tell me about his experiences with different types of bullying. He replied by explaining that his school district had created a "Promote Respect Committee" a few years prior, and he was chosen to serve on that committee. He explained:

> One of the big points of emphasis was trying to better define for the public what bullying actually is. Because the thought was that it was an overused term in situations that were not technically, by definition, bullying. So, there was an effort to better educate our public and our administrators. So, to that end we've seen a decrease in documented cases of bullying over the last…five to seven years versus what would predate that work. I would say, however, that the [bullying] instances we do deal with are more cyber in nature.

In response to the question about the differences in the types of bullying, Administrator D confirmed that there are differences in the types of bullying he sees. However, he stated that cyberbullying seems to be more prominent than other forms of bullying. Furthermore, he said, "in the two buildings that I have principaled, I think there has only been one documented case where I had to respond in writing."

Administrator D believes that access to technology and "social media platforms are norms" for the students, today. Further, he feels that because of these norms cell phones and social media access "increase or lends itself to an increase in cyberbullying." He says, students are "far more comfortable being tigers online." In turn, such actions manifest themselves "in fights or other types of aggressive behaviors

or confrontations, verbal or otherwise." Administrator D explained that sometimes the aggressive behaviors take place in the neighborhood, but later spill over into the school as a disruption. However, there are other times when the aggressive behaviors take the place directly in the school. Either way, the school deals with those disruptions to the learning environment.

Administrator D reported that he had dealt with one incident involving "bullying via social media" in the past two years. He told me they deal with quite a bit of harassment. However, he clarified that harassment is not bullying by definition. He went on to say, "just to kind of draw a delineation between the two, we deal with much more unsettled conflict on social media" than what we would call bullying. When asked how text messaging has impacted his school, Administrator D replied, "I could go on for days." However, he clarified that its impact is not specifically related to bullying. He reiterated the fact that he had only had one documented incident in the past two years. Therefore, he could not say text messaging was significant in relation to cyberbullying. His description of the one documented cyberbullying incident is as follows:

> Generally speaking, there's a victim who did not do anything to bring conflict onto themselves or attention. There is, um, a bully, that we determined to be a bully, so a perpetrator who targeted this individual, and would make threatening comments intended to make the victim uncomfortable at school. Um, to the point of coercive behaviors, trying to get the victim to do things for them or give them things under the threat of

consequence otherwise. (Administrator D)

Prevention and response to cyberbullying. Administrator D conjectures that his district has "pretty progressive protocol" for responding to incidents that he does not think is enforced throughout the Commonwealth. He illustrates the protocol as it would be followed in the above situation. When a parent or student alleges that bullying has occurred toward an individual, the principal must send out a letter to the parent of the identified victim stating that the incident has been brought to the principal's attention and explaining that there will be an investigation. If the alleged bully is identified, the principal will also send a letter to that student's family letting them know that an investigation has been opened in regard to bullying. Then, the investigation occurs. Afterward, a second letter goes out to announce the findings, either confirming that bullying took place or that it did not. Immediate disciplinary actions would be taken in the situations where it is necessary.

When asked if there was a school-wide bullying prevention or intervention program in his school, Administrator D returned his discussion to the Promote Respect Committee. He explained that "part of the committee's work was to present an expectation that each school have a Promote Respect campaign that sought to educate students, parents and teachers on the ways and the norms, and the definitions of bullying, but flipping it to promote respect." This campaign was included in each school's Improvement Innovation Plan. Administrator D confirmed that each school's School Improvement Plan can be located on the website for each school. In addition, one can locate a "snapshot of each school's Promote Respect plan." One of the current

"flagships" in Administrator D's district, as well as across the country, is PBIS. Further, PBIS is a large part of Promote Respect.

Administrator D explains that PBIS is an example of how adults are contending with views within themselves, in order to express healthier behaviors between themselves and their students. The teachers receive professional development that is "topically relevant." Theoretically, the idea is that there will be a positive outcome from the teachers that projects itself upon the students. In addition, the students have homeroom every Friday during which lessons are centered around Promote Respect, as well as climate and culture expectations. Parents are included by hosting coffee chats and other awareness type events, in addition to links that the principal sends out.

When Administrator D was given the scenario of a student being bullied and her sibling's friend reporting it, he first spoke of the anonymous link available in his school. He explained that an individual (parent or student) can be as anonymous as they would like when using this link. When a report is made it "pings the counselling department." The report is then directed to an administrator as needed, and investigation begins. Next, Administrator D also told me of a software program adopted by his district, called Gaggle. He explained that they use Google Suite with their Chromebooks, so Gaggle is able to search the students' documents for "certain words or phraseology." Alarming words are then sent to a third party to screen for contextual relevance. Administrator D explains that using this tool, Sarah (from the scenario) would not even need to be implicated, at this point, neither would her sibling's friend. Administrator D explained that Gaggle was primarily designed to identify threats to self and others. Further, he

told me that many students use their Chromebooks to journal. They also submit essays in that way, as well as write back and forth to one another. "It is the modern way in a one to one school of passing notes," he explains. If something is a "red flag," they are able to see the notes the students are passing. Since Gaggle works through Google, even if a student is using a personal device with a school account, Gaggle will pick it up. It not only scans documents, but also images and videos. It will flag anything that may be criminal in nature, as well. It was apparent that Administrator D was proud of the prevention strategies his district had instituted.

At this point, Administrator D said, "So, let me jump back into your scenario." He stated that he felt there were a few situations and layers within it. He specifically pointed out the retaliation threat and the anonymity of the perpetrator. He went on to explain:

> It's always been my belief that fear of retaliation comes from a core belief, maybe through adverse experiences along the way, that the administration or the adults that need to intervene are not gonna do it with complete fidelity and diligence. Um, and while I trust the protocols and procedures, and even personally my own way of navigating situations like this, you can never behave for another individual. I think if you onboard the right folks to include law enforcement as necessary, and counseling resources. Maybe, enact other protocols that have proven to be, through research and practice, very beneficial, such as, restorative conferences and restorative conversations. Hopefully, we have mitigated the potential for retaliation.

So, really just knowing what your resources are and pulling every arrow

from your quiver, so to speak, necessary to take care of that. Also, putting

actionable steps in place that Sarah could rely upon if a form of retaliation

bubbles up, so that she knows exactly what to do in that situation.

Administrator D concludes from an administrative and counseling perspective,

the key is to ensure Sarah has an action plan moving forward. We do not want assume

that the situation is fully resolved. Administrator D asserted that we have to be

transparent about this. He said, "we know we are on a transformation continuum."

However, hopefully, we will be able to mollify her anxieties. As far as the "aliases" of

the perpetrators, "aside from getting IP addresses, subpoenas and such," Administrator

D asserts, there is little you can do immediately. In addition, he states, there is always

"plausible deniability." Fortunately, it appears in this scenario there are many people

implicated. Therefore, he says, this is where they rely on their personal relationships,

because "there is usually a songbird" in there, so they use that leverage gather

information.

In addition, Administrator D points to the importance of educating parents. He

maintains that parents typically have access to their children's devices and sites.

Therefore, they elicit parents to help obtain specific information in situation like this.

Administrator D claims that he cannot identify one student who uses his or her real

name on social media. Therefore, they have to rely on the pictures they use in their

posts or identifying banner. He argues that using aliases is not anything new. However,

it does take additional man hours to resolve.

Legal knowledge and its impact on decision making. Administrator D reasoned that being progressive in response to protocols protects principals and other administrators who are responding in accordance with local and state legislation and policy. He states that he cannot remember a time when a parent has challenged his decision in this particular area. He feels that having been an administrator for 12 years, and not having been challenged in the area of free speech, speaks for itself. Administrator D maintains that if you are following the policy and protocol, there should be no issue. He said, "you may need to explain on the front end, to better educate and rationalize your decision to a parent," which is something he feels they deserve. However, he declares that it also "mitigates challenge on the back end."

Administrator E. Administrator E has served as both an assistant principal and a principal in a Central Virginia school district that serves over 50,000 students. Presently, Administrator E is an assistant principal of a middle school with a population of approximately 1,100 students. This is her sixth year in this position. After attempting to schedule our interview a couple times, Administrator E and I agreed to meet before work one morning. We chose a local Panera Bread that was convenient to her school. When I arrived, she was seated in a quiet corner, sipping on a coffee. I joined her. We exchanged pleasantries, and I explained my study to her, again. Then we began the interview.

Experiences and perceptions of cyberbullying. As with my previous interviews, I began my questions asking Administrator E about her experiences with bullying in general. She started by saying she normally sees people "just trying to put

other people down." She believes these behaviors stem from "people who generally have low self-esteem issues or are trying to gain attention from others in a negative way." Administrator E says mostly she has experienced behaviors that are "mean or aggressive" that can be misinterpreted as bullying. These are not incidents that have happened over a period of time, but rather "just people saying hurtful things."

Administrator E contends that she does have issues with students having technology and cell phones readily available. She explains, that she is a "firm believer that parents of middle school students should definitely have their child's cell phone at a certain time at night…according to their bedtime." She reveals Instagram to be an issue in her school and points out that it is happening at night. Therefore, if the students did not have access to these devices during the night, the issues would lessen.

Administrator E went on to speak of other concerns with technology in general. She also feels that students should not have their phones during the school day. She explains that the school policy mandates students to have their phones turned off and out of view while in school. However, it is difficult to manage and a disruption to the learning environment. A further disruption is the use of Google documents. Administrator E admitted when she was in school they passed notes back and forth between friends. "Nowadays, students have Google documents that they chat with between themselves and then with someone in another classroom, or even someone at another school." This is the way the communicate, she explained. The difficulty is that the audience or friend group is so much larger. Therefore, the disruption is so much greater.

Administrator E affirmed that students will have Google documents open throughout the day. They will "have it named me and my crew" or something similar. From time to time they will go in and chat back and forth. Administrator E said, "most of it is innocent; most of it is just talking about nonsense." However, she explained, "the bullying part comes in when someone has a group document, and then they include people who may not be in agreement with what they are saying about someone." Administrator E went on to explain:

> You have a group of people on a document. Whoever is reading it or whoever the victim is, feels everyone on that document feels the same way. That's not necessarily true. So, it's up for the students who have been included by someone else to either stand up and say, Hey, that's not nice. You shouldn't do that or I don't feel that way. Or just get themselves out as soon as it becomes mean or aggressive. (Administrator E)

When Administrator E was asked about a cyberbullying incident that she had dealt with, she described the following situation:

> Recently I dealt with one of our cheerleaders during halftime. Someone posted a picture of her and commented from a routine they were doing at halftime. [She] circled her picture when she was doing her stunt and put WTF and some emojis and some things like that. It got back to the student. So…I guess I could categorize that as cyberbullying, because she had posted it on Instagram towards students and anyone else to comment on. So, I handled it as cyberbullying. Actually, her parent took her phone and

I had it for a while until they picked it up. I explained…What do you do in your free time? What extracurricular activities do you do? She said, nothing. I said, so how can you put someone down for just representing your school? Although it may not be perfect, think of this particular young lady. Have you heard her talk much? So, don't you think it would take a lot for someone who seems to be shy to even get out there and try out for the cheerleading team? Now she is performing and you're making fun of her? I was very upset. She apologized.

Administrator E stated that the perpetrator's parent was extremely upset, as well. She completely agreed with Administrator E. She took the students phone immediately. Administrator E told the parent that she thought the perpetrator should apologize in the same manner as she had victimized the other student, online. However, the parent had her daughter write an apology on paper instead.

Prevention and response to cyberbullying. Administrator E explained that her school does not have a specific program for cyberbullying prevention. However, they have several programs that touch on it. At the time of our interview, her school was doing *No Place for Hate*, which is centered around kindness. Also, during their study block they have *Digital Citizenship*. She explained that there are lessons every month focusing on *Digital Citizenship*. The also bring in speakers to enhance the program. It concentrates more on kindness and anti-bullying than cyberbullying. However, that is included.

Administrator E stated that there is also a district wide program called *Silence*

Hurts that is present in all middle and high school in the division. It allows individuals to just send an email reporting something they feel needs to be shared. She clarified that it can be an email or a message and it will be directed to the administrators who have been designated. Administrator E told me that she had received an email two days prior at 8 o'clock in the evening. A student emailed to tell her that one of her friends was upset, because peers had been calling her fat lately. She told her friend she was thinking about taking some vitamin D pills. Administrator E called the girl's parent right away. She told the parent she did not know how credible it was, but she felt it was important enough that the parent should be made aware.

Administrator E responded to the scenario by saying she would speak with the victim along with the school counselor. She would let Sarah know that she has a concerned friend. She would ask Sarah if she could show her what she had been receiving, and ask Sara if she had informed her parents. Administrator E stated that she would try to get a feel for how Sarah was doing in mentally, and have the counselor speak with her individually. Administrator E would continue the investigation to try to identify the perpetrators. If she was able to identify the student or students, she would then call them in for conference. Then, she would speak with the parents. She would let Sarah know that if anything else occurred she should bring it to the attention of Administrator E.

Legal knowledge and its impact on decision making. Administrator E says, "mainly at this age we just try to educate them regardless of what the law is." She clarifies, unless it is something criminal, like having a firearm or something similar in

nature. Administrator E explained that students in middle school need to be educated about what is appropriate and not, so that is what they do. They educate them and they make sure the parents are aware of what is going on. She said the law has not really impacted the decisions they make, unless it is something gang related or it has to do with another student's safety. Administrator E stated that they follow the student code of conduct for disciplinary actions. The student code of conduct is their district policy, according to her.

Administrator F. Administrator F was not comfortable being recorded. Therefore, after receiving permission from the chair of my committee, we agreed that she would answer the interview questions in written form. Administrator F is an assistant principal in a Central Virginia district that serves over 50,000 students.

Experiences and perceptions of cyberbullying. The first question asks the participants if there are differences in the types of bullying they see. Administrator F responded to this question by saying she sees the same bullying behaviors that she saw when she started in the field. For example, she spoke of negative comments pertaining to "appearance/clothing, brands or labels of clothing, hairstyle, etc." However, she noted that she has seen "a high increase or uptick in bullying via social media platforms." She identified Instagram as the most popular at this time. She also reported that students are "increasing their manipulation of others' images." In addition, students are taking screen shots of texting conversations and sharing them. Administrator F claims these are being used to either embarrass someone or they are being manipulated "to feed a certain narrative." Administrator F feels there is a

"massive increase of texting threatening messages." She also has seen personal videos that have been shared in confidence, being shared publicly or to larger groups of individuals. Administrator F confirms that having cell phones and technology readily available is an issue for schools. She says, "While I know we are supposed to consider educational advantages and implications for technology/device use in the school setting, constant access to devices seems to increase what presents as obsessive-compulsive like behavior from students." Text messaging "can prove extremely disruptive throughout the course of the day," Administrator F said. Students and teachers have been videotaped without their knowledge, and they have had two fights because of "texting banter" that took place during the school day.

Administrator F did not describe a specific cyberbullying incident that she had experienced. However, she did speak generally about how such situations are dealt with at her school. Her explanation is as follows:

> Most were relayed to leadership/administration by a student and/or a parent who has seen text messages or private messages via one of the social media platforms. When possible, images/screen shots are obtained, statements are taken from all involved and some level of consult occurs with our SRO's. We also notify home/families and case managers/behavior support so staff is more alert for signs of difficulty/continued bullying behaviors. We will provide restorative circle opportunities if students/families are willing and we have provided intensive, small-group counseling supports if the problem is more

pervasive for a particular group of students.

Prevention and response to cyberbullying. Administrator F reported that her

school has a school-wide program, which includes tiered systems of support. It

indirectly addresses bullying. However, it does not have a component related to

cyberbullying. The core tenants of the program include: respect, responsibility and

relationships. In response to the question about district policy, Administrator F said,

"Code of Conduct provides a clear definition of cyberbullying as well as recommended

guidelines for consequences and discipline." She explains that it "reads easily" and is

easily understood, though "applying it by the book is more difficult." She further

explains, "The nuances of social media, photoshopping and manipulation of info makes

it murky." Administrator F reports that they tend to be more flexible in their

interventions due to being in an alternative setting. She says, they do not go "most

severe with consequences" unless the case is cut and dry, with absolutely no doubt.

Administrator F responded to the scenario by saying:

We would first contact SROs to see whether it rates at a level for which

they need to be involved or charges can or need to be pressed or a police

report filed. We would try to get screenshots/pictures of the event/situation

as it's being depicted. We would reach out to families to share what was

brought to our attention and the steps we take for investigation purposes.

Any students who were recognizable in pictures/videos would likely be

pulled for conversation/written statements and as an admin group we

would review together, document all steps/information and notify or

involve outside supports (home, social services, law enforcement, home-school staff, etc.). We would keep students separated until all steps were completed & then determine consequences based upon results of the investigation. We would also consider scheduling a restorative circle for the students involved, and possibly their families, depending on the nature/severity of the event. If need be, long-term suspension and referral to DRHO would occur.

Legal knowledge and its impact on decision making. Administrator F feels that a more extensive documentation process now required. However, she notes most of the new process were things already being done informally. She explains that you must always make students and families aware of the adjustments in the process and our legal requirements in addressing these types of situations. In addition, she reported that she always consults with SRO for all of situations, as a just in case measure. Administrator F reported that she had not had anyone formally question Free Speech and her decisions. Although, she has had students question why something done of their own time is relevant at school. She says she "suspects that question comes up as more of a deflection for their behaviors as opposed to a true concern regarding their right to free speech."

Administrator G. Administrator G is an assistant principal in a high school that serves over 1650 students. His school is in a large central Virginia district. At the time of this interview he was starting his second year as an assistant principal in this school. He had served the past several years as an administrative aide in this same

school.

Experiences and perceptions of cyberbullying. Administrator G stated that cyberbullying was on the forefront. He told me that they conducted business, daily, with the knowledge that cyberbullying "could definitely distract students throughout their daily schedules because of what would occur outside of the regular hours." He said most often they were taking second-hand information from students who told them of incidents, and having to follow up on that information. This proved difficult for administrators, because they did not often have access to their personal devices. More than that, he said, the students did not want their parents to be contacted. Therefore, "it was a tricky thing to try and tackle." Administrator G described the population he taught, while being an administrative aide, as not having the access or effectiveness as the "normal population." Furthermore, he said, bullying by this population of students was not to the degree of others. In addition, just addressing it with them was often enough to stop the behaviors.

Administrator G agrees that having cellphones and technology readily available is an issue in schools. He sees cyberbullying as personal with an impersonal approach. The students "can just do it at random…and not think of the repercussions." He has found that "students just fire off." He likened it to adults with email, but said that students "are more crafty with their technological devices." They could also do so all day long, which "could hinder the academic process." Administrator G said the difficulty is controlling the access to personal devices. Students have the ability to use them during free time, such as lunch and electives. In order to adequately stay on top of

such use, schools would have to have stricter policies regarding students' usage.

When asked if he could describe an incident of cyberbullying that he was aware of, Administrator G first stated that he was not aware of one, specifically. Then, he said, "well, maybe we have." He went on to speak of an incident where a student wanted to date another student and contacted the other student via text. His description is as follows:

> A student wanted to date a particular student. Then, when that student was denied the possibility of being dated…the bullying started. I think, both face to face and through social media, through multiple members. So, then it became very complicated, almost a ring of bullying, if you will, which isn't really funny, but it's very complicated. You really want to track it back to a single person if you can, which makes it easier. When you have multiple members involved, then you have to consider multiple consequences at the level that each individual would receive, because of the bullying. So yeah, it can be very complicated. (Administrator G)

Administrator G stated in incidents like described above, they first had to get "all their ducks in a row." They gathered all the information they could obtain and reviewed it. Then, they interviewed all the students involved, both "victim and culprit." Next, they had to make decisions as to "what was validated and actually a case of bullying." Then, they "imposed the consequences as related to the code of conduct." He stated that it is "not zero tolerance." However, there are procedures that must be followed. Administrator G told me that the intellectual level of students must be taken

into consideration. He said, the administrators must consider whether the students truly understand "what their actions entailed and the consequences that would follow."

Administrator G confessed that his experiences with parents have not been positive. He said they have "met resistance most of the time." The parents have either been in disbelief or they have refused to allow the school to access the students' personal devices. He adds that this also obstructs the investigation.

Prevention and response to cyberbullying. Administrator G refers to the Code of student Conduct as their district policy. He feels "because of the transparency with communication across boundaries most districts are of the same page. This is the reason Student Codes of Conduct are so similar. He said his school follows the code of conduct when investigating and making disciplinary decisions. Administrator G confirmed that his school has a bullying prevention/intervention program. He told me that they have a multitude of individuals trained in crisis intervention. Therefore, the students are always receiving information and support regarding these types of situations. He explained that the students participate in large groups, small groups, and individual sessions. It is dependent upon the age and aptitude of the students they are attempting to reach at that time. He also confirmed that there is a cyberbullying component. However, that was not originally included. It was only added after concern was raised about being able to handle cyberbullying incidents more effectively. He explained that they are continually improving on this area and are attempting to work it into group sessions with students. He feels some of their students do not comprehend the seriousness of these types of actions. Therefore, education is the answer to make

them aware of what could happen when they do such things. Administrator G stated that they also train teachers regarding cyberbullying. He told me that it was a general training that is done annually, to make them aware of possible occurrences and what to look out for. He stated that they did not address teachers individually, unless there was a specific situation of which certain teachers needed to be made aware. For example, a situation could be taking place or brewing, or there may be something they need to look out for in order to prevent something from occurring. Administrator G stated that he thinks "teachers being honest with themselves is good enough." Some will brush off a sense they may feel. They need to pay attention to it instead. Administrator G confessed that parents were not specifically involved in the prevention program. They are aware that groups occur, and that the school teaches students about bullying. However, the parents are not involved in the education piece of it. He said it may be a good thing to look into incorporating. He further stated that parent groups could prove to be beneficial.

When given the scenario of Sarah, the student being cyberbullied, Administrator G said the first thing he would do is talk with Sarah's teachers. He feels that the teachers know Sarah better than the administrators, because they see her daily. Sarah may have spoken to one of her teachers, even minimally, because of the relationship they have. Administrator G said he would fill the teachers in on the details and ask them if they are aware of anything regarding her being bullied. His next step would be to sit down and meet with Sarah. He would tell her that though he cannot promise there will not be retaliation, he will make sure that they will deal with the bullies according to

school policy, and find a way to stop the negative actions. He would also inform Sarah that he is going to notify her parents. He feels strongly about ensuring parents are aware and can support her "on the home front." "It is very important," he said, "that they are aware of anything she might be thinking (i.e. suicide, self-harm, things like that)." Administrator G went on to say, he would probably notify local law enforcement if he did not have all the information regarding who was actually involved. He stated that he would most likely not have access to the perpetrators' personal devices. As previously, he pointed out that parents are resistant to allow administrators to see their children's technology. They often have difficulty accepting their child's involvement. Administrator G told me that law enforcement agencies have cyberbullying units. He goes on to say, there are always "channels you can go through." Although, resolution will not happen overnight, the schools have to make sure the student is safe both at school and home, and "it is resolved as quickly as possible."

Legal knowledge and its impact on discipline. When asked about his understanding of the laws surrounding cyberbullying, Administrators G said, "they are definitely going to be different between adults and minors." Further, he stated, in a school setting there will be zero tolerance. He told me there have been situations where they have asked law enforcement to step in, because the students or parents were being uncooperative. However, at other times the school was able to manage the investigation on its own. Administrator G emphasized the desire "to make sure it stops." He went on to say cyberbullying has been "getting a lot of press" and students are harming

themselves because of cyberbullying. Therefore, it is a priority to provide a safe and nurturing school environment. Administrator G explains, "knowing it's something that society is well aware and they trust the school administrators and staff to be on top of it." Therefore, administrators have to make sure every situation is handled with utmost seriousness.

Administrator H. Administrator H has been a high school principal in a small Central Virginia district for several years. Though, he did not say how many years and I did not think to ask. His school serves just over 1,300 of the nearly 4,400 students in the district. His school is the only high school in the district. There is one middle school and four elementary schools. Due to the travel and scheduling factors, Administrator H and I opted to conduct a phone conference. We set a time one morning, during the school day. I emailed him a copy of the questions prior to the interview, so he would be able to follow along as I asked the questions. On the day of our interview, I called at the 10 O'clock hour as agreed upon, and he answered immediately.

Experiences and perceptions of cyberbullying. When I asked administrator H about his experiences with bullying in general, he replied, "as any high school, we are going to have some bullying." He said that it truly varies from student to student. He explained, "one of the problems we are finding is that bullying has become such a buzzword that the minute a child says something to another child, the parent is like, my child's being bullied." The parents do not understand the "true definition of bullying," according to Administrator H. He declared that they might have some bullying that

occurs face to face, and/or over the internet or text messages. However, he said, "it is truly not a huge issue. At least, it doesn't get reported to us." He continued, "I mean, I can't deal with it unless the kids or parents bring it to our attention." He told me when it is brought to their attention, they "act on it."

Administrator H feels that students having technology and cell phones readily available is "a big issue."   The students cannot seem to put cell phones down, he explained.   Text messages are the largest concern in his school. He experiences disruptions such as messages between a boyfriend and a girlfriend where one tells the other, "Hey, I'm getting ready to get a pass to the bathroom. You get one too." He has also had students who planned to fight and texted each other such things as, "meet at the top of the stairs." Administrator H has not seen "a whole lot of just nasty bullying." However, he stated that he had had some incidents with Facebook through the years. These include threats to the school as well as parents bringing in concerns of someone saying something to their child. Administrator H said, "of course they always leave out their kid's responses back." He reiterated that they had experienced incidents "related to Facebook and the net." Then he confessed:

> I gotta be honest, we're having a hard time. At least, I'm having a hard
> time keeping up with the different platforms, because the kids change what
> they use all the time. I forget the one that goes away after 24 hours. I
> don't know if it's Instagram or Snapchat or whichever one that is. That
> one is really hard to keep a handle on, because they can use that one and
> it disappears. Of course, kids are getting smart now.   They're taking

screenshots of that before it goes away. So, we do spend some time dealing

with it, but not an inordinate amount of time.

Administrator H was unable to give me a specific incident of cyberbullying that

he had dealt with. However, he was able to describe how they handle such situations.

First, he told me their response varies dependent upon "the severity of the situation." If

the situation is "your typical and forth" between students, they try to mediate. They

also provide students with options like, blocking the other person. They meet with the

students as well as the parents on both sides. They conference with the victim and

explain that he or she needs to come back to the administrators if this happens again.

They tell the perpetrator that his or her consequences will be more severe if this

behavior continues. In some cases, they have gone from mediation to one day out of

school and in other cases they have gone from mediation to five days out of school.

Administrator H stated that they had also banned students from having their phones on

school grounds. They have explained that if they bring their phones, it goes from being

a cell phone issue to a defiance issue. In most cases parents have been receptive, he

said, "because obviously [the] child is not responsible enough to have the phone…in the

building."

Prevention and response to cyberbullying. When asked if they had a district

policy pertaining to cyberbullying, Administrator H replied, that they did not have a

specific cyberbullying policy, rather it was covered under the general bullying policy.

He explained that the policy says they "basically will not tolerate it and incidents will

be reported to the principal to be handled." I asked Administrator H if the policy he

spoke of was in the Code of Conduct or if his district had something different. He

replied, "I think it's in the Code of Conduct." Then told me he had his Code of Conduct

right there and asked me to "hang on" while he looked. After shuffling through the

pages for a few seconds, he reported it was on page 60. He went on to tell me that

cyberbullying falls under bullying and it gives the district's definition of cyberbullying.

He further explained that it is broken down into offenses and categories. It lists

offenses and refers back to categories and discipline consequences. Administrator H

stated that his school does not have a school-wide bullying prevention or intervention

program. They also do not have an anonymous reporting system. He said they

encourage students to come in and talk to either him or the assistant principal, or any

other adult in the building with whom they feel comfortable.

When given the scenario, Administrator H stated that they would first contact

the parents to make them aware of the report and ask what they are seeing at home.

They would also ask the parent for a meeting. They would meet with the parent and the

student, at that time letting the student know what has been reported to them.

Administrator H explained that even though the perpetrators are using aliases, often

they are able to identify them by using pictures and such. He would want to talk to the

victim to see if he could identify the perpetrators, first. He would further investigate,

and once they have identified the students doing the bullying, he would notify those

students' parents to make them aware of the bullying behaviors. Administrator H then

said, "of course they are going to say they've been hacked or whatever." However, he

stated that he would get the parents involved and explain to the students, "Ultimately,

you are responsible and if this continues…you are going to be suspended." Further, he would let Sarah and her parents know that everyone has been put on notice, and if there are additional occurrences they need to report it to administration. Administrator H proclaimed, "I can tell you from experience, the kids that we were able to identify by pictures start rolling over on people who were using anonymous names." He explained once you start putting constraints on some of them, they will report the others involved.

Legal knowledge and its impact on discipline. Administrator H admitted that he does not "have a very good understanding of the laws on cyberbullying." Therefore, he reports that it has not impacted the way he responds to or handles incidents that occur. He also stated that he has never had a parent question freedom of speech. He explained that typically when the parents come in to discuss a situation that has occurred, they discuss the facts. He tells the parent, "Your child did this out of school, but it came into school, so we're going to deal with it."

Administrator I. Administrator I served as a principal for the past twenty years. At the time of our interview, he was in his third year as principal of a magnet school that attracts students from a dozen districts across Virginia. Previously, he served as a principal of two different high schools in a large district in Central Virginia. His current school serves close to 800 students. Since this school is serves students from several districts, it does not have a district of his own. It is governed by a board of directors. Administrator I and I agreed to a time for our interview and I met at his school on the agreed upon afternoon. I checked in at the main office. The principal was alerted of my arrival and I was escorted through the building to his office. He was

ready and waiting when I arrived. We exchanged pleasantries and began the interview promptly.

Experiences and perceptions of cyberbullying. In response to my question about experiences with different types of bullying, Administrator I stated that he had seen "a little bit of cyberbullying." However, he said he had not seen any "physical bullying, in the classic sense…or academic bullying." He elaborated on the cyberbullying incidents he had experienced, explaining that they involved "some students posting negative comments about another student." He recalled the incidents being on Facebook. Administrator I further explained that in his previous schools he saw "bullying across the spectrum." He said, he saw racial bullying, sexual bullying, both in person and online. However, in his current school it is not as prevalent. He justified this as being "a unique school."

When I asked if he had issues with cell phones and technology being readily available, Administrator I told me he did not have issue. He said, "the reality is they're here to stay." He went on to say:

 Districts that have a real hardcore cell phone policy, I think, personally, they are kind of missing the boat, because once they get out of school they're going to be exposed to it constantly. So, I think the real angle we should take is to try to teach them how to use it responsibly and appropriately. [Rather] than to try to deny them, because kids are kids and I can tell you…they're going to get around our efforts to keep them from having cell phone there. They're going to have…two or three cell phones.

[When] you catch them, they'll give you the dead one…and keep the live

ones. So, no, I don't have issues with students having cell phones and

technology readily available, because [use] in a proper way can be a

tremendous asset to the classroom.

Administrator I described an incident he was currently dealing with on

Facebook. He stated that a "young gentleman is making comments that are negative

towards women in general." However, he is directing his comments toward one

specific female. Administrator I explained that this young man "had feelings that were

not readily returned." Therefore, he used the Facebook platform as a means to deal

with it. Administrator I told me, previously he dealt with incidents on Snapchat and

Instagram, but has not dealt with anything related to those platforms recently.

Administrator I described the process for handling the incident described above.

He said the first contact with this student was "his counselor, not the administrator."

After conversation with the counselor the incident went to the administrator.

Administrator I explained that they focused more on educating the student. He reported

that the student was not "native born" and the administrator was unsure if culture played

into the young man's actions. Administrator I told me they dealt with the incident

"proactively." He reasoned that they "didn't really come at it hard as discipline,"

because he felt it was more of "an opportunity to learn and change some behavior."

Administrator I stated that he thought it was the victim who reported the incident to

administration, but he was not sure. It was apparent that he was unable to remember.

He justified that there was not "a threat of harm," but rather "just negative comments

about somebody."

When I asked Administrator I what experiences he had with parents, he replied, "It's interesting. Everybody's opposed to cyberbullying, but nobody thinks their kid is a bully." He explained that when he calls a parent to talk to them about something in which their child has been involved, "their first reaction is almost immediately, we should see what the other person did." Moreover, he said, "there's probably merit to that, because a lot of times it's hard to trace it down to…incident zero, the first volley and an exchange." He chuckled and said, "these kids are slick." They can delete, move and hide messages. He further explained that students are able to frame something in such a way that they look like the victim. However, after further investigation one can see "the other side of the fence and…realize there's two sides to the story."

Administrator I described a situation that occurred the first year he was an administrator in a local middle school. A teacher reported that she had received harassing emails from a colleague. Administrator I was sent in, because he "was the young guy who knew how to use computers." He explained that not only did he see the emails she reported as harassing, but he also saw the ones she had sent, which she drug to the trashcan that she forgot to empty. "They were just as suggestive and just as bad," Administrator I said. He further explained, both teachers were married. The male teacher either became tired of the relationship or afraid. He decided it was time to back out. The female teacher was not ready to end it. Therefore, she was reporting the emails he had sent, but refraining from including hers.

Prevention and response to cyberbullying. Administrator I told me that he does not have a district, due to being a specialty school that serves different districts. However, he does have a school board approved policy. The policy is that "we don't tolerate it," he exclaimed. He told me that they deal with it just as they would traditional bullying. "It's not different than regular bullying," he said, "just a different form." Therefore, it is addressed it in the same manner. In addition, the principal feels the policy has not impacted the school, because they have had so few incidents. He justified the students are "pretty busy. We keep them loaded up." Consequently, "they don't have a lot of time and it's a lot easier to collaborate than it is for them to have conflict with each other." As a result, cyberbullying has not been a huge concern for his school, according to Administrator I.

Administrator I declared that they do not have a school-wide bullying prevention program, because they "haven't seen a need for it." He confessed that they have a larger concern with depression and anxiety. Prior to his principalship, five or six years ago the school had a couple students commit suicide. For this reason, they have a student assistance program. It is called SOS, which stands for Signs of Suicide. He explained that they put a great deal of effort into this program and helping students with anxiety and stress. Administrator I further explained that "nonacademic time is pretty precious" in his school. Thus, they would only shut down classes and conduct an assembly for something imperative. He proclaimed one of the things he appreciates about his position in this school is that he has the ability to decide what is important, and not have to "go off the district's latest flavor of the week."

In response to the scenario, Administrator I said this type of thing is "not uncommon" for them. He clarified, "some of the specifics…are a little unusual, but oftentimes [they] find out about stuff through a friend of somebody." The students do not generally want to talk to adults when they are dealing with concerns. However, they will tell their friends, who will in turn report it to the school counselor. Therefore, most often the first point of contact with a student in this situation is through the counselling department. After they receive a report, the first thing the school does is talk to the victim, because, Administrator I declared, "there's some merit to what she is saying." He maintained they do not have issues with students feeling they will not do anything. However, the fact that she is worried about retaliation is a concern. He agreed that sometimes this can make matters worse. Therefore, "they really need to investigate the nature of what is being said." A big focus for this school is to provide the victim with "coping skills in terms of dealing with" the anxiety and stress of the perpetrator's actions and additional repercussions.

Administrator I affirmed that he addresses the bullies as well. Although, he elucidated, this must be done in such a way as not to compound the matter for the victim. In addition, you have to make sure the victim does not retaliate on her own, Administrator I explained. There are times when a student will feed into the negativity, after it was thought to have been quashed. Then, it does not play itself out as anticipated. He added, "I wish I could give you a canned answer as to how to do that, but each case is a little bit different." Further, he explained that it is important to determine why the bullying is occurring. Is it because she is different, looks different or

identifies differently?   Administrator I clarified that they have several transgender students in his school as well as others who are LBGTQ in some manner. He held that the environment is "very open and accepting." He went on to tell me that he does not care which bathroom a student uses, and he feels very fortunate that "the culture of the school doesn't give a crud."

Administrator I stated that he thinks this scenario is probably more prevalent in middle school. However, he affirmed his belief that many high school students get mercilessly bullied without reporting it to anyone. It is not until something really bad occurs that people become aware. For example, it may not be until the victim can no longer tolerate it and becomes violent, or takes his or her own life or harms his or herself, that adults will know.   Therefore, Administrator I asserted that when situations like this come to the school's attention they must be addressed in a calm manner. He emphasized the need to help students develop coping skills, "because the reality is people can be really crappy and that doesn't disappear after high school." In addition, he proclaimed, "while kids are in school, you still have the opportunity to have a bigger impact on teaching them what behaviors are positive and negative." In most cases, bullies are compensating for "some inadequacy that they have," he said. They try to make themselves feel better by making others feel worse. Administrator I reported that he used to say, "blowing out someone else's candle doesn't make yours burn brighter." He agreed that there is a problem that needs to be dealt with proactively. However, he argued, we have to accept that technology is here to stay. He pointed out that I had an apple watch, and iPhone and an iPad all within reach, while he had a laptop close by.

He said, "we have four of them covered here." His point was that we should not expect students to go without technology, rather we should teach them how to use it appropriately.

Legal knowledge and its impact on discipline. Administrator I stated that "the laws are kind of iffy," because no specific cyberbullying laws exist. He explained that districts and schools have policies. However, when we speak of laws, we encounter the issue of "first amendment rights" and freedom of speech. He gave the example:

> What constitutes a first amendment right for me to post something on Facebook saying all PhD candidates are ugly and smelly, and they shouldn't be allowed in public schools? You had just recently been here and you know darn well that my thing is directed at you. But I can simply say, Hey, it's my First Amendment right. I'm just talking and you can't tell me that I can't do that. So, the law does get a little tricky, because I don't think we have a lot of real defined Virginia Code right now, about what constitutes that fine line between cyberbullying and First Amendment. (Administrator I)

Administrator I reported that he has never experienced a parent or student arguing free speech. However, he has been asked if a situation was "a school issue" or if it was his "business." He stated that he suspects he has not been questioned about free speech, more because they are not aware of it. Administrator I had a parent say, "He did it on his cell phone on Friday afternoon, after hours. It's okay. It's wrong and I am going to talk to him about it, but it's none of the school's concern." His response

to this type of argument is, "when it manifests itself in behavior at school, it becomes a school issue." Further he explained:

> If two students are getting into a fight at school and I find out it is over something that happened on Snapchat the night before. Then, that does become a school issue. Even if on the surface it may not be. (Administrator I)

Administrator J. Administrator J is a principal of a specialty center in a large Central Virginia district. His school serves both middle school and high school students who are over age and/or at risk of not graduating on time. Administrator J and I attempted to schedule our interview several times at various places before we decided to conduct the interview via phone. As with the other phone interviews, I sent the questions to Administrator J prior to the interview.

Experiences and perceptions of cyberbullying. Administrator J explained that due to the nature of his school, he has a somewhat transient population. Therefore, when new students enroll, the students "try to feel each other out." He explained that the students attempt to determine "who is going to be the big boss." When new students arrive, the current students pick on the new students in a manner of confirming that a relationship still exists between the current students. After a week or so it returns to normal, he claims. Furthermore, Administrator J reports that there are not differences in types of bullying. The behaviors just mentioned are what they typically see.

Cyberbullying is not a big concern, according to Administrator J. He told me that they do not allow cell phones or other personal electronic devices in their

classrooms. Therefore, if cyberbullying takes place with his students, it happens

outside of school hours. He affirmed that they had experienced some incidents of

students "going back and forth with one another, kind of talking trash." When that type

of behavior "spills into the school," Administrator J and the other administrators in his

school get involved. He explained that they talk to the students involved, as well as the

parents. They assign consequences if necessary. However, he said, the first thing they

attempt to do is "mediate with restorative practices." Basically, they will meet in a

classroom or an office and discuss the circumstances. Administrator J explained that

they want to attempt to "diffuse the situation versus them…trying to have an

altercation." He said this is another way they try to decrease their discipline.

When asked to describe a specific incident of cyberbullying he had experienced,

Administrator J provided the following account:

> We had some middle school students who were on social media, I think it
>
> was Instagram, and they were threatening. It was four students threatening
>
> one student.   It happened outside of school, so it was out of our
>
> jurisdiction. The parents of the victim brought it to my attention. First of
>
> all, she called me. Then, I met with her here at school, in my office and
>
> she…let me see the video. I shared with her that it was out of my
>
> jurisdiction. I couldn't do anything about it, because it did not happen at
>
> school. After I finished observing the video, I called the parents of the
>
> students…in our building who was doing the threats…and made them
>
> aware. I shared…how threatening over social media could be a felony and

if the police were involved, [the] student could be in some serious trouble.

I also made my school resource officer aware, because that's all in his

jurisdiction. He was able to contact the victim's parent and get more

information. I'm not sure what he did about the aggressors, because at that

time it was out of my hands. (Administrator J)

Prevention and response to cyberbullying. In response to the question

regarding a district policy, Administrator J stated, "there is a policy on cyberbullying. It

is in the code of student conduct." He explained that the policy defines cyberbullying

and describes the differences as well. It also outlines the infraction categories and

possible consequences, depending on the severity of the incident. Administrator J

acknowledged that his district views any case of bullying as quite serious. They want

students to have positive experiences while in school. Therefore, perpetrators can have

consequences to include suspension and expulsion.

Administrator J reported that his school has a school-wide prevention program.

He explained that they meet with the students at the start of the year, as well as in

orientation. They share the discipline plan in regard to cyberbullying as well as the

acceptable use policy. They speak to both the parents and students about not being

allowed to access unauthorized websites, in addition to not having personal

technological devices in the school. The SRO also discusses appropriate use of

technology during an assembly. Teachers are trained during teacher training week at

the start of the school year. In addition, the expectation is that teachers are mobile in

the classroom, monitoring what the students are doing on the classroom computers.

The school has a blended curriculum. Therefore, the students spend a great deal of time on the computers. The teacher must be aware in order to prevent the students from accessing social media and other unauthorized sites during the school day.

In addition to the training and prevention strategies mentioned, Administrator J reported that his school also has a program called Crosstek that they use to monitor the school computers. He explained that the program allows them to identify students who are accessing inappropriate websites. The program gives them the ability to "remotely control the students desktops" as well as speak to the students and even shut the computers down.

In response to the scenario, Administrator J said he would call the student's parents to make them aware of what is going on. Next, he would notify the school counselor. He emphasized the need for the victim to receive support, and he explained that their school provides social-emotional support services for their students. Then, he would conference with the perpetrator, letting him know that the incident was brought to his attention by other sources. Next, he would alert the SRO and ask that he speak with the perpetrator as well. Last, he would contact the perpetrator's parents. Administrator J stated that he would not be able to do anything since it occurred outside of school. However, he stated "if it spilled back into our school buildings, then it would be within my jurisdiction to hand out consequences."

Legal knowledge and its impact on discipline. Administrator J has spoken of things being within and outside of his jurisdiction several times during this interview. At this point I asked him to speak a little more about that. He told me that his district "takes

cyberbullying very seriously." Therefore, if something is outside of their jurisdiction, the administrators are expected to turn it over to the school resource officer. The administrators still contact the parents and make them aware of what is occurring with their children. They want the parents of the victims to have access to the necessary supports and legal parties. The administrators also contact the parents of the perpetrators to make them aware of what their children are involved in. At times, they even converse with the perpetrators. Although, Administrator J said, they always tell them before they even start talking, that this incident is not within their jurisdiction and they cannot do anything about it. However, they make the students aware of the ramifications surrounding their behaviors. They explain the trouble that the students could get in, the possibility of even receiving charges for threatening another student on social media.

Administrator K. Administrator K has been an educator for over fifty years, in multiple school districts across multiple states. She has approximately thirty years of experience as a school administrator. Currently, she works in a school district that serves just over 4,400 students in the valley region of Virginia.

Experiences and perceptions of cyberbullying. Administrator K stated bullying in her school is an issue "as in it happens and nobody reports it." For example, she told me if a student takes something from another student, administration is lucky if they even find out. She said kids are worried about getting "on the bad side" of others. She said, "the normal, old fashioned kind of bully happens." Students push and shove others, or walk past them in the hall and shoulder butt them. They take things that

belong to others, like "their phones and headphones." The perpetrators threaten to retaliate if the victims tell. Administrator K told me that they have "to be on it 100%," because often the victims will not report it. Administration typically finds out when a peer reports it or a staff overhears something being said among students.

In response to the experience with cyberbullying question, Administrator K said they have dealt with several situations. However, she felt one of the worse was "a middle school girl who was very provocative and reaching out to older boys." Administrator K explained, at one point there was "a kind, not so high functioning 11th grade boy" who was quite smitten with the middle school girl. Administrator K felt as if the girl led him along. She said, he brought her gifts and candy, and took her out in the community. Then, one day "she just turned on him." She yelled at him and embarrassed him in the stairwell. She "accused him of touching her." Other boys took her side. "They grabbed him and it became a real scene." When he went home, he told a friend who was ex-military. This man allowed kids to "use his guns in his shed." The kids made a video of the guns and themselves directing threats toward the girl, which they put on the internet. Administrator K reported that she received a call the next morning from the girl's mother. The principal actually drove to their house, because the mother did not have transportation. She reviewed the video, which included threats and guns. Then, she transferred the video to her own device and returned to the school. At this time, she notified the police. The male student's mother was called to come up to the school. She was very upset. Administrator K stated that she thinks this is "a good example of internet cyberbullying." However, it was a very difficult situation

considering the male student was manipulated and he ended up being arrested.

Administrator K acknowledged that she has had other situations. She told me of one incident that involved someone sending pictures of male body parts to a female student. Administrator K admitted that even with police involvement they were still unable to determine who sent them to the student. Administrator K also reported instances of students threatening to fight; setting up the fight online. She stated students have also texted each other to meet in order to fight. Administrator K proclaimed "cell phones have made it much harder," and she finds it difficult to deal with these sorts of situations. In the past, if two students were mad at each other they would simply fight. Nowadays, "they engage their parents, their cousins, their uncle…the whole neighborhood, and it's all done online." Administrator K confessed that she is not sure the online communication is all bad, because sometimes the fight never becomes physical due to the online conflict. Though, there are times when it creates a great deal of mayhem, online. This in turn can cause a disruption in the school. Administrator K explained, their "kids are savvy. They all have phones and they all have access to whatever, Instagram, Facebook." She said that is where they see the issues. They see "a lot of threats" and a lot of "I'm going to get you later, kind of stuff" on the internet platforms. However, she clarified that she feels their innocence gets them in trouble. She explained that "the perpetrators are kids too" and she does not think they completely understand the ramifications of their actions. Nowadays, they get online and make threats, and it becomes more "criminalized than it needed to be." Administrator K explained, "kids don't understand the importance of how it is illegal to

threaten someone or send an inappropriate picture."

Administrator K described another incident that she dealt with since they returned from break. She explained that there was a male and female student who were previously a couple. She explained that break ups are always difficult in a small school. Since this couple's break up, there was a negative air in the school. Administrator K hoped they could mediate with the two students in order to clear the air. Her account is as follows:

> We had a couple here and they broke up. She sent lots of threatening messages to him. I didn't know. One day she was coming in with her mother and we thought we could have some resolution, so we were going to get them together to talk. But he said, "I can't talk to her. I don't want to talk to her." He showed me his cell phone and all the threatening messages. She called him 91 times in one night. I found that out from her mother, because her mother monitors her phone. When we brought our concerns to her mother's attention, she went in and looked. Her mother said, "Oh my God, you called him 91 times in one night? How could you do that? You know that you're stalking him? You're harassing him." I printed out some of the emails and the mother was flabbergasted. (Administrator K)

Administrator K told me that the parent in the above incident is very supportive. However, she confessed that most parents are not as supportive. She told me most parents get angry even if their child is the one sending the messages and you have

evidence in front of you. They always defend their children and try to say that someone must have done something to them.

Prevention and response to cyberbullying. Administrator K explained that they follow the student Code of Conduct as a district policy. She said that she tries to stay within the guidelines of cyberbullying, which is not an easy task. She stated, "two things are ever changing. The more technology evolves…it's harder to define what is defamatory and what is okay." Because her school is "not big on consequences…in the traditional form," Administrator K said she tries to use it as a learning experience. She wants the students to learn that it is not the right thing to do. She explained that her students feel they can do something, if it was done to them. Administrator K did admit that it does not impact her school on a daily basis.

Administrator K reported that her school does not have a bullying prevention program. When asked this question, she referred to the code of conduct again. She told me that she feels "the teachers understand pretty well." She explained that they work together as a team, so any decision that is made is done as a group. In regard to parents, Administrator K works to involve them. She said that she calls them and explains the situations. Sometimes she asks the parents to keep the phones home. Administrator K said that she sometimes gets cooperation, but it varies. Parents are sometimes afraid to take the phones, either the students will be upset or the parents are worried that the students will be unable to contact them if they need them. Administrator K stated that they also attempt to use mediation as was mentioned in the previous incident.

In response to the scenario question, Administrator K listed the steps she would

take to handle the situation. She told me she would first contact the parent to make her aware of the occurrence. Then, she would talk to Sarah to gather her side of the story and find out who Sarah could identify as being involved. She would make sure Sarah understands that it "is her right to not be treated this way." Administrator K stated that she would investigate from the information gathered. She said if it looks like it has been going on for a period of time and many are involved, she may have to involve the police. However, she prefers to handle it through the school and assign consequences, personally. Most importantly, she wants to make sure that Sarah is supported.

Legal knowledge and its impact on discipline. Administrator K stated that she is cautious "not to violate anybody's rights." She said, she gets concerned when it is pictures of children or threats. They have had students involved in gun situations outside of school and that scares her. She said these situations started online. She explained that she tries to stay within the laws and not hinder people's free speech. She also prefers not to involve the police.

Administrator L. Administrator L is one of five high school principals in an urban district in central Virginia. The district serves approximately 24,000 students, 1,700 of which attend Administrator L's school. Administrator L has served in many administrative roles over the past 20 years. He has been a dean of students, assistant principal, principal and disciplinary hearing officer. He has worked in both public and private schools, in both suburban and urban districts.

Experiences and perceptions of cyberbullying. When I asked Administrator L if he could talk about different types of bullying he had seen, he chuckled and said, "Oh

wow. I can look at it from a different perspective." He explained that because he had worked in urban districts as well as suburban districts, he could compare the types of bullying he had experienced. He clarified that types of bullying are different when looking at the communities from which the students are pulled. He stated that he feels bullying in general has "kicked up a notch since the invention of social media." He said when he worked in suburbia, he "didn't see a lot of overt bullying other than bullying related to kids being mean to each other," because of being in a different "socioeconomic class." In addition, he explained that the majority of the bullying was "mean girl" types of situations that were "social media related." He told me about a specific high school he worked in. This school was in a large central Virginia district and this particular high school was in a more affluent area of the district.

In the urban school district, Administrator L told me, "it takes on a different texture." It also deals with socioeconomic status," but more than that it is related to "neighborhoods having issues with other neighborhoods, because of the demographics of how the neighborhoods shaped up." He explained that schools pull from different neighborhoods. Therefore, kids in one neighborhood may go to one school, while those in another neighborhood may attend a different school. The way the lines are drawn, there are times when a neighborhood will be divided and some kids from a neighborhood, may end up going to a different school than other kids in the same neighborhood. There may also be times where the majority of the students come from one area, but for districting reasons, other students come from a different area. These students in the minority will be targeted because of the neighborhood in which they

live. Furthermore, he explained, there are times when students on one side of a

neighborhood are in opposition with the students on the other side of the same

neighborhood. Administrator L explained that there is a great deal of bullying that

pertains to these neighborhood issues. However, he said, "the most important thing he

learned from working in urban schools" is that there are "a lot of dealings with bullying

related to race and class." He elaborated on this by saying, "a lot of my Latino babies

would be bullied by my African American students." In addition, he found that "in

retaliation Latino students would each other based a particular country that they come

from." For example, he explained, "Puerto Ricans didn't necessarily like Salvadorians

or Dominicans didn't like folks from Nicaragua, or something along those lines." So, in

other words, there was bullying based on ethnicity.

Administrator L explained that the difference between bullying in an urban

school versus that of a suburban school is that in an urban school "the actions students

take would be more sinister." In an urban school there is typically "more violence or

more threats of violence, fights or group fights." All of which is conveyed on social

media. Administrator L elucidated, "it's a different texture, I would say, bullying in an

urban school as it is in a suburban school." Bullying in the suburban school involves

kids "who are different, ostracized, marginalized." They have different names for their

cliques, like: "prep kids, goth kids, athletes." The suburban schools, according to

Administrator L, break down into social groups whereas the bullying in the urban

schools is based on neighborhoods and ethnic groups.

I asked Administrator L to talk about his experiences with cyberbullying and

cell phone and technology usage, and how his school is impacted. His first response to this was, "Oh wow." Then, he said, "Most, if not all of the bullying I have dealt with, I'm going to say within the last 10 years as an administrator, 75 to 80 percent of the bullying was directly related to cyberbullying and social media." Administrator L went on to say that he had students bring guns to school due to feeling threatened or having threats directed at them via social media. He said, it was rare that he would see social media issues happening during the school day. Rather, it happened outside of school, but was brought into school.

Administrator L described the cyberbullying incident that resulted in a student bringing a gun to school. His account follows:

> The child was being bullied in his neighborhood by a group of kids. He felt that the group of kids were threatening to jump him and initiate a group assault on him at school. They said this was going to happen whenever they see him. So as a result, the child brought a weapon to school. We got word that there was a weapon at school. So of course, we went into the whole process of locking thigs down and involving the police. We were able to secure the weapon. When we started to investigate, it was an issue of him feeling scared and threatened, because of the threats he was receiving via social media. We had to identify many of those folks that were involved in it and it was always a few folks that were directly involved in the cyberbullying piece. But there was a larger group of kids that were marginally involved in the background. So, when that child

began to identify folks based on that information and corroborating

statements from folks that were involved, what would happen once you

started getting these folks together, the kids would start telling on each

other. Who did what. Who was going to do this? Who else was involved.

Essentially, many of those kids who were directly involved received five

to ten days suspensions. Some of them went to the office of student

conduct, because of the severity of the accusation and what we uncovered

in the investigation. (Administrator L)

Administrator L said the most important thing after such an incident is to restore

the child's sense of safety. He admitted that there were times when they had to have a

student transferred out of the school, because the parent insisted the child would not be

safe. The child's biggest fear in situations like this is repercussions. Sometimes a child

never feels safe after they go through something like this, no matter how quickly the

administrators take action. Administrator L told me one of the things he really prides

himself on as a principal is being "big on school safety and support to students."

I asked Administrator L about his experiences with parents and if he ever had

parents who did not recognize their children's behaviors. He responded by telling me

generally "the parents who did not hold their children accountable for specific events

related cyberbullying were the same kind of parents who did not hold their children

accountable for many things." However, he also stated that there were some parents

who were unaware.

Further, Administrator L reported that he had incidents here parents actually

became involved in the cyberbullying. He told me of a situation where a group of girls were going back and forth on social media and it ended up in a big fight either on a school bus or at the bus stop. He explained that the thing about social media it that it "goes all around like wildfire." In this situation, a girl was bullying another girl on social media. A conflict resulted in the back and forth between the girls and two mothers got involved in the back in forth of their daughters. The parents ended up going to the bus stop to receive their children getting off the bus and they ended up involving themselves in the fight along with the girls. Administrator L disclosed that he had to show the parents the footage from the fight. They were in denial about what occurred, one blaming the others regarding who started what. Then, there the woman is on the video actually fighting a child. He said, "it's very powerful to show how parents even involve themselves in social media."

"On the flip side," he said, "then you have parents who are totally uninvolved with their child's social media life." The do not know that their child is "carrying on a sort of alter ego or persona on social media." These parents as dumbfounded when you pull it up and show them what their child is doing on social media. The children present one way at home, and they have "a totally different persona online" involving themselves in all sorts of inappropriate acts.

Prevention and response to cyberbullying. When I asked Administrator L if there was a district policy regarding cyberbullying, he referred to a previous job he had in another urban district, where he was a disciplinary hearing officer. He told me that in this position he made the recommendations for long-term suspension and expulsion. He

said it was during his tenure in this position that the district he worked for revised the discipline code. They included a specific reference to cyberbullying. It was considered a Tier One offense, he explained, which meant it could possibly go to long-term suspension or expulsion, depending on the nature of the incident. Administrator L exclaimed, "years ago, isolation bullying used to be just a slap on the wrist or a conference with parents, but not these days." He went on to say, "we have children who are being traumatized by bullying." There are children who are committing suicide because of cyberbullying. Administrator L stated that he thinks over the past ten to fifteen years, school divisions have recognized the seriousness of bullying across the board. It is no longer considered a minor offense. Now, it is considered a major offense under bullying and harassment. Administrator L confirmed that the discipline code is the district policy.

When I asked Administrator L if there was a school wide bullying prevention program, he said, "I've not worked for a school division that had any comprehensive antibullying program and that's where the disconnect is, because schools are not doing enough the address the bullying. As in more of a proactive not reactive position of convention." He went on to tell me that he could not speak intelligently about it, because of that fact.

Though, Administrator L did not explicitly speak of bullying prevention in his school, he did speak of actions he took that were specifically meant to prevent such behaviors. For example, Administrator L admitted that he "used to keep a dummy Facebook page" in order to be well-informed of what was going on without being part

of the conversation. He posed as a kid, and befriended students he knew were involved in things they should not be involved in. This allowed him a presence without the students' knowledge, which in turn gave him the ability to stop things before they became an issue. Another thing Administrator L does is develop relationships with parents. He spoke a great deal about this. He said years ago he "went from being Dean of Students to an assistant principal in less than a year" because he had a "no-nonsense, obsessive-compulsive approach to addressing discipline and in working with parents." Administrator L declared "perpetrators want their parents involved in their lives." He feels that "schools struggle with administrators who do not do a full, thorough job and…shy away from really involving parents." He explained when this occurs, "you empower kids to be able to do these things, because there isn't any accountability with parents because the parents don't know what's going on." Administrator L proclaimed he is one to develop partnerships with parents. He stated that he never had an issue communicating with parents, which he attributes to having a background in special education. He explained as a special educator everything involved the parents. He had to communicate with parents regularly regarding IEPs, student progress, behavior and the like. It is his opinion that this helped his ability in not only relating to students, but also collaborating with parents. Therefore, by the time he became an administrator he was comfortable in the task. Whereas, other administrators who come out of core academic classrooms have not had the ability to hone this skill.

In regard to the scenario question, Administrator L reported that he would handle the situation just as if Sarah had brought it to his attention, herself. He stated he

would "investigate it." He "would involve the parents." He "would hold folks accountable." He stressed that would "do everything in [his] power to ensure the child's safety." This means he "would emphasize to the parents of the perpetrators that if there's any kind of retaliation related to this…consequences will be swift." Administrator L expressed that this type of cyberbullying "is a chargeable offense." He would make sure that the perpetrators' parents as well as the victim's parents are aware of this fact. He would ensure the victim's parents know they have the right to press charges. Administrator L admitted that depending on the severity of the bullying, he has involved the police in past situations. He reported that there were times in which he asked the school resource officer take a report because "direct threats [were] made towards a child."

Moreover, Administrator L expressed his concern regarding confidentiality in this scenario. He stated that he would address this investigation in the same manner as if he had seen the bullying first hand. He would want to make sure to shield the privacy of the individual who reported the bullying to them. However, he acknowledged "once it's posted on social media, you can we got it from anywhere." Therefore, he did not feel confidentiality would be a concern in that regard.

Legal knowledge and its impact on discipline. Administrator L told me that "school policy to a degree supersedes a lot of the notions related to free speech." He held that speech that is disruptive to the learning environment, considered a threat, or self-harm requires immediate action. In these situations, they do "not worry about whether or not [they] are violating civil liberties." Administrator L proclaimed, "since

the invention of social media, there's been…a much stronger stance on bullying." He thinks "the laws reflect the fact that bullying is a real issue." He also feels that the laws have "kept pace…with what schools have to do to take swift action." He stated that he "personally thinks they are in line." However, he admitted that the missing "piece is really educating the parents on school board policy." He explained that parents need to know that "we have a recourse we can take that does not necessarily mean that we're violating civil liberties." He stated that he believes if "free speech is a disruption to the learning environment or threatening or causing an issue with safety, we are well within our rights to take action…to keep another child safe."